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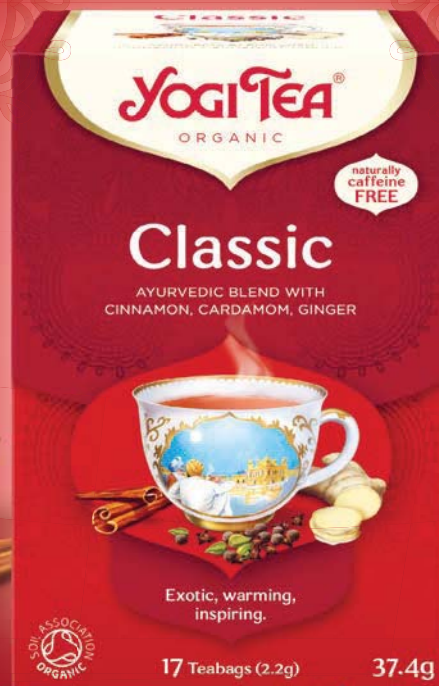




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# Welcome...

Institutionalised by almost two decades in education, even now, 20 years since my last graduation, I can't help feeling that this is the *real* new year. You can keep January – for me, this is the period of new beginnings and fresh starts; a time of bright-white school shirts, too-large blazers and, best of all, beautiful new pencil cases, as yet unsullied by pencil sharpenings and dust, shattered rulers and, worst of all, the dreaded leaking Biro. We're trying to capture that feeling this issue: that lovely air of possibility and newness, and look at how you can make this a joyful time of possibility, creativity and happiness.

We're taking a deep dive into happiness habits and how to make them easier to stick to on page 30, and working out how to up our emotional and physical energy in our Body section – because who doesn't want to double their energy levels? Check out our health coach's inspirational advice on page 76. Plus, this month, our dossier, on page 41, is exploring the thorny issue of self-confidence, which the vast majority of us could do with more of, I'm sure. We'll be examining what is holding us back, looking at how to change our negative internal script, and seeking out ways to gently build ourselves up and help us step forward into this new start with self-belief. We're also tapping into the much-maligned emotion of envy, and seeking to use its power to help us unlock our true purpose and motivation – while avoiding its negative impact – on page 20.

If you're not feeling excited by positive prospects and possibilities at this time of year, we also have some stories to inspire hope and healing. We share one woman's moving tale of how she overcame cancer at 30 and the tragic loss of her sister just a few days after her baby was born, and learnt to thrive again, on page 60, plus we look at other ways to heal our bruised souls through the power of art (page 90) and the magic of talking and therapy (page 38).

We all have our own unique life story and, whatever challenges you have faced, I hope that you feel seen and heard. Whether you are joyful or saddened, confident or afraid, I hope this magazine speaks to your soul and helps you to make this a wonderful month.



Sally x

Sally Saunders,  
Editor



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COVER IMAGE: HOLLY MCGLYNN





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# The advice starts RIGHT HERE!



## LUCY SHERIDAN

*'As uncomfortable as it may be, I always invite clients to greet envy as a friend who is a messenger,' says comparison coach Lucy Sheridan. 'Envy forces us to remember what we want most; of our unfulfilled desires and unmet needs.' Discover how to use envy as fuel for your own ambition on page 20.*

## GRAHAM MUSIC

*'Most of our challenges can make us more resilient,' says psychotherapist Graham Music. 'Of course, some can floor us. But if we can recover, we get to know deeply that bouncing back is possible, and that we hold muscle memories of this.' Find out how to rise again when life brings you to your knees, on page 60.*



## SUZY READING

*'Art has the power to lift the mood, to assist people in processing their emotions, and to help them feel part of something bigger than themselves,' says psychologist Suzy Reading. 'Even just looking at art can be effective, and offer a profound wordless release.' Tap into the healing power of art on page 90.*

## Our mission

*Psychologies'* mission is to provide you with inspiration and advice to support you to improve your emotional wellbeing. We aim to help you boost your happiness and resilience and lower your stress and anxiety. We do this by providing simple, achievable steps to make small changes that can add up to a real difference.

Embracing the four pillars of your life, from mind and body to heart and soul, *Psychologies* engages with the world around us as well as the world within to help you discover inspiring ways to make every day better and create a life you love.

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# In the mood

Thought-provoking culture, insightful science and inspirational snippets to bring you up to date on all things uplifting, hopeful and happy-making

COMPILED BY ALEX LLOYD

## *Gold rush*

We all know about the summer solstice, but the autumn equinox – on 23 September – is the point in the year when day and night are in perfect balance. Known as Mabon, and named after an ancient Welsh folk hero, this pagan festival is the equivalent of Thanksgiving, and ties in with the second traditional harvest of the year.

One of the easiest ways to mark the occasion is by decorating your house with dried and fresh flowers, gourds and pine cones, embracing the autumnal colour palate. Sit down to a meal with loved ones, too, and take time to reflect on the steps that can bring you harmony and happiness in the months ahead.



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



**Brighton is Britain's top city for pre-loved shopping, according to a study by Barratt Homes, with the highest number of charity shops, auction houses and secondhand furniture stores.**

## Mind over matter

*Humans have tried to harness the power of mindfulness meditation to reduce pain for centuries, but it's only now that neuroscientists have finally fathomed exactly how the practice can minimise physical discomfort.*

*Researchers at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine discovered that mindfulness meditation interrupts the communication between brain areas involved in pain sensation and those that produce the sense of self. This means the individual does not feel as much ownership over the sensations, and their suffering is then reduced.*

### **Waste not, want not**

So you've recycled all your glass bottles, reused your shopping bags and reduced plastic packaging by buying refills. Now, as Recycle Week arrives (19–25 September), it's time to turn your attention to food waste. Redistribution of surplus food was up 16 per cent last year, as manufacturers and retailers create networks to channel it to charities. But 200,000 tonnes of perfectly good produce still goes in the bin each year\*. You can do your bit by buying as you go, utilising your freezer for everything from milk and bread to fruit and houmous, and using your senses to assess whether an ingredient is edible in spite of the best-before date.

## WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



**WATCH** Julia Roberts reunites with George Clooney in *Ticket To Paradise*, a razor-sharp rom-com about a bitterly divorced couple trying to stop their daughter's wedding. Out 12 September.



**LOOK** Klimt: The Immersive Experience lets you step into the Austrian artist's work with a 90-minute, 360-degree digital show. Take part at The Boiler House, London.



**LISTEN** The *River Café Table 4* podcast sees restaurateur Ruth Rogers sit down with some of the distinguished diners she has cooked for to discuss all things food.

\* SOURCE: WRAP



### Time to upgrade your career?

If your focus has now switched back to work, and you don't necessarily like what you see, it might be a good idea to visit Karren Brady's Women in Business & Tech Expo, 12–13 October at ExCeL, London. This award-winning, female-led event is the UK's leading business and tech expo for women in the UK, and delivers inspiration, guidance, recruitment opportunities and business services to supercharge your professional journey. This fourth event, back in person after a break, is destined to be bigger, better and brighter than ever, the perfect place to take the next step in your career journey. For more information, visit [wibexpo.co.uk](http://wibexpo.co.uk). Register for free now at [wibexpo.co.uk/register/](http://wibexpo.co.uk/register/)



**31%** of British people turn to social media daily for a boost of positivity, with posts of pet videos and random acts of kindness the most popular, says Sky Mobile.



### Be here now

By Katie Piper



As human beings, we always seem to be chasing the next big thing. Whether it's a new job, a new house, or the next life milestone, we move from one goal to

the next and forget to live in the present. But I'm learning that taking pleasure in the little things can make life so much richer.

While setting goals can have great benefits, continually striving to get ahead can remove joy from the present moment. Life has been busier than ever recently, but I'm learning to take the time to find happiness and gratitude in the day to day. Simple pleasures like ordering my favourite drink from my favourite café, lighting a candle, or listening to my favourite song can be just as joyful as achieving a lifelong dream.

My debut ITV breakfast show aired last month on Sunday mornings. To host my own talk-show has been a dream I've held for years. I've made a conscious effort since my show came out to enjoy this moment and not lose sight of how long I have dreamt of this reality. Whenever I achieve a long-term goal, I find it helpful to check in with myself and ask 'Remember when this was everything you wanted?' Studies show that there's a pressure connected to big achievements that can leave us feeling underwhelmed and desperate for the next goal to work towards. But, finally, I am learning to celebrate the good while it's actually happening.







*"I strive for contentment and believe in the world of small things. There's something divine about watching the tiny daily changes in a garden and being awake to the cycle of life. Even if you're in a bad place, the world keeps turning and the flowers keep blooming"*

*Actress Indira Varma*

### Save it for Saturday!

Does failing to fit in a workout around your job, relationships and chores leave you with 'gym guilt'?

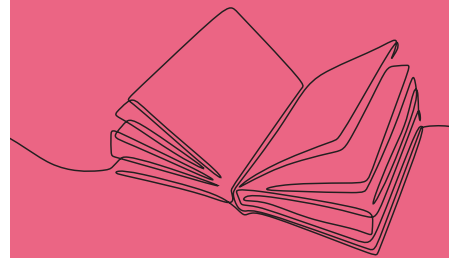
A decade-long study has proven that exercise doesn't have to be regular to be beneficial – and a weekend session is just as effective.

Saving your sweat for Saturday and Sunday is just as impactful at lowering your mortality rate as spreading your recommended weekly target of 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity over seven days.

Joanne Whitmore, senior cardiac nurse for the British Heart Foundation, says: 'The most important thing is that physical activity is undertaken in the first place.'

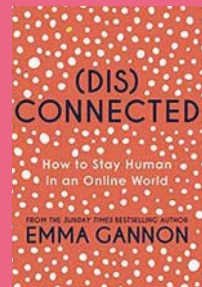


## 3 reads to get you... TALKING



**1** (Dis)connected by Emma Gannon (Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99)

is a guide to logging off and finding community in an increasingly online world.



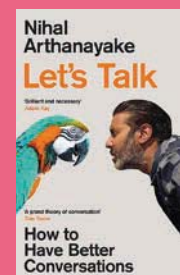
**2** You're Not Alone by Debbi Marco (Octopus, £8.99) offers

comforting advice and strategies on how to cope when loneliness strikes, no matter your personality or situation.



**3** Let's Talk by Nihal Arthanayake (Orion, £16.99) sees the

presenter delve into the evolution of dialogue and why learning to hold proper conversations matters.



# Viewpoint

Send your letters of gratitude and tell us what you loved reading in the magazine to [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)



## From the heart

I loved Caro Giles' column 'Between the hills and the sea', in the August issue. I normally flick through nature-related articles, but I'm so glad I didn't this time. The writing was beautiful and really struck a chord with me.

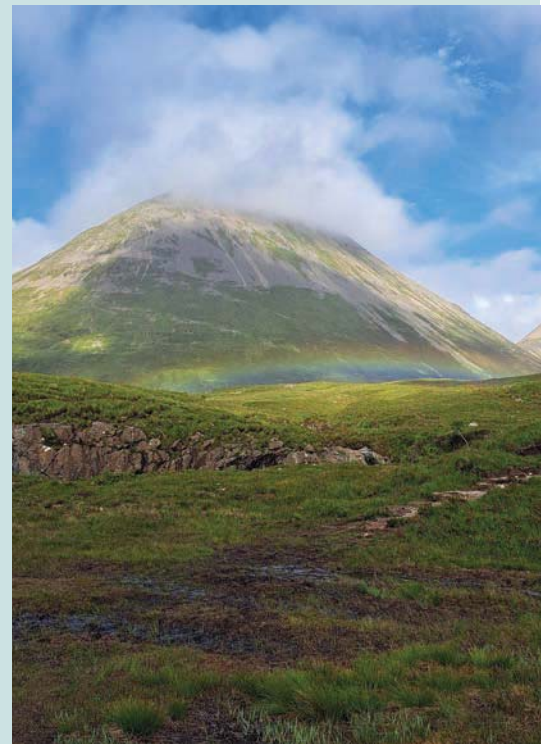
I so often feel like the 'odd one out' for talking about personal, matters of the heart to people, rather than just exchanging 'fluff'.

I moved to a small town from a heavily populated city in a different country some 17 years ago, and it has taken me a while to accept my new surroundings. Now, years later, I still often feel like a round peg in a square hole.

In answer to your question on 'itchy feet', Caro, I think this is a feeling that arises when we are unable to get away from our current circumstances, and feel 'trapped'; when we feel not fully understood and are longing for a 'perfect' connection with another human. The truth is, I do not know if any of us ever feel like we genuinely belong, in a wider sense. However, you are definitely more than 'enough' for your closest family; your girls are your tribe. And your writing is an amazing tool to reach other souls – it has definitely connected with mine! Thank you for being so honest.

**Polly Jenkins**

## PHOTO COMPETITION



I look at this photo of the Red Cuillin mountain in Skye as often as I can, as it reminds me to live in the moment. This rainbow lasted just a few moments, as I stood to breath in the scenery. My husband and I were the only ones to witness it and had I not stood still to just 'be' at that exact moment, it would have been a moment missed!

**Sally Moore**



## LETTER OF GRATITUDE

*I'd like to thank...*

Ann and Karen,

We met more than 20 years ago at university. Sharing a bathroom with one of you and a hallway with the other, we quickly became friends, and soon you felt like sisters. A year later, we moved in to our lovely little house, and managed to laugh a lot, argue a little – but never fall out – over all the little things that made it such a wonderful, crazy time.

I've never been the best at keeping in touch with people, and I assumed once we'd graduated our friendship would peter out. But to my joy, it hasn't, and you are both the most wonderful friends. Even being separated by the Atlantic, we still manage to remain in contact and meet up when possible. I had a fantastic time during our recent visit – it was a joy to see you both and immediately click into our old patterns, and natter away like it was a few weeks since we had all been together, not four long years.

You and your families are wonderful parts of my life, and make me remember the saying that friends are like stars: you don't need to see them to know they are there. And you also remind me that they shine brightest when the night is darkest.

Thank you for making me believe in true friendship – I love you both.

*Sally*

**We'd love to know what you think**

**Read an article in *Psychologies* that rings true? Have something on your mind or a poem or a picture you'd like to share? Get in touch and share your thoughts at [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)!**

Well done on producing a first-class magazine! There are always so many features that allow me to reflect and adjust, where needed, my own life, thoughts and actions.

It has been a difficult year in which my dad unexpectedly died and my partner (only in his 30s) was diagnosed with cancer. With all of the grief and

loss, I have found that being outdoors and taking photos of the wonder that is nature has been both calming and healing for me. It helps to remind me that we should not feel selfish for taking time for ourselves when we need it, and to enjoy this fragile gift of life we have all been given.

**Delfina Dos Santos**



I love walking our dog in the fields behind our house and feeling the quiet calm of nature wash over me. On this particular evening, I was feeling frustrated, and resigned to the fact that history seems to keep on repeating itself, when nature threw me a timely reminder that you need to experience the storm before you can enjoy the rainbow. The unexpectedness of this spectrum of light arching across the sky spurred an energetic shift within me.

Now, I try to remember that there are always magical moments waiting in the wings.

**Jennie Gardner**

**Would you like** to showcase your photographic talent in *Psychologies*? What moment has made you feel inspired, grateful or moved this month? Capture it and tell us why, and we'll print our favourite. Share your photograph with us and explain its inspiration on Instagram @psychologiesmagazine with the hashtag #PsychologiesPhoto, or email it to [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)

A large, stylized graphic of a quote mark, composed of two overlapping circles, one light grey and one white, positioned to the left of the main headline.

# *‘I’ve learned to celebrate the positive side of change’*

Despite her reservations, an escape to the country proved just the tonic for presenter Edith Bowman. She opens up about how she’s never felt healthier or happier, and why the shock of losing her job at Radio 1 gave her the determination to carve out her own success

WORDS: BETH NEIL

**W**hen Edith Bowman moved her family out of London for a fresh start in the Gloucestershire countryside at the end of 2019, it was with a fair amount of apprehension. After more than 20 years of going at full pelt since starting out on MTV in the late Nineties, the Scottish-born broadcaster was ready for more of a balance between work and life with her young sons and rockstar husband. But Bowman, 48, admits that she was also fearful about the impact living away from the capital would have on the career she had worked so hard for.

‘I thought it might stop me from doing things or make me less available,’ she says. ‘That was my big worry. But work wise, it hasn’t been restrictive at all and, especially during lockdown, I’ve been amazed at how busy I’ve been.’

Indeed, Bowman’s career is thriving, and she’s enjoying perhaps the most fruitful phase of it so far, having earned her stripes as one of the most knowledgeable and passionate film and music presenters in the business.

Last year, she hosted the BAFTAs alongside Dermot O’Leary and, among other projects, she has







IMAGES: HOLLY MCGLYNN



two successful podcasts that she's created from scratch and a new presenting gig for BBC2's *The Great Food Festival*, due to air early next year. The move to the country has given her 'the best of both worlds', where she regularly pops back to London but also has the quality time she'd been craving with Rudy, 14, Spike, nine, and husband, Tom Smith, frontman of successful indie band Editors.

'I feel like we're in the right place. This is so healthy for us as a family. We're close to Tom's family, we have a dog, we're right by a common, and I've made some lovely friends who have introduced me to wild swimming,' says Bowman.

It sounds like Bowman has hit the jackpot, but it's been a tumultuous journey to get to this sweet spot. Back in 2009, she was called into a meeting with Radio 1 bosses, fully expecting to hear plans for her career progression at the station, only to be told she was being taken off weekday afternoons and moved to the far less high-profile weekend breakfast slot. The news blindsided Bowman, who had been given the impression she was due a promotion.

'Lies and deceit are extremely strong words, but the discussions I'd been having with my boss at the time about my future were very far from what I was being told in that meeting.

'The conversation was the opposite of what I was expecting and it absolutely floored me. So I just felt incredibly let down because, as I do with every job, I'd given it everything I had.'

Bowman was so shocked at what she was hearing that she was unable to form much of a response, but says, if she had the time over, she would handle things very differently.

'At the time, I was too speechless and upset about it. But I'd definitely be more honest now about how I felt I'd been treated by the individuals in that room, and the lies I'd been told. I would ask what had changed from the conversations we'd had up to that point.

'And the next thing I would do would be to think more about the long-term plan and ask for some things. So, if that's what they wanted to happen, then I'd say I wanted X, Y and Z on top of that.'

After three years on weekends, she was effectively sidelined again when it was announced Gemma Cairney was taking over breakfast, with Bowman moving to *The Review Show* on Tuesday nights.

As it happened, that proved part of her 'stepping stone' journey, which, via co-hosting Saturday



mornings on BBC 6 Music with Adam Buxton and her podcast *Soundtracking*, would eventually lead to the pinnacle of her career so far, hosting the BAFTAs.

'I knew that I was being edged out at Radio 1, but *The Review Show* ended up being one of the most joyous experiences I had in my time there. I did it for a couple of years, got to work with the most amazing people and, weirdly, this show, which I think they saw as something to give me as a demotion, was actually exactly what I'd been looking for. And, so, when I did leave [in 2014], I left on a high.'

The following year, Bowman launched *Soundtracking*, which sees her interview actors, composers, producers and directors about the music

***"The conversation was the opposite of what I was expecting and it absolutely floored me. I just felt incredibly let down, because I'd given it everything I had"***





that inspired them, and is now more than 300 episodes in, including one recently with Steven Spielberg. She books all the guests herself and says that it has given her the confidence to take charge of her own destiny.

'*Soundtracking* came out of the frustration of not being given a regular slot and just going: 'F\*\*\* it, I'm gonna do it myself', and so I did!

'I do it because I love it and I almost forget that, once it's out there, people might actually listen to it. I've learned to celebrate the positive side of change. I love what I do so much that when I don't get gigs, I get really down about it. But it's about going, "Okay, that door's shut. But look at what's opening up over there."

There's also been a shift in the way she sees herself. It started at the end of her time at Radio 1 and has continued with the move out of London.

'I still have that imposter syndrome in that I'm fully prepared for someone to swipe the rug from under my feet at any moment. But I don't feel the need to impress people anymore.

'I would spend days going around having meetings with people, talking to them about what I wanted to do and the ideas I had, and nothing would ever come of it. And then I'd see my ideas on the TV with other people hosting. I'm so done with going out and spewing my energy [for nothing]. Just like in relationships, if things aren't going right and you feel like you're being too in-their-face, you take a step back. You can't make people want to work with you.

'I'm happy with myself and so I've stopped searching for who I am. There are still a million and one things I want to do and explore, but in terms of me, this is what you get – like it or not!

Bowman says she's never been in better physical or mental health, and credits wild swimming for some of that and how it has encouraged her to prioritise herself more often.

'I kind of feel younger now than I did in my 20s and 30s, because I was drinking so much and I was so unhealthy. These days, my energy levels are off the scale compared to what they were back then and I've moved myself slightly further up the to-do list.'

Bowman's affinity with water goes back to growing up in the fishing village of Anstruther in Fife. She's not a fair-weather wild swimmer either, and is still plunging into ponds in the depths of winter. Bowman is hard core!

'My friend introduced me to double dipping, which is the best thing to do when it's that cold. So you get in and then you get out, and then when you go back in the second time, your body's had a moment to get used to it and it feels warmer.

'There's just something about that environment and feeling floaty. Since my mum started doing it, she's been able to come off two different sets of medication, so there has to be something in it health wise.'



A constant tower of support is Smith, 41, Bowman's 'wingman' and husband of nine years. The two of them met back in 2005 when Bowman was brought in to give Editors some much-needed media training, and ended up on a night out with them a few weeks later, where she spent the whole evening locked in conversation with Smith. From that point, they were inseparable. Rudy was born in 2008, they married in 2013, and Spike completed the family that same year. They've always been a private couple and rarely appear in public together.

'The idea of Tom coming to a red-carpet event would make him physically vomit,' laughs Bowman.

'It's funny because he's such a quiet, shy person, which is the antithesis of who is on stage when – and I'm not just saying this because I'm married to him – he's one of the most impressive frontmen I've seen in terms of giving it 100 per cent.'

'In a lot of ways, we're very opposite, but we found this lovely place in the middle. That's our bubble. We had a bubble before bubbles became a thing!'

The return of live music post-lockdown has meant Editors are back out performing and Bowman says seeing the 'sparkle' back in Smith's eyes has been 'beautiful'. Both Rudy and Spike share their parents' love of music and she recently took Rudy to Glastonbury for the day, just mother and son, where they walked a total of 16 miles going from stage to stage, and she watched her boy 'making memories'.

She becomes visibly emotional as she recalls a recent school performance of Rudy's in which the head of music asked Smith if they could use an Editors' track for. He said yes but to check with Rudy in case he felt uncomfortable about it.

'We never heard any more until we went to see the show and Rudy came on stage and started singing a solo of *Ocean of Night*, which is one of my favourites of Tom's songs,' says Bowman. 'And then the whole year joined in and it was phenomenal.'

