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CREATE A LIFE YOU LOVE

UK edition

psychologies

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with positivity expert
Paul McKenna

4 smart ways to
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ones cope with
tough times

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GETTING ON WITH
YOUR GROWN-UP
CHILDREN

Why running is the
perfect exercise if
you're over 40

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*Kate
Silverton*

on leaving the news
and why therapy
changed her life
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Welcome...

Do you remember a few years ago when every magazine was praising the Scandi practice of hygge? In case you don't quite recall the details, hygge is all about embracing the fact that it's cold and a bit dark and damp outside, curling up under a snuggly blanket, lighting a few candles and lamps to provide a lovely warm glow, and resting and relaxing until the spring comes. For us in the UK it was perhaps a passing wellness trend, but for those clever Scandinavians it's a way of life in the long dark winters, and I think it might be time we took notice again.

So if you find that things are a bit challenging again in the next few weeks, why not find ways to make this a calm and leisurely time? Hygge isn't just about snuggling up under a pretty throw, it's also about spending quality moments with loved ones, so we've packed this issue full of gentle and inspiring ways to reconnect joyfully with those you love, as well as support yourself through difficulties.

Our Dossier this month looks at how to nurture long-lasting love (page 51). Whether you are single, in a new relationship or have been together for decades, it is full of beautiful ways to be open-hearted, choose loving behaviour and keep love alive – a positive and receptive way to live even if you're not looking for romance. Plus we've got some brilliant techniques to support those around you by being more than just a shoulder to cry on (page 82). The hypnotist and self-help legend Paul McKenna is on page 24 explaining his mission to help you feel more confident and positive, as well as how to boost your resilience, and we discover why friends of the furry, four-legged variety provide so much comfort on page 114.

And when you do decide to venture outdoors, we have encouraging thoughts on how you can truly harness the power of nature to lift your mood, and discover why running (especially in the outdoors) is the perfect exercise to make you feel more optimistic, happy and healthy. So whatever this month might throw at you, I hope you'll find inspiration on these pages that will help you make the most of it and find joy on cold days. Happy reading, and lots of love,



Sally x

Sally Saunders, Editor

We hope you love your new-look 'Psychologies'. Subscribe today!

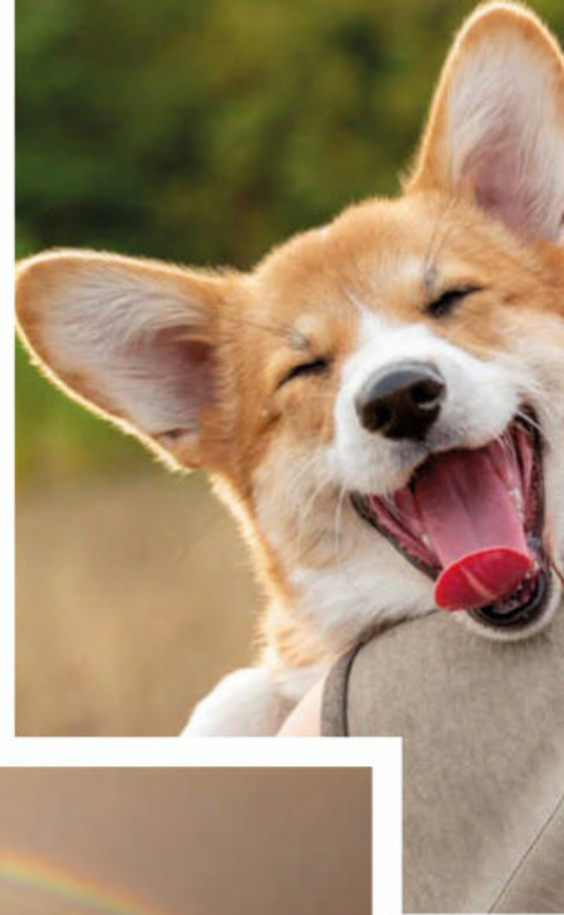
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*FOR FULL DETAILS, SEE
PAGE 40

MARCH

In this issue...



Regulars

7 In the mood

Enlightening, happy-making facts, fascinating news stories and more

12 Viewpoint

What's caught your eye in *Psychologies*? We want to hear from you!

14 * Kate Silverton

The former news anchor talks about courage, career change in midlife and the incredible power of psychotherapy

20 Life as I know it

Harriet Minter has turned 40 – and she's diving in feet first!

Mind

24 * Power of positive thinking

Train your brain to think differently with renowned hypnotherapist Paul McKenna

28 Coaching in action

The award-winning coach Kim Morgan helps a people-pleasing client learn to let go of things beyond her control

33 A moment of calm

Rest, relax and sleep well with hops

36 * Force of nature

Head outside and harness the brilliant wellbeing benefits of ecotherapy

42 What my mother never told me

Celebrate the successes of others and be mindful of their journey in life, writes Vee Sey

45 Lightbulb moments

Self-care doesn't have to be selfish, says the psychologist Kimberley Wilson



Train your brain to think more positively and see the rainbows, not the clouds

48 Your mental wellbeing toolkit

Understand body dysmorphic disorder

Heart

76 * What empty nest?

Steer your grown-up family towards modern domestic harmony

82 * More than just a shoulder to cry on

How to be a calming source of comfort and ease a loved one's distress

86 Your dilemmas addressed

Our agony aunt, Mary Fenwick, offers a fresh perspective on your troubles

Body

90 Mindful wellness

Conscious and accessible ways to eat, move and look well

96 Food for thought

Pile your plate high with these delicious, nutritious and planet-friendly dishes

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114

Why it's a dog owner's life

100 Good mood food

Keep calm with cardamom

101 * Race for (mid) life

Discover the wellness benefits of taking up running

Soul

108 * Time to move on

Stride confidently into a new career

113 Replenish before the spring

Take nature's lead and prepare for the new season's growth

114 A woman's best friend

Strengthen your bond and reap the wellbeing rewards of pet ownership

118 Work in progress

Our agony aunt, Mary Fenwick, resolves your difficulties in the workplace

122 How to be happier

With the psychologist Emma Hepburn

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psychologies DOSSIER

With you
in mind



51

Nuture lasting love

52 Choose love

Approach love as a choice and make a deeper connection

54 Believing in love

Heal past personal hurt to move your relationship forward

56 Are you ready for love?

Take meaningful steps towards a new or richer relationship

58 Receiving love

Foster self-love first and foremost, and make a healthy and intimate match that will endure

60 Keeping love alive

Focus on your perspective to cultivate a lasting partnership

62 What do you need for romantic love to flourish?

Take our insightful psychological test to find out...

66 'Respecting each other's dreams is paramount'

A reader shares her secrets to love

77 Dossier extra: Love and self-care heroes

Show a little tenderness and care

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The advice starts RIGHT HERE!



PAUL McKENNA

'Visualise the future you want, then take mental steps backwards to the present day to understand the path that's needed to reach it,' advises the world-renowned hypnotherapist Paul McKenna on page 24, as he reveals the power of positive thinking.

BETHAN O'RIORDAN

You can be a mother to grown-up children still living at home without being a martyr, says the psychotherapist and parenting expert Bethan O'Riordan on page 76. Find out how to navigate parental responsibility in a still-full nest without compromising their independence, or your own.



ELEANOR TWEDDELL

Changing careers, whether through choice or circumstance, can feel a lot like going through a break-up, says the coach and author Eleanor Tweddell on page 108. Take steps towards saying goodbye to the old you to make space for the new, and compassionately navigate moments of grief.



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.

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

Share the love of reading

Valentine's Day on 14 February is also International Book Giving Day, an annual event to get books into the hands of children and foster a love of literature. Set up 10 years ago by the blogger Amy Broadmoore, and organised by the British author Emma Perry, Book Giving Day is now celebrated in 44 countries.

The stories you share, and how you do that, is up to you, but many participants choose to be 'book

fairies', printing official International Book Giving Day bookplates or bookmarks to place inside books, which they leave to be discovered, read and treasured. Your GP surgery, playground or along the school run route are perfect spots. Or simply surprise a child you know or donate to a charity, such as BookTrust.

bookgivingday.com; booktrust.org.uk



PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK



Little ways to stay upbeat

By Katie Piper



For all the positivity that a new year brings, for many there is an undeniably heavy feeling in the air. With Christmas behind us and the days still dark and cold, it's easy to feel the January blues.

Having said that, I dislike beginning the year on a negative note, and I've started as I mean to go on: being kind, staying active, thinking positively and practising gratitude. These are habits that I strive for every day to stay optimistic.

We should all be more compassionate. A small act of kindness can go a long way and will boost those around you. Whether it's buying a coffee for a friend or complimenting a stranger, they don't have to be huge: sometimes the little things in life are the most important.

I also aim to be active and get outside every day. Exercise boosts my mood and it's crucial to get vitamin D on dark days. The simple act of going for a long walk or a lunchtime run is enough to raise my spirits and keep me healthy.

I use positive affirmations daily. These are repeated positive statements that help challenge negative thoughts, overcome self-sabotage and help us make positive changes. This practice has been invaluable to me in dark times. My book, *A Little Bit Of Faith* (SPCK, £14.99), is full of bite-sized affirmations for every day of the year and is the perfect way to start your morning.

'Grease' is the word! The 1978 film was chosen as the UK's favourite movie soundtrack by Showcase cinemagoers, slipping ahead of 'Dirty Dancing' and 'Mamma Mia'.