'Rudy just came alive and it was like the school had seen something in our child that we hadn't. I don't think Rudy realised himself what it would mean to us.'

Bowman is currently recording a new batch of her BBC Sounds podcast *Friends will be Friends*, presented with her own BFF Cat Deeley, who she's known since they presented on MTV. Each episode is a celebration of friendship and sees a celebrity and their friend discussing what makes their relationship tick. The last series featured names including Minnie Driver and Vicky McClure.

Bowman says one of the reasons her own friendship with Deeley, who recently moved back to the UK after 14 years in LA, has endured is because neither expects anything of the other.

'LA is a tricky time zone to keep in constant communication with someone, and so when she was out there, we hardly saw or spoke to each other. But when we did, it always felt like we'd



***"We found this lovely place in the middle. That's our bubble. We had a bubble before bubbles became a thing!"***

seen each other just yesterday.

'There's no bulls\*\*\* with me and Deels. We've always been honest with each other about situations, and I know I could pick up the phone for advice on anything and, whatever time of the day it was, she'd be there.'

'She's also a very good giver of gifts and always brings the glamour and the bubbles, so you're sorted in that area.'

Apart from the occasional pang about leaving London, Bowman couldn't be happier. Besides, she recognises the benefits of living where they do now, with more outdoor space and freedom for the boys.

'Sometimes I do have regrets, if I'm being totally honest. We had 10 days in London over the summer in our old neighbourhood and we all miss it.'

'But the lovely thing is that it's almost like a good friendship in that, when we go back, we just pick up where we left off.'

'What it's done is encourage me to slow down, to be in the moment, and to not go at 500 miles an hour so much. My next aim is to open up a bit of a window to write a short film script and a book. I just need to give myself the time to do these things because they're there, constantly tapping me on the shoulder.'

'I feel like it's all a series of chapters and I'm about to start another one.'

*The new series of Friends Will Be Friends with Cat and Edith is available from 20 September on BBC Sounds*





# Mind

Inspiration to boost your happiness and confidence,  
plus simple steps to overcome anxiety and stress



***When do you  
feel closest to  
reaching your  
full potential?***

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

# *Why envy is a* **POWERFUL MOTIVATOR**



Sit with the discomfort and treat your green-eyed monster as a messenger, providing fresh fuel to fire up your ambitions, writes Anna Bartter



**W**e've all felt it. A surge of adrenalin. A quickening pulse. That familiar sting: Envy. A friend has been promoted, moved to a huge new house, jetted off somewhere amazing on holiday. Our envy triggers may all be different, but the outcome is the same: it makes us feel *bad*.

Aristotle defined envy as 'The pain a person experiences at the sight of another person's fortune'. Nuanced with shame, imbued with hostility and resentment, it's a feeling as old as time. One of the seven deadly sins, not one but two of the Ten Commandments warn against it. From ancient philosophy to modern psychology and throughout history, literature and beyond, we're told that envy is evil. It's supposedly responsible for crimes from murder to genocide, and it certainly doesn't sit well with most of us.

It's little wonder, then, that we go to extreme lengths to deny or repress feelings of envy. After all, admitting to it is not only an uncomfortable, shameful confession, but it's also an admission of inferiority: we lack something we desire.

But rather than berating ourselves and feeling bad, there are ways we can reframe this negative, much-maligned emotion and work it to our advantage.

As a species, humans are designed to self-compare. Historically, it literally meant the difference

***"Envy reminds us of what we most desire; what we want to do; what we want to achieve"***

between life and death, therefore, comparison and envy are hardwired into our DNA.

Sara Protasi, associate professor of philosophy at the University of Puget Sound, Washington, and author of *The Philosophy Of Envy* (Cambridge University Press, £75), explains: 'From an evolutionary perspective, we've evolved to feel envy. It's a very ingrained response in our psyche, meaning it still plays a functional role. In ancient communities, where there was scarcity of resource, people were constantly competing for food, sexual partners, and other resources. The higher your social standing, the more of these were available.'

And modern envy, while no longer a fight for survival, is thriving. Back in 2014, a whopping 80 per cent of under 30s, and 69 per cent of over 50s, said they'd struggled with envy in the past year – and despite its negative connotations, it's a universal and cross-cultural emotion, which everyone experiences at some point in their lives. 'People who say they're not envious, that they've never felt it? I'm telling you now, they are lying!' says Protasi, reassuringly.

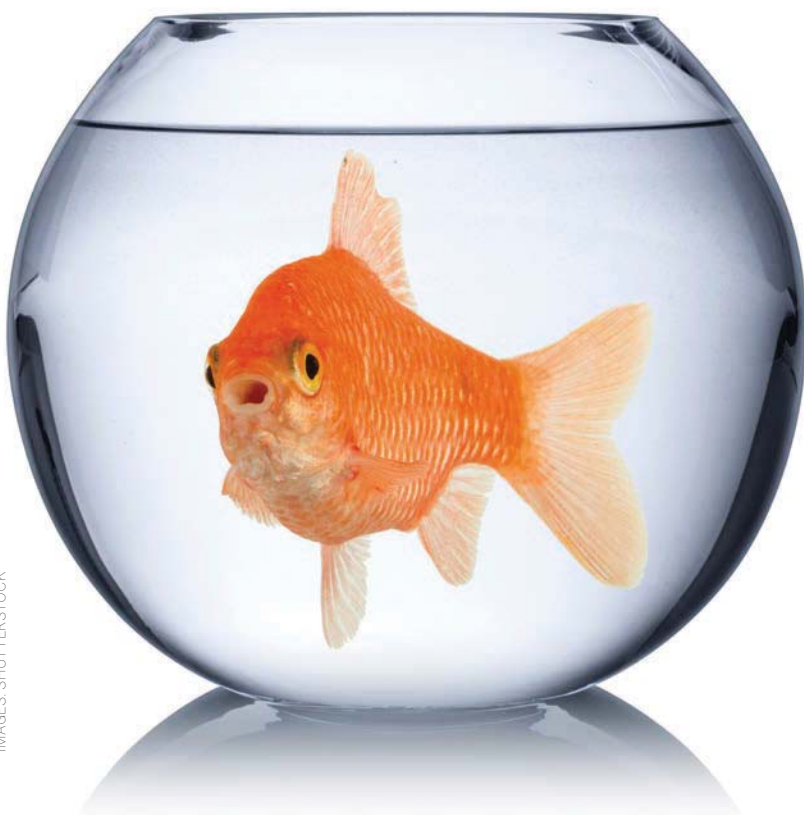
In the past, we compared ourselves to those in close physical proximity to us: friends, neighbours, relatives. With our lives increasingly played out on social media, we're now judging ourselves against virtually anyone, and it's inevitable that people's online lives seem more interesting, more successful, glossier than our own. A childhood friend of mine sums it up perfectly: 'Everyone's life seems to be like the opening sequence of a film, and one I feel excluded from.'

Journalist and founder of online coaching platform Freelance Feels, Jenny Stallard, is all too familiar with this feeling: 'I can't avoid envy. It bubbles away, and I feel it across all areas of my life. I envy other women, and I've found that recently I envy people who aren't even my peers: celebrities and other people who seem to be doing better than me. I feel their success is out of reach, and I'll never get there. It eats up a lot of my time!'

Like it or not, the reality is that envy is here to stay, in all its various manifestations. The key to living successfully alongside it is to cultivate a healthy and positive mindset around the emotion, which allows us to harness its potential power.

Lucy Sheridan, comparison coach and author of *The Comparison Cure: How To Be Less 'Them' And More You* (Orion, £9.99), explains: 'As uncomfortable as it may be, I always invite clients to greet envy as a friend who is a messenger. Envy reminds us of what we most desire, what we want to do or achieve, and what our individual aspirations are.'

So, it's not all bad news. But how can we tell if we should worry about it? Protasi distinguishes between 'malicious' and 'benign' types of envy. Traditionally, when we think of envy, we think of



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



the malicious, bad kind. The one where we may not even want what the object of our envy has; we simply don't want them to have it. We're bothered by their perceived superiority, and feel maliciously towards them. If left unchecked, this can manifest itself in behaviours such as social media trolling, gossiping or public criticism.

Benign envy is more positive. We observe the object of our envy with a sense that what they have could also be available to us. Rather than feeling destructive, it spurs us into action, it helps us find our purpose, improve ourselves or our situations: it becomes our biggest motivator.

Sheridan agrees: 'Envy is not necessarily healthy, but it can be helpful. Even though it feels unpleasant, it forces us to remember what we want most; of our unfulfilled desires and unmet needs. This in turn can fire us up and provide fresh fuel for our own ambition.'

The first step in moving towards a positive reframing of envy is to be able to recognise what the emotion is telling you. This is known as 'signalling value'. Protasi explains: 'All envy has signalling value, even malicious envy. It tells us what we care about and how we compare ourselves to others regarding important goals.'

However, in order to be able to recognise and acknowledge our envy's unique signalling value, we need to overcome the deeply ingrained sense of stigma and shame surrounding it. 'We have been taught that envy is bad and should be internalised' Protasi warns. 'And while it does have the power to be very toxic, there is a danger that people can be so afraid of it – of being a "bad" person – that they are unable to harness its positivity. Instead, they rush to suppress it, and make no effort to work on themselves or motivate themselves to reach their objectives.'

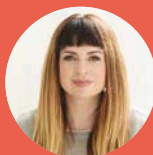
Stallard agrees, saying 'I find envy can be useful sometimes – it can spur us on to achieve more. But we need to be careful, as too much envy can draw us away from our own goals.'

Mindset plays a vital role here. It's important to be aware of your envy triggers, as this can provide valuable information about your capacity for growth and change.

Sheridan stresses: 'Envy can be a sign of poor self-care. It's a rallying cry to attend to our own needs and wants, and it can chip away at our self-esteem. This makes it much harder to see the positive side of it.'

Overt envy can lead to a self-fulfilling circle of shame and judgement, where insecurity and pessimism prevent us from experiencing its beneficial side. My childhood friend found that moving in with his long-term girlfriend gave him the boost he needed to start seeing things differently: 'It's only very recently that

## Expert advice



Lucy Sheridan is a comparison coach and author of *The Comparison Cure: How To Be Less 'Them' And More You* (Orion, £9.99). She is accredited by the Association of Psychological Therapies (APT). [proofcoaching.com](http://proofcoaching.com); [@lucysheridan](https://twitter.com/lucysheridan)



Dr Saliha Afridi is a clinical psychologist and managing director of The Lighthouse Arabia. [lighthousearabia.com](http://lighthousearabia.com)



Dr Sara Protasi is associate professor of philosophy at The University of Puget Sound. She's the author of *The Philosophy Of Envy* (Cambridge University Press, £75). [saraprotasi.weebly.com](http://saraprotasi.weebly.com)

I've noticed that I'm not hankering after what other people have so much. Now, it's more a case of thinking about what's missing in my life and what I need to do to get it.'

This positive reframing allowed my friend to take up a new hobby, leaving less time for him to ruminate: 'I concluded I needed to be productive, using my hands and making things. Woodworking has filled my time and stopped me being envious of others, because I'm happy in myself and I've worked out what makes me tick.'

Likewise, author Nina Manning was able to use her lifetime of feeling envious to her advantage. Determined to get her book published, her hard work finally paid off in 2019: 'I had always wanted to be a writer, and I'd sent my manuscript out multiple times to no avail. I kept seeing all these published authors and thinking "This should be me". So I decided that I would try one last time – and, finally, got an agent and a book deal! I was so proud that I hadn't given up.'

It's important not to underestimate the resilience and perseverance required to reframe envy. Most of us are not simply lucky: we are successful when we work hard and have clear goals in mind. Sheridan explains: 'We need the courage to face our fears, and to sit in the discomfort of envy and really receive its message. The golden rule is, if you are honest about experiencing it, you are always about to gain a breakthrough for yourself.'

So go ahead and embrace your green-eyed monster. Once you've accepted it and understood it for what it is, you're well on your way to achieving what you crave.

**[freelancefeels.com](http://freelancefeels.com)**

### Is your green-eyed monster threatening to gobble you up? Clinical psychologist Dr Saliha Afridi shares her coping strategies:

- Practise gratitude. Counting your blessings can be a fast antidote to keeping your envy in check.
- Be curious about the fears and feelings at the root of your envy. What are they telling you?
- Use social media for connection, not comparison.
- Develop a growth mindset. Are you ready to embrace the hard work that achieving your goals will entail?
- Don't beat yourself up! If your envy is causing you distress, it might be time to practise some gentle self-care.



## Is your envy becoming toxic?

**Comparison coach Lucy Sheridan shares her red flags:**

- Watch out for feeling overly judgemental, in real life or on social media.
- Be careful of gossip, or fixation on discussing other people's lives more than is necessary or justified.
- Be aware of seeking out your 'envy trigger' on social media, or starting conversations about people to gain more information about them.
- Are you overly interested in someone? Keeping tabs on them or what's going on in their lives? This is a sign of out-of-control envy.

## ▶▶ NEXT STEPS

**Read** *The Philosophy Of Envy* by Sara Protasi (Cambridge University Press, £75).

**Watch** Christie Aschwanden's TEDx Talk *How Envy Can Guide Your Path to Success*.

**Read** *The Comparison Cure: How To Be Less 'Them' And More You* by Lucy Sheridan (Orion, £9.99).



*Coaching in action*

# *Learning to unlearn*

In their second session together, the award-winning coach Kim Morgan helps her client Chrissie\* relinquish the reins and overcome her relationship difficulties





## Session two...

Chrissie had left our last session planning to have an honest conversation with her partner about their relationship. She felt that they were drifting in different directions, and if they didn't face up to their difficulties together, their relationship could be in real trouble.

As I waited for Chrissie to arrive for her coaching session, I was feeling a bit anxious. Chrissie was a charismatic, powerful, whirlwind of a person, and I wondered whether she had approached the conversation with sensitivity, or like a bull at a gate. It soon became clear she had taken the latter approach!

I could see that Chrissie was upset. 'I went straight home after our last session and I didn't pull any punches. I told Jez\* all about your coaching, including the "woo-woo" exercise you made me do.' (It wasn't 'woo-woo' and I didn't make her do it!) I managed my irritation and didn't react. I asked, 'What was Jez's response?'

'He went silent and shut down. He was so angry. Eventually, he said he didn't know why I was having coaching, that I should stop looking for problems, and then he said I had betrayed him by talking to a stranger about us.'

'Things went from bad to worse,' she continued. 'I kept pushing him to speak and ignored all the signs that he didn't want to. Finally, he snapped, and it all came out. He said he felt insignificant and unappreciated. He thinks I don't respect him. He thinks I expect him to be the "right" one for me, but I don't even try to be the "right" one for him.'

'What really hurt was what he said before he stormed off to sleep in the spare room. He asked me if I could tell him anything that is going on in his life right now. If I knew what was happening with his art and the sales of his pictures. If I even knew what matters to him or what his hopes and dreams are.'

I gently asked, 'And how did that make you feel?'

Chrissie said she was feeling ashamed, sad, and worried. 'Jez was right. I could answer those questions about people at

work, but not about Jez. I've got carried away with my own life, and my own sense of importance. Jez is a good man and I take him for granted. I've focused on all the things he *isn't*, rather than all the things he *is*. I really, really want to make our relationship work,' she said.

I felt empathy and compassion for Chrissie. I wanted her to know that losing sight of one another in a relationship is not uncommon. I decided to share a quote that I had learned from having attended relationship counselling myself (although I didn't share that bit with Chrissie!): 'Great relationships are not great because they have no problems. They are great because both people care enough about the other person to find a way to make it work.'

'I think we do care about one another enough to find a way – otherwise, we wouldn't be so distressed,' Chrissie said.

Then, suddenly, the problem-solving businesswoman Chrissie was back in the room: 'Okay, I've got it! Jez and I need to spend time getting to know one another. We both need to understand the other better and what matters to each of us. I'm going to tell Jez that we can do this on a series of dates or weekends away.'

'Sounds like a plan,' I said. 'But it sounds like *your* plan, Chrissie. Are you really going to tell Jez what you both need to do? Or could you use this as an opportunity to ask him what *he* thinks and feels?'

Chrissie groaned. 'I have such a lot to learn and to unlearn. Thanks for the challenge. I will slow down, listen more, and ask more questions.' Then, with a grin, she added, 'Hashtag be more coach!'

As she breezed out of the room, like a woman on a mission, I found myself thinking about Jez (who I had never met) and hoping that Chrissie really could slow down and let go of control – and be a bit 'more coach'!

**Find out if Chrissie finds a way to readjust the balance in her relationship in next month's issue**

*Does this sound like you?  
Turn the page for Kim's  
coaching exercises*



# Work it out

A 'relationship audit' helps you to reflect on the quality of important relationships in your life.

NAME	SCORE	REFLECTIONS	CHANGES/ACTIONS
Helen	28		

Choose five or six people who are important to you. Now, for each person, score yourself (out of 10) on the following behaviours you show towards them:

- Being reliable and keeping commitments. If you say you are going to do something, do you?
- Being loyal and showing respect. If you are unhappy or upset with somebody, do you speak about them (to others) or to them (with honesty and respect)?
- Saying sorry. How readily do you apologise for mistakes you have made?
- Paying attention to the small courtesies. How often do you make kind gestures without expecting anything in return? Or express your gratitude and appreciation?

Add up your scores for each behaviour and put the overall score in the grid. What are your reflections on your behaviours in these relationships?

- Are there any patterns in your behaviours?
- Are your behaviours consistent across all the people?
- What changes or actions do you need to make?

Now flip it around. How do you think each of these people score with you on the behaviours? What further reflections or actions do you have?

## Miracle motivation

Let go of reality for a moment, and enter the world of miracles, making some time to think about the question below:

**'Imagine that tonight, while you sleep, a miracle occurs that completely resolves your current situation. When you wake up in the morning, what are the first things you would see, hear, experience or notice that would tell you that things were different?'**

The 'miracle question' works well if you are facing what feels like an insurmountable problem. It works by switching your focus to imagining that the problem has been solved, without you having to work out the steps you need to take to solve it. It gives you a glimpse of how things could be if the situation was resolved. You may even realise that it won't take a miracle to solve it after all! By focusing on how life could be in the future, you may discover some increased motivation to make the changes that are necessary.



**The Miracle Question, devised by Steve de Shazer, pioneer of Solution-Focused Therapy**

## WORDS OF WISDOM:

*"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around"*

**Leo Buscaglia**



# Poetic justice

*Writing your own and reading other people's poetry can be a soothing antidote to the frantic pace of modern life, writes Jackee Holder*



Lately, I've been dreaming of poems. Poems I've encountered over the years come to me in my sleep, and I think about slipping them into my clients' dreams as antidotes, a form of word whispering to the experiences and

turbulences that confront them on a daily basis. Hafiz's poem, *My Brilliant Image*, with lines like, 'I wish I could show you, when you are lonely or in darkness, the astonishing light of your own being!' relays emotions about loneliness and a lack of support we can't always find the language to express. But a poem can.

Find a poem that you've been drawn to over the years, create an intimacy with it, and copy it into your journal or notebook. Research tells us that writing by hand strengthens memory retention. Deepen your relationship with a poem by reading it aloud. Optionally, take a line from a poem and write a response in your notebook. Argue with a poem. Give that part of your voice space to be expressed.

I believe everyone can be a poet, and according to the writer Mary Flannery O'Connor, 'anyone who has survived childhood has plenty to write about'. Captured moments are what the best poems are made of; as they say, God is in the details. And that's where we're heading this month – how to make the transition from a captured moment to a poem. Years ago, I was part of a facilitation team delivering a residential programme in the grounds of a sprawling red-brick UK university in the Surrey countryside. It was a warm night and a group of us sat on the low-hanging branch of a majestic pine tree. A silence opened up between us that none of us rushed to fill. Suddenly, out of the blue-black, a bulbous body streaked with a chalky white stripe appeared, and time stopped as I met the gaze of a badger's obsidian eyes, taking in the strangers in its patch.

Poems are stitched from the fabric of ordinary moments like this. By transporting that moment to the pages of my notebook, a poem emerged sparked by the event, which connected me to a deep longing for more solitude and silence in my life at the time. Whenever I feel stretched for time, or I find work is draining what little energy reserves I have,



I return to this poem and the vivid image of the badger's arrival. And it refocuses and roots me in an instant.

The medicine of poetry can naturally emerge from what journal therapist Kay Adams refers to in her Journal Ladder methodology as these short 'captured moments.' This is where I encourage clients to go. Make a list of all the small kindnesses layered into your week and, immediately, you have a poem on the go. One-line poems works just as well. This is where a poem begins – in the showing and capturing. Forget rhyming, and dismiss the school teacher sitting on your shoulder. Throw it all out and begin right where you are.

When taken into a journalling practice in this intentional way, the whole body system takes time away from the screen and immerses you in the moment right in front of you.

**[jackeeholder.com](http://jackeeholder.com); @jackeeholderinspires**

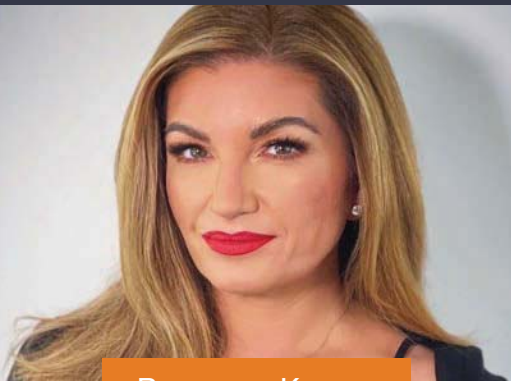
IMAGE: LAURA RICHARDSON



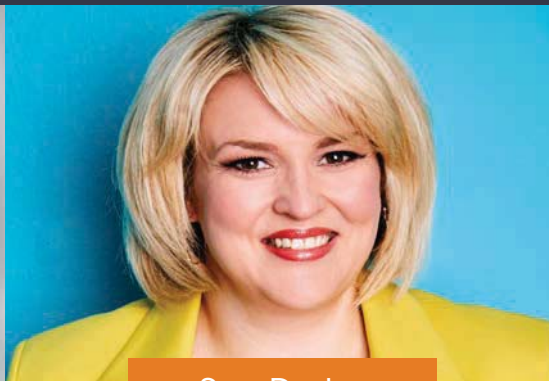
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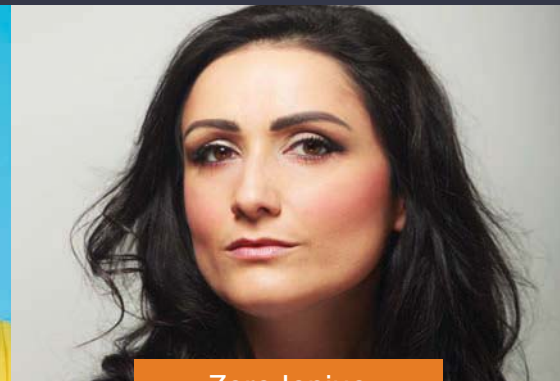
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# Bridge the workplace gap

Make a difference at Karren Brady's Women in Business & Tech Expo

**W**hile diversity and offering equal opportunities in the workplace and male-dominated industries has been pushed up the agenda, it is a constant challenge to accelerate the level of change required to make a true difference.

A working paper from The Peterson Institute for International Economics, which studied 22,000 companies in 91 countries, proved that businesses that have a 30 per cent female representation in leadership positions see a 15 per cent increase in profitability than those who don't. This gap is also evident in UK-based private limited companies, with UENI's recent report on gender and small business highlighting that only 32 per cent of businesses in the UK are female-owned.

There is still an incredible amount of work to be done to close this gap, so, the big questions are: why is it taking so long? And what can we do to pledge our support?

Karren Brady's Women in Business & Tech Expo, taking place 12-13 October 2022 at ExCeL London, aims to empower professionals and shine a light on organisations who champion diverse workforces and equal opportunities.

Curated for individuals who are eager to thrive in their careers and progress their businesses, this female-led exhibition and conference provides inspiration, guidance, recruitment opportunities, and professional services to supercharge attendees' professional journey within the technology and wider business sectors.

The expo will see a programme of inspiring CEOs, tech leaders, career-influencers and entrepreneurs discuss

a range of topics and themes, including leadership, STEM careers, diversity and inclusion, career progression, business transformation, upskilling and reskilling, returning to work after a break, entering new industries and much more.

#### Speakers include:

- **Baroness Karren Brady CBE, vice chairwoman of West Ham FC**
  - **Sara Davies MBE, British businesswoman, entrepreneur and TV personality**
  - **Sarah Jenkins, managing director at Saatchi & Saatchi**
  - **Angelene Woodland, CMO of British Business Bank**
  - **Dr Alka Patel, TEDx speaker, GP, lifestyle doctor, author and podcaster at Lifestyle First**
- World-class, diversity-driven businesses Amazon, Dell, Adobe, Cisco, CGI, Accenture, McDonald's, Capital One, Goldman Sachs, Experian and Morgan

Stanley are sponsoring the 2022 event, and will join the varied technology, recruitment and business exhibitors in advocating diverse workforces and showcasing their services.

Whether you're looking to advance your career or are a business owner, Karren Brady's Women in Business & Tech Expo provides a platform for women to lead these conversations, together. For more information on the event, visit [wibexpo.co.uk](http://wibexpo.co.uk). Register for free now at [wibexpo.co.uk/register/](http://wibexpo.co.uk/register/)



# 3 HAPPY HABITS

*and six tricks to make them stick!*

Pave the way for long-term happiness and fulfilment with these simple, stay-smiling techniques to bring delight to every day

1

## Find the joy

'Bringing focus to the small things in your day that have the potential to

bring you joy is an essential habit for happiness,' says positive psychology coach Dawn Baxter. 'Upgrade your towels and wrap yourself in luxury each time you get out of the shower; start each day with the invigorating aroma of your favourite coffee; and make time to sit in that spot in your garden that gets the last of the sunshine. Life's simple pleasures are easily overlooked when we're consumed with what we need to do and where we need to be. But bring your focus back to those micro-pleasures; it's incredible how they help you find your balance and give you the resources to enjoy your life day to day, regardless of other things that will come at you.'

2

## Shift views

**'How often do you arrive at the office loudly listing all the things that have gone wrong that morning: "I couldn't get the kids out of the door today! I forgot my bag! I hit every red light!" asks Baxter. 'Instead, try "positive stacking": acknowledge the fact that you dodged the rain, remembered your lunch, and put your favourite top in the dryer last night so it was available to wear today – and you didn't have to iron it! We're programmed towards negative bias, but get into the habit of spotting the good stuff. It's easy to shift perspective back into your favour when you try, and once you've done it regularly, for a month or so, it soon becomes second nature.'**



## 3

TAKE  
TIME

*'One habit  
we should  
all try*

*to introduce is giving ourselves time to process what's going on in our lives,' says business mentor Rhiannon Bates. 'Look at your diary and build in time after a challenging meeting to go for a walk to clear your head, or to talk with a friend after a tough day. Process your feelings and let them out, rather than bottling it all up inside. This can feel hard when you're busy with work or children, but giving yourself even 15 minutes to decompress and reflect on what's happened in your day, and how you are feeling, can have a huge impact on your happiness levels.'*

Expert  
advice

Rhiannon Bates is a business mentor and visibility coach, and is the founder of Garnet PR. [garnetpr.com](http://garnetpr.com)



Dawn Baxter is a certified positive psychology coach and founder of [beyondthedawnblog.com](http://beyondthedawnblog.com)

# HOW TO GET INTO THE HABIT

1

## TAKE IT ONE STEP AT A TIME

*Introduce one thing and make it easy to achieve, then build from there, says Bates. Trying to go too big, too fast, with extreme change will make it far harder to stick to your new habits.*

2

## Make it fun

'We can make habits fun with a method called "temptation bundling",' says Bates. 'This involves the coupling of something that is instantly gratifying, such as watching TV, eating your favourite food, checking social media or having a bath, with something that we feel we "should" be doing, such as going for a run, cleaning the house, or completing that piece of work you keep putting off.'

'Make a deal with yourself: "If I go for a run, I can come back in and have a nice long bath." Or, "If I finish that piece of work, I can scroll through social media for ten minutes." This same principle applies for habits, too: giving yourself your own mini reward system can help you to self-motivate and stick to your habits, while feeling they are fun.'

3

## Remind yourself

**One of the biggest struggles with habit forming can be the concept of trying to find more time to fit them into. 'When we're already feeling stretched by everyday life, work, family commitments and so on, habits we introduce for self-care can easily be overlooked or underestimated – but, in reality, they're vital for helping us feel great,' says Baxter. 'Try performing your habit at a few different times of day, and see when it works best for you and feels easiest – or when you find you do it naturally anyway. Then schedule a daily reminder at whatever that time is, to lock the behaviour into your routine.'**



## 4

**Try habit stacking**

**'An easy way to start a new habit – and stand the best chance of success with it – is to introduce "habit stacking",' says Bates. 'This is the act of attaching a new habit onto an existing one. For example, if you want to build gratitude into your daily routine, add them onto something you already do without even thinking about it, such as brushing your teeth. Or why not say some positive affirmations out loud while making your morning coffee? This way, it doesn't feel like you're adding another to-do task to your list but, rather, maximising time you already use. Habits become second nature so much faster this way than trying to build a whole new action into its own time slot.'**

## 5

**FOCUS ON THE LONG TERM**

*You may find it really helpful*

*to visualise how your habits will benefit you in the future, says Baxter. For example, if this new habit is going to mean that you will get to spend more time with your family, then put a picture of your loved ones in a place where you can see it while practising your new habit, as a constant reminder of your motivation.*

## 6

**If you're trying to make a habit of something more substantial, try this three-step plan:**

- Get crystal clear on where you are and where you want to be; drilling down on what your new habit needs to incorporate allows you to get clarity on how you can break the habit down into smaller daily changes.
- Give your habits meaning; it is vital to focus on your 'why'. Why are you committed to creating this habit and what is the purpose behind it? Start visualising what this will mean to you and how it will feel when this becomes a daily habit. Remembering all the reasons you want to add this into your life will help you to stay motivated. Your 'why' is one of your most powerful tools.
- Make your habits achievable; when you come to start a new habit, even if the overall habit incorporates a bigger lifestyle shift, you need to make the end goal achievable. If you work nine to five and need time either side to commute, it's unlikely you can form a new habit that requires three hours of your time in the morning. However, you *can* commit to this particular habit once a month on a weekend, or introduce a much smaller, less time-intensive version of the habit that still helps you get to your bigger end goal.

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Sally x

Editor,  
Psychologies

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# Help yourself HEAL

Time is not a cure-all for past pain, writes Madeline Popelka, but it can create the space, opportunity and perspective to set intentions, and take the first step on your healing journey

Growing up, when I did something that made my mum angry, like talk back, she'd furiously rush to the corner of the kitchen where she kept the broom. She wouldn't say anything at first, but I knew what the broom meant, so when she did this, I'd run up the stairs as fast as I could. She'd come after me, yelling, 'What did you say?' My sisters and I didn't have locks on our doors, so once I'd get to my room, I'd hide in my closet or under my bed. If I had a big enough head start, I'd sometimes sneak into my parents' room and hide in their closet under my dad's suits. As I got older and my legs got longer, I was able to keep my bedroom door shut – and my mum out – by sitting with my back to the door with my feet pressed against my dresser in front of me.

My mum always knew where I was hiding, but she never pulled me out from the closet or from under the bed to strike me, as her parents had struck her. In Vietnam, corporal punishment was the norm, and she endured physical pain daily. Yet she knew that, in America, it wasn't an acceptable form of discipline. Instead, she would smack the broom against a door, the floor, a bed frame, or the banister, to scare me into behaving better. And it worked – I was terrified.

After she did this, I'd cry in my hiding place, thinking about what I did to deserve it. I knew that if I hadn't

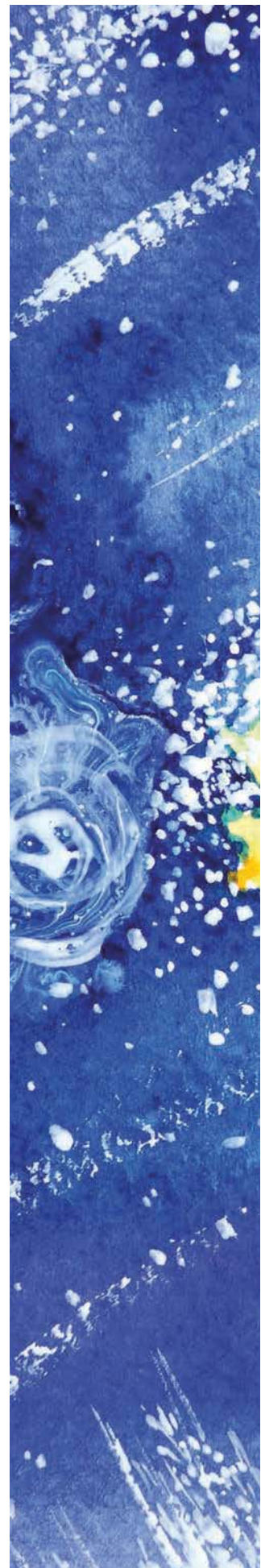
talked back, I wouldn't have made her so angry. I thought I wasn't worthy of her love because I wasn't a straight-A student like my older sister, and wasn't as adorable and innocent as my baby sister. I thought that I was born a 'bad' kid, and that I was unlovable. I convinced myself that I deserved to be treated like that to make sense of it all. I was hurt, and I didn't know what else to do other than to push my feelings away and act like it had never happened.

***"I was hurt, and I didn't know what else to do other than to push my feelings away and act like it had never happened"***

Even though this happened decades earlier, the pain felt just as intense when I started retrieving these memories in my late twenties. When a trigger came that sparked a memory of my mother chasing after me, I'd cry just as hard as I had when I was hiding from her in my closet. As I recalled how I felt as a child – like I was never loved, nor could be loved – the thoughts quickly spiralled into depression. Time never healed these wounds. Time alone cannot heal – it's not magic.

**'If you're waiting for time to heal you, you'll be waiting forever'**

Time didn't make my pain disappear. If anything, time helped me become more comfortable living with the pain. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I found ways to cope. I found comfort in food and would eat everything in









the pantry until I made myself sick. When I was in middle school, I'd cut myself in the bathtub. I'd cry in the pink-tinted bath water, asking myself, 'Why do I have to be me? Why couldn't I have been born someone else?' In high school, I started finding relief from my negative self-talk by smoking weed, numbing my emotions. This continued into college, where I began getting blackout drunk with friends five days a week. I hooked up with people that I barely knew each week because I thought I was undesirable, and I wanted to be wanted. I was reckless because I felt like I didn't have anything to lose – if anything ended my life, that would've been fine with me. Time went on, and I continued moving through life hurt, while pretending that I was fine.

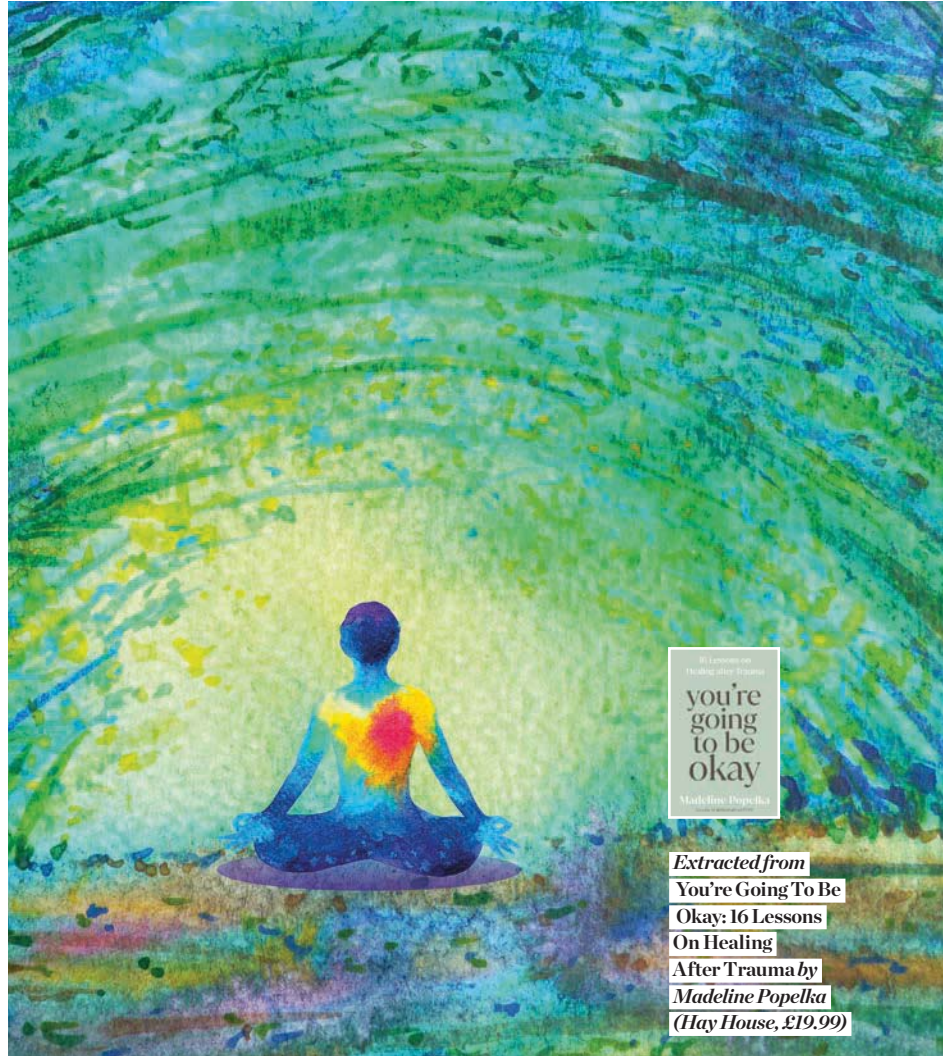
I didn't begin healing from my childhood trauma until I acknowledged what had happened and how it affected me. (And because the person who harmed me is someone I love and care for, and someone who I know loves and cares for me, this wasn't an easy task.) Time didn't change the facts of what took place back then. Time didn't change what my mum did to me, or how it made me feel. As a 30-year-old, I'd beat myself up for still feeling hurt from what I went through as a kid. I'd think, 'Shouldn't I be over this by now?' And as the flashbacks kept coming in, I felt ashamed and overwhelmed with sadness because I still wasn't over it.

While time offers no magic fix, I will say that it can be helpful on our healing journeys. Time can guide you towards new perspectives that may not be available without some distance. When I look back on my childhood now, I realise that my mum didn't do what she did to me because I was a 'bad' kid or because I was unlovable. No, that's how she was disciplined, and the trauma her parents inflicted on her was also passed on to me. I realise that she didn't know that what she put me through could be traumatic, because what she'd been through had been so much worse. I realise that my mum may have been struggling with her own traumatic past that she hadn't yet healed from. These are perspectives that have developed with time, and I'm grateful that distance has given me the opportunity to see things from a different point of view. But, still, even with space and new perspectives, time didn't have the power to erase the trauma I endured.

### **'Time can support your healing, but it isn't a solution'**

Just like we can't ignore our traumatic experiences and expect to heal, we can't expect time to magically heal our wounds either. Trauma doesn't work itself out, and healing is not a passive activity that occurs by coincidence; it's an active process that only takes place if we're intentional about it.

Intention creates space for your healing. Without intention, you may not give yourself the time or make yourself emotionally available to mend your



***“Putting your desires into words will bring focus to your healing, and can help you get clear about the direction you want to go in”***

wounds. Without intention, it's easy to continue living life as is, waiting for a miracle to happen.

Take some time to think about some of your intentions for your healing journey. Putting your desires into words will bring more focus to your healing, and it can help you get clear about the direction you want to be going.

Think about some of the challenges you've been dealing with. Maybe trauma has left you feeling fearful and paranoid, or maybe you're suffering from insomnia. Maybe you're feeling lonely because there isn't anyone in your life you can trust.

Next, think about how you want to feel, and what you want to get out of healing. It could be living a more peaceful life with minimal symptoms of trauma, or learning to love and trust yourself (or others) again. Maybe it's being able to revisit your past without intense fear or shame overtaking you.

It's okay to let yourself dream. When you're dealing with trauma, your world can shrink and it can be a challenge even to envision a way out. You may not get there how you imagine, but remember, healing is possible, and while encountering obstacles along your journey is inevitable, you're capable of achieving whatever your desires may be. Just try not to be hard on yourself if you're not progressing as quickly as you want to be. While time alone cannot heal, healing does take time (and work). But the time and effort you put into healing will be time well spent.





psychologies

## DOSSIER

*With you  
in mind*

# How to become more **SELF- CONFIDENT**

By identifying the things that are holding us back, we can move forward with confidence and shake off the shackles of negative self-beliefs, discovers Caroline Butterwick ►►

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



**I**t's a gloriously sunny day, I'm surrounded by people I know and love, eating delicious food, but my heart is racing. Everyone around me is deep in conversation, laughing away while sipping their Prosecco at this family party, while I fiddle with my bag and worry what to say.

From school reports lamenting 'Caroline needs to be more confident in class' to feeling too afraid to speak up in meetings at work, self-confidence – or a lack of – has always been a common feature in my life.

That's not to say it's all bad. I've definitely grown in confidence over the years, and have far more of this most illusive of characteristics now, compared to in my younger years – and I can happily say that I have delivered some great presentations, put myself forward for rewarding opportunities, and made meaningful new connections. But I often feel like this is in spite of my self-confidence issues, rather than a result of having overcome them.

And it's not just me who finds self-confidence an ongoing concern. 'Everybody, at some point in their life, will struggle with their confidence, their self-image or their self-worth,' says psychologist Dr Tara Quinn-Cirillo. It can manifest in a range of ways, from struggling to cope in social situations to not pursuing a career path because we doubt our own abilities.

'Self-confidence is intrinsically tied up with your emotional wellbeing and your mental health,' Dr Quinn-Cirillo tells me, as we delve a little deeper. 'It can really impact how you then navigate the world. So you might not do certain things, you may avoid particular activities, and you might stick to a really rigid way of being.'

And our low self-confidence, says Dr Quinn-Cirillo, can have a cyclical effect. If we believe we aren't able to do certain things, we can find ourselves avoiding them, which reinforces our view that they're not for us and we're unable to tackle them. This can limit our opportunities, or make us fearful of stepping out of our comfort zone.

Issues with self-confidence can arise from a range of places. Growing up, this can be anything from the messages we got from our caregivers to how teachers

treated us at school. And, just as vitally, our experiences as adults, too, can impact our self-confidence – bad experiences, such as a relationship breakdown or issues in the workplace, can all affect how we see ourselves.

I've always held myself to incredibly high standards, and get frustrated with myself when things don't go exactly how I'd hoped. This then feeds into my feelings of low self-confidence, leading to negative self-talk and telling myself that I'm not capable.

The pandemic, too, may have further negatively affected our self-confidence, believes Dr Quinn-Cirillo. 'We haven't socialised with people – we might meet someone and genuinely not know what to say,' she explains. For me, stepping into the garden at that recent family party, I found myself overwhelmed by a social situation that I hadn't found myself in for a couple of years.

But I continue to *want* to be more confident, so that I can both feel better in myself, and make the most of the opportunities that life throws my way – rather than stalling at the starting line. Perhaps speaking with experts will help me understand where my issues with self-confidence come from, and what can be done to not only give it a temporary boost, but increase my baseline level of self-confidence in order to move forward brimming with self-belief...

## Expert advice



*Dr Tara Quinn-Cirillo is a psychologist specialising in adversity. She has 20 years' experience in mental health, disability, and behaviour.*  
[drtara.co.uk](http://drtara.co.uk)



*Dr Marianne Trent is a psychologist, and founder of Good Thinking Psychological Services and The Feel Better Academy.*  
[goodthinkingpsychology.co.uk](http://goodthinkingpsychology.co.uk)



*Jo Emerson is the International Executive Coach of the Year and the author of Flying For Beginners (£799).*  
[jo-emerson.com](http://jo-emerson.com)

***"If we believe we aren't able to do certain things, we can find ourselves avoiding them, which reinforces our view that we're unable to tackle them"***







# WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

*Reflecting on how our levels of self-confidence change over time and in different situations can help us recognise that self-esteem is not set in stone*





**I**'m not a confident person'. This is something I've said about myself to others, and often think in my mind. It's something I treat as gospel, as true as the fact I enjoy hiking, favour pizza over any other food source, and that I am a writer. But is confidence really set in stone like this?

'Confidence can be transient; it can be flexible,' Dr Tara Quinn-Cirillo tells me, reassuringly. 'There may be times where we have high self-esteem or low.' Our level of self-confidence isn't fixed, and is, instead, something that can change in different situations and over time. This means we have the power to influence how self-confident we feel.

It can help to reflect on occasions when we have managed past feelings of low self-confidence. I think about how I am a more confident person than when I was younger. In my early 20s, I hated making phone calls. It was listed in my head as something I simply couldn't do, as if it were an unchangeable part of who I was. But faced with office jobs where speaking on the phone was a big part of my day, this belief shifted. It took time: at first, I was panicky and had to psyche myself up before dialling. Now, although I get nervous before an important or complicated call, I think nothing of picking up my mobile to make a dentist appointment or book a taxi. Perhaps I am more confident than I assume I am.

To start, look to identify the areas of your life where you already feel confident, alongside those where you may struggle. Are you happy to talk in front of a room of people with a prepared presentation, but find mingling afterwards leaves you eyeing up the nearest exit? Are you confident doing tasks in your current job, but nervous about trying something new?