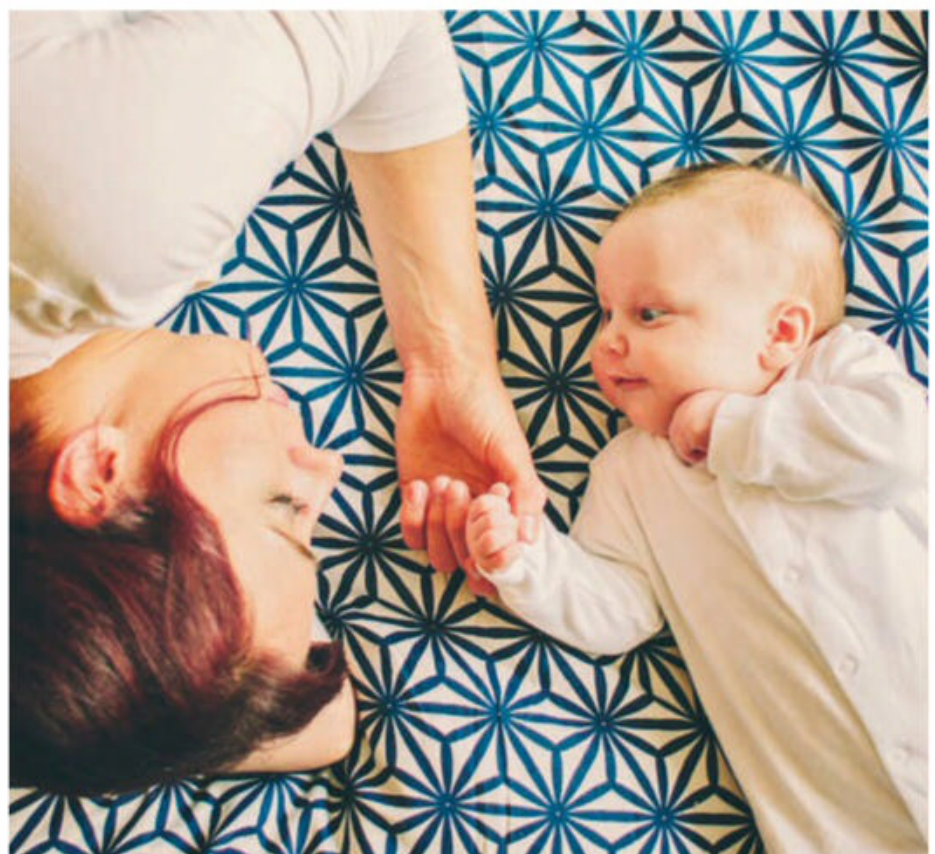


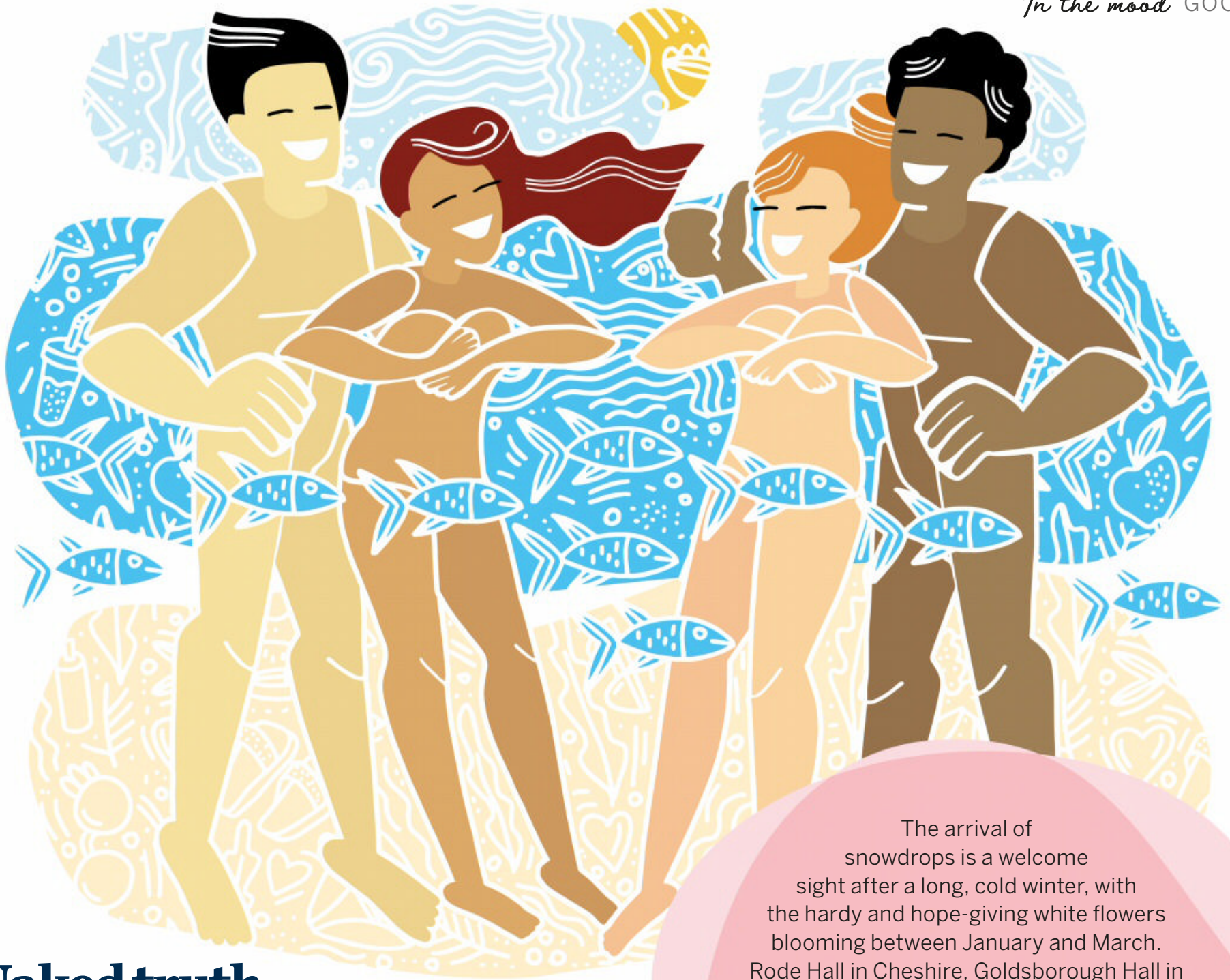
Labouring the point

Judges have claimed that the government discriminated against new mothers when it set up a Covid-19 support scheme, a landmark ruling that could make policymakers consider more carefully how their decisions affect women who take time off work to have a baby.

The maternity rights charity Pregnant Then Screwed took the Treasury to a judicial review, stating that the way the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grants were calculated meant applicants who had a baby between 2016 and 2019 got less help.

The Court of Appeal agreed that this was indirect sex discrimination and breached laws that give pregnant women and those on maternity leave protected status. However judges said that the emergency nature of the situation justified the action, so the estimated 65,000 women affected aren't entitled to a rebate.





Naked truth

Would you dare to bare? British Naturism has reported a 100 per cent increase in members over the past year, with events such as virtual naked yoga selling out. Experts believe new ways of living in the pandemic mean we have shed societal norms, leading more people to shed their clothes too! According to a study in the 'Journal of Sex Research', communal naked activity is good for your body confidence and reduces social physique anxiety.

The arrival of snowdrops is a welcome sight after a long, cold winter, with the hardy and hope-giving white flowers blooming between January and March. Rode Hall in Cheshire, Goldsborough Hall in Yorkshire and Hever Castle in Kent are good spots to view spectacular snowdrop carpets and many rare varieties, but the ultimate destination is Shaftesbury in Dorset, where locals have planted 200,000 bulbs since 2012 and run an annual snowdrop festival in February.

shaftesburysnowdrops.org



WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



WATCH – *Death On The Nile* sees Kenneth Branagh reprise the role of detective Hercule

Poirot as he investigates the honeymoon murder of a young heiress. Out 11 February.



LOOK – Grayson's Art Club at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery celebrates

lockdown masterpieces inspired by the second series of Grayson Perry's TV show. Until September.



LISTEN – *On My Last Eggs* is the podcast every perimenopausal woman needs, with the

host Rachel New speaking candidly to experts and celebrities about 'the change'.

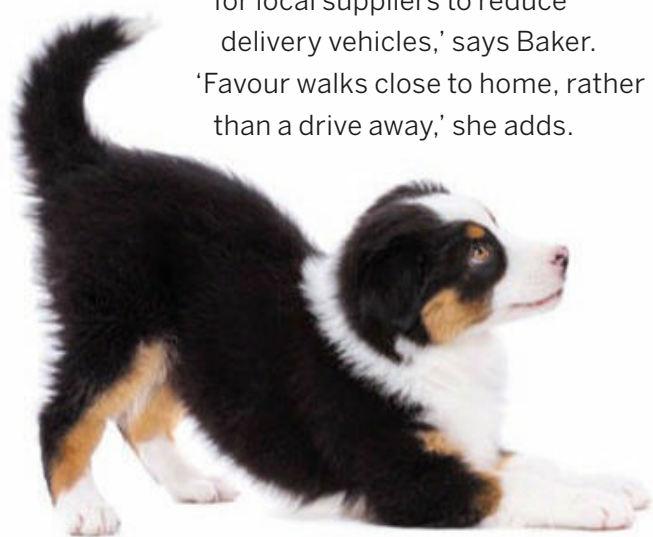


Around 3.2 million British households have acquired a pet since the start of the pandemic.

But while this is good news for the wellbeing of pet owners, the boom is a problem for the planet, with an average-sized dog estimated to create the same amount of carbon as an SUV.

However Becky Baker, the founder of dog owners' app K9 Nation, says there are plenty of ways to cut your carbon pawprint, from choosing food in recyclable packaging, cutting back on red meat and using eco-friendly grooming products.

'We have plenty of sustainable options in our online marketplace, plus listings for local suppliers to reduce delivery vehicles,' says Baker. 'Favour walks close to home, rather than a drive away,' she adds.



Are your eyes tired of working from home?

Elizabeth Hawkes, an oculoplastic surgeon, says increased time indoors staring at screens throughout the pandemic has meant a rise in dry eyes and eye strain, in part because we are not blinking as frequently.

Hawkes advises the following steps to protect your peepers:

- Adopt the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away from your screen at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Make sure you take off your make-up and clean your eyelids and lashes daily to prevent inflammation, and use preservative-free eye drops to help keep your eyes lubricated.
- Most importantly, go for regular eye screenings. The earlier issues are picked up, the easier they are to treat.



"You're allowed to change. You're also allowed to not change. You're allowed to wear anything and say anything and do anything and be anything"

Billie Eilish

3 inspiring reads... VALENTINE'S DAY MENU INSPIRATION



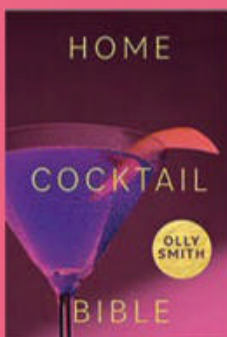
1 *Love To Cook* by Mary Berry (Ebury, £26) features 120 easy recipes from the queen of the kitchen, whether you want a quiet dinner or to entertain friends.



2 *Sugar, I Love You* by Rayneet Gill (Pavilion, £20) is a dessert lover's dream, with indulgent cheesecakes, bakes and ice creams to satisfy any sweet tooth.



3 *Home Cocktail Bible* by Olly Smith (Quadrille, £20) contains 200 classic and new tipples to suit every taste, along with essential mixing knowledge for wannabe home bartenders.



Early learning

Teaching teenagers about how babies' brains work can make them better parents in the future, a pilot scheme backed by the Duchess of Cambridge has discovered.

Pupils at 21 schools were given special science lessons designed by the University of Oxford and shown practical ways to support infants in their development.

It follows a study that showed only a quarter of adults understand the importance of the early years for future opportunities in life.



People in Britain spent an average of £23 per person last Valentine's Day, compared with £28 in 2018, indicating that lovers are focusing more on romantic gestures than expensive gifts.

Viewpoint

Send your letters of gratitude and tell us what you loved reading in the magazine to letters@psychologies.co.uk



*Star
letter*

Holiday harmony

What a lovely read your feature 'Make it a Christmas to remember' (January edition) was, and packed full of good advice. The end-of-year holidays can induce a special type of hysteria: buying multiple gifts, eating too much and spending time with extended family who may have differing political views. There is no shortage of reasons to get stressed out!

But I've always loved Christmas and really look forward to the holiday season. Nowadays my favourite aspect of Christmas is coming together with family and friends for uninterrupted and

extended quality time, and to have the chance to remind loved ones how much I appreciate them.

Gifts can convey gratitude, but I'm also aware of the impact of extreme consumption on our planet, from wrapping paper to plastic packaging. Your words made me determined to make more of family time, not to worry so much about festive traditions, get the work-life balance right, unclutter my calendar and, importantly, make more time for myself. As someone once said: 'The most important relationship is the one you have with yourself.' So true!

Sali Thomas

Change is going to come

'How do I begin to change the habits of a lifetime?' (February edition) was a game changer for me. Many of us have habits that we'd like to alter. And the good news is, after reading your expert's advice, it seems it's never too late to do things differently. Changing habits may not be easy, but going about it in the right way can help our chances of success.

We are all creatures of habit. Some of them good, some of them bad. To stop doing something that has become habitual didn't seem possible to me previously, but since reading your article, I believe I am quite capable of change.

My list starts with exercising more because I've become lazy. Health changes, even later in life, can still bring benefits, and even becoming moderately active will make a big difference to my wellbeing.

I'd like to develop more positive thinking too. Negative thinking has taken hold for far too long in my life. And I'd like to focus on one goal at a time, eliminating all but the essential tasks. I'm not a superwoman! These are my goals for 2022. Focusing on them every day will help me see profound changes in my life in the future. Thank you for the kick-start!

Leonie Heckman



PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK
LETTERS ARE EDITED FOR STYLE AND LENGTH



PHOTO COMPETITION

This photo, taken on holiday in Zakopane, Poland, made me appreciate the freedom of nature and understand that, just like the weather and the seasons, changes occur throughout life. Now, I see that change can be a good thing.

Ewelina Banak

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. We'll print the winner, plus you'll receive a free copy of our bookazine, 'Find Your Calm', worth £6.99. Share your photograph with us and explain its inspiration on Instagram @psychologiesmagazine with the hashtag #PsychologiesPhoto, or email it to letters@psychologies.co.uk

'A caged bird does not sing' (January edition) really resonated with me. Working as a teacher for a decade, I hit burnout, so decided to set myself free. I changed my career – and my life. Now, I try every day to be gentle with myself.

Elizabeth Woods

LETTER OF GRATITUDE

I'd like to thank...

My counsellor,

Thank you for everything. I lost my mum in tragic circumstances over 20 years ago and am still grieving her loss. You helped me process it and now, finally, after all these years, I have begun to heal. You gave me valuable insights into what happened and how this experience has shaped the person I am today. You helped me understand the situation at a deeper level to give me clarity.

You listened and spent time trying to understand my whole experience – my sadness and my loss and, for that, I will always be grateful. You made me feel valued. My experience has been difficult and you helped me acknowledge that it has been extremely hard and anyone in my place would have felt the same. Gently, you guided me towards accepting the loss of my mum, and that I can't change the past and need to move on.

Although my beloved mum will never come back, the experience has strengthened me and built my resilience.

Thank you for coming into my life. Although brief, it has made a positive difference. I'm OK now and I know I will carry this wisdom and courage with me for the rest of my life.

Varsha

Help at hand

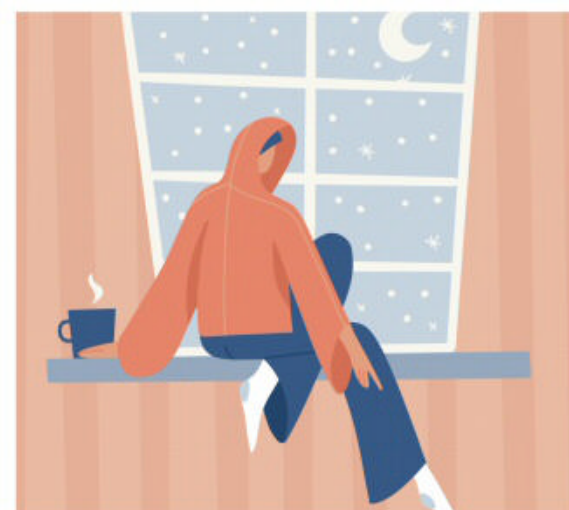
Thank you for the article about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and how best to cope with it (February edition). I've suspected for years that I'm affected by SAD, but have never had a confirmed diagnosis or advice on treatments beyond vitamin D supplements and sun-mimicking lamps, which only go so far. I found the column about intrinsic goals particularly useful as a way to motivate myself during the darker months, as well as the five-point plan.