'The best thing to do is to ask yourself, "What's my past? What do I like about myself? What don't I?"' suggests Dr Quinn-Cirillo. 'It's good to start to notice when that inner critic shows up.' She recommends getting a pen and paper and writing down things you like about yourself and the things that you struggle with. This can help you identify patterns in your levels of self-confidence.

You can also look at situations that you were worried about and how you coped with them – perhaps you're surprised that you navigated a tricky meeting really well, or that you put yourself forward for a new opportunity. Dr Quinn-Cirillo recommends asking yourself: What have you learnt about what you've been through? How have you coped? What were you surprised with? And if anything didn't go so well, what can you learn from the experience?

By reflecting on our changing levels of confidence, we can see how we are capable of being confident. We can start to see our potential, to develop it further, or channel our confident self in different situations.



# WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

*Identifying the source of what's stopping us from being more self-confident can help us move through it and beyond it*





## SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS

Self-limiting beliefs are when we tell ourselves we aren't good at something – public speaking, for example. Holding these beliefs 'can be self-preservation; a fear that others would laugh at you or think you weren't capable enough,' says psychologist Dr Marianne Trent.

'We have to consider whether the consequences we're imagining are logical or likely, and whether the payoffs might actually outweigh some of those negatives,' Dr Trent explains.

Chances are, you're inflating the threat in your mind. It links back, too, to the idea of low self-confidence being cyclical: we tell ourselves we can't do something, so we don't do it, even though we probably could.

Dr Trent recommends that whenever we are faced with a new situation, we notice what our primary thoughts are. Are they positive – that you're going to smash this interview, or have a lovely time with this friend – or are they more negative?

'Tune into the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and bodily sensations you get when you have new opportunities or ideas,' Dr Trent says. Are you telling yourself you're not capable of something, or sensing a resistance inside yourself? This can help you identify whether self-limiting beliefs are affecting your confidence levels.

## Perfectionism

'Perfectionism can be born of a desire for other people not to criticise us, and to feel like we are good enough to do whatever we're doing,' Dr Trent explains. 'But we have to remember that *done* is better than perfect but incomplete.'

I think of my tendency to hold onto tasks for a long time, scared to share my work, out of fear of being seen as inadequate. This can affect my confidence in my abilities, and ironically, can lead to me not doing my best work, which then feeds into this lack of self-confidence even more. Or it can stop me going for opportunities in the first place, worried I won't be able to deliver the perfect result.

Perfectionism can lead to us procrastinating or struggling to get something done. If you think this may be what's holding you back, Dr Trent says it can help to write a list where you ask yourself 'Why can't I do this now? Or why not yet?'

If you find that worries about not being good enough come up, it may be that perfectionism is affecting your self-confidence.

*"Perfectionism can lead to us procrastinating or struggling to get something done"*

## SOCIAL ANXIETY

Social anxiety can massively affect our self-confidence. I've always struggled to speak up in social situations out of fear of saying something stupid or being judged, and, afterwards, I tend to over-analyse the conversation, sifting for evidence of my failings.

If you find yourself turning down social situations, picturing how you'll spill your drink or worrying that you aren't interesting enough,

it may be that social anxiety is what's affecting your self-confidence. Or maybe you feel nervous in the run-up to a party or dinner with friends. You may find yourself over-thinking about the upcoming event, cancelling at the last minute because of your worries, or finding an excuse to leave early because you're feeling overwhelmed.

'We can talk ourselves out of

things by imagining the worst-case scenarios,' says Dr Trent. 'And social anxiety can make us feel like we are at the centre of everybody's focus; it can really over inflate. It can make us feel like it's all about us. We can forget that people will generally be on our team and on our side, and will want good things for us, whereas we tend to be a little bit more negative in our predictions of how things will go down.'



## Past bad experiences

The events and attitudes we grew up with shape who we are and how we feel about ourselves. For some, trauma can be a big part of this.

'It's helpful to tune into what narratives you tell yourself,' says Dr Trent, 'and how many of them concern the now, and how many of them are linked to things people have told you about yourself, rather than being based in fact.'

Dr Trent suggests focusing on your breathing and getting yourself into a relaxed state. Then, think about what ideas you have about yourself, and things that you tell yourself you can't do. Ask yourself: How many of the reasons are fact based? How many are fear based? How much of it is anxiety based? Or not practically based? Many of the reasons, Dr Trent says, are not as hard and fast as we think.

Doing this can help you work out whether your past is affecting your present levels of confidence, and can help you to start to think about moving forward.

***“Tune into what narratives you tell yourself, and consider how many of them are linked to things people have told you about yourself, rather than being based in fact”***

## IMPOSTER SYNDROME

When I ask about imposter syndrome, Dr Trent tells me about the idea of 'Mount Stupid'. This is where the more time you spend doing something, such as your chosen career, the more you develop an increasing awareness of all the things you don't know. This can lead to you feeling you aren't an expert after all, that there are gaping gaps in your knowledge, which can knock your confidence. 'But you forget to tune into the things that you do really well; the reasons that you get paid; the reasons why people want to be your friend; the reasons why people often ask for your advice,' says Dr Trent.

To work out if imposter syndrome is affecting our self-confidence, Dr Trent suggests we tune into the quality of the reasons we're telling ourselves we can't do something. She links imposter syndrome to perfectionism, with both having us doubt our abilities, even when there is evidence that we are more than capable.



# *How to become more self-confident*

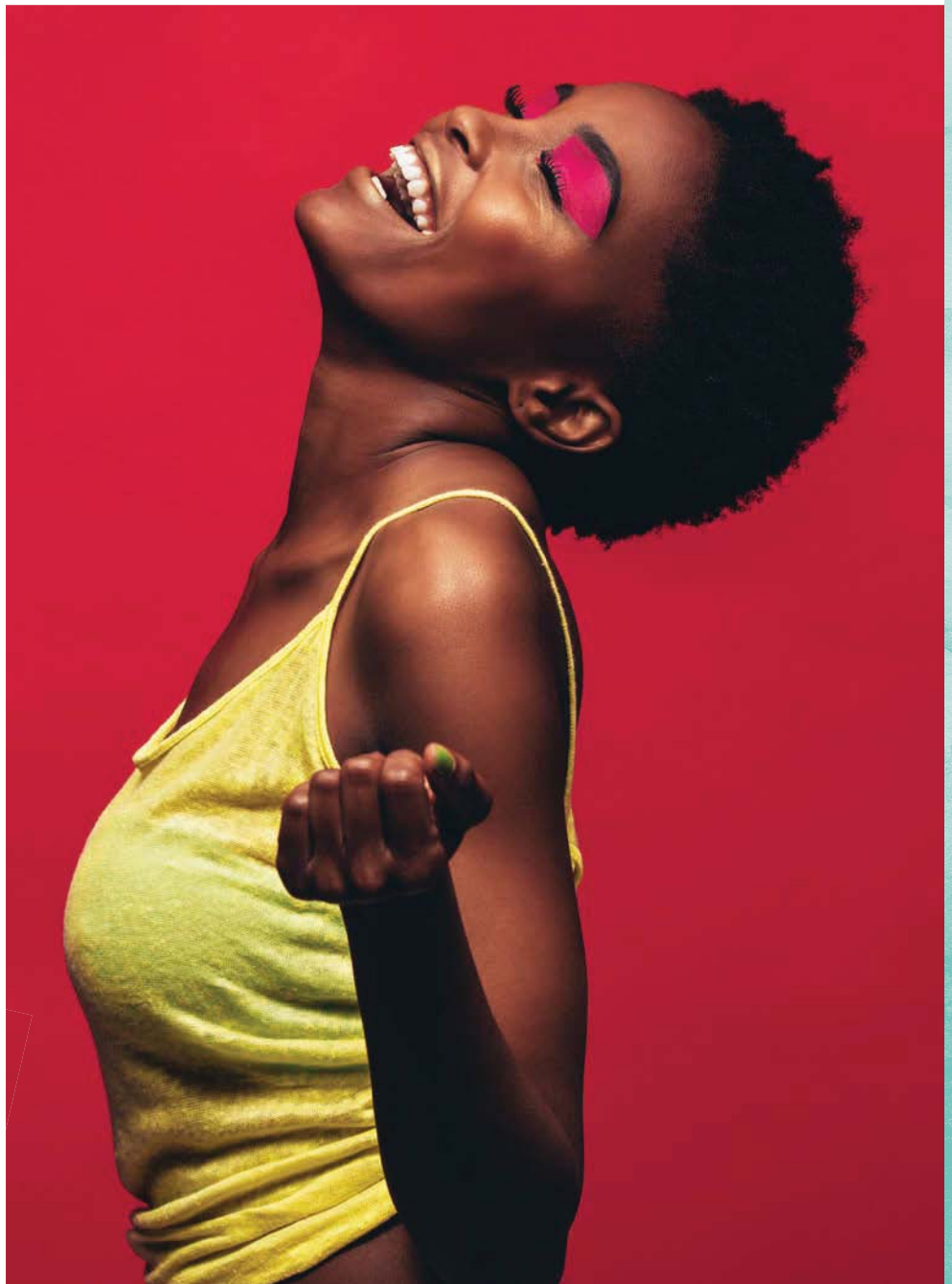
*Once you've identified the source of your low self-confidence, it's time to give your inner critic a new script, based on positive encouragement and self-belief*

**A**fter speaking to Dr Trent, I spend some time thinking about what's holding me back. It's a mix of things, and having this sense of why I struggle with self-confidence is helpful. But, once we've identified *why* we may have reduced levels of confidence, what can we do to get more of it?

I have a fascinating conversation with Jo Emerson, a coach specialising in confidence, where we talk about ideas we can all use for increasing our self-confidence. 'Without self-confidence, we're doing things in fear, or we're doing things half-heartedly, or we're not bringing who we really are to a situation,' Emerson tells me. It's clear that working on our self-confidence has a range of benefits. 'It underpins how we parent, how we dress, how we work, how we interact with other people, how we feel about ourselves, even little things like whether we decide we can cycle up a hill or not,' Emerson says.

After speaking with Dr Trent, I've identified self-limiting beliefs as a big reason I struggle with self-confidence, so it's no surprise that when Emerson tells me about the importance of positive self-talk, her words really resonate with me. Rather than the inner voice that comes from a place of

*"Without self-confidence, we're doing things in fear"*



fear and panic and tells us what we *can't* do, we should shift our focus. 'If we're listening to and believing a negative, fearful voice day in day out, then our experience of life is going to be negative and fearful, and it's going to destroy our confidence,' Emerson says.

Awareness of this critical inner voice is the first step. Then, we need to ask ourselves, 'Do I want to believe this? Is this true?' Emerson suggests we question the validity of what it's saying, and what's really going on in the situation. 'Become aware of it, catch it and question it,' she says. 'The simplest thing to do is just ask yourself: What is the opposite of what I've just been believing?'

Emerson talks about the idea of a compassionate friend. She suggests spending ten minutes or so writing down your negative self-talk, and then asking yourself whether you would speak to a friend that way – you probably wouldn't dream of being so cruel and negative to anyone else. So why would you treat yourself like that?

We live in a culture, Emerson tells me, where it's normal to put ourselves down, even when speaking to other people. Think how often you downplay your strengths or achievements, not wanting to appear boastful. 'What we're believing in our heads we definitely portray outwards, but also what we're allowing in affects us inwardly,' she says. 'No other person is going to benefit from you being mean about yourself.' I think about how often I downplay my writing work to others, focusing on what hasn't gone well rather than my successes, which feeds further into my negative self-talk. Rather than turning red at a compliment, maybe it's time I start embracing my positives when I talk about myself.

If you're still doubting yourself, Emerson recommends speaking to a trusted friend and asking them the reality of the situation. And, of course, a therapist can help you understand and work on your confidence.

Worrying what others think of us can be a big source of low self-confidence, whether stemming from social anxiety or perfectionism. Emerson is refreshingly straightforward about this: 'I know that other people are going to have their opinion, no matter what I do.' There's


something liberating about the idea that we should stop obsessing over what other people think – and, chances are, they haven't even noticed the small 'mistake' that you're worried about.

Feeling hurt by criticism can dampen our self-confidence, too. While sometimes criticism can come from a bad place, it's often meant to help us. 'If you think that criticism hurts because there's a bit of truth in it, then what we need to do is sit with it,' says Emerson. I know that I take criticism personally, but, Emerson tells me, it's important to let go of that attachment.

For many of us, issues with self-confidence can stem from comparing ourselves to others – seeing the friend who, on the surface at least, is living the perfect life, achieving things we wish we had. 'Comparison is the thief of joy, as the saying goes,' Emerson says. 'It's completely and utterly ridiculous that we compare ourselves to other people who have had different upbringings. They have different brains, different bodies, they have had a different start in life.'

So how do we break free of this? 'If we're going to stop comparing ourselves to other people, we have to understand that we're therefore not going to have that temporary hit when we feel like we're doing better than other people,' Emerson says. 'Drum into your mind that life is not a competition. You can choose to step out of the ring.'

As well as working on our baseline levels of confidence, there are things we



*"It's only through facing your fear that you will grow in confidence. It's accepting that it is going to be tough; that you are going to feel scared"*





can do to help ourselves in the moment. Most of us are aware of the idea of taking a deep breath before we do something we're anxious about. And there's a good reason for it, with deep breathing engaging the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms us down.

My earlier conversation with Dr Quinn-Cirillo has me reflecting on how our self-confidence levels can change in different situations. What's a practical way we can channel our past confident selves when our hearts race and we want to hide?

Emerson tells me about an exercise called 'the cloak of confidence'. This is where you remember a time you felt really confident. How were you sitting? How were you speaking to yourself?

How were you holding your body and what words were coming out of your mouth? Try to embody that state now, and then imagine you put a cloak around yourself and that this cloak absorbs all those good feelings. When you go into a situation where you feel low in confidence, imagine yourself putting that cloak on, remembering all those feelings, physically and mentally.

Sometimes, just thinking about times we've done similar in the past can remind us that we're able to face this new situation with confidence – that we are capable, no matter what our inner critic attempts to tell us.

'It's only through facing your fear that you will grow in confidence. It's accepting that it is going to be tough;

that you are going to feel scared. And that doesn't mean it's a bad thing; it's just a feeling,' says Emerson. When faced with a situation where you feel low in confidence, she recommends writing down what you're going to do, thinking about the reasons why you're doing this, and being accountable to another person.

'There will be days where you don't feel great about yourself. And that's okay,' says Emerson. 'Acceptance is a big part of confidence building – acceptance of self, acceptance of others, acceptance of the world.'

Increasing our self-confidence is an ongoing process, one that can be challenging and scary, but it's one that we all have the power to achieve.



# WHAT DO YOU NEED TO GROW YOUR SELF- CONFIDENCE?

Sometimes the biggest barrier to feeling self-confident is our own mindset.  
Take our test to find your personal confidence-boosting mantra

**Tick the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section, or sections, you ticked most, to find out what will help your self-confidence flourish**

## 1 More confidence would give you permission to

- ♥ Lower your standards..... ☐
- ♦ Expand your horizons ..... ☐
- Follow your dreams ..... ☐
- Do what you want..... ☐

## 2 Your confidence takes a knock when you feel

- Bored ..... ☐
- Attacked ..... ☐
- ♦ Uncertain..... ☐
- ♥ De-skilled..... ☐

## 3 In general, you wish you could be better at

- ♥ Going with the flow ..... ☐
- Trusting your gut ..... ☐
- ♦ Being spontaneous..... ☐
- Seeing things through..... ☐

## 4 Before any big change you

- Ask everyone for their advice..... ☐

- ♥ Do your research ..... ☐
- ♦ Imagine the worst-case scenario ..... ☐
- Trust your gut instinct..... ☐

## 5 You'd have more confidence if you could stop

- Comparing yourself..... ☐
- Criticising yourself ..... ☐
- ♦ Doubting yourself..... ☐
- ♥ Pushing yourself ..... ☐

## 6 You most regret time spent

- ♥ Over-preparing ..... ☐
- ♦ Catastrophising ..... ☐
- Procrastinating..... ☐
- People pleasing..... ☐

## 7 When you've achieved a goal, you think

- What's next? ..... ☐
- ♥ Did I do okay? ..... ☐
- ♦ Did I really do that? ..... ☐
- Has anyone noticed? ..... ☐

## 8 True confidence means knowing

- You're doing okay ..... ☐
- You're a good person ..... ☐
- ♥ You've done enough..... ☐
- ♦ You'll be okay ..... ☐

## 9 As a child, you were a bit of a

- Wild card..... ☐
- Outsider..... ☐
- ♥ High-flier..... ☐
- ♦ Dreamer..... ☐

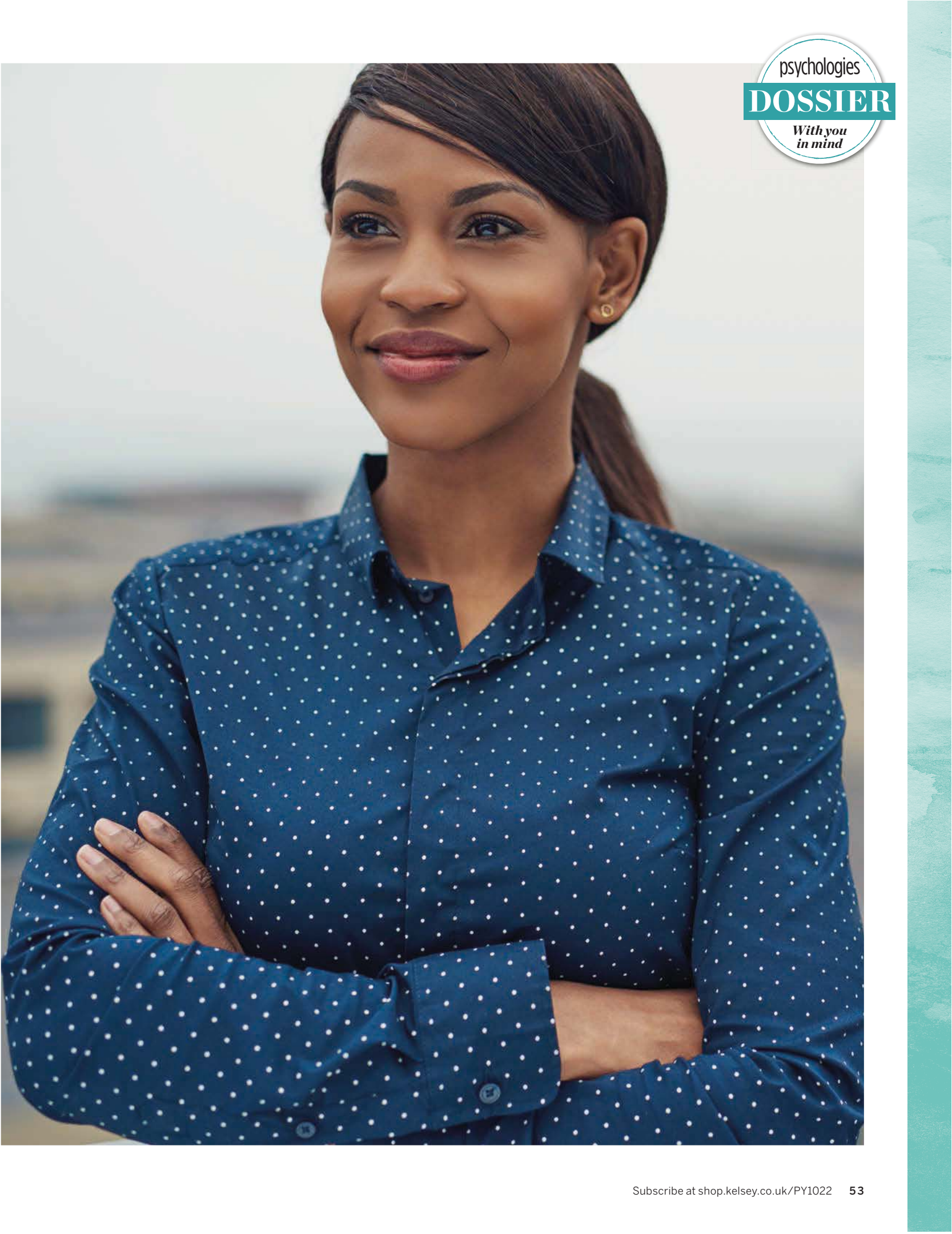
## 10 On the whole, it's most important for you to feel

- ♦ Safe ..... ☐
- Inspired..... ☐
- Accepted..... ☐
- ♥ Successful ..... ☐

**Turn the page to find out  
what you need to grow  
your self-belief**







# What's your personal confidence-boosting mantra?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

## *I am enough*

Conscientiousness is an appealing character trait, but even minor tasks can start to feel overwhelming if the attention you dedicate to them is disproportionate to their importance. It's great to set the bar high, but if feeling good about yourself requires you giving everything 100 per cent – whether it's important or not – you can feel like a hamster on a wheel.

It may be that 'being the best' brought you attention growing up, and you're well aware that your self-image is still too dependent on external approval. But are you also aware of how much of your headspace and energy is consumed by your compulsion to be seen as 'good' at everything you do, leaving you constantly questioning how you can be better? Even admitting that you are struggling can feel like a failure, as you may think you 'should' be able to cope, especially if there's someone at hand to aspire or compare yourself to. No doubt you've even added 'feeling confident' to the list of things you need to be better at. But the irony is that confidence flourishes when you embrace your true self, flaws and all. Your personal confidence-boosting mantra is 'I am enough' – because, the truth is, you are.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♦

## *I am strong*

If your inner narrative revolves around what might go wrong, it's no wonder your confidence is shaky – you're continually questioning your ability to cope. A 'can I cope' mindset often starts in childhood when we're constantly told to 'be careful'. Catastrophising or imagining the worst-case scenario can seem like a smart way to prepare yourself for any eventuality, but it also keeps you stuck in your comfort zone. And the irony is that you know that dealing with new challenges helps to build your confidence.

When you've had low-level anxiety for so long it's become your default mode, it's no wonder you avoid pushing yourself – confidence can't flourish when we're afraid. Your overthinking is designed to keep you safe but what it's actually doing is sabotaging your chances of feeling good about yourself. It's time to focus on your personal triumphs – however tiny – or just everyday events that have gone well. And instead of allowing yourself to overthink something that might never happen, focus on regulating your nervous system with some breathing exercises instead, and coming back to your personal mantra of 'I am strong'. Remind yourself of everything you've done in your life that shows what you're really capable of.





#### IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ●

## *I am succeeding*

Committing to lifelong learning and staying open to new ideas is supportive of confidence and mental wellbeing, as long as you avoid immediately thinking about what's next before you've even had a chance to savour what you've just achieved or experienced. In low moments, you may question whether you're simply flaky or lacking in direction rather than curious or creative, especially when you compare yourself to others who are more conventionally successful or whose life and career path has been more linear.

It's time to embrace your wandering path with its cul-de-sacs and U-turns, because it's a testament to the maverick in you – you hate to be bored and have a fear of complacency and routine. And it's okay to treat yourself as a work in progress, as long as you let go of the idea that there is a destination you'll reach when you'll finally feel successful. When you're feeling confident, you know that success for you isn't about money or status, it's about living life to the full – can you give yourself permission to enjoy that, without comparing yourself to others? Embrace 'I am succeeding' as your mantra, and let your confidence flourish.

#### IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

## *I am loved*

The biggest barrier to growing your self-confidence is fear of disapproval, which can manifest as people pleasing. People pleasing isn't always as overt as saying yes to things you really want to say no to. Sometimes it just means you let things go that niggle you, for the sake of keeping the peace. Do people think you're more laid-back than you really are? Those with a vocal inner critic tend to have a heightened sensitivity to being judged by others, which may explain your default response of putting other people's feelings before your own.

You're probably well aware of your tendency to be hard on yourself but may not have linked it with your limited self-belief – some of us still hold onto the misguided belief that it brings out the best in us. The truth is, it's like installing an inner bully that constantly chips away at your self-belief, calling into question that most crucial of core beliefs – that you are loved and lovable. Try approaching your relationships – and the choices you make – while holding in mind your mantra, 'I am loved', and then watch your self-confidence blossom. It's time to start loving yourself, and treating yourself with the same kindness and compassion you show others.



# STEPPING OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE

**N**ot long after my conversations with Dr Quinn-Cirillo, Dr Trent, and Emerson, I go on holiday to Italy.

It's my first time abroad since the start of the pandemic, and I realise my confidence about the trip is quite low: I'm anxious about the airport, about finding my way around another country, about doing something that is different from my relatively stable day-to-day.

I've learnt a lot from the experts I've spoken to, and, despite my nerves, I go to Italy inspired to be more confident and make the most of a treasured trip. I know now that negative self-talk is a big part of my confidence issues, and so this holiday is my chance to challenge these self-limiting beliefs.

Before we head to the airport, I try the 'cloak of confidence', and remember times I've been confident doing similar things before: how I felt happy, relaxed, content. I let myself feel these emotions, the visceral sense of relaxation and joy in my chest, and find myself smiling.

One balmy evening during the holiday,

my husband and I head to a local rock bar where we know they hold karaoke. Flicking through the song choice booklet, my heart rate picks up as I imagine this room of strangers sniggering at my singing. Then I think back to how much I loved karaoke as a student: I loved belting my heart out to my favourite songs. It may be years since I held a mic, but I know it's something I can do. I hesitate, then hand my song choice to the barman. I'm doing this.

I sing along as others go up for their chosen songs. Occasionally, I feel a flutter of anxiety, but tell myself I am here to have a good time. And then, my name is called. I take a calming breath, and shuffle out of my seat and over to the karaoke stand, grip the mic, and start.

I'm a little shaky at first, but soon the whole bar is singing and dancing along with me to Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit*.

And it's wonderful.

I sing at the top of my lungs, joyously head-banging to the music and smiling at those around me doing the same.

'*Fantastico!*' someone shouts as the song ends and everyone cheers. I'm still grinning as I slip back onto my chair, buzzing for the rest of the evening.

I realise that self-confidence affects every part of our lives. In Italy, I think of the ways I gently push myself: to jump into the warm Adriatic waves, to ask for a table for two in my rusty Italian, to catch a bus in a different country. Back home, it's having the confidence to reach out to people I want to work with and take on exciting projects, to make the first move and arrange social events with people I haven't seen for too long, to speak up when I have an opinion.

There are immediate things we can do to boost our confidence, like taking a deep breath and remembering our past successes. But, over time, we can grow our base level of confidence further. That doesn't mean we'll never feel nervous or doubt ourselves, but by realising what's holding us back and what we can do to change the way we think about ourselves, we can move forward and grow into the more confident people we want to be.





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To take part you need to pay a registration fee of £45 and fundraise £100 for the Women V Cancer charities.  
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**d-c** Dream  
Challenges





# Join Ollie's army

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**Ever wanted to make a difference and train to become a coach?  
With the Ollie School, you could be changing lives before you know it**

**D**espite the very best efforts of our education system, it is struggling to cope with fully supporting the emotional wellbeing of our children within the curriculum. Have you ever felt that you would love to help, but were powerless to act? Well, here's your opportunity to do something positive.

The Ollie School plans to build an army of coaches who can make the world a better place, one child at a time. Ollie Coaching is a holistic approach that leads all our youngsters to a place where they can thrive in the chaos of modern living.

So many schools are battling to provide an appropriate mental health environment, and busy parents are up against it in our fast-paced lives ruled by social media. That's why Alison Knowles, who was challenged throughout her life with undiagnosed dyslexia, decided to set up the

Ollie School. The Ollie methodology is all about empowering children to seek solutions and take control of their emotions, rather than be controlled by them. The Ollie School trains coaches in a blend of methodologies that brings together NLP, CBT, EFT and play therapy to make sure they cover all the bases. The Ollie methodology is all about personalisation and identifying which technique will work with each individual child – no one-size-fits-all approach here.

## ***Licence to help***

The Ollie School graduates are awarded a certified qualification in NLP and a licence to work as an Ollie coach. If helping children and their families to be more emotionally resilient appeals to you, contact Ollie School for a prospectus and to talk about getting with the programme.



## ***Get in touch***

To train to become an Ollie coach, find a coach in your area or book an event, visit [ollieandhissuperpowers.com](http://ollieandhissuperpowers.com), or email [info@ollieandhissuperpowers.com](mailto:info@ollieandhissuperpowers.com). The Ollie School is waiting to hear from you!



***Courses are now online and in the classroom, combining the best of both worlds with a limited number of trainees, maximising learning potential. See [ollieandhissuperpowers.com](http://ollieandhissuperpowers.com)***



# I Heart



How to connect more meaningfully and enjoy loving relationships with our partners, children, parents and friends



***What kind  
of a person do  
you most enjoy  
spending  
time with?***

# *Learning to thrive again when life brings you to your knees*

When you step into the storm of your sorrow, you can not only recover, but rebuild a life that's richer than before, discovers Annabel Chown



I was 30 years old when the words 'You have cancer' were hurled like a grenade into my world of work,

the gym, and Saturday-night parties.

With a bald head and a 10cm scar slashed across my left breast, I feared no man would ever desire me again. I acquired a deep distrust of my body, every cough and twinge magnified – in my mind – to a secondary and incurable cancer. But I also acquired, during that time, a sense of wonder for the seemingly ordinary. Like the coppery autumn leaves crunching beneath my feet as I walked to radiotherapy.

And the life I rebuilt post-cancer was, in many ways, more meaningful than the one I'd had before: 60-hour weeks at the office replaced by freelance architecture work from my kitchen table; evening

treadmill runs usurped by candlelit yoga classes; and being too busy for holidays giving way to trips to Australia and India. Cancer showed me how precious and finite life is, and gave me the opportunity to resculpt my own, creating one that was more in alignment with what I truly valued.

Then, 16 years later, at 39 weeks pregnant, a police officer informed me my sister was dead. After five years trying to conceive, it was meant to be such a joyful time. Now, I was questioning how I'd cope without my only sibling.

My son arrived nine days after my sister's sudden death. I lay in my hospital bed with him draped across my chest. He was beautiful. Perfect. But a stranger. And as I cuddled him, it was the familiar embrace and scent of my sister I longed for.

We buried her three weeks after the birth. That cold January afternoon, I threw earth on her ashes, my C-section scar still raw. Would I ever thrive again?

## *Expert advice*



*Graham Music is a psychotherapist and author. His latest book is Respark: Igniting Hope And Joy After Trauma And Depression (Mind-Nurturing Books, £10.99). [nurturingnatures.co.uk](http://nurturingnatures.co.uk)*



*Chloe Brotheridge is a hypnotherapist who specialises in helping people who suffer from anxiety. She is the author of The Anxiety Solution (Michael Joseph, £12.99). [calmer-you.com](http://calmer-you.com)*





IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

I had asked myself the same question before – but breast cancer had proved to be just the dress rehearsal for losing my sister. I now realise it had also given me tools I was instinctively using to navigate this new challenge. Perhaps, deep within, you also know that having learnt to thrive again after a setback means it's possible to do so again.

'Most of our challenges can make us more resilient,' says psychotherapist Graham Music. 'Of course, some can floor us. But if we can recover, we get to know deeply that bouncing back is possible, and we hold muscle memories of this. For example, if a child slips on a climbing frame and is helped to climb it again, this will feel scary, but as they dare and succeed, they learn in their bones they can do it; that recovery is possible. That is resilience.'

The first weeks and months without my sister were hard, though. A death and a birth had razed all the familiar ground beneath me, and I was edgy and unsettled. On endless, dark winter afternoons, rocking my screaming newborn in my arms, I longed to escape. I also longed for my mother. Close as we are, she was, understandably, absent; preoccupied by the logistics of death, and helping look after my sister's 10-year-old son.

My friends were my salvation. Do you find it hard to accept support? I do, but during cancer treatment, I discovered it can be a lifeline. My best friend insisted on accompanying me to chemo. Having her there while a nurse inserted yet another needle into my arm made it more bearable. After my sister died, she blocked out two hours each day for me, the week my husband went back to work after paternity leave. We'd go for walks, sometimes in companionable silence, other times talking intently about my sister. 'It's so important to find support, be it friends, family or a therapist,' says Music. 'And to ensure we're spending time with people who can simply be there with us, rather than trying to jolly us out of our feelings. There's a kind of magic that happens when somebody stays with you through your sadness.'

Have you been conditioned to believe sadness is wrong? I had. But the therapist I saw during cancer treatment explained that feeling sad, angry or scared when something horrible has happened is a natural and appropriate response. Music



expands on this: 'We have to be able to process our feelings rather than escape them, by putting a defence in place – say, workaholism. But it's important to learn to move towards difficult experiences rather than push them away, despite the short-term gain of bypassing their discomfort. The long-term effect of defending against them can lead to living a diminished life. When emotions are faced and borne, we generally feel more alive, and life becomes richer for this. We also feel relief, such as when a fought-against sadness eventually gives way to deep tears.'

When I lost my sister, I expected to feel permanently dark and depressed. But the grief storms, as I came to call them, would come and go. Waking from a dream in which my sister was still alive, and the realisation I'd never see her again, was like a sledgehammer slammed into my chest. When I could dare to lean into the full intensity of these storms, somehow they seemed to shift more easily. There were times I'd cry in front of my son and whisper, 'It's okay to be sad, my darling. Because life can be very sad.'

As with birthing contractions, spaces would open up between storms. The warmth of my son's body, his breath rising and falling, as he napped on me would remind me the world was as exquisite as it was harsh. I let myself lean into these softer moments, too, as they were a tonic that could bolster me through the tough periods. I had to remind myself that I didn't need to feel sad all the time.

For months after my sister died, every night I wrote down three things I was genuinely grateful for that day: the passerby who insisted on helping me carry the pram up our front steps; going for brunch with my husband; our son miraculously staying asleep through our meal. Some days, I had to dig deep to find three things. This routine reminded me that, however hard things felt, there were still nuggets of goodness there, too.

I ask coach Chloe Brotheridge why practising gratitude in this way works: 'Humans have a negativity bias,' she explains. 'We're wired to notice problems. A gratitude practice counteracts that. It's not about pretending everything's wonderful, but learning to appreciate beauty, even when life is challenging – which can help make us see the bigger picture and make us more resilient.'

Brotheridge recommends finding a gratitude practice that works for you. 'It might be writing lists. Or perhaps you prefer to lie in bed and scan through your day, remembering any nice moments. You could have a conversation with someone else. Hearing what they're grateful for, too, can be uplifting. The important thing is to be really specific. And when your brain starts searching for good things, you're training it to notice more of them.'

Often, I'd chance upon something uplifting in the park, be it scarlet beds of tulips, luminous in the spring sun, or a swan, wings outstretched, gliding above the lake. Something I did every day after my son was born was get outside and move my body. Movement has always helped me feel better. During cancer treatment, I had time for yoga classes. With a baby to look after, I walked London's parks and streets. This grounded and soothed me. I witnessed the passing seasons. The cherry blossom tree on my street flowered for its two brief weeks, reminding me that change is the very essence of life.

When I accept this, I'm more able to delight in the life that is around me. Of course, I'll never stop missing my sister. It's three years since she died, and occasionally grief still hits me, its familiar ache just as raw as those early days. But then my son runs towards me, blonde hair flying. I lift him up into the air, and my heart is so alive with both sorrow and joy.

## **PRACTISE GRATITUDE**

*Notice the good things in your life, not to deny your pain and pretend all's well but, rather, to remind yourself that in spite of your challenges there are nuggets of goodness there, too. The more you look out for them, the more you tend to find.*

## **FEEL YOUR FEELINGS**

*Uncomfortable emotions, such as sadness, anger and fear, are natural responses to hardship. Tempting as it is to escape them, healing happens when we allow ourselves to lean into them.*

***"When emotions are faced and borne, we feel more alive, and life becomes richer"***



# HOW TO NAVIGATE ADVERSITY

## REFRAME IT

*When we view life as being about growth and transformation, we can get curious about challenges, instead of just wishing them away. Often, they're our greatest teachers. That said, it's important not to gloss over the pain, particularly in the thick of it, and to give ourselves time to heal.*

## FIND YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

*Spend time with people who can be with you through your challenges, and with whom you're comfortable opening up. It can be easy to go into hiding when times are tough, and think people won't want to be around you if you're not your usual self. But those who love you want to be there and help.*

## ▶▶ NEXT STEPS

**Read** Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, And Finding Joy by Sheryl Sandberg & Adam Grant (Ebury, £10.99). Written after Sandberg was suddenly widowed, this interweaves personal stories with practical tips on how to find joy again in the wake of adversity.

**Read & Listen** *How To Be Sad* by Helen Russell (HarperCollins, £8.99), and the *How To Be Sad* podcast, which explore the importance of feeling sadness and how it can actually help us to be happier.

**Listen** *Grief Is My Superpower* podcast by Mark Lemon. Honest and inspirational conversations on how people have coped with loss.

**Watch** Grief Channel (grief-channel.com, £20 for one year's access). Filmed conversations and interviews normalising grief and showing it is a natural, transformative part of life, and not something to be feared.

## MOVE YOUR BODY

*Movement boosts endorphins, your feelgood hormones, and offers an antidote to the intensity of grief.*

*Try to move daily. Choose something you enjoy, be it a run, yoga, or a five-minute dance in your kitchen to a favourite track.*

# Q&A

Our agony aunt, Mary Fenwick, offers a new perspective on whatever is troubling you



**MARY FENWICK** is a writer, speaker and executive coach. She is also a mother, divorcee and widow.

**GOT A QUESTION FOR MARY?** Email [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk), with 'Mary life' in the subject line.

**FOR MORE** about Mary's work in leadership and team coaching, her 'Writing back to happiness' programme and free resources, go to [maryfenwick.com](http://maryfenwick.com)

## “When will he realise it's time to take responsibility?”

**Q** My 21-year-old son lives with me, but says 'charging me rent will just delay me moving out'. He's never even emptied the dishwasher. When I ask him to do something, he's always 'just about to' join a work call or leave the house. I've tried getting angry, being sad, and staying calm, as well as appealing to his kindness – but he'll make me laugh, cajole me, or change the subject. I know I'm being manipulated, but I really value my relationship with him. What can I do to bring about a change?

I'm sure a lot of parents will recognise this dynamic, so it might be tough to hear parenting expert Catherine Hallissey say that it is not good for you *or* for your son.

She is a chartered psychologist and mother of five, and says human beings are designed to be industrious – but another part of us really wants to conserve energy. Hallissey says a change in mindset would actually be a gift to both of you: 'It's much better to have a gradual apprenticeship in how to look after yourself, your money, and your own home, before you move out and have to manage all by yourself,' advises Hallissey.

The first step is to begin listing all the jobs in your head on a typical day, from breakfast to locking up for the night. Perhaps walk around the house making a voice memo for ten minutes, then write it all down. Your son might have loads of charm, but maybe he doesn't realise he's still being treated like a very young child. Hallissey says, 'Sometimes, the young person will see it all written down and it will suddenly dawn on

them: "There's a lot here; maybe I'm being lazy".

The point, though, is to approach this adult to adult, as a problem-solving challenge, rather than parent to child. The same approach works for couples, and you will find tips for creating your own master-list of household tasks in the Fair Play work of Eve Rodsky, for example.

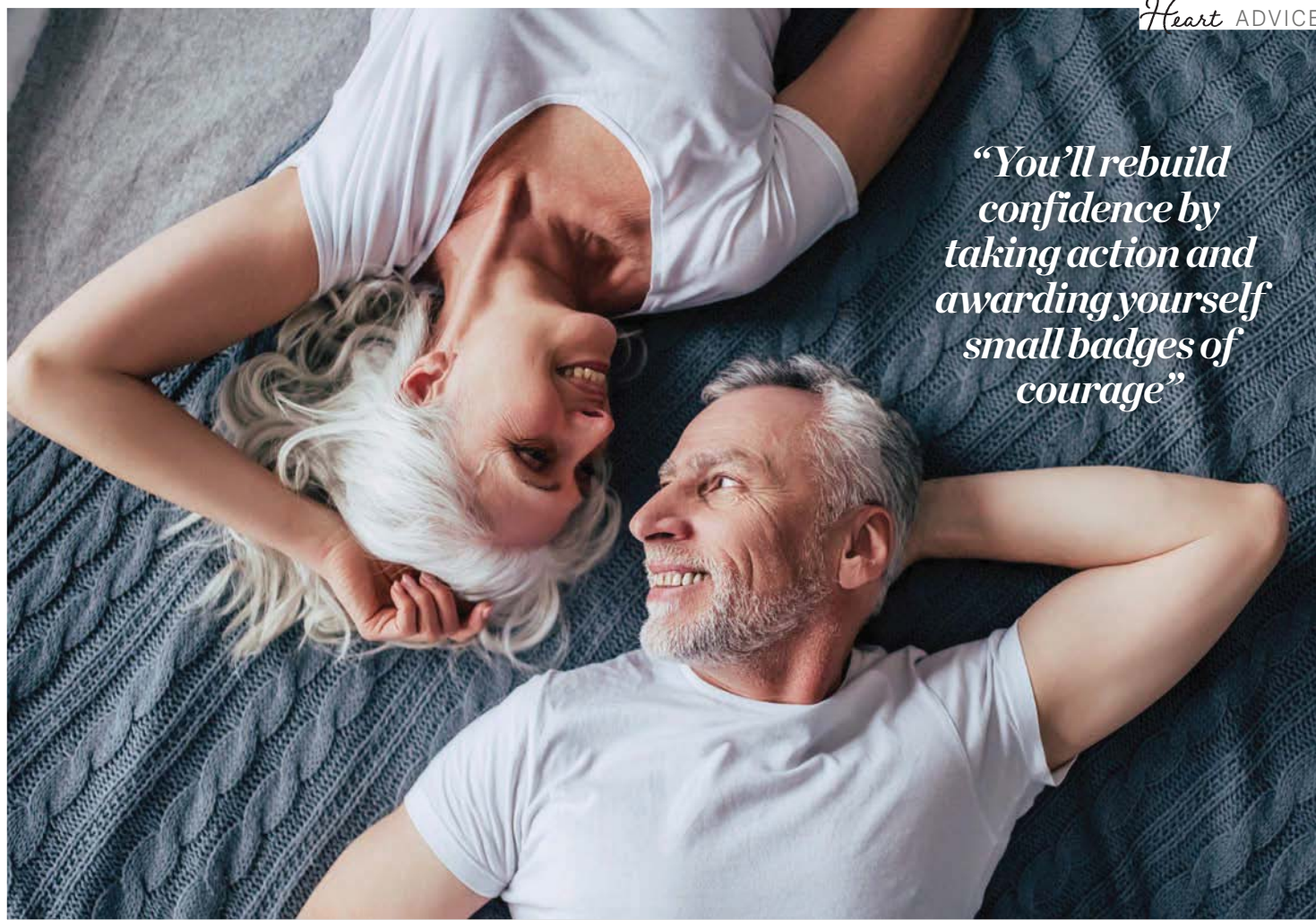
Logically, your son is right: paying rent could mean he's there longer. At the same time, if he can't pay for his own needs, how will he ever move out? You could try some simple maths: 'This is how much it costs to run the house each week'. It's not emotional; it's just the practical stuff he needs to learn. You might even secretly put some of the rent aside and give it back to him as a moving-out gift.

Hallissey points out that there's a danger your wonderful relationship will be damaged in both directions if this situation is allowed to continue – perhaps by your resentment, but also because it's not good for anyone's self-esteem to be a freeloader.

**[catherinehallissey.com](http://catherinehallissey.com); [fairplaylife.com](http://fairplaylife.com)**







*“You’ll rebuild confidence by taking action and awarding yourself small badges of courage”*

## “How can we bridge the divide and find our way back to intimacy?”

**Q** I want more sex than my husband does, even though I’m the one who is menopausal. I feel like he gives me excuses that don’t seem genuine to me, and that he doesn’t fancy me anymore. It makes me feel unattractive and question myself. Is he emasculated because I earn more than him? Or is it that I’ve put on weight? The whole ‘sexy underwear’ thing used to work, but now I’m fatter, I doubt that will help matters either! I don’t know how to find our way back.

Psychosexual therapist Jo Coker says we have a lot of myths about sex, including: ‘Men want sex more than women’, ‘Women go off sex as they get older’, and ‘Sexiness is related to body size’. You might have versions of all these in your head, but the missing link is that you don’t know whether your husband has the same or different stories. In the meantime, Coker says it’s common in heterosexual couples for women to blame themselves.

Unfortunately, this can’t be solved by going over it in your own head; you’ll rebuild confidence by taking action and awarding yourself small badges of courage.

With your husband, you could try Brené

Brown’s technique of saying ‘The story I’m telling myself is...’ It’s a way of sharing while acknowledging that you might be wrong. Your version could be ‘The story I’m telling myself is you no longer fancy me’.

Meanwhile, could you invest in some new underwear that makes you feel luscious and desirable? Or, follow the example of ‘silver-haired curve model’ Rachel Peru (see her top ten midlife body confidence tips).

Sex is mostly about communication, not the mechanics, but it’s worth considering factors such as erectile problems, heart trouble, depression or changes in hormones for your husband as well.

You don’t mention children, but the feelings of devastation when our young fly the nest are beginning to affect men just as much as women. He might find these things just as difficult to discuss as you do, if they go to the heart of what he feels to be his masculine role.

The main question here is whether you can find a way to discuss these questions together, or whether you might need a therapist to help you get started. Sometimes, we need another set of eyes and ears to help us find a new pathway – but, sometimes, all we need is a tiny piece of silk.