In the December issue, I also found Debbi Marco's article on how to let go of past events insightful. I often find myself thinking of moments of social awkwardness or times when things went wrong that can go back decades and have certainly been forgotten by everyone else involved. I plan to try

out the techniques suggested, and I'm confident I'll find one that works.

I'm a new reader to your magazine but intend to keep buying it and am considering subscribing, as I find something interesting on almost every page. Please keep up the good work!

Kate Eccles





Courage leads to empowerment

The former journalist and BBC News anchor Kate Silverton credits psychotherapy with changing her life. Now she is embarking on a new career as a child therapist, helping families improve their mental health and relationships

WORDS: GEMMA CALVERT

Throwing everything up in the air and changing career is never easy, but when your professional highlights include interviewing Clint Eastwood, Cate Blanchett and Dame Helen Mirren, working with the Duke of Cambridge and appearing on our TV screens for more than 20 years, it's perhaps harder still. Nevertheless Kate Silverton has no regrets about leaving journalism and dedicating herself to helping young people and their parents.

Last summer, shortly after releasing her debut parenting guide, *There's No Such Thing As 'Naughty'*, she stepped down from news presenting to concentrate on counselling primary and secondary-age schoolchildren as part of her training to become a qualified child therapist. By the time

this interview is published, Silverton will 'be very much ensconced' in her new profession, just weeks away from completing a post-graduate diploma in child counselling and one step closer to achieving her dream: opening her own private counselling practice to help youngsters and their parents.

'The Japanese have a wonderful concept called *ikigai*, which means "life purpose". Doing something you love is shown to improve life expectancy, so you should always make sure you're not running away from something, as in "I hate my job", and running towards something you're passionate about instead,' says Silverton. 'Go towards something that nurtures and fulfils you, because life is not for us to endure, it is for us to enjoy. Once you make that step, providence will follow,' she adds. 'I've been





planning this [pivot] for quite some time. ‘I’ve always followed my heart and asked “Where is my passion?” and, actually, journalism is quite similar to psychotherapy, because you’re asking questions and being curious. I’ve loved having a career that has been so multifaceted and fulfilling,’ she adds. ‘I’ve reported from the frontline in Iraq and Afghanistan, and from the red carpet at the Oscars.’

As most memorable moments go, producing a BBC documentary with the Duke of Cambridge about rhino poaching tops the lot. In June 2012, Silverton and Prince William spent an afternoon together at a wildlife park in Kent, discussing Africa’s illegal rhino trade and the role the prince wanted to play in ‘effecting international change’. Silverton, who had recently become a mother for the first time with her daughter, Clemency, had taken her six-month-old to filming. ‘The duke took great interest in her,’ recalls Silverton. ‘I have a lovely photo of her reaching out to him and him laughing.’

Now, a decade later, it’s Silverton who children are reaching out to for help. It’s an inspiring professional about-turn for Silverton, who studied child psychology at Durham University and worked for a bank before being hired as a regional BBC

reporter in the north. She climbed **the ladder to become one of the country’s best-loved prime-time news anchors** then, in 2018, after **a two-year period of maternity leave and appearing on the**

sixteenth series of *Strictly Come Dancing*, she began her training in psychotherapy.

Growing up in Waltham Abbey, Essex, Silverton describes herself as an ‘adventurous and curious’ child who was inspired to venture into the unknown by her late father, Terry, a London cabbie turned hypnotherapist, who taught her to ‘live life large and dream big’. In her blog, Silverton movingly recalls sitting in a hospice beside her dad in 2015, shortly before he died from cancer.

‘He turned to me and told me how proud he was of me,’ she writes. ‘He had taught his daughters they could achieve anything in life by working hard enough. “Hard work works” he’d say. How lucky I was to be able to show my dad that it was his example I had indeed followed.’

A junior swimming champion at nine, five years later Silverton became the youngest in her county to achieve the The Queen’s Guide award – the highest attainable award for members of Girl Guiding. During a trip to Israel she lived on a kibbutz before, at the age of 20, embarking on a charity expedition to Zimbabwe to build a village.

‘I’ve never let fear stop me from doing anything and, if I’m going to do something, I will always do it as well as I can,’ says Silverton. ‘I’m not saying I’m brilliant, but I go into things wholeheartedly. Why bother otherwise? I just immerse myself. Take *Strictly*... I didn’t claim I was going to be the greatest-ever dancer but my feeling was, if I’m going to do it, I’m going to damn well try.’

It’s an admirable attitude and Silverton attributes a lot of her resilience to therapy. Discovering **counselling** during her ‘bachelorette’ years in

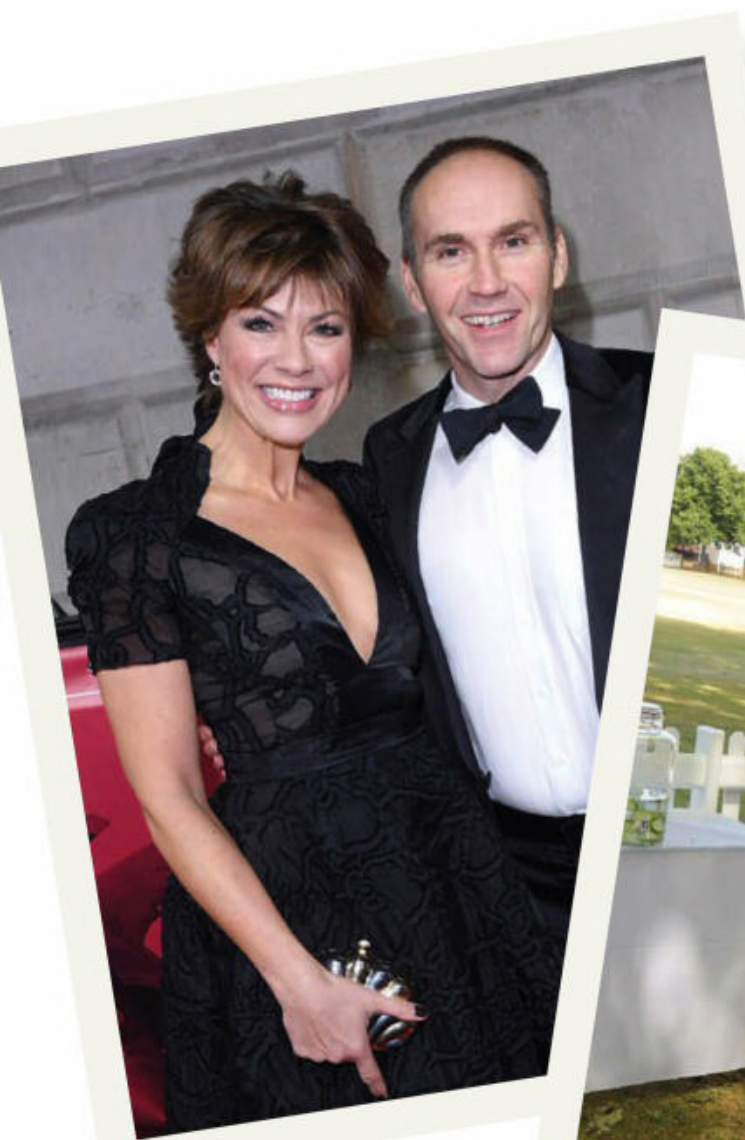
the early noughties was, she says,

a revelation. At the time, Silverton was in a ‘tricky’ situation – falling for an ex-marine but struggling with the idea of long-term commitment.

‘I was like, “Really? *Really*? Is this it for **the rest of my life**?” I called a psychotherapist **who** had been recommended to me and **said** to her, “I’ve got this problem” and this **very** considered voice replied: “My dear, the **problem** is not with them, it’s with you.”’

Silverton’s jaw drops in mock outrage, but **she** says her former therapist’s bluntness **made** her instantly realise the woman was **worth** her salt. In the years that followed, **regular** sessions with Liza Elle, who died last **autumn**, helped Silverton gain a deeper sense **of persp**

ective on life and self-understanding. ‘**When** we’re able to sit with someone that we **trust and** who is able to help us reflect, we start **joining the dots** to see how and why we operate **the way we** do, and how our brain works,’ she **explains**. ‘Therapy helps us unpick stuff and live **life in multicolour**, rather than a deeper shade of



Kate Silverton with her husband, Mike, and their children, Wilbur and Clemency





Silverton says she became a journalist because of her inherently curious nature

“Tears are for the soul as soap is for the body. They’re cleansing”

grey. Many people are fearful of therapy, and I was in the beginning. We may think, “What am I going to find? I don’t want to know.” We think we’re going into a dark cave full of monsters, but what we actually discover is that the cave is full of sparkling jewels.’

It’s a beautiful analogy, not least because Silverton believes therapy helped her achieve true happiness. ‘I wouldn’t be married without my therapist,’ smiles Silverton, who married Mike Heron – the marine in question – in 2010. After four failed IVF cycles and two miscarriages, the couple had two children naturally. Silverton was 41 when she gave birth to Clemency, 10. Then came Wilbur, now seven.

‘I credit therapy with falling pregnant naturally, because I was able to let go of stuff,’ she continues. ‘When we hold on to strong emotions, trauma even, it can clog us up psychologically and physically. To women and couples who are trying to conceive, you must first be able to let go. I talk to women about the IVF journey and they tell me, “I had two miscarriages but I’m fine. I’m back at work” and I say, “No, no, no! Have you grieved the miscarriages? Have you been on your knees with snot coming out of your nostrils asking “Why me?”. We can’t move on until we grieve.’

Silverton insists she fully grieved the unborn babies she lost. ‘One of the best things Liza taught me was being able to lose, and when we can feel the pain of that loss fully, we are more able to move on. Tears are for the soul as soap is for the body. They’re cleansing.’

Silverton would like to see the British therapy system overhauled and ‘made simpler to understand, more accountable and more accessible to all’. And if someone is unable to afford private counselling, she recommends investigating alternative routes, including NHS-provided treatment and options of reduced-rate – and sometimes free – therapy through voluntary or community organisations. She also highlights the immense psychological benefits of ‘offloading’ to an ‘emotionally available’ friend.

‘By that, I mean someone who is able to sit and really listen to us as we share something painful or important, and not feel the need to problem-solve,’ says Silverton. ‘In therapy, I’ve been taught to “hold the space” for a child to enable them to feel safe enough to share what they’re having difficulty with.’

Silverton maintains that getting parenting right during a child’s early years paves the way to a future of solid mental health for both the child and adult.



Laying bare the science behind children's behaviour, her book denounces 'old school' parenting techniques, such as the naughty step.

Instead, Silverton encourages parents to tap into their 'wise owl brain' to tune into their child's emotional needs, and recommends creating a 'soothing stair' instead to help unruly youngsters reach a state of calm. Parenting without the need for scolding or punitive measures, says Silverton, not only benefits the child's emotional state but the parent's too.

'Parents are feeling better about themselves because nobody wants to be the shouty mum or dad,' she explains. 'Suddenly he or she thinks, "I can now deal with that. In any given situation in the future, I know exactly what to do."'

When Silverton's book was released last April it shot into multiple bestseller charts, so it's no surprise to hear that a sequel is coming, focusing

on children of primary school age. These days she can rarely go anywhere without being stopped by a parent eager to unearth a nugget of child-rearing wisdom. What question is she asked the most? "Is it too late?" or, "Have I damaged my child?" says Silverton. And, apparently, the answer is no.

'The fact that you're asking me and you've read the book tells me that you care,' she elaborates. 'In the short term, absolutely do not worry about the fact that you might have shouted or missed all these wonderful emotional cues that our children give us. We can now do things differently. There is always repair. And when we do get it "wrong", as we inevitably will on occasion, then we can feel able to apologise. Being present in that moment and saying, "Oh goodness, I don't want to be a shouty mummy or daddy" means our children understand that we are not perfect, we will get things wrong and, when we do, we can explain why and take ownership of that mistake.'

"It feels amazing to have a confident handle on what our children are thinking"



At home, Silverton is relishing observing the positive effects her methods are having on her own children's mental health. 'I'm seeing it now with a 10 and a seven-year-old,' she says. 'Their teachers say things like, "Gosh, they're very resilient" and I'm like, "Yeah!". That's not because I'm any great shakes as a parent, it's simply because I've had the benefit of having great teachers, learning the lessons, and now I get it and I can apply it. I don't have to overthink it.'