**cosrt.org.uk; rachelperu.co.uk**





## *Coming up for air* **New beginnings**

In the midst of the lazy, hazy last days of summer, writer and mum-of-four Caro Giles relishes the lack of routine, and a rare fallow period where dreams and ideas can unfurl



Autumn offers another opportunity in the year for a fresh start. Vague memories of new

stationery I couldn't wait to buy as a child filter through my brain, and the blank screen on my laptop is as full of hope as the first page of a school planner. It's human nature to seek junctures in life to reboot. January is the obvious one, but the new school year can also be seized upon as a chance to breathe and take stock – however long it has been since you stepped into a classroom.

The long summer holiday means something different to everyone, but for most it will at least have involved a shift in the daily routine. My summers, spent almost entirely in the company of my four children, are no less intense than the rest of the year, but we all delight in the

absence of alarm clocks. The car is permanently sandy, fragments of shell are tucked between the seats, and a decaying crab floats in a bucket by the front door. I will have exhausted every pasta recipe I can think of, while charred sausages still sit on a reusable barbecue, rinsed with rainwater and possibly nibbled by mice. Late summer sun catches dust motes, and a breeze through the window blows fluff down the hallway. Cleaning never sits at the top of my agenda, but during the summer it drops off it almost entirely. I have to shift my mindset to one that can ignore piles of colouring on the kitchen table, felt-tip lids on the floor, dressing-up clothes thrown over chairs, and piles of washing stacked on the stairs.

Although my caring responsibilities are still huge, the lack of routine allows my mind to expand to accommodate more thoughts. I find I can be present for

the children while forming creative ideas – a magical kind of multi-tasking. Ideas begin to hover behind my eyes, ready to be pinned down when I begin to instil some discipline back into my days. And I can snatch moments here and there, unhampered by early dashes for the school bus or endless appointments. I rarely sit still, but somehow life takes on a hazy quality that is hard to achieve during the term time.

As the days get shorter, the stone step no longer feels warm under my feet when I open the front door each morning. There is a chilly edge to the air, even on days when the sun climbs high into the sky and floods me with heat. It's as if the weather is nudging me into action, giving me a little nip and reminding me to put my dreams into practice. I enjoy this metaphorical new pencil case. I can give myself permission to try again, regroup, take a big breath and push forwards.





*“It’s as if the weather is nudging me into action, giving me a little nip and reminding me to put my dreams into practice”*



*“I enjoy this metaphorical new pencil case. I can give myself permission to try again; to regroup”*

This time of year also sees a shift in my energy, from being a little frantic and bared to the skies, to drawing in with the nights and using the darkness as a different kind of creative incentive. It would be an exaggeration to say I slow down – my default position is frenetic – but I do become more grounded.

It has taken me several years of living in Northumberland to get use to the long winters, but now I look forward to nights pricked with stars and frost-covered sand dunes. I often hear disappointment in people’s voices after the summer solstice

or when the clocks go back, as if they are being shortchanged, but darkness holds as much value as light. I find I can become more focused underneath black skies. The rest of the world is invisible to me and I can be very productive. Like seeds in the soil, my ideas germinate and begin to take shape – though it may be a little longer before the flowers unfurl.

Perhaps what I am learning is that it is not possible or healthy to sustain the same pace throughout the year. Maybe the long summer holidays are a fallow period for me; time to restore my creative

fertility and build up strength for more activity in the autumn. Though I know that in the new year I will soon become hungry for sun on my face, desperate for the clouds to shift. During those days it can be harder to find motivation, because there is only so much darkness I can take. I’d love to know how the seasons affect your creativity and productivity. Are you replenished after the long summer months, or flagging and in need of a reboot? Lots of people chase the sun. Others thrive when the stars come out.

Email your thoughts to [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)



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*Be better, naturally...*





# Body



Improve your physical wellbeing with gentle activity, better sleep, optimum nutrition and natural beauty



*How have  
you put  
your body's  
needs first  
this week?*

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK





# MINDFUL WELLNESS



Our Acting Wellness Director, Elizabeth Bennett, shares new research, strategies and wisdom on all aspects of wellbeing, from activity and nourishment to meditation and conscious beauty

## Eat well

### 3 SNACKS TO POWER A WORKING DAY

*Nutritionist Hannah Hope shares three energising snacks proven to boost productivity. Discover more of Hannah's recipes at [hhopenutrition.com](http://hhopenutrition.com)*



#### **Dark chocolate and walnuts (30g of each)**

Walnuts not only look like brains but studies show they improve cognitive function through their high levels of DHA. Alongside a small amount of caffeine, dark chocolate contains a substance called theobromine, which affects alertness in a positive way. It's also a source of magnesium, enhancing learning and memory.



#### **Mackerel pâté and veg sticks (1 can mackerel mixed with ½ tub cream cheese, juice of 1 lemon, and topped with parsley)**

Mackerel is an oily fish full of brain-boosting omega-3 fatty acids. It enables blood flow to areas of the brain responsible for learning. This snack is also full of protein, essential for the building blocks of brain health, and will also stop you feeling hungry.



#### **Matcha protein balls (1 cup almonds, ¾ cup hazelnuts, 1½ tbsp matcha powder, 1 cup dates, ½ tbsp coconut oil, 1 ⅔ cup coconut flakes, ¼ tsp sea salt, 1 tbsp flaxseed, blended and rolled into balls)**

Matcha boosts brain function by improving attention and memory. It also contains a small amount of caffeine, as well as L-theanine, which promotes alertness.

### **An avocado a day**

We've shone a light on the avocado many a time – and now we have yet another reason to! New research from Penn State University has found that eating an avocado each day for six months lead to a decrease in unhealthy cholesterol levels. Interestingly, despite avocados being high in fat, the study showed that daily avocados didn't have a negative effect on belly fat, liver fat or waist circumference. Looking to up your avo intake? Top on toast or add to a smoothie for breakfast, pair with a salad or eggs for lunch, or mix into a chocolate dessert for a healthy after-dinner treat.







## Coconut dal with kale

*Cooked with lemongrass, coconut milk, turmeric, curry leaves, garlic and lime, this dal is light and restorative.*

Serves 4

### For the dal

- 300g red split lentils or toor lentils
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and halved lengthways
- 1 lemongrass stalk, bruised
- 1½ tsp salt, or to taste
- 4cm piece of pandan leaf (optional)
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 100ml coconut milk
- 3–4 small handfuls of kale (approximately 200g)
- ½ lime
- 1 tsp chilli flakes (optional)

### For the temper

- 1 tbsp coconut or vegetable oil
- 1 small red onion, peeled and finely sliced
- 10 fresh curry leaves
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp cumin seeds

1 Pour the lentils into a saucepan and rinse loosely under the tap, then drain well. Cover the lentils with water until they're submerged by about 5cm. Add the garlic, lemongrass, salt and pandan leaf, if using. Bring to a boil over a medium-high heat.

2 Skim off any scum and turn the heat

down, so the lentils are simmering. Add the turmeric and simmer for 12–15 minutes, until the lentils are tender. There's no need to stir here, you can basically forget about them except to check they're not bubbling too vigorously.

3 Drain off about 80 per cent of the liquid – you don't want it to be too wet and soupy, because you'll also be adding coconut milk.

4 Stir in the coconut milk and kale, and simmer gently for 2–3 minutes until the kale is bright green. Take out a little kale to try; it shouldn't taste raw but should be soft with a firm bite. Remove from the heat and transfer to your serving bowl.

5 In a small frying pan, make the temper. Heat the oil over a medium-high heat (careful, it will splutter a little!). When hot, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3–5 minutes, until it starts to turn golden brown. Add the curry leaves, mustard seeds and cumin seeds, and cook for a couple of minutes until the curry leaves are bright green. Be careful not to burn the spices!

6 Pour the temper, oil included, onto the dal. Squeeze lime over it and sprinkle on the chilli flakes, if using.

**Rambutan: Recipes From Sri Lanka by Cynthia Shanmugalingam (Bloomsbury, £26)**

# Look good

*What's the deal with...*

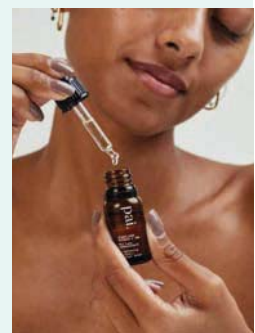
## VITAMIN C

Not just great for fighting immunity via a morning glass of OJ, vitamin C is also a hero when applied to your face. A powerful antioxidant, it aids your skin's natural renewal process by fighting off free-radicals – the pesky chemicals that slow down the skin's regeneration, making it look duller and less youthful. Applying vitamin C – especially in the morning, as it helps the skin protect itself from pollution and even UV (although you do need SPF too) – will keep skin looking healthy, plumped and free from pigmentation. It's best applied as a serum or as a concentrate or booster, which you can add to your moisturiser.



**REN Protect and Glow Serum, £50, renskincare.com**

**Pai Stabilised Vitamin C 20% Brightening Booster, £19, paiskincare.com**



## BRAND WE LOVE

### BYBI

Looking for plant-powered skincare that's good for the planet and light on the pocket? BYBI ticks all those boxes, with products that go the extra mile. Try the Bakuchiol Booster, a natural alternative to retinol for smooth and soft skin.

**BYBI Bakuchiol Booster, £12, bybi.com**



# Sleep well



## REST AND RESTORATION

*There's a reason people advise you to 'sleep on it' and it all comes down to REM sleep. When we sleep, we move through two sleep modes: REM and non-REM. Adults spend roughly 20 per cent of their time asleep, and REM is when most dreaming takes place. We've known for a while that this crucial period of sleep is important for processing emotions, and new research from the University of Bern shows exactly how. Its study reveals how neurons (the cells that send messages) in the front of the brain reinforce positive emotions, while also fading negative ones. This proves why sleep is so important for processing the events of the day and bolstering good mental health.*

## BRAND WE LOVE

### PATCHOULI FAIR

*Pyjamas won't help you sleep per se, but they do make getting into bed more appealing! Silk is a great all-year-round material that will keep you cool in summer and warm in winter; Patchouli Fair's beautiful selection are made from upcycled saris, which mean each pair of PJs is totally unique.*

Patchouli Fair  
Vintage Sari  
Silk, £59,  
patchouli  
fair.com



# 69%

of women in the UK have poorer sleep on their period, according to new research from Bodyform. Women lose around 158 days of sleep due to their period in a lifetime – that's five months!



# Meditation + mindfulness



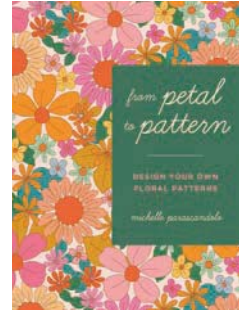
## GET IN THE GARDEN

*Nature may be good for the soul but it turns out gardening could also combat stress. A new study has found that gardening activities lowered stress, anxiety and depression in healthy women who attended twice-weekly gardening classes. And you don't need to be a pro in the garden – the research, from the University of Florida, looked particularly at women who hadn't gardened before.*

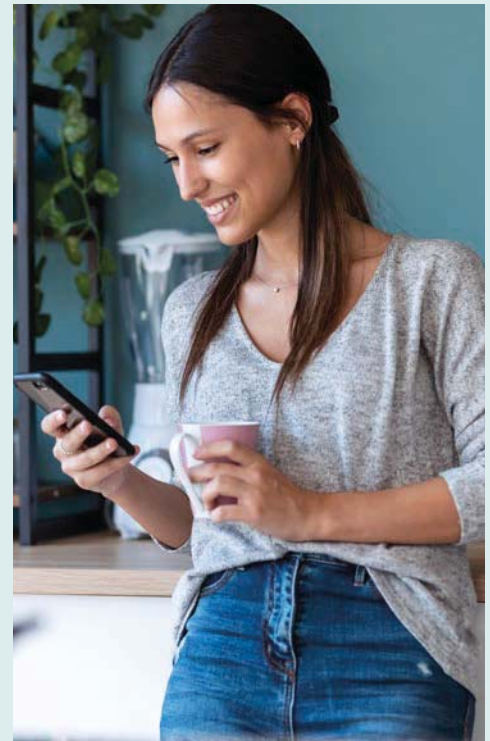
## BOOK PICK

### Flower power

Take a few moments for yourself and let your mind wander... With step-by-step guides to 20 intricate patterns, *From Petal To Pattern* helps you explore the meditative practice of drawing repeating flower patterns.



*From Petal To Pattern: Design Your Own Floral Patterns*  
by Michelle Parascandolo (Quarto, £14.99)



## Help yourself

Nothing can beat real-life therapy, but when it comes to working on your mental health, My Possible Self, a mental app backed by the NHS, comes close. Using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), the app uses interactive tools and techniques to create daily exercises that will help you make small but powerful behavioural changes.

[mypossibleself.com](http://mypossibleself.com)



# Move well

## Do you need time out?

'Recovery is crucial for performance at any level. Physically, rest days allow your muscles to rejuvenate and adjust to the stress placed on them during exercise. Additionally, reduced mental stress helps to avoid burnout and fatigue. When considering how to enhance long-term progress, rest days should be accounted for to help the body to calm down, and to rebalance the nervous system and the hormones released during exercise. How many rest days each person requires is unique to their training regime, from casual to intense. It is influenced by a variety of factors, including age, goals and genetics. As a general rule, the more you work out, the more powerful your rest days will be.'

*Melissa Wood, founder of Bathletic*

*Relax, recover and reset with Bathletic After Sports Aromatherapy Bath Oil, £16.99, [teambathletic.com](http://teambathletic.com)*



## Walk this way

**We often vouch for the benefits of walking. After all, it's arguably the easiest and most accessible form of exercise, with myriad physical and mental wellbeing benefits. New research from Baylor College of Medicine confirms this further by proving how good walking can be for those with knee issues. While the study looked specifically at people over 50 with diagnosed knee conditions, it supports how important it is for more general bone health as we age.**



# Become a health coach, and change lives

Are you fascinated with nutrition and natural ways to be healthy? Would you love to have the skills to improve the health, happiness and wellbeing of others? Perhaps you would like to change your own health and find a brand-new purpose in life?

Then consider a new career as a Health Coach, one of the fastest growing professions in the UK. You can be qualified and making a difference to yourself and others in less than a year.



*Este Rabe, Health Coaches Academy Graduate*

I have never experienced anything close to this course - partly because the team are so passionate - what I saw on the live training was life changing. You have empowered us so we can empower others. So professional, but so person-centred and a feeling of being part of the HCA 'family' too.

## WHAT IS HEALTH COACHING?

Have you ever made New Year's resolutions to improve your health or fitness and found, like 85% of us that by the 3rd week in January they are a thing of the past? It can be difficult to make positive changes to our health and stick to them. A Health Coach works alongside clients to re-think the way they live and create a brand new set of lifestyle habits that lead to living a more vibrant and energetic life. Health Coaches then support clients and hold them accountable to achieve their goals and enjoy a new found level of health and wellness.

### Why are Health Coaches needed now more than ever?

With spiralling statistics for preventable diseases such as heart disease, obesity and cancer, there is more awareness about the changes we need to make to avoid certain 'lifestyle' related diseases and prevention is always better than cure; but how do we change and where can we get the right support? People must take a more active role in their own healthcare and this is where a Health Coach comes in. Health Coaches can

educate people on how to be healthy and importantly, then help inspire and motivate them to change their lives for the better. Health Coaching is a 6 billion dollar profession in the US and has more recently taken off in the UK as we recognise an area of healthcare that has not yet had sufficient focus – mindset and behaviour change. That's exactly how a health coach can help.

### Could you be a good Health Coach?

Most Health Coaches who train with us have their own story that led them to the profession. This could be their own health reaching crisis point or the sadness and frustration of seeing those who matter to them suffer when so much could be done to help them. Whatever story brings people to us, the common theme is a deep desire to do something positive to change the quality of the lives of others, a fascination with natural ways to promote health and wellness and a strong desire to work in this field and do something that really matters. Does this resonate with you?

### Become a Health Coach with the Health Coaches Academy.

Founders Carolyn St John Loder and Ann Garry and their expert team have been Health Coaching in the

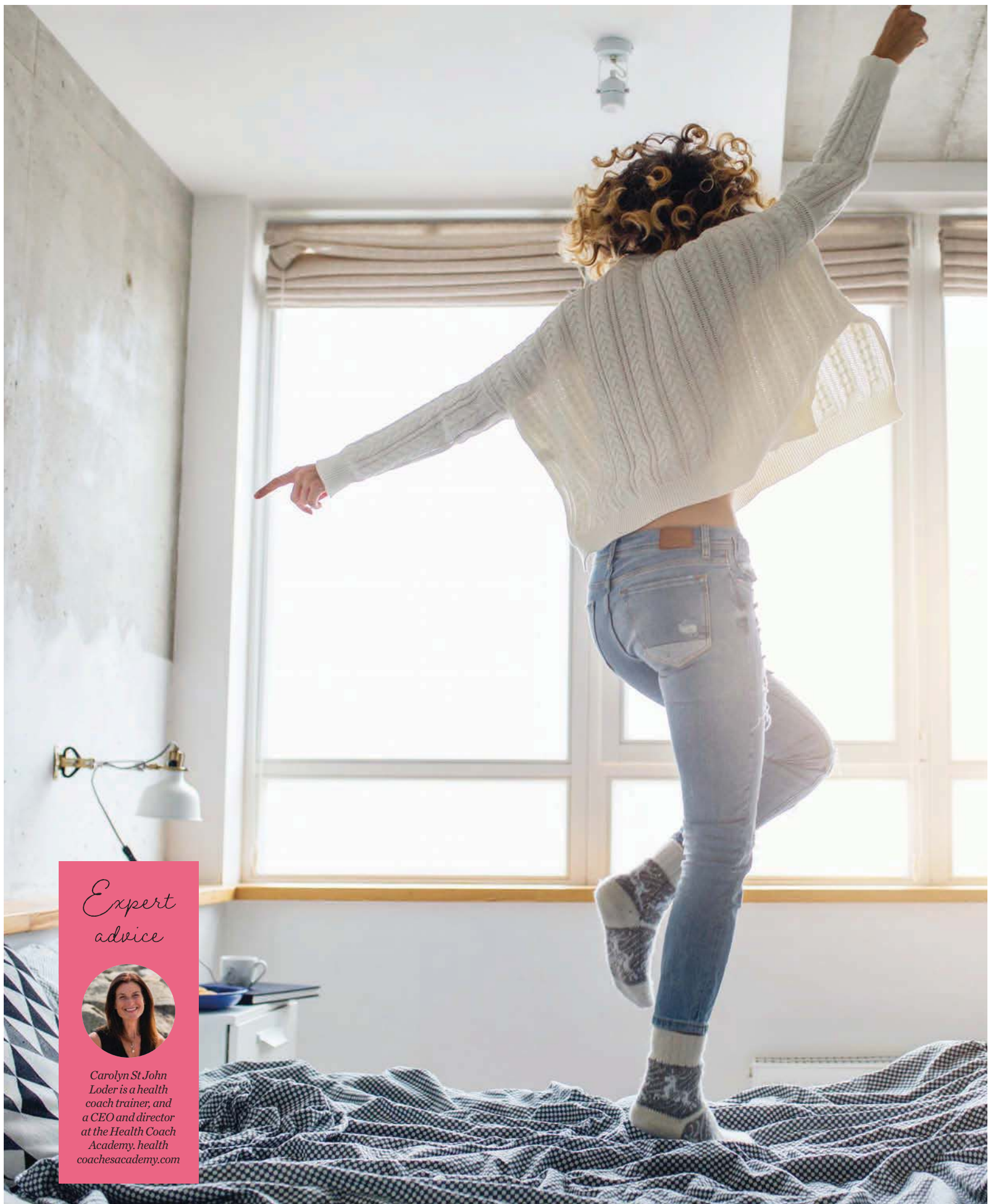
UK since 2003 and provide a thorough and professional training pathway to becoming a highly skilled professional Health Coach.



The HCA Health Coaching Diploma course is part-time and flexible with a blend of online, distance learning and 6 days of in-person live training. There are 6 intakes per year and the next course starts 26th September 2022.

**Scan the QR code below, to join one of our free events or book a personal call to discover health coaching for yourself.**





## Expert advice



Carolyn St John Loder is a health coach trainer, and a CEO and director at the Health Coach Academy. [healthcoachesacademy.com](http://healthcoachesacademy.com)



# DOUBLE YOUR ENERGY

*in 30 days!*

Sounds impossible, right? Wrong! Health coach trainer Carolyn St John Loder shares the secrets for how to change your mindset – and your life!

**F**or many women, summer is a time for putting the needs of everyone else first – while your own slip steadily to the bottom of the pile. Yes, it's lovely to have holidays and days out, but when you're trying to juggle around-the-clock fun alongside work and other commitments, life can feel more frantic than ever. And, when that's the case, it's easy to treat September a little bit like Monday morning: 'We'll get to the end of the summer, and when the kids go back to school, *then* I'll think about me.'

But your health should never be something you put off until tomorrow. If you want to improve your energy, you need to have a mindset shift about how you want to live your life *right now*.

It's time to ask yourself: 'Who am I in the world, and who do I want to be?'

What's important to me as a human being?' When I work with people, the very first thing we do is to ask the question: 'What's not working about your life and your health, and your wellness and your happiness?' If you feel like you're lacking in energy – which, if you've read this far, is probably a feeling that resonates! – then, firstly, I'd ask what having more energy will give you. *Why* do you want more energy? Because unless you really can get connected with what difference it will make to your life, you won't be committed to the process of gaining more.

So, now, take a minute to think, on a scale of one to 10, where your energy level is right now, and what is the cost of that to you? Say it's at four out of 10. What is life like with an energy level at four? Maybe you haven't even had time



to think about it! Maybe you haven't thought about the fact that you feel tired *all* the time, you don't feel like exercising, and you just grab the nearest carb to keep you going through the day. You just don't feel *well*; you're tired; you're stressed; you reach for sugary snacks; you have a drink in the evening. It's hard to get up in the morning, so you reach for the coffee. You're living life on automatic pilot, getting through on adrenaline during the day and slumping in the evening.

Firstly, we have to get really clear here: what's actually going on? And what is this costing you in terms of your own vibrancy? It's then that we realise that change needs to become a *must*. So, we need to get to the root of what the issue is.

Okay, well, your energy is low. And that's probably why you're not prioritising your health, because it's just too tiring. But instead of adding another thing to your to-do list, let's first get really excited about the prospect of getting some more energy, and get you pumped up about how you can do that. Because within 30 days, your energy can go from a four to an eight.

What does life look like for you then? Would it mean you'd have more time with your kids, and be less irritable with them? You wouldn't want to eat sugary snacks, and you'd want to go for a walk. Or would it mean more energy to put into a side hustle? Or to travel? Or to take up a new hobby? Whatever having more energy will do positively in your life, you need to start painting this picture, and vividly, and believing that your life really could be like that. And once you really believe that you can make your life better, you'll be much more keen to put some strategies in place to make it happen.