'It feels amazing – and my husband will concur – to have a confident handle on what our children are thinking. The other morning before school, Wilbur came into the bedroom and began jumping on the bed, then stopped and said, "I'm feeling a bit insecure about my play date later." The playing around was rooted in nervousness about going to a new friend's house. The fact that he joined those dots was wonderful to witness.'

With many parents finding the pressures of pandemic life overwhelming, and doctors fearing a new child mental health crisis in the UK, made worse by Covid, Silverton's foray into the parenting support space feels superbly timely and, of course, she feels privileged to be in a position to help.

'The businessman Sir John Timpson said to me recently that I must become "the broadcasting voice of children's mental health, as Sir David Attenborough has done for the natural world". I had to smile, but I feel so passionately that, yes, I do want to do as much as I can to raise awareness in all the ways I am able, television included,' she says.

Through her books and conversations in mainstream media, Silverton also intends to shine a light on the need for society to better support parents. Historically, extended families provided help with childcare, but modern living and life in lockdown have left many people parenting in isolation. 'We are living through a really stressful time but it's important to stress to parents that we are not meant to do this alone,' she explains. 'Whether we're a solo parent or parents that have grandparents living far away, we're not meant to parent single-handedly. It is too hard. The whole thing is about giving parents permission to ask for help and say, "Actually, I'm not doing so great" and to know that there's no shame in that, so that we create more of a community.'

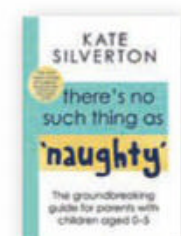
'As adults, we can all benefit from having someone who will hear our story and often hear our hurt. I would love to write a book for adults to explain how we can do that – what to say in situations when someone needs our support.'

'We feel better in ourselves when we're being kind to ourselves,' says Silverton, and when conversation turns to her 50th birthday, celebrated in lockdown, she ponders whether she feels more empowered the older she gets. 'I am not sure if it is age that brings empowerment, or overcoming challenges and



learning lessons along the way,' she replies. 'Once we have overcome difficulties and tricky situations we are able to move on in life and take those lessons with us, so that when we do reach our latter years, we can draw on that inner wisdom and sense of accomplishment that allows us to reflect on our lives with greater clarity. For me, empowerment comes mostly from having and experiencing courage.'

'As the poet Maya Angelou said, "If one has courage, nothing can dim the light that shines from within."' She smiles. 'I love that sentiment.'



'There's No Such Thing As "Naughty": The Groundbreaking Guide For Parents With Children Aged 0-5' by Kate Silverton (Little, Brown, £14.99) is available now

LIFE AS I KNOW IT

Just keep swimming

As a wave of misfortune hits her in the run-up to her 40th birthday and beyond, the irrepressible Harriet Minter finds a way to stay afloat



Let me tell you how the last few months of being 39 went. First up, I got the flu.

I spent 10 days in bed, shaking and shivering and thinking I was about to die. Then I broke up with my boyfriend. And finally, wary of starting my 40s with the reputation as a Covid superspreader, I cancelled my birthday party. I went into a new decade tired, fed up and single.

Weirdly, this is similar to how I started my 30s, except then the party went ahead and all feelings were drowned by booze. In the intervening years I have 'done the work'. I've read self-help books, learned how to feel emotions rather than eat through them and embraced my inner hippy in the name of self-love. So I decided I would put this knowledge to use and go into 40 feeling, if not 'fabulous', at least 'vaguely OK'.

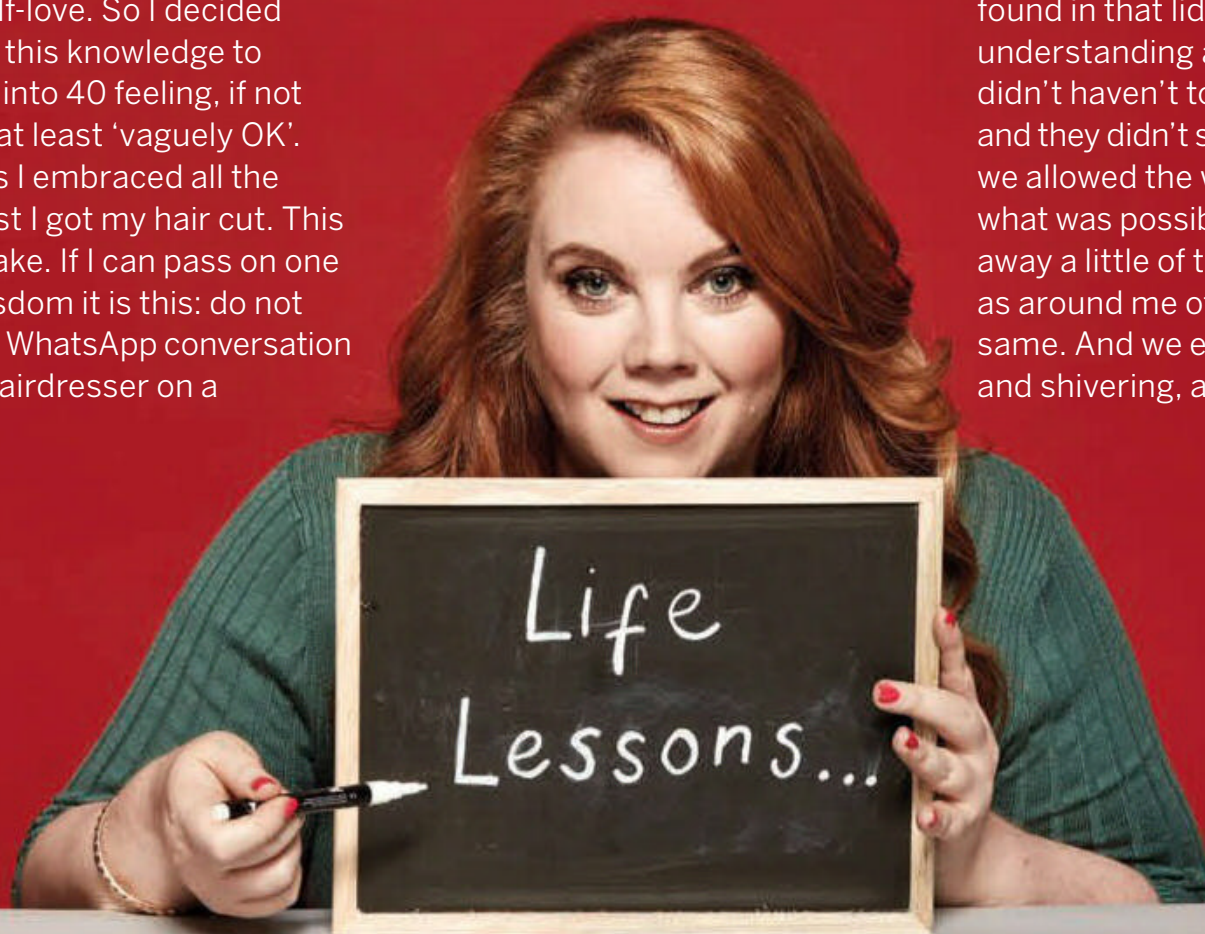
To do this I embraced all the cliches. First I got my hair cut. This was a mistake. If I can pass on one piece of wisdom it is this: do not engage in a WhatsApp conversation with your hairdresser on a

Saturday night when you are giddy from a combination of *Strictly* and wine. The inspiration pictures you send at that time might seem to embody the spirit of wildness that you think suits a 40-something doing it by herself but in reality will make you look like Ginger Spice with a bad fringe.

Then, in an effort to get away from putting all my attention on my physical appearance because at this point it was too painful to look at my hair in the mirror, I decided to get in touch with the amazing things my body could do. I bought a Peloton, and went cold-water swimming. If you haven't seen the *Sex And The City* reboot, you might not know that Peloton is responsible for giving a major character a heart attack. My bike arrived at 9am the morning

after the episode aired so it took me a couple of days to work up the courage to get on the thing. The good news is that I am not dead, the bad news is my vagina is so bruised from the seat that even if I wanted to find another relationship I wouldn't be able to consummate it.

But one cliché did work: cold-water swimming. I was inducted at the local lido by a brilliant woman who assured me that four degrees really wasn't as cold as I feared. It was. But it was also magical. In those freezing waters I was mirrored by other middle-aged women healing and laughing. Grieving and thriving. Bodies dimpled from age and the cold. Heads covered in bobble hats because warmth was more important than style. I saw myself in them and I felt less alone. What I found in that lido was an unspoken understanding and acceptance. I didn't have to tell them my woes and they didn't share theirs. Instead, we allowed the water to remind us what was possible. I doggy-paddled away a little of that day's sadness as around me other women did the same. And we emerged shaking and shivering, and very much alive.



Follow Harriet Minter's writing journey by signing up for her newsletter at harrietminter.com

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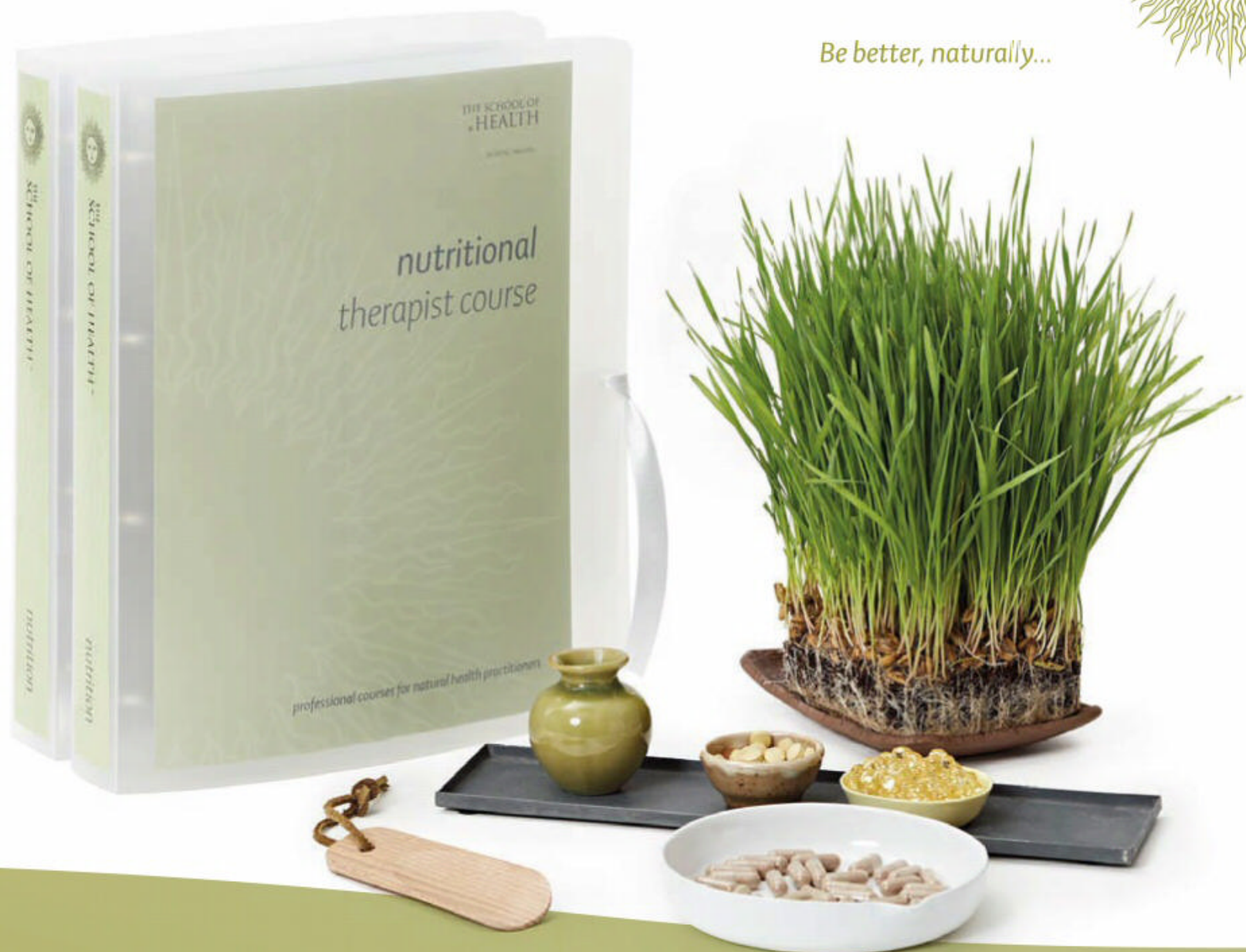
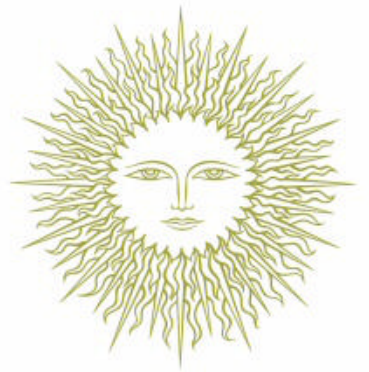
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*“Self-esteem is
as important to
our wellbeing
as legs are to
a table. It is
essential for
physical and
mental health
and for
happiness”*

Louise Hart

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES



Power of POSITIVE THINKING

Can you force the hand of your thoughts and train your brain to think differently? Gemma Calvert meets the world-renowned hypnotherapist Paul McKenna, and discovers how...

It's no surprise that Paul McKenna, the hypnotherapist and motivational guru, describes himself as an optimistic person, but even he has not emerged unscathed from the world-changing events of the past two years. 'About 18 months ago, I said to my wife, "I feel a bit down" and she replied, "Been watching the news all day?" and I went "Ah..."', says McKenna, nodding his head slowly to illustrate the lightbulb moment that transformed the way he digests news.

'If you open a newspaper or turn on the TV, the narrative is that you're under attack – from the virus, the economy, terrorists, some extremist political party – and, in recent years, the temperature has cranked right up. I now limit the amount



of news that I watch. I just take in the headlines and try not to get drawn in.'

I'm sitting in McKenna's airy second-floor sitting room in Kensington, west London, opposite the man whose legendary powers have transformed everyone from mega stars to PTSD-stricken war veterans, not to mention the millions of Joe Publics who have devoured his library of self-help books, which over 23 years have revealed how to achieve – to name a few – happiness, weight loss, wealth, calm, confidence and better sleep.

Now the focus is positivity. But far from traditional positive thinking where, regardless of the circumstances, people simply hope for the best and tell themselves that everything will be OK, McKenna's latest book – his twelfth – is



PHOTOGRAPHS: STEVE SHAW; SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY IMAGES

centred on research that reveals some people are more happy and resilient than others. Studies also suggest that those with a resourceful state of mind and body can better deal with challenges and, therefore, have a better quality of life.

But brilliantly, thanks to McKenna, the door is now open for us all to rid ourselves of overwhelm. Through a smorgasbord of guided psychological techniques, which he has also recorded on audio download, McKenna says we can all learn how to control fear and build focus, mental strength and motivation in order to survive and thrive. For many, in the midst of a life-controlling pandemic, it's finally an opportunity to claim back command of our own existence.

'In these challenging times, these skill sets have never been more necessary,' explains McKenna. 'There's now a biological vaccine [to protect us against the pandemic], which can improve the quality of our lives. I'm trying my best to provide the psychological vaccine.'

'Far too many people are victims of their brains running them, and stop themselves from having enjoyment in life because they're continually preparing for emergencies that never happen – but you can force the hand of your thinking, stop yourself from thinking certain thoughts and train your brain to think differently.'

Written in hypnotic language, the book guides readers on a journey of self-discovery and self-care, by building a mindset and physical state where

optimism, resilience, confidence and motivation work in unison. With practice, McKenna says readers can train their minds to search for solutions and learn to see what they have, as opposed to focusing on what they don't have.

'If you continually look for what you don't have, you'll be reinforcing that and coming from a place of lack,' he explains. 'Going to a new default setting and beginning to look at what you do have is very simple. These are the big boxes you can tick: Do you have your health, mental or physical? Do you have friends that you can connect with? Do you have food in the fridge? Do you have a roof over your head? Do you have clean air? Do you have a purpose? If you can tick those big boxes, life's good. This is a kind of a reset. It's



not about getting used to having less, it's about seeing how much you already have.'

McKenna believes we all underestimate the control we have over our ability to change our mindset because it's not a practice we're familiar with. He notes that as far back as our school years, we were taught what to think, but never armed with an understanding of how to manage our thoughts.

'We continually make pictures in our heads and the internal dialogue we use affects our mood and our state, and that drives our behaviour and the results we get in the world,' he says, before recommending the Havening technique for reducing sadness and establishing calm. The practice involves repeatedly and reassuringly touching parts of the body – usually the arms – plus using visualisation to reduce the body's production of stress chemicals. McKenna used the technique a decade ago after his father died when he had an extended period of grief and sadness.

Reducing stress, insists McKenna, is the first piece of the positivity jigsaw puzzle, because only when the 'bandwidth isn't taken up with fear' is it possible to think clearly about building confidence and motivation – skills that contribute to positivity and require deep inward focus.

'Confidence is important because as soon as you feel self-belief, you're in an optimum state,' he says. 'You could sit at home all day feeling confident, but that's not going to make any difference. You need to point confidence at something and decide on the direction of your life.'

A former broadcaster, McKenna changed track after interviewing a hypnotist. He began studying the treatment and eventually built an estimated £75 million fortune by transforming people's lives through a series of CDs, books, TV shows and motivational talks. In 2008, realising he 'wasn't loving life any more', McKenna closed down his UK business and relocated to the United States, where he spent a decade having 'a magical time'. Eventually though, he realised something was missing.

'I was a relentless goal-setter, but if all you ever do is try to achieve goals, there's no end, and you never get to enjoy it. You just move on to the next one. I'm much more of a direction-setter these days,' says McKenna, who has since found



“Happiness is when we’re in tune with our values – it’s the backdrop to our lives, rather than just momentary spikes of pleasure”

love with his PA of 25 years, Kate Davey, whom he married in Barbados in 2016. Now his focus is on core values – in short, the non-materialistic things he considers most important. ‘Happiness is when we’re living life in tune with our values – it’s the backdrop to our lives, rather than just momentary spikes of pleasure,’ says McKenna, who lists health, love and creativity as his top priorities. ‘For me, being truly rich is living life on your own terms, in accordance with your values.’

A firm believer that we get more of what we focus on in life, McKenna advises against using the word ‘don’t’ in order to free space in the mind to concentrate on exactly what we want to achieve. ‘People will very often tell me “I don’t want to be overweight”, “I don’t want to be nervous when I talk in front of people”, “I don’t want to procrastinate”, and that’s all they’re thinking about. But we get more of what we focus on.

‘Most people spend more time making a list of what they’re going to get in the supermarket than they do planning the next five years of their life,’ says McKenna. ‘A friend of mine, Michael Neill, is a life coach and he says even if you just go and tell a lamppost your plans every day, they’re more likely to happen.’

To connect with the future you really want to achieve, McKenna recommends implementing the ‘positive future technique’, which involves visualising the future you want and taking mental steps backwards to understand the path necessary to reach the final destination.

‘Go off in your mind a year into the future. Imagine your life is fantastic, that it’s been one of the best years ever. Think about what must have happened with regards your health, your relationships, your career, your finances and your general levels of happiness. Then come back three months and consider what you must have done in order to get there,’ he says.

‘Come back until you get all the way back to now and, at that point, your mind

will be able to see the life adjustments you need to make to get you on the road to living life as you want.’

During the pandemic, lockdowns and life restrictions have, notes McKenna, made thinking ahead not only tricky but uncomfortable for many. The positive future practice is effective because it negates feelings of overwhelm and allows us to take baby steps towards our dreams and wants. ‘When the life goal is too big, it feels insurmountable,’ he says. ‘So you think: “What’s the point?” But any task can be achieved if it’s broken down into small enough chunks.’

McKenna references last year’s YouGov poll that revealed only nine per cent of people want post-pandemic life to return to ‘normal’, which he believes is because most people now appreciate the extra time available to spend with family and to do ‘exercise, reading and meditation’ – calm-creating boxes he has been personally ticking in recent months.

‘I’ve been doing tonnes of meditation,’ he says, adding that on morning walks with his beloved Great Dane, Misty, he mentally writes a gratitude list of ‘all the things I’m looking forward to’. It’s a practice he describes as ‘one of the simplest and most powerful things you can do to elevate your mood’.

Right on cue, Misty pads into the living room, stretches out on the carpet and closes her eyes, causing McKenna to momentarily glance across and smile. Lots of people tell me they want money and I ask them why. They’ll say because then they’ll feel secure, accomplished or free. But there are plenty of miserable millionaires in the world. They have loads of money, but they don’t have any quality of life because they’re on a treadmill trying to get more and more stuff. When we stop and look at what’s truly important to us, very often we’ll find that it’s not about having more bits of green paper stored in the bank, it’s actually quality of life.’



‘Positivity: Confidence, Resilience, Motivation’ by Paul McKenna (Welbeck, £14.99) is out now. His Positivity UK Tour takes place 12-26 March. For venues and tickets, visit mindbodyspirit.co.uk

Coaching in action



Choose your battles

The award-winning coach Kim Morgan helps her client Maria* accept things beyond her control and turn her focus inwards as she breaks free from people pleasing. We catch up with them in their third session



ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES;
SHUTTERSTOCK. *NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED

Session three...

Maria had left our last session feeling more confident about asserting herself. I was hopeful that she would be able to have an honest conversation with her in-laws about how she wanted to spend Christmas. But, a few weeks later, Maria called me to book an ‘emergency’ session. She sounded upset, and I agreed to see her the following day.

Maria was hurt, angry and distressed. Bit by bit, I learned what had happened: Maria had calmly explained to her in-laws that she would like to visit her own parents on Christmas morning and would then go to their house for the rest of the day, arriving in plenty of time for Christmas dinner, the giving and receiving of presents and games.

Maria’s in-laws had listened stony-faced to her suggestion. They accused her of lying and misleading them, claiming she had ‘promised’ to be with them all day. They said she was ruining their Christmas. Her mother-in-law wept, saying, ‘What have I done to be treated like this by my daughter-in-law? I am an old lady. I have put up with all your airs and graces, and this is how you repay me!’

‘Then, they told me to leave their house!’ Maria said, shaking her head in disbelief. ‘They’re now giving me the silent treatment and they are triangulating the situation by involving my children, who are asking, “Why are you being so horrid to Granny?” My husband is taking his parents’ side and I now realise that he is terrified of them too.’

‘I used my assertiveness skills to say what I wanted, but it didn’t work!’ Maria lamented.

Listening to Maria, I was fighting my own feelings of guilt: Had I pushed her into asserting her needs too soon? I stopped myself – what was I doing? I reminded myself that sometimes in a coaching session the coach can start to experience what their client is feeling and, like Maria, I was beginning to blame myself. Maria had not done anything wrong, and neither had I! It was now apparent that she was dealing with controlling and manipulative people who would demean, criticise, intimidate and guilt-trip others to get what they want.

I said, ‘You are right about being assertive. Assertiveness is a choice, not a guarantee of getting what you want. It depends on who you are dealing with, and how they choose to react.’

Maria said this shocking experience had been a wake-up call for her. She showed me a notebook in

“I made a deliberate choice to ‘fall on my sword’ from a place of strength, not weakness. I am going to focus on changing myself... I feel proud of my courage”

which she had written down the awful words her in-laws had used to describe (or attack) her.

‘I have crossed out their words and written another list of all the things my friends say about me, and what I know to be true about myself. This way, I remind myself who I really am and how most people see me.’

We talked about what Maria wanted to do next. She could see that her children were being dragged into her in-laws’ manipulation, and now she was arguing with her husband. Maria’s parents were kind people and they had never put any pressure on her to visit them. So Maria decided that, on balance, her desire to assert herself and see her parents on Christmas Day was not worth the fallout – at least not this time!

‘I made a deliberate choice to “fall on my sword”,’ she said ‘My decision came from a place of strength, not weakness. I now know what my in-laws are really like. I have given up thinking that it’s my fault or that I can change them, and I am going to focus on changing myself. I feel proud for having had the courage to assert myself, and one thing I won’t be doing is blaming myself for their behaviour!’

I was impressed by Maria’s ability to accept that her in-laws were difficult people to deal with, and nothing she did could change that. She was no longer taking responsibility for things outside her control, and she was learning to look after herself.

I sometimes think I learn more from my clients than they do from me. As soon as Maria left, I reached for my journal and wrote: ‘Note to self: Be more Maria!’

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



Work it out

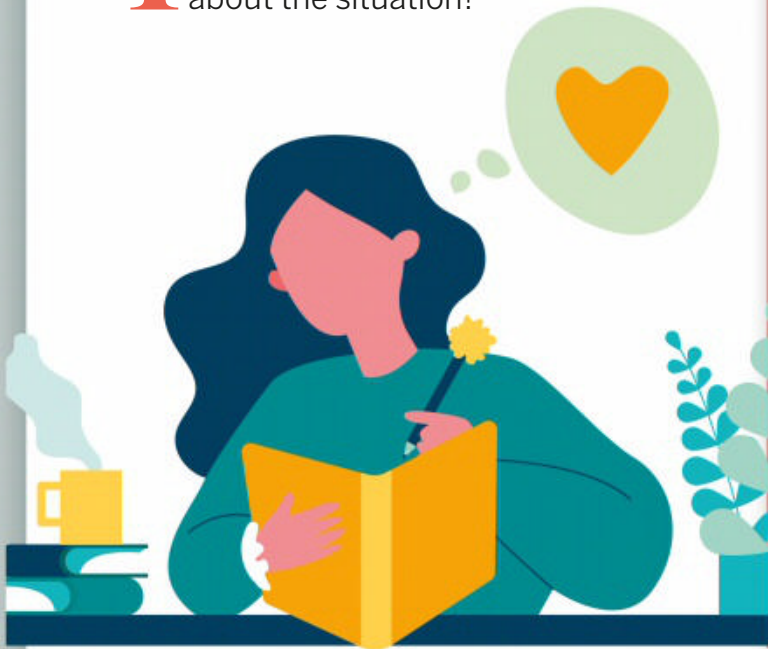
Take a step back and gain fresh perspective on a situation in which you have been hurt or bullied...