Now you're feeling excited about it, we can start to look at the whole picture of your life. And it starts with what you are eating. If you're having a lot of high-sugar foods and carbohydrates, then it's likely that your blood sugar is imbalanced, and as a result you're feeling exhausted. Easy ways you can tell if this is you is if, 20 minutes after getting up, you still feel tired. You'll be irritable mid-morning and find it difficult to concentrate and to remember things. You'll be craving carbohydrate and sugar, and by the afternoon, you'll be so tired you could literally fall asleep at your desk. Your energy is just going up and down – and

your mood is going up and down with it. So you're craving things that will give you a very fast energy release, and your energy is out of kilter throughout the day. It's almost impossible to eat healthily if you have an imbalanced blood sugar, because at some point, your body will demand: 'Give me sugar, or give me a coffee, because I can't carry on without it!'

To try to tackle this, a lot of women go on a really restricted eating plan, and they'll stick to it for a couple of weeks and then swing back to eating pizzas and doughnuts, because it's too restrictive. Instead, there are some simple ways to start to balance your blood sugar:

- **Eat protein with every meal**
- **Swap simple carbs (processed foods, such as cake and biscuits) for complex carbohydrates (such as fruit, vegetables, beans and whole grains), which take longer for your body to digest, so cause less of a spike**
- **Eat five smaller meals a day**
- **If you have coffee, drink it alongside a meal, so it causes less impact on blood sugar**
- **Cut out sugar in drinks**

The next thing to look at is your sleep. You might be surviving on five hours sleep, but then at work you're really tired. Your mind and your body start saying 'I need to rest. I need to go to sleep.' But you know that you have to get through your day so, instead, your body says: 'Okay, fine. Give me sugar. Give me a source of energy, because I don't have any.' So it'll make you have cravings and – bam! – there you are back in that same eating pattern again. So, getting on top of your sleep is another way to balance your blood sugar – and your mood.

There are some important things to avoid before bedtime to improve your sleep:

- **Upsetting, aggressive TV shows**
- **Eating late at night – this gives your brain the wrong message**
- **Opening emails**

Sounds like a simple plan, right? And it is! If you change your mindset to make it easier to balance your blood sugar, aim for seven to eight hours sleep a night, and exercise a little more, then you will find your life – and energy levels – transformed!



## COACH YOURSELF TO GET MORE EXERCISE

**Exercise is another top priority when it comes to boosting energy levels. Our minds tell us we're too tired to exercise, but for the vast majority of people, any form of exercise – and especially being outside in the fresh air – actually gives us more energy. Discover three ways to train yourself into pulling your trainers on...**





2

### Find a friend

It might be that you've

decided to go for a walk before work. But it's raining – so you don't go. Unless, of course, you've committed to meet a friend. Exercising with a friend can increase your energy levels, and bolster your social life. If your sense of life on a scale of one to 10 is a three, ask what impact walking with a friend twice a week would have on your satisfaction level with your social life, and open yourself up to more human connection.

1

### Become accountable

You decide that after work you're going to go for a walk. But when you get home, you're tired – you don't want to do it. I'm going to coach you to do it anyway. Think

now: Where are you going to go? How long will you walk for? What preparations do you need to put in place? So you might decide, 'Well, I'll get home at six o'clock. I'll take one of my kids. I'll go for 30 minutes, and we'll go over to the park.'

Now, I want you to tell me what's in that for you. What will it give you if

you do that? You might think: 'I'll be pleased with myself, which will probably help to reduce my stress after work. Plus, I'll have a separation between work and home.' And these are all great reasons. But when it comes to it, you *still* might not feel like it. So I say, great, you're going to go to that lovely park and that lovely oak tree that you love. So just send me a picture of the oak tree when you're there. Now you're thinking 'I don't feel like it. But I said to Carolyn that I would do it: I have to send that bloomin' picture!'

Now, you don't really have to send it to me! But make a promise to a friend – and she to you – and see if you can find that same motivation.

3

### Get inspired

If you're lacking in motivation, try tapping into other people's

stories. Get some good books, start learning and reading, and be inspired! You can work with a health coach – it's their job to motivate you – but you can also do it yourself. Get yourself into the right headspace and make your reading about health, wellness, exercise, other people who have overcome challenges, and people who have restored their health. Immerse yourself in that world and get motivated!



# FEELGOOD FOOD

Nourish the body, fuel the mind, and feed the soul with joyful dishes from Melissa Hemsley's book, *Feel Good*

## *Zingy Vietnamese-style noodles with fried sesame tofu*

Serves 4

*A must-make! The sticky sesame tofu works beautifully in this dish, but you could swap it for mushrooms, prawns, shredded chicken or fish. This is one of my all-time favourite dressings. I also like to drizzle it on roasted cauliflower, baked squash and fried Brussels sprouts. I love thin rice vermicelli for speed, but cook up any type of noodles you like. This is also fantastic with leftover rice or quinoa; use vegan fish sauce to make this completely plant-based. Mix the dressing ingredients in a small bowl or place in a clean screw-top jar and shake well.*

- 280g extra-firm tofu
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 tbsp mixed sesame seeds

### **For the dressing:**

- Juice of 3 limes
- 2 tbsp maple syrup or coconut sugar
- 2 tbsp fish sauce (vegan, if you prefer)
- 2½ tbsp tamari or soy sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 Thai chilli, deseeded and finely chopped, or 2 squirts of chilli sauce (or to taste)

### **For the noodle salad:**

- 300g thin (rice or mung bean) dried vermicelli
- 2 handfuls of mixed fresh herbs (such as coriander, basil and mint)
- Leaves from 2 little gem lettuces
- 2 tbsp cashews or peanuts
- 2 carrots and ½ cucumber, sliced into matchsticks
- 2 handfuls of finely sliced radish or cabbage

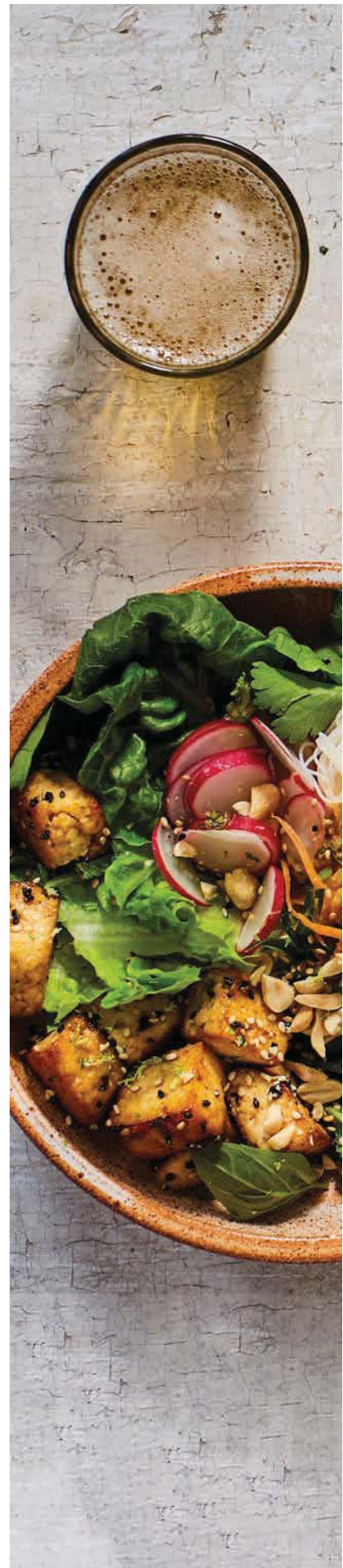
**1** Drain the tofu well. Chop into 2cm cubes, then pat dry in a clean tea towel. Pop into a bowl, stir in 2 tablespoons of the combined dressing ingredients and set aside to marinate for 10 minutes.

**2** Meanwhile, place the dried vermicelli in a large, wide heatproof serving bowl, pour over some just-boiled water and leave for the length of time specified on the packet – usually around 5–8 minutes. Keep the leaves of the fresh herbs whole and finely chop the stalks (discarding any mint stalks – or use in mint tea!), and tear the lettuce leaves.

**3** Heat up a large frying pan, add the cashews or peanuts and toast on a medium heat for 2 minutes until lightly golden, then tip onto a chopping board and roughly chop.

**4** Pop the pan back on the heat and melt the coconut oil. Using tongs, place the tofu pieces in the pan, spacing them out, and fry on a medium-high heat for 4–5 minutes, then turn over and cook for another 4 minutes. Try to leave them undisturbed as they fry so they go lightly golden and, then, during the final minute of cooking, stir in the maple syrup and sesame seeds, and remove from the heat.

**5** Drain the noodles once they are tender (test one by eating it), wipe the bowl out with a clean tea towel, and then pop the noodles back in the bowl, roughly snipping with scissors so they are easier to eat. Drizzle over half of the dressing, add the herbs and veg, and toss together in the bowl. Scatter over the tofu, then sprinkle the nuts on top to finish. Serve with extra dressing on the side so that everyone can add more if they like.







*"What we cook and eat can help to build the emotional scaffolding that supports our busy lives, and sustain us through the toughest times"*



## Roasted white beans with Caesar-style tahini dressing

Serves 2–3 as a main or 4 as a side

*Use any crunchy salad leaves you like here, but I love the combination of gem lettuce and red chicory for the contrast in colour and between the sweeter and more bitter leaves. I love this dressing, so this recipe makes lots – you'll have extra. Use it as a dip, in a lunch wrap the next day, on roasted cauliflower and broccoli, drizzled over grilled sweet potatoes, or tossed through a pasta salad.*

- 3 tbsp ghee or olive oil
- 400g tin of white beans or chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tsp dried thyme or rosemary
- 1 handful of walnuts or pecans
- 1 handful of bread, cut into 1cm chunks
- 1 little gem lettuce
- 1 head of red chicory (or another little gem lettuce)
- Sea salt and black pepper

### **For the dressing (makes extra):**

- 2 anchovy fillets (from a jar or tin)

- 2½ tbsp tahini (stirred well in the jar first)
- 1 garlic clove
- ¾ tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 handful of grated Parmesan or other hard cheese, plus extra to serve

**TIP: To make this plant-based, swap the anchovies for 1 teaspoon of vegan Worcestershire sauce or 1 teaspoon of miso paste plus 2 teaspoons of pickling liquid from a jar of capers. Instead of cheese, use 1 teaspoon of nutritional yeast, and roast the beans in olive oil.**

**1** Preheat the oven to 240°C, fan 220°C, gas mark 9, then place 1½ tablespoons of the ghee in a large roasting tray and pop in the oven to heat up. Meanwhile, dry the beans well in a tea towel to ensure they don't spit in the hot ghee.

**2** Once the tray is hot, remove from the oven and toss the beans in the melted

ghee, along with a good pinch of salt and pepper and the dried herbs, then spread out in a single layer. Roast for 15 minutes.

**3** Add the rest of ghee and the nuts and bread chunks, toss everything together well and spread out again into a single layer, then pop back in the oven to cook for another 10 minutes. Remove the tray from the oven and let the roasted bean mixture cool for 10 minutes if you have time, as it will crisp up more as it cools.

**4** Meanwhile, add the dressing ingredients to the small bowl of a food processor, along with about 4 tablespoons of water, then blitz to combine. Season with salt and pepper and add 1–2 tablespoons of water if the dressing needs thinning down.

**5** Slice off the ends of the lettuces and separate the leaves, then wash and dry really well so that the dressing doesn't slide off the leaves. Arrange haphazardly on a big serving platter. Scatter the roasted bean mixture over the leaves, drizzle over half of the dressing, and sprinkle with extra grated cheese.







## Big broccoli and spinach salad with carrot-ginger dressing

Serves 2

*A favourite lunchbox salad of mine, and happily this makes extra dressing, so drizzle over roast veg and noodles. It's inspired by a Japanese dressing, the white miso paste giving it a beautifully salty-sweet umami flavour. Swap the cooked chickpeas for lentils or other beans, if you like.*

- Large handful of bite-sized broccoli florets, stems sliced thinly
- 100g baby spinach
- 400g tin of chickpeas, drained, rinsed and dried
- 1 handful of cherry tomatoes (I like a mix of colours), halved
- About 150g cooked quinoa or brown rice (about 80g uncooked – see tip)
- 1 handful of seeds (such as pumpkin or sunflower), toasted, to serve

### For the dressing (makes extra):

- 2 medium carrots, scrubbed (about 200g)
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh ginger
- 3½ tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp toasted sesame oil
- ½ small white onion or 3 spring onions
- 3 tbsp rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 2½ tbsp white miso paste
- Sea salt

**TIP:** To prepare the quinoa from scratch, cook it following the packet instructions and, in the last 4 minutes, add the broccoli florets to sit on top. Remove from the heat and leave the lid on for 3 minutes.

**1** Steam the broccoli for 4–5 minutes in a small pan until just tender. You can do this by putting a small amount of water with a little pinch of salt in a pan so that it covers the bottom by about 1cm, and cooking the broccoli in it with a lid on the pan.

**2** Place all the ingredients for the dressing – except the salt – in a blender or a food processor and combine until smooth, then season with salt to taste. If your blender isn't high-powered, roughly grate the carrots and ginger first before adding. Add about 4 tablespoons of water to the dressing to make it drizzly; it is a thick dressing, but add more water to thin it out further if you fancy.

**3** Toss all the salad ingredients together, drizzle over about half of the dressing and scatter over the seeds. Serve any extra dressing on the side and keep the rest in a clean screw-top jar in the fridge.



Extracted from *Feel Good*  
by Melissa Hemsley  
(Ebury Press, £22).  
Photography by  
Lizzie Mayson



## ON MY WALK TODAY

# I TOOK A DOODLE WALK

Armed with paper and pencils, get creative and commit summer's spectacular sights to memory, says walking enthusiast Annabel Streets

**W**hat's not to love about this time of year? The green-gold of summer gently shifting into autumn; the soft syrupy light; the abundance of apples and blackberries. You can almost feel the turning of the seasons. It's the perfect month for walking. The temperature is neither too hot nor too cold, and the colours are glorious. But it's also a wonderful time for looking. Shapes, lines and patterns appear from beneath summer's foliage. Look carefully and you'll see mushrooms, acorns, pine cones, seed heads, the veins of leaves, sycamore wings, bracken. Everything seems a little more defined. A little more intriguing.

So, last week, I packed my pocket sketchbook, a pencil and a set of watercolours, but left the expectations at home – I'm a doodler, not an artist. Drawing

is just a very pleasurable, calming way of observing the intricacies of nature. It also logs the memory deep in my brain, so that in the heart of winter, I can pull out my sketchbook and remember, with absolute clarity, those dog days of summer.

Research shows that when we draw something, we remember it. Drawing forces us to process information in several ways: we look, our hand moves, our brain attempts to replicate the object. This combination of looking, thinking and moving means we encode the memory in a very rich way, creating lots of synaptic connections in the brain.





My walk began in a huge overgrown London cemetery, where I met Dr Ali Foxon, author of *The Green Sketching Handbook* (Pan Macmillan, £14.99), who had kindly agreed to share her doodling tips with me. Meandering between graves, we found blonde wheat kernels, tiny toadstools, plump blackberries and dried flower heads – perfect for sketching. Dr Foxon recommends starting small – a petal or a leaf, rather than a flower or a tree, for example. ‘The more closely you look, the more you’ll see,’ she explained. ‘And always start with something that doesn’t move!’

Introducing me to watercolour pencils and brushes and charcoal, she explained: ‘Play around and find what you like. Anything will do – even a Biro and a block of Post-it notes.’

As we ambled and doodled, I felt calmer. Drawing does this; when we observe closely, the brain has no space for rumination. Which is why art therapy is so effective: it’s a form of mindfulness that simultaneously allows us to express ourselves. Drawing also enables us to connect more deeply with nature and with the landscape around us. ‘When we doodle something, we care more for it,’ Dr Foxon says. ‘People who regularly green-sketch – regardless of how good their pictures – feel more bonded to nature, and research shows this sense of attachment results in better wellbeing.’

Using colour can make us feel happier, too, so I whipped out my watercolours and started splashing on the shades. Studies suggest that lighter and brighter colours make us feel more uplifted; reds energise us; blues make us feel as if time has slowed down; and green is linked to lower heart rates.

Sketching enables us to shift our emotions, says Dr Foxon. She suggests doodling rivers and skies if we want to feel calm, buds

and leaves if we need hope, ferns and shells if we want to focus, colourful blossom for joy, and paths, gates and gaps if we want to reflect on the past or ponder the future. ‘By changing what you focus on, you can change how you feel,’ she says.

As I paused to doodle a conker shell, it occurred to me that sketching also helps us reconnect with ourselves. Each little drawing reflects a moment in our lives, hinting at the colours, shapes and patterns that give us greatest joy. One day, I’ll be gone (a cemetery walk is a pertinent reminder of this), but my sketchbook will live on, like the book passed to Dr Foxon from her grandmother, and now one of her most treasured possessions. ‘I never knew her, but her doodled landscapes make me feel very connected to her,’ says Dr Foxon.

I always add a few words to my sketches. Nothing complicated, just a line of description, or a note of where and who I was with. But Dr Foxon knows plenty of people whose sketchbooks double as diaries or gratitude journals.

A final tip from Dr Foxon: ‘Don’t bury your doodle kit in the bottom of a backpack – keep it in your hand as you walk. Just have a go. And never judge your work!’

*Turn to page 90 to discover more about the healing power of art*



Annabel Streets is a writer, a founder of The Age-Well Project, and author of *52 Ways To Walk: The Surprising Science Of Walking For Wellness And Joy, One Week At A Time* (Bloomsbury, £12.99). @annabelabbs



psychologies

# ORGANIC HEROES



This Organic September, we're bringing you an array of wonderful products for your mind, your body and your home that work wonders for you *and* support the planet



## FOR BEAUTY... Be bold and beautiful with our roundup of the best organic beauty staples

### Mumanu Organic Rejuvenating Face Balm, £35, [mumanu.co.uk](http://mumanu.co.uk)

Mumanu's rich and creamy, non-greasy formula helps to rejuvenate and protect skin, leaving the perfect base to apply make-up. With organic ingredients including frankincense, tangerine, and shea and cocoa butters.



### Odylique Organic Mineral Lipstick, £18, [odylique.co.uk](http://odylique.co.uk)

Pucker up this autumn with Odylique's range of organic, nourishing lipsticks. Bursting with organic plant oils and butters that add moisture as well as colour, this will leave your lips looking camera-ready.



### Absolute Aromas Organic Nail & Cuticle Oil, £6, [absolute-aromas.com](http://absolute-aromas.com)

Achieving salon-standard nails is easy with Absolute Aromas organic nail oil. Its blend of organic ingredients nourishes, strengthens and improves overall appearance naturally.

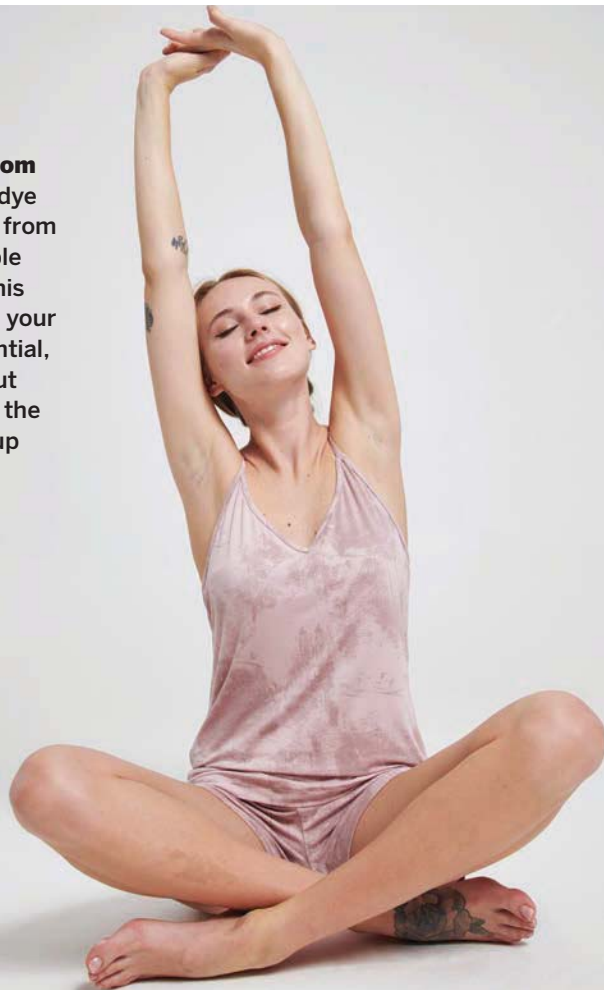




# For fashion...

Update your autumn wardrobe with our organic fashion finds

**Asquith Dream Cami – Shadow Shell, £35, [asquithlondon.com](http://asquithlondon.com)**  
With a pretty tie-dye design and made from natural, breathable bamboo fabric, this effortless cami is your loungewear essential, whether you're out and about during the day or snuggled up in bed at night.



**Universal Performance Seamless Organic Cotton Leggings, £40, [up.clothing](http://up.clothing)**

All of UP's active wear is made from organic, recycled fabric, even down to the packaging. These soft and stylish seamless leggings are contoured to suit all shapes and sizes, and are perfect for yoga, light workouts and day-to-day activities.



**Celtic & Co Organic Cotton Corduroy Jacket, £160, [celticandco.com](http://celticandco.com)**

This chunky-knit cord jacket with front-pocket design is an autumn wardrobe staple, and made from 100 per cent organic cotton.



## FOR THE HOME...

Harness nature in your home with our organic picks

**1 MOAM Organics Laundry Starter Set, £22 (shown here with Cleaning and Body Set, £78), [moam.co](http://moam.co)**

Create an organic cocoon around you and your family by washing your clothes and bedding in MOAM Organics eco laundry products. Created with a blend of organic essential oils, which are perfectly balanced to promote wellness and calm.



**2 Urtekram Soft Wild Rose Hand Wash, £6.99, [thefragranceshop.co.uk](http://thefragranceshop.co.uk)**

Nordic beauty brand Urtekram's products are certified by Cosmos Organic and use sustainable packaging made from plant-based sugar cane. This soft wild rose hand wash with aloe vera extract leaves your skin soft and supple.



**3 Camomile London Diamond Cotton Blanket, from £95, [camomile.london](http://camomile.london)**

Feel shrouded in calm as you snuggle down into this lightweight blanket made from cotton, naturally cultivated and free from harmful chemicals and processes. Perfect for the whole family, with an array of colours and sizes available.



# For feasting...

Enjoy a bounty of organic goodness with our selection of wholesome produce



## Abel & Cole Fruit & Veg Box, from £15.30, [abelandcole.co.uk](http://abelandcole.co.uk)

Get all kinds of wholesome organic produce delivered to your door with Abel & Cole's organic delivery service. From fruit and veg boxes to meats and pantry favourites, it offers everything you need for a truly organic lifestyle.

## Yogi Tea Classic, £2.69 for 17 bags, [yogitea.com](http://yogitea.com)

This tea brand was organic long before that became a trendy buzz word. The ingredients are 100 per cent certified organic and grown on organic farms, to ensure there is absolutely nothing in your tea that doesn't belong there! It's also sustainable and ethical, using only FSC-certified paper and compostable tea bags. So you really can relax!



## Mr Organic Italian Basilico Pasta Sauce, £2.70, Waitrose and Ocado

Made with sun-ripened tomatoes grown in Italy and packed within a few hours of harvest, this organic pasta sauce is also produced in BPA-free packaging.

# FOR SELF-CARE...

## Dr Organic Manuka Honey Deodorant, £5.99, [hollandandbarrett.com](http://hollandandbarrett.com)

Looking after delicate underarm skin is easy with Dr Organic's natural roll-on deodorants. Free from harmful chemicals and preservatives, its range of fragrances promise to leave you feeling fresh and soothed.



## FLO Eco-Applicator Tampons, £3.60, [boots.com](http://boots.com)

Eco sanitary brand FLO is on a mission to make organic periods more accessible and affordable for all. Made from recyclable sugarcane, its organic and biodegradable Eco-Applicator Tampons provide maximum comfort and performance.



## Verdant Alchemy's Ascent Bath & Shower Oil, £42, [verdantalchemy.co.uk](http://verdantalchemy.co.uk)

The bright and invigorating blend of geranium rose, ho leaf and lavender in this bath and shower oil is designed to lift your mind and leave skin soft and glowing.







Discover ways to make your soul sing... with creativity, nature, finding your purpose in life and at work, travel and spirituality



***Sum up today in a song. Is it upbeat or slow? Happy or sad? How could you improve your inner soundtrack?***

# THE HEALING POWER OF

# art

Whether you want to create your own or simply lose yourself in someone else's, it can seriously improve your health, writes Kerry Hussain

One of the earliest examples of art in the world is a single red handprint that was created over 40,000 years ago deep in the Altamira caves in north-western Spain. We will never know who left it or why, but what we do know is that it was intentional. Art is what sets us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom – for thousands of years, humans have used it to communicate, for ceremony and celebration, to record details of our existence, and as a form of expression.

Now, there is increasing evidence to suggest that visual art also has the potential to heal us from daily stress and even past trauma. Put simply, art is good for us.

Mental health issues are at an all-time high, with the World Health Organization reporting in March that there has been a 25 per cent increase in anxiety disorders worldwide. While this is largely due to the pandemic, it is a growing problem, and new ways are being sought to combat it. Art therapy has been used



## Expert advice



*Suzy Reading is a chartered psychologist and author of The Self-Care Revolution (Octopus, £14.99). [suzyreading.co.uk](http://suzyreading.co.uk)*



*Clare Barton-Harvey is an artist, art and mindfulness teacher, trainer, and mentor. She offers workshops, courses and retreats exploring the relationship of mindfulness and art. [cbarton-harvey.co.uk](http://cbarton-harvey.co.uk)*



A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is sitting on a wooden stool. She is smiling and painting a large, vibrant sky with colorful, fluffy clouds in shades of blue, white, yellow, and pink. She holds a paintbrush in her right hand and a palette in her left. On the floor in front of her are various art supplies, including a blue paint tray, brushes, and tubes of paint.

*"For thousands of  
years, humans have  
used art to communicate,  
for ceremony and  
celebration, to record  
details of our existence,  
and as a form  
of expression"*



for many years as a way to help those suffering, and chartered psychologist Suzy Reading explains why it has been so successful: 'There is great value in creating art for its power in helping people express and move through their emotions. It can be a profound wordless release, and tapping into creativity can also be a powerful mood booster.'

My own work as an artist is borne from a long (and ongoing) healing process. I suffered from severe depression for many years and, during a particularly traumatic period, I was guided back to the one thing that had always comforted me as a child – making art. When I was young it was a coping mechanism: drawing pencil portraits in meticulous detail was a way of maintaining an element of control, and dissociating from the external chaos. Now, it is my way of being present – a mental space where I can be completely in the moment. The free, intuitive abstracts in my gallery today are a sign of improved mental hygiene. Clare Barton-Harvey, an artist and mindfulness teacher, clarifies the power of creating: 'For artists, engaging mindfulness in their practice can support increased sensitivity and responsiveness to their subject matter and materials, while supporting increased creative flow and significantly reducing the judging mind.' Personally, allowing myself to let go and paint intuitively has liberated me from my past and given me a sense of emotional freedom.

Experimenting with mark-making can improve your wellbeing regardless of your artistic ability. 'For those with no experience in art, mindful mark-making can be a very playful and supportive way of discovering one's innate creativity (yes, *innate!*), while cultivating the enriching qualities associated with mindfulness practice, such as calm, resilience, perspective, and joy,' says Barton-Harvey. 'Use materials that you are drawn to and approach your "making" time with curiosity and a sense of play and experimentation. Try doing a short mindfulness practice before you start, and embed pauses into your session to connect with your heart and recollect your purpose.'

To have a go at creating your own mindful art, follow these simple guidelines:





### CREATE INTUITIVELY

*Let go of any urge to control what you are doing and paint freely – a process known as creative journalling. You don't even have to use brushes; lots of household items can be great tools for mindful mark-making. Experiment with sponges, cotton buds, even vegetables! Printing with textured materials, such as bubble wrap and corrugated card, can produce some wonderful effects. There is no right or wrong!*

### LAYER UP

*Building layer upon layer introduces texture and gives depth. This is great for visual meditation because it gives an extra dimension to focus on. Start with the heavier paint layers or collage, then use ink or draw lines with a pen over the top. Be mindful to let each layer dry before adding the next – try working on several pieces at once so you can stagger the process and stay in flow.*

### DON'T OVERWORK IT

*You will instinctively know your painting is finished. When you get to a point where you're not sure whether to add more, don't! Step away for a little while and then come back to see it with fresh eyes. If you are still not sure, then it's done! Keep your finished piece somewhere you can see it every day, to encourage regular mindfulness breaks.*

***“Art acts as an anchor to keep you focused, and can also amplify your emotions, allowing you to work through them”***

If you're not keen to play with paint, there's still good news: in the past few years, it's been proven that simply looking at art can be just as powerful as creating it, and it is becoming more common for doctors to prescribe visits to art galleries instead of medication for stress-related illnesses.

‘Just looking at art can be effective because it trains our mindfulness, curiosity and appreciation muscles,’ affirms Reading. ‘Art has the power to lift the mood, to assist people in processing their emotions, to transport people, and to help them feel part of something bigger than themselves.’

The prescriptive art scheme, which was pioneered in Canada, has since been adopted by the UK and, thanks to numerous studies, we already know that time spent contemplating art can have a profound effect. When your brain's pleasure zones are stimulated, blood flow to certain areas can increase by as much as 10 per cent and you get an instant hit of dopamine. Heart rate and cortisol levels are lowered, which brings your nervous system into balance. The ripple effect of releasing stress from your body improves not only your mental health but also your physical health. Inflammatory diseases, which are so common in today's society, can be alleviated and even prevented.

Mindfully studying a piece of art (a practice known as ‘slow-looking’) takes you out of auto-pilot and increases your awareness of the present moment. ‘Slow-looking offers us a potentially deeper and more enriched experience of engaging with art,’ says Barton-Harvey. ‘When we are more aware of our experience in the present moment, the artwork can come alive in refreshing ways, as if it has its own life that we then participate in.’

Art acts as an anchor to keep you focused (much like a mantra) but it can

also amplify your emotions, allowing you to work through them and let them go.

Combining creativity with regular meditation allowed me to become mentally balanced and rid myself of my demons, and I developed a unique method of visual meditation. This specific technique, which is available as a free download, can be used in times of heightened stress or anxiety to bring you in to the present moment, calm your nervous system, and alleviate physical symptoms such as a racing heartbeat, headaches and muscle tension.

Abstract art is excellent for directed mindfulness practice. It is one of few things that engages both sides of the brain simultaneously. Meditation is another, and by doing both together you can supercharge the effects.

While it cannot replace medication altogether as a treatment for serious conditions, art can be a great option for mild symptoms of stress. ‘There is a time and place for medication, but there are many potent alternatives to consider, from movement to mindfulness, restorative practices like breathing and meditation, and art therapy,’ Reading concludes. ‘Nourishing habits, coupled with therapeutic support, can be very effective in addressing stress-related illnesses.’

By creating your own or enjoying the work of others, and learning to unlock the healing power of art, you can add a valuable asset to your self-care toolkit.

### ▶▶ NEXT STEPS

**Read** *L'art Qui Guérit (Art That Heals)* by Pierre Lemarquis (Hazan, £20.36)

**Download** How To Use Art For Meditation; [kerryhussain.com/resources](http://kerryhussain.com/resources)

**Read** *Mindfulness And The Art Of Drawing* by Wendy Ann Greenhalgh (The Ivy Press, £8.99)

# *How can I stop feeling hurt by her harsh words?*

Our brilliant agony aunt, Mary Fenwick, turns her gaze to the world of work, helping sort out the problems you are struggling with day to day

**Q I have a colleague with whom I mostly have a good relationship, yet there are times when she can be incredibly cutting. We've known and worked with each other for years, and supported each other through some tough times. It's a small business and we both have key roles (I do sales and she does all the invoicing). Mostly, I can grin and bear it, because I know things are difficult in her personal life too. But what can I do on the days her words cut through and really hurt me?**

I admire the way you've framed this question, because it implies that you are still willing to learn and take responsibility for your own part, which

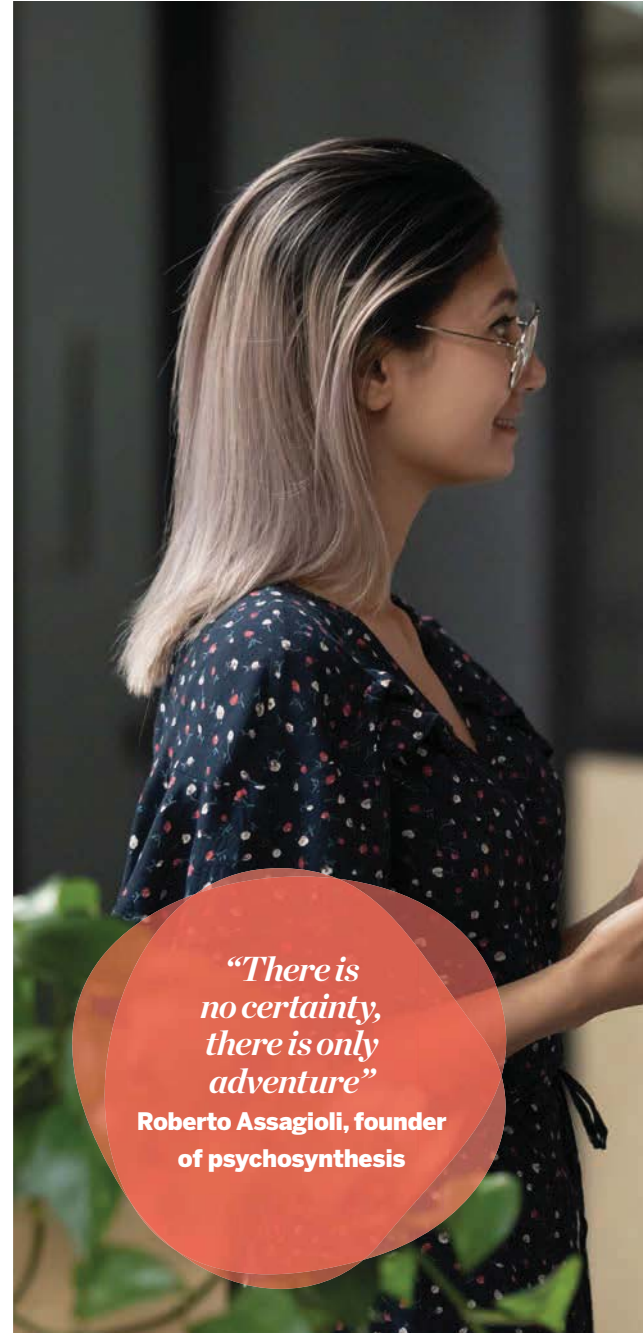
is a great approach to any relationship.

Our work colleagues can become even closer than some family members given how much time we spend with them, but the downside is that they know – even if unconsciously – exactly how to hurt us. And, as you say, sometimes these confrontations can cut very deep. Words like 'livelihood' and the phrase 'making a living' acknowledge that problems at work can often feel like life or death.

I talked to Penny Terndrup, a coach, and chair of the Psychosynthesis Trust, an educational charity informed by psychosynthesis, which is a psychological technique about 'meeting and embracing our challenges, pain and shadow aspects, as well as our light and joy'. In this case, Terndrup asks if you could think of the

hurtful remarks as coming from a different part of your colleague – it may be a part that is struggling, defensive, or very sad. She might even be unaware that whatever is going on for her is leaking into her relationship with others: 'It's a mental construct of "I work with colleague Gloria, but sometimes frightened Gloria drops in",' explains Terndrup.

One analogy is to liken it to being the conductor of an orchestra. Ideally, we choose when each musician plays, but it's not always easy, says Terndrup: 'Maybe Gloria wants the violin to play during her work day but, suddenly, in comes the kazoo'. You might find a good time to say, 'That comment didn't sound like you, is there something going on that I need to know about?'





## Personalities at work

**We all play a number of roles during the day. Become more of a conscious conductor in your life by following the steps below...**

### OBSERVE

Which player in the orchestra is here now? What do they think and feel?

### GIVE THEM A VOICE

Imagine the essential you – the conductor – is talking to that particular musician. What do they sound like? What do they say?

### THINK BIG PICTURE

Remember: you are more than any one role. Many people become stuck if they over-identify with just one part of themselves.

### IDENTIFY THE NEED

Perhaps one part of you knows you have to leave a dead-end job, but another part of you is scared. The only way to solve this is to go deeper and find what each part needs – usually things such as self-love, more peace, or recognition from others.

### USE HUMOUR

The author Julia Cameron famously thinks of her inner critic as a camp British designer called Nigel. Why not give it a go?

*loveandwill.com/psychosynthesis-basics/subpersonalities-parts-of-our-whole/*

The question of whether to raise this directly will depend on your deeper knowledge and experience together. Do you have any time together which is purely about bonding, or having fun, even once or twice a year, outside of work? Love-bombing can sometimes work with a prickly person, but only if you are being truthful in saying what you appreciate about them.

You could also reflect on which part of you is being hurt. Is it a younger self who was always being told they were messy, for instance? How can you tend to that part of your inner self? And from a compassionate point of view, understand that what your colleague says reflects the harshness of her own inner voice.

*psychosynthesis-trust.org.uk; pennyterndrup.com*



*Mary Fenwick is a writer and director of coaching at [teamsandleadership.com](http://teamsandleadership.com). She's also a mother, divorcee and widow. Connect with her on LinkedIn or Twitter @MJFenwick*

**Got a question for Mary? Email [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk) with 'Mary life' or 'Mary work' in the subject line.**



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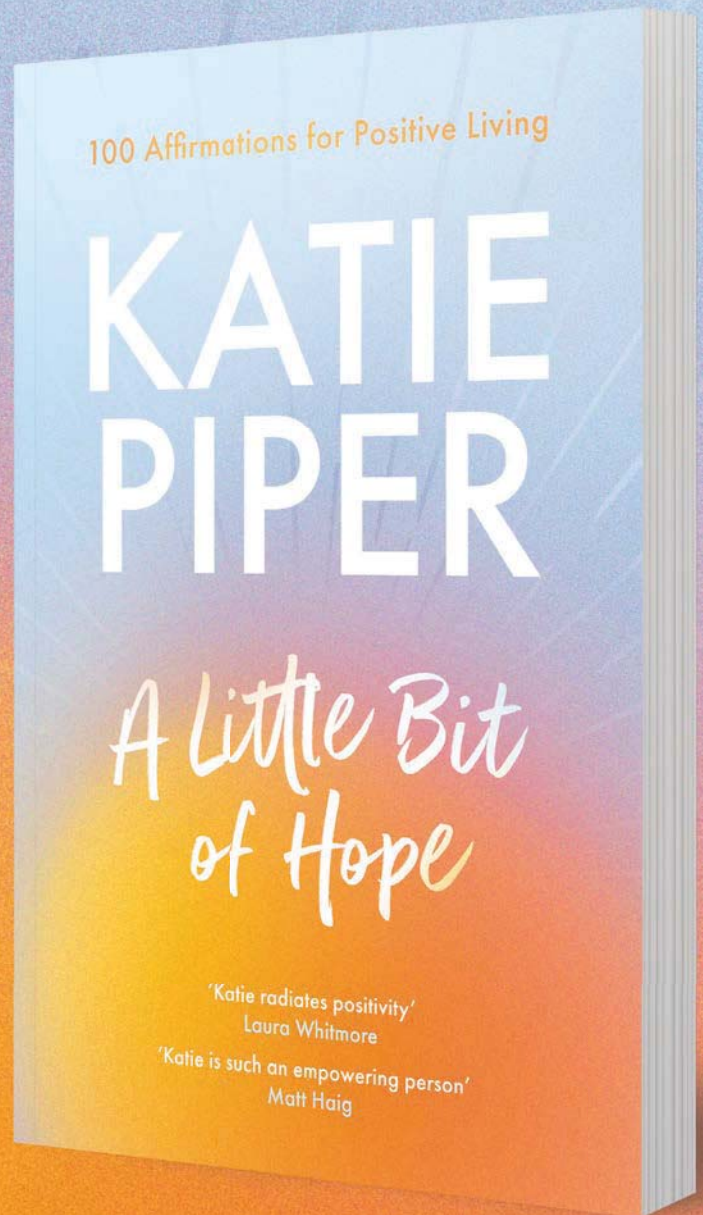
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# How to be happier

Emma Hepburn, aka The Psychology Mum, shares how to bring more bliss into your life

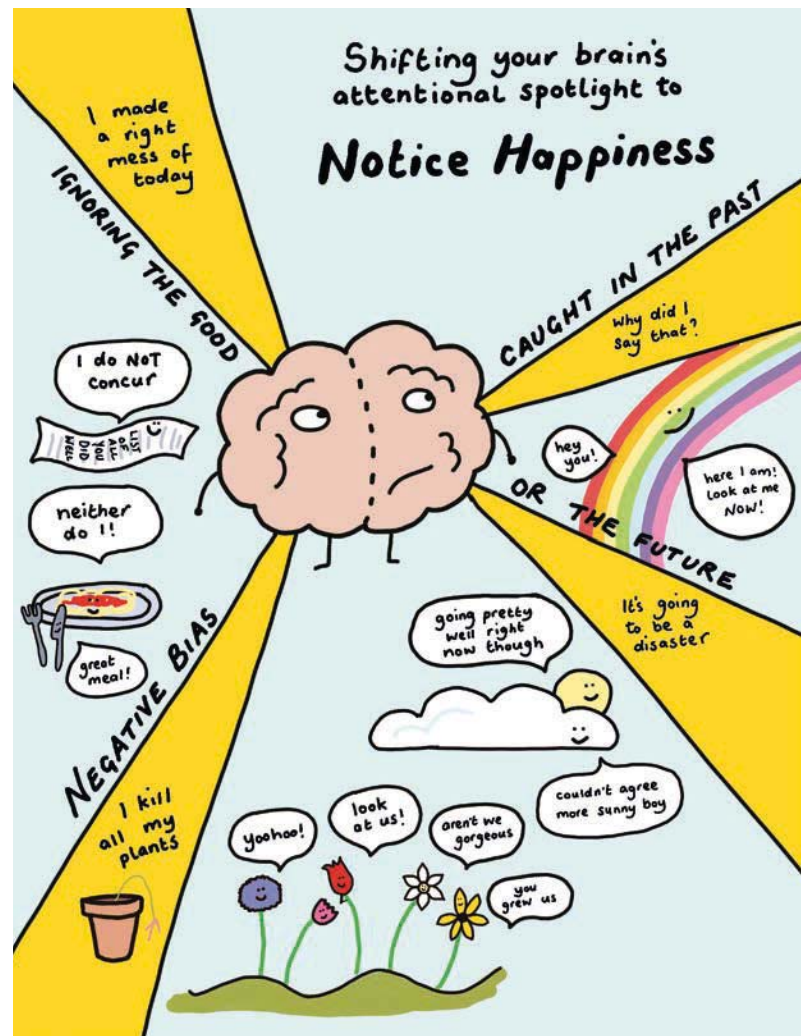
Your attention is pulled towards threat, and negative information demands your attention. Let's take a random – ahem – example of an author who just happened to be a psychologist: even if you get hundreds of five-star reviews, you will be pulled towards that one one-star review. The negativity will sometimes fill your attention. The same applies to everyday life: you'll mull over that one negative comment about your work, when you had twenty positive ones. Don't beat yourself up even more for doing this – it's a natural brain process. Some research even suggests that all events aren't created equal: we need a ratio of around five positive events to one negative event to make us feel good. Let's step back, notice what is demanding your attention, and think about creating a fair way to distribute your attention and help your brain notice the stuff that will make you feel far, far better. Here are some ways to help your brain notice the positive, which you might want to consider adding as tools for your happiness sandwich. Everyone is different, so see what works for you.

**Reflect on achievements.** At the end of your day, or at the end of your work day (in fact, at any time during the day) stop and pause. Take some time to reflect on what you have achieved or done today. What have you done well? What was difficult that you managed? What are you proud of? I often talk about regularly using a 'ta-da' list as the natural partner to your to-do list to note these things down.

**Find the positives.** When you notice yourself mulling over something negative, stop. Think if there is any contradictory information your brain is overlooking. For example, if you are thinking about that slip-up in a meeting, was there anything else that went well today, or any part of the meeting when you spoke fluently? If you shouted at your children, were there any times that went well today? Were there more times you responded calmly?

**Take the long view.** Reflect at regular longer intervals about what you have done over a period of time. Can you give yourself credit for getting through a tough period? Can you notice some things you feel you did well? It can be helpful to do this both at work and in your personal life.

**Notice the good from the day.** Remember the moments you enjoyed. Write them down to help you remember, or look at photos. It may help to create some



'A Toolkit For Happiness' by Emma Hepburn (Quercus, £14.99)

structure around this. Some people like to complete a 'three things I am grateful for today' list. It's a nice way to shift your attention to focus on to gratitude.

**Nudge your attention towards the good.** Keep a clipboard on your desk with feelgood reminders of positive days or events you are planning. Keep a record of your achievements in sight at work. Pin those 'thank you' cards up! Remember, you stop seeing it once the novelty wears off, so ring the changes to keep your attention on them. Shift items to a new position, add to or change them. You can even use social media or the internet as prompts by following accounts such as The Happy News, Upworthy or The Good News Movement (also great ways to induce awe!).



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