Compare and contrast

Ask yourself: 'What would nice people do?' If someone has been unkind to you and you are a generous person, you may try and think about what you might have done to trigger their aggression. You might even blame yourself for what happened. You will rarely consider the possibility that you have encountered someone who simply wanted to hurt or control you.

Healthy relationships require us to put ourselves in another's shoes and be self-reflective, but this only works if you both do it. Try the exercise below to experience the situation from a different viewpoint:

- 1 Make a list of people in your life whom you trust, respect and admire – people who are genuine, generous, decent and fair. They may be friends, family or colleagues.
- 2 Think about how these people would have behaved in the demanding situation in which you found yourself.
- 3 Consider how their reactions compare with the experience that you have had.
- 4 How does acknowledging their reactions change your feelings about the situation?



Your emotional bank account

Stephen Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People* (Simon & Schuster, £16.99), devised the idea of 'an emotional bank account', defining it as 'a metaphor that describes the amount of trust that's been built up in a relationship. It's the feeling of safeness you have with another human being'.

No relationship is without conflict and difficulty but the 'deposits' of kindness, support, care, respect and loyalty allow for occasional 'withdrawals'. When the withdrawals exceed the deposits, your relationship is not likely to be in a great place. Thinking about a relationship you are in, have a look at the four quadrants in the model below and identify where your relationship bank account is healthy, and where it is in overdraft.

What can you get back for a healthy emotional bank balance?



OVERDONE/UNDERDONE QUALITIES

A quality becomes a strength when it is right for you and the situation. A quality becomes a weakness when it is either overdone or underdone for you and the situation. For example:

Underdone	Quality	Overdone
Rigid	Flexibility	Aimless, no boundaries
Antisocial	Sociability	Overtalking, not listening
Selfish	Helpfulness	No time to yourself
Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Low expectations. Poor attention to detail	Conscientiousness	Unattainable standards. Dissatisfaction

Think about the overdone and underdone qualities in your life and notice where your qualities are in balance and have become strengths. Ask:

- What is the impact of the overdone qualities in your life?
- What is the impact of the underdone qualities in your life?
- What action do you need to take to dial up or dial down your qualities so that they become strengths?

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A moment of calm

HAPPY HOPS

Rest, relax and sleep soundly with a helping hand from a hoppy little healer



Used as one of the **main** ingredients when brewing beer, and hailing from the cannabis family, there are no legal issues where hops are concerned – just a bounty of relaxation benefits. This herbaceous perennial is famed for its cone-shaped flowers, the hops themselves, which contain a number of valuable compounds to help calm and soothe.

Herbalists have traditionally used dried hops as a nervous-system soother, muscle relaxant and sleep inducer, but latterly this plucky little flower has also been found to be beneficial for nervous indigestion and reducing stress and anxiety. The chair of the British Herbal Medicine Association, Chris Etheridge, shares some of the main benefits of hops and advises how to introduce them into your routine...

Ramp up relaxation

If, like many people, you struggle to switch off in this modern world, then look no further: 'Compounds found in hops have been shown to have a direct impact on the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA),' says Etheridge, 'which influences your natural activity and rest rhythm, helping slow things down and leave you feeling calm and serene. Hops have also been found to contain

antispasmodic and muscle-relaxant properties, which can be particularly helpful for calming muscle tension that interferes with sleep.'

Snooze soundly

'On the subject of sleep, hops have long been famed for their ability to help with insomnia,' adds Etheridge. 'This is thanks, in part, to the presence of the clever chemicals humulin and lupulin, which have a sedative effect on the body. Sleep is essential for our physical and mental wellbeing – it allows our bodies the time to rest and heal, and gives our minds a chance to process the day's events, so it's vital we're able to get our quota. Studies have also indicated that hops can have a positive impact on your circadian rhythm (the sleep-wake cycle) and are particularly effective in securing a great night's sleep when paired with valerian.' *bhma.info*



Tasty as it may be, sadly beer cannot be relied upon as a source of hops to capitalise on its benefits, due to its alcohol content – although a pint may well make you more likely to fall asleep!

PICK OF THE PRODUCTS

Hops are generally very safe to use, **although** it's a good idea to talk to your **doctor** before trying if you suffer from **depression**. Hops can be enjoyed in **many** forms, from a warm brew to a **tincture** or capsules.

The herb

Hops can be purchased as a dried herb and added to boiling water for a relaxing bedtime brew. Try Baldwins Hops, from £3.99 baldwins.co.uk



The tincture

Enjoy hops in tincture form for a great night's sleep. Dormeasan Valerian-Hops by A. Vogel, from £4.75 avogel.co.uk



The capsule

For an easy-to-take tablet, try THR-approved Herbal Store Sleep Aid, £2.68 amazon.co.uk



A warm, inviting photograph of a white ceramic mug filled with a golden liquid, likely tea, resting on a thick, cream-colored knitted blanket. The blanket is draped and folded, creating deep, soft shadows. In the lower right corner, a portion of an open book is visible, showing printed text and a small green plant illustration. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the blanket and a hint of a patterned fabric. The overall lighting is soft and warm, evoking a sense of comfort and relaxation.

psychologies inspiration

*“There is
nothing
like
staying
at home
for real
comfort”*

Jane Austen



A photograph of a forest with tall, straight tree trunks and a mossy forest floor. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The ground is covered in green moss and fallen branches. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a serene atmosphere.

Force of **NATURE**


With its ability to heal many of our ills, create awe in our hearts and calm our troubled souls, there's far more to getting out into the great outdoors than just a walk in the park, discovers Emma Winterschladen

It all started when my art psychotherapist suggested we go into the woods. Although her therapy space is situated in a cabin in said woods, and I'd taken myself for post-therapy walks among the trees each week since starting, we'd never ventured out together. I wasn't sure what that would look like. It turns out it looked like me, an hour later, standing under an ancient oak, wearing a crown of foraged woodland objects on my head, holding my six-month baby bump as I welcomed in this new season of my life.

I was as resistant as I was intrigued. What if we encountered someone I knew? Or what if I suddenly found myself blubbing uncontrollably as a group of unassuming dog walkers passed? I was feeling particularly vulnerable at that point in my pregnancy, overwhelmed by a renewed sense of grief that my mother was not around to share this part of my life. The thought of that vulnerability moving beyond the four walls of the therapy cabin made me feel both exposed

and anxious. And yet I felt drawn to the unknown of it, to the idea of experiencing a place so familiar to me in a new way, guided by a person I had grown to trust. So I agreed and we headed out for what would be my first session of ecotherapy.

The green cure

Of course, healing within a natural setting is nothing new – indigenous cultures and traditional medicines have long seen human health as intrinsically tied up with Mother Nature, whether that be through ancient plant ceremonies or 'taking to the sea' the Victorian way. And now modern science is catching up: one study of more than 20,000 people found that 120 minutes of exposure to natural surroundings weekly, even in urban areas, significantly increased self-reported health and subjective psychological wellbeing. Another found that 'ecotherapy-related techniques' are effective in helping heal various medical disorders, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, 



“There is an organic shift that takes place when we connect with our surroundings – one that can be incredibly healing”

alongside offering ‘a general sense of connectedness to life as a whole’.

Fieldwork

A ‘connectedness to life as a whole’ was just what I was craving. After spending most of the first trimester of my pregnancy in lockdown, I was feeling disconnected. I had made sure to get my government-mandated hour’s daily exercise, but ecotherapy, I have found, is so much more than a walk. A term first coined in 1996, it merges ecology and environmentalism with the human psyche. The charity Mind has been at the forefront of ecotherapy’s development in the UK, defining it as ‘therapeutic treatment that involves doing outdoor activities in nature’. This could look like gardening therapy, arts and crafts based in nature, animal-assisted therapy, wilderness therapy and, increasingly, eco-psychotherapy.

Nurturing nature

A crucial part of this practice is an ecological consciousness – the view that our psychological wellbeing is intimately bound up with the health of the planet. For Emma Palmer, a Bristol-based eco-psychotherapist and author, taking therapy outdoors isn’t enough to qualify it as ecotherapy. ‘The past year has seen more therapists move outside the therapy room, and there’s no doubt of the value of “walk and talk” therapy in nature,’ says Palmer. ‘But, in my eyes, in order for it to truly be ecotherapy, the session has to, in some way, pay attention to our relationship with the environment.’ This awareness of our place alongside the ‘more-than-human’ world, a term used to describe all living species that are not human, and natural elements, such as mountains, clouds, rivers and forests, is central to many who practise.

Palmer points out that this doesn’t mean ecotherapy is reserved solely for those suffering acutely from eco-anxiety, or

with an interest in environmental activism. ‘I’m not going to sit with a client and say, “I know you’ve recently divorced, but have you thought about climate change lately?”’ says Palmer. ‘Rather, there is a more organic shift that takes place when we connect with our surroundings – one that can not only be incredibly healing, but can also bring about an ecological awakening and heightened care for the environment.’ For some that may look like volunteering at a community garden, for others it’s choosing to walk to work.

‘It’s so often forgotten that we *are* nature,’ says Palmer. ‘So much of the work I do is about remembering that we’re part of this great, interconnected web of life.’

Wild everyday

This capacity to reflect on our place in the ecological scheme of things doesn’t have to be confined to formal ecotherapy. ‘Even if we’re just going for a walk, as long as we go out with a sense of purpose, taking the time to slow, stop, look, breathe, notice, listen, smell and touch, we are already actively engaging in something bigger than ourselves,’ says Palmer.

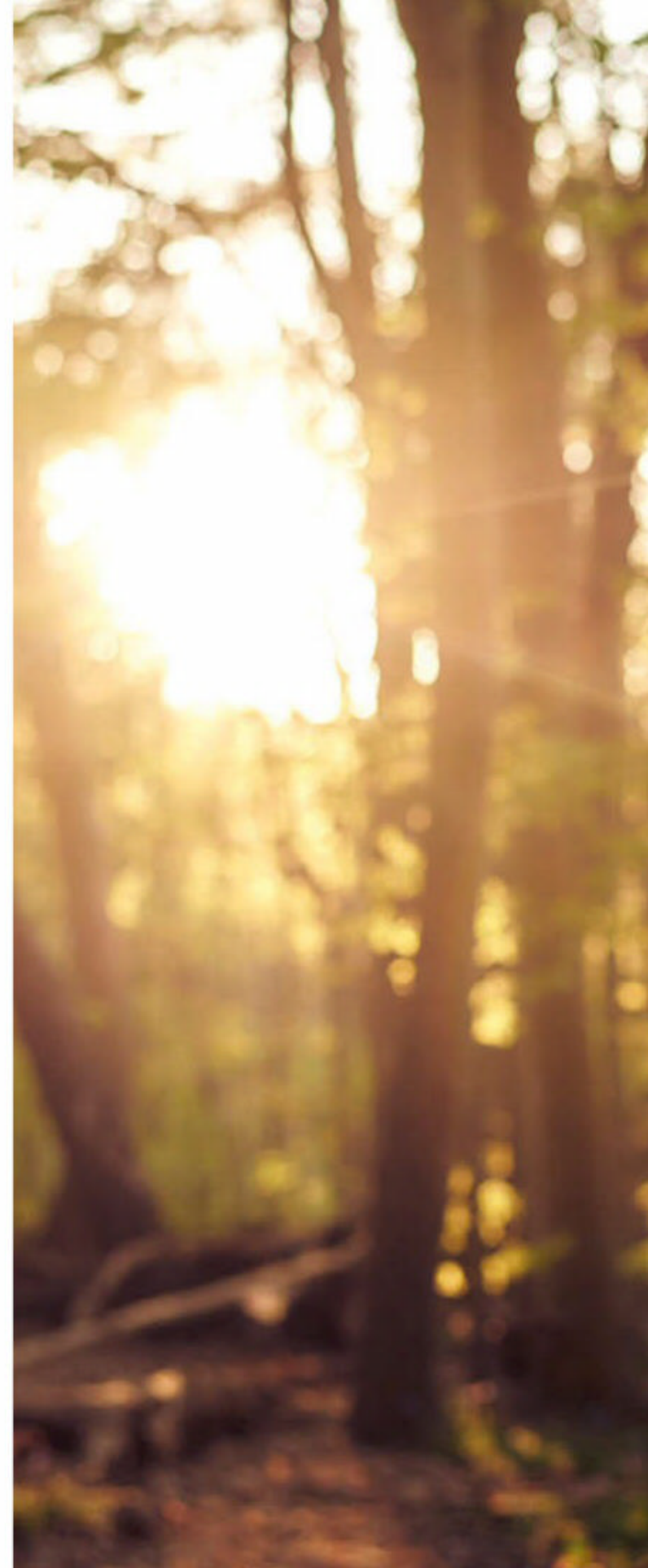
Cycle of life

But what does it look, and feel, like to engage in ecotherapy within a more formal psychotherapeutic framework? For me, it looked like permission from my therapist to walk until I found a spot that spoke to me, which turned out to be under a winter-sun-dappled oak tree. It looked like my therapist laying down a blanket on the woodland floor and inviting me to go off and explore, gathering any natural objects that took my attention. It felt structured yet free, purposeful yet playful, familiar yet unknown.

According to Palmer, it’s this very ‘holding’ of the space by the therapist, despite the fact we may be outside in a wild, unpredictable setting, that allows us to step outside our emotional comfort zone. ‘When we feel secure and contained

in our therapeutic relationship, then we are more likely to feel empowered to explore feelings that may seem too big to feel alone.’

The act of mindfully scanning my environment gave my unconscious the freedom to home in on certain objects. My therapist then asked if I’d like to free-associate with each object for 60 seconds at a time, speaking out loud anything that came to mind. Once I started, I couldn’t stop: a small new shoot, found unrooted on the ground, clearly represented the new life I’m currently growing, in all its potential, and fragility; a trio of prickly holly leaves reminded me that, as I go forth into motherhood, I need to set boundaries for my family of three; a ‘naked’ stick,





stripped to its under-bark, represented the vulnerability I knew I'd have to embrace in this new chapter.

The session ended under the oak tree, with me wearing my objects in a crown, holding my bump in what felt like a spiritual state of connection with my body, my baby and my mother. But I also felt connected with something bigger. I felt in conversation with the trees that stood above me, the earth that held me, the birds that sang around me, and all the lives that have lived before me, and those that will follow. It's a feeling I haven't shaken, and one I carry with me every day, even on a quick walk in the park.

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *Ecotherapy: Healing With Nature In Mind* by Linda Buzzell (Counterpoint, £13.99)

Listen *Nature Therapy Online – Episode 4: Caroline Brazier From Tariqi Trust*; naturetherapyonline.net/podcast/caroline-brazier-interview

Book an eco-retreat at ecoretreats.co.uk/conscious-living

Find an ecotherapist at ecopsychology.org.uk/practitioners

FIVE EXPERT TIPS FOR EMBRACING ECOTHERAPY

Emma Palmer introduces five easy ways to bring the principles of ecotherapy into your life:

1 Research your locality

Set yourself a project to find out about your local area's unique environment. What sort of soil is your house sitting on? Is there a particular type of wildflower in your immediate area? What birds visit your garden or windowsill? Collect your findings in a notebook.

2 Let your feet walk you

Next time you go for a walk, instead of defaulting to your normal route, let your feet guide you and see where you end up. Soften your gaze and slow your pace, allowing your mind

to quieten as you tune into your body's movements, step by step.

3 Find your special place

Choose a nearby green or blue space that you can visit a few times a week. Start by going there, switching off your phone and sitting for 10 minutes. Let yourself absorb your surroundings: notice the blades of grass moving in the wind, the shape of the trees, the chorus of sounds. If boredom or restlessness come, feel them fully. Build up to 15, 20, 30 minutes and beyond.

4 Forage and free-associate

Go for a walk and gently scan your environment, seeing if any natural objects speak to you, taking care not to overthink why

you're drawn to something. Gather your objects and find somewhere quiet, outdoors or indoors, and give yourself 60 seconds per object to speak whatever comes to mind while holding and looking at the object. You could record yourself speaking or write down notes in a journal.

5 Help your community

Find your local community garden, growing project or allotment and get involved in whatever way you can – be it volunteering once a week, or perhaps offering gardening lessons, anything that allows you to get your hands dirty, while connecting with others in your local area as you work together to look after your neighbourhood. kamalamani.co.uk

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Sally x
Editor,
Psychologies

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Wish people well and truly mean it



The achievements of others can be a bitter pill to swallow if you're struggling – but success wears many guises and comes at different stages in life, and perhaps they've paid their dues, writes Vee Sey



Bernadette* has been a ghost hovering in the recesses of my mind for many years. That fragile girl and I were best friends at the age of five and, while I was a timid child, she

was beyond terrified... Of the tadpoles we kept in jars, the silkworms we fed mulberry leaves for pink thread and the well-meaning teachers who tried to separate us. Kindred spirits in our rocky family circumstances, as the stronger one, I protected Bernadette – so thin her bony knees were broader than her thighs – from the rambunctious children who teased her, chased her and mocked her meagre lunch. I held her tiny hand and spoke for her when she was mute and tearful because her father had been unspeakably cruel to her the night before.

When Bernadette was not at school, I felt as if my Siamese twin had been hacked from my side. Bernadette was front runner for the 'least likely to succeed' award because that child was waging an uphill battle in life. Something dramatic must have happened in Bernadette's family because she disappeared from my side without warning. One day my unhappy friend was there and the next she was gone.

I have never forgotten Bernadette and imagined that she must have had a difficult life, perhaps even tragic. Then I found her. Wouldn't-say-boo-to-a-goose Bernadette grew up to be the founder of a multimillion-pound company. She has written glossy books that sell only in hardcover and has retreated to an island idyll. She wears 1970s-inspired silk scarves around her edgy ice-blonde haircut and smokes cigarettes like a film star in beautifully shot photographs. It seems her hobbled beginnings did not stop Bernadette from attaining great heights.

I am ashamed to say that I wrestle with my green-eyed self who can resent other people's success – but

this was also incredulity! I could not even think the words 'I am happy for you, Bernadette' because I did not consider the struggle and sacrifice that took her to the top of her professional game, nor how the pain of her formative years may have propelled her. How did the child I knew become this woman? The thin shape of answers and making compassionate peace with it came to me as a running metaphor, as they often do...

Mr Plod, as I like to call him, is a competitive chap at my Parkrun with a surly demeanour. On an incline he resorts to speed walking because his hips are giving him gyp. As he lumbers uphill, I trot by with my flexible joints and I can feel his annoyance because he mutters as much. When the track levels out, he surges past me, only to hold me up with a slower pace, but that's beside the point. The problem for Mr Plod is that the finishing line comes on a skyward slope and victory over me is elusive with those crooked hips. But he will not buckle to his limitations and I suspect that grit gives Mr Plod one up on me. He remembers to adapt to the hills by pacing himself, and to make hay when the course is flat. He knows that life is a marathon of ups and downs. I had forgotten that when I felt jealous of Bernadette's good fortune. I had forgotten that the challenges of her childhood meant she deserved undulating beaches of happiness as an adult, and possibly even riches and glamorous headwear.

This week, thinking about Bernadette, I let Mr Plod beat me, swaggering to victory as I faked a defeated trudge. He was triumphant in a way that he needed, and smiled at me with genuine pleasure – and it felt good for me too. I may set the record straight next time, but Mr Plod helped me see that we should not envy people's successes, because we do not know the price they have paid for them – broken heart or broken hips. Bernadette, I am sorry you were sad. I am proud of you for labouring on and finding success. I am happy for you, my friend. @VeeJaneSey



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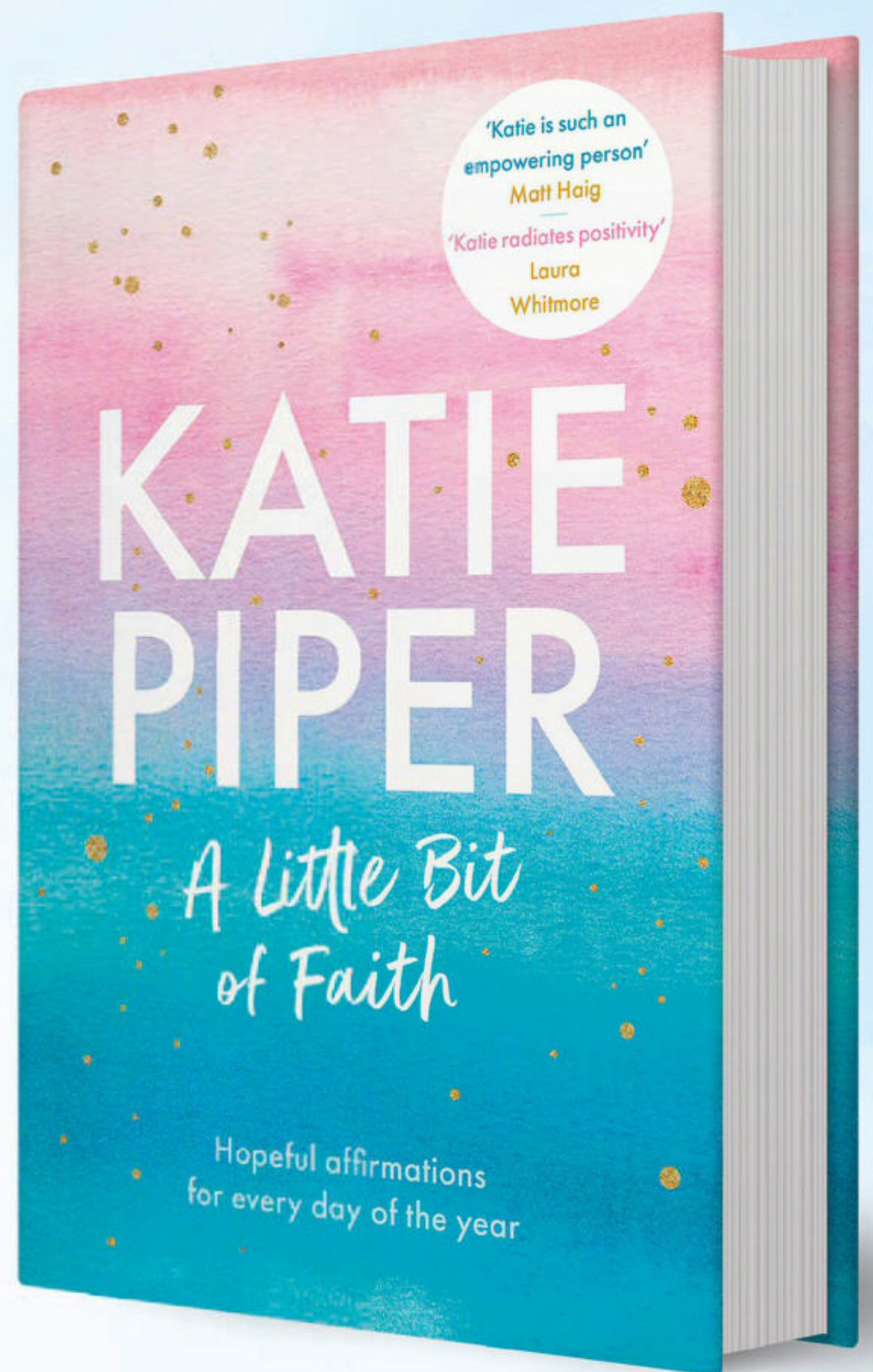
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Lightbulb moments

Self-care, or selfish?

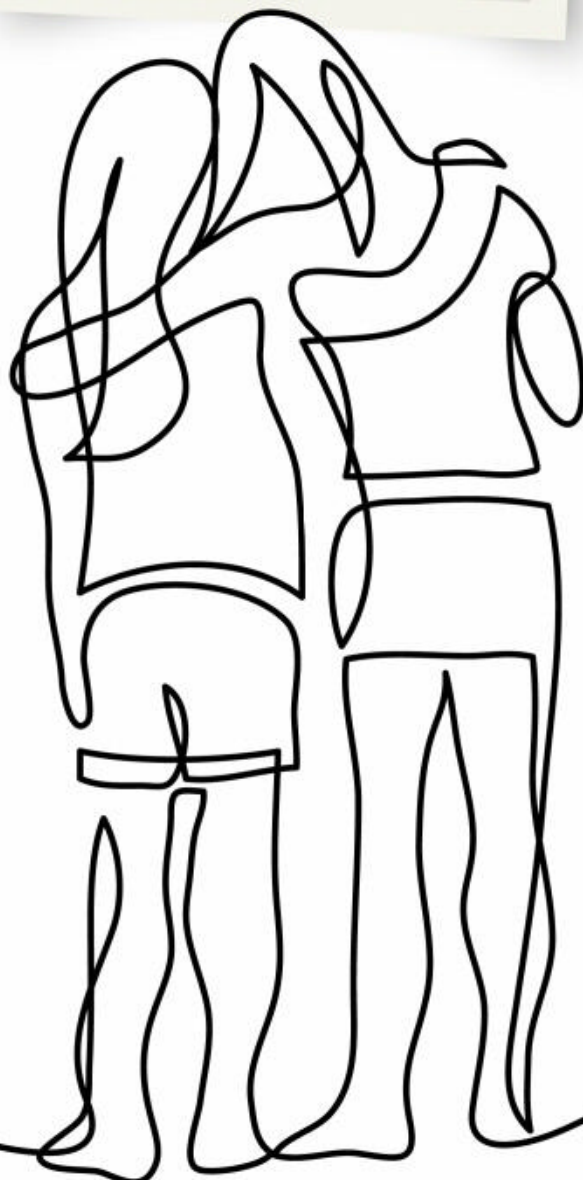
Do we really want to live in a world where we're never responsible for other people's feelings, asks Kimberley Wilson, a psychologist and author of 'How To Build A Healthy Brain'

Many people arrive in therapy in what could be described as a state of emotional (self-)neglect. Perhaps they're in the habit of being overly self-critical, frequently tolerate disrespect or never ask for help. As a consequence, I have been teaching people to care for (or love) themselves for more than a decade now.

In explaining the concept of self-care, I invariably invoke the notion of an ordinary, good parent, one who cares and protects without being either authoritarian or permissive. Someone who recognises and responds to an immediate need but balances it against future risks: 'You can stay up a bit later, but you will have to do your homework first.'

In short, self-care is about making life better for your future self. This means that incredibly mundane tasks, such as opening post or responding to text messages, can be important acts of self-care if they help you stay on top of your bills or maintain your relationships, for example. And this is why I am troubled by a new brand of selfish self-care that is in ascendance.

Quotes on social media such as 'Don't feel bad for making decisions that upset other people. You're not responsible for their happiness.' Or, 'I hope you know you don't have to apologise for anything that means you're putting yourself first.' Or, 'Sometimes self-care is cancelling plans, saying no or changing your mind without apology or lengthy explanation.' This one I reposted to my Instagram page and ran a poll, asking whether people agreed or not – 92 per cent of respondents



agreed, explaining, 'It's taking care of yourself first and focusing on yourself rather than what others expect of you,' and saying, 'Explaining myself can be exhausting – also, do I have to justify every decision I make?'

Their responses seemed to indicate that one's own needs were in conflict with those of other people. Friends and plans made with them were depicted as a drain on one's reserves, a threat to wellbeing that had to be defended. Not a single person commented on the impact on the other person of being cancelled on without apology. Because feeling guilty is 'bad' (rather than, say, a sign of having a healthy conscience) and unnecessary in a world where you're not responsible for other people's feelings.

Curiously, not apologising, renouncing responsibility for the impact of their words or actions on others, and being unreliable are oft-quoted qualities of 'toxic people' – the kind of individual you should limit contact with in your life, again in the name of self-care. So we have an inherent double standard: when I cancel without apology it's self-care, but when you do it it's toxic.

But beyond this contradiction, the rebranding of selfishness as self-care actively undermines the very thing that all the evidence tells us is most important for our long-term mental health: strong relationships. Like it or not, we need other people for our emotional wellbeing.

You might have all the self-love in the world, but what is it worth if you have no one to share it with?

kimberleywilson.co; @foodandpsych; 'How To Build A Healthy Brain' (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

Help others find confidence and joy

Do you crave purpose and fulfilment at work? Training to be a coach could bring the change you seek – and allow you to transform the lives of others. But where do you begin, and what does it entail?



After 25 years at the forefront of coaching and coach

training in the UK, I remain fascinated by the psychology of human experience and behaviour.

As pioneers of coaching to the highest standards, our focus is to inspire personal growth and make the world a brighter place through exceptional coaching. More than 4,000 people have completed our International Coach Federation (ICF) ACTP-accredited training and students leave as confident coaches ready to make a difference.

Kim

Kim Morgan MCC, CEO
Barefoot Coaching Ltd

HOW COACHING CHANGED MY LIFE

When she felt the world was changing around her and she was struggling to keep up, Rhiannon Penny, a mortgage broker, partnered with the Barefoot-trained coach Kirsty Birnstiel. Rhiannon has now left her job to start her own business and says her relationship with her family is the best it's ever been.

I I went for coaching because I didn't want to rake over the past and wanted to find my best path forward. I spent all my time pleasing other people rather than looking after myself. Coaching made me realise that I didn't have to accept the way I was being treated. It helped me stand up for myself.

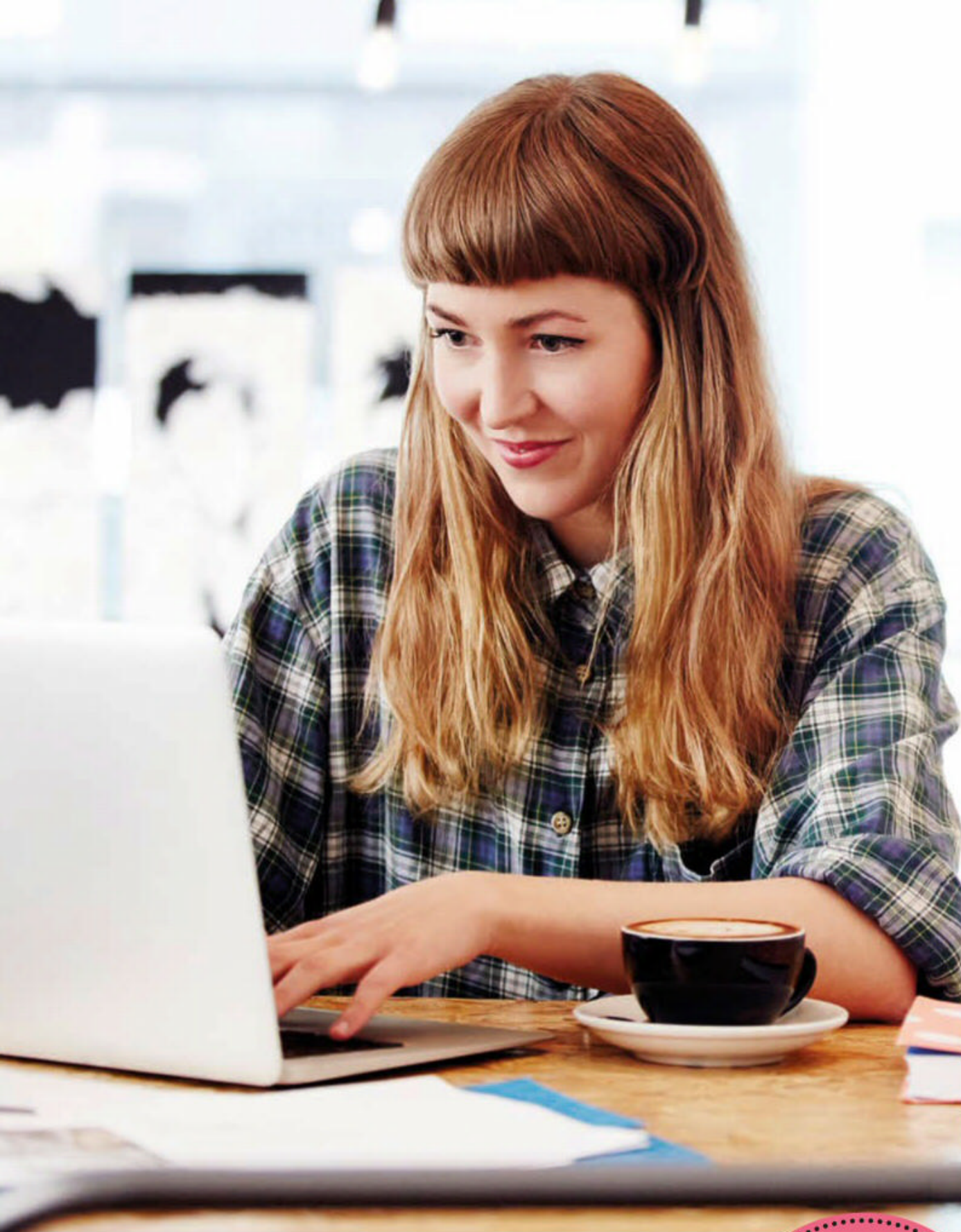
2 Kirsty asked me the miracle question: what would you do if you had just one day to do anything at all? That was the turning point for me, my lightbulb moment! I started to look at what I really wanted out of life. As a result I left my job and started my own

business, which is what I wanted but didn't have the guts to do.

3 I have also had important conversations with my family. I've been able to say, 'I love you all so much, but I need space for me.' These days my relationship with them is better than it's ever been. People use the term life-changing a lot but coaching really has been for me. I developed the confidence to make so many changes, as well as go on a three-month solo trip to the United States, which I would never have done before. I feel purposeful, anchored and much more whole.

rhiannonpenny.com

“Coaching made me realise that I didn't have to accept the way I was being treated. It helped me stand up for myself”



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**BAREFOOT
COACHING**

HOW I BECAME A COACH

KIRSTY BIRNSTIEL

I worked as a make-up artist in TV and film for years. I loved the creativity, but the best thing about it was working with people.

I have always been fascinated by what makes a person tick.

After I had my son, I decided to use my passion for people for good and became a counsellor. A couple of years ago I trained with Barefoot because I knew I could offer more as a coach. It has a different energy and I wanted to be goal-focused and forward-looking.

My aim is to help women from all walks of life build their confidence. Often women come to me when they are at a crossroads. They are unsure about what they want, or don't have the tools to get what they want. A lack of confidence can affect anyone at any stage of life, and no matter how successful someone might be, they still have things they worry about. Being let into the client's inner world is such a privilege. We create a road map, and I use some of the brilliant tools Barefoot gave me to work through their challenges. I love to see that lightbulb moment: 'Maybe I don't need that label any more' or, 'I don't always have to do this for everyone'.

The next time I see them they report back: 'I tried what we talked about. I was nervous but it was OK.' It's amazing to see the progression and to help someone go from being uncertain to finding a new direction that is a joy. I get so excited for them and I love it.

cactuscoaching.co.uk



Understand body dysmorphic disorder

We're debunking the myths, challenging the taboos and offering the tools we need to deal with some of the most misunderstood mental health issues affecting us, our families and friends

As humans, we often think about our appearance and may even harbour concerns about our perceived flaws. But while many of us have negative thoughts from time to time, for people who experience body dysmorphia, low body confidence can take on a whole new meaning. A better understanding of this condition can allow us to spot the signs when we, or someone we love, needs help, and ensure we have empathy for how they feel.

Radha Modgil, a medical doctor, and experts from the Mental Health Foundation, shed a light on body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), commonly called body dysmorphia. They offer reassurance, expose potential causes and symptoms, and share tips on how we can help ourselves and others.

What is BDD?

'BDD is a mental health condition that leads to a person spending a lot of time worrying about perceived flaws in their appearance,' says Dr Modgil. 'These flaws are usually unnoticeable to others, but to people with BDD, they are real and often mean they feel ashamed and embarrassed to talk about their symptoms. BDD can be all-consuming for a person and have a big impact on many aspects of their life,

including their work, socialising and relationships. BDD can also lead to depression and negative thoughts.'

Who is affected?

'BDD is fairly common and people of any age can be affected, but it's more often seen in teenagers and young adults. It affects both men and women equally,' says Dr Modgil. 'A frequent misconception of BDD is that a person is "vain" or "obsessed with their looks", but this is absolutely not the case. Having BDD does not mean a person is self-obsessed, it means that they have an anxiety disorder relating to their body image.'

What causes BDD?

'It's not known exactly what causes BDD, but it might be associated with genetics,' says Dr Modgil. 'You may be more likely to develop BDD if you have a relative with the condition, or other conditions such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) or depression. Research suggests it could be caused by a chemical imbalance or a traumatic past experience, such as being bullied or teased. It's also not uncommon for some people with BDD to have other mental health conditions, such as OCD, anxiety disorder or an eating disorder.'

REACH OUT

'It's important to remember that you should never feel ashamed or embarrassed of BDD, and to know that you are not alone,' says Dr Modgil. 'There are a number of support groups with advice and practical tips that can help you manage your symptoms. In addition, don't forget to talk to your GP because they will be able to recommend organisations in your area and refer you for help. One of these groups may be able to assist you:

- Anxiety UK; anxietyuk.org.uk
- International OCD Foundation; iocdf.org
- OCD Action; ocdaction.org.uk
- OCD UK; ocduk.org
- Mind; mind.org.uk
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder Foundation; bddfoundation.org
- Samaritans; samaritans.org

"Body dysmorphia can be all-consuming for a person and have a big impact on many aspects of their life"

IDENTIFY THE SIGNS

Signs of BDD can vary from person to person, but these are some common symptoms:

- Worrying a lot about a specific area of your body, particularly your face.
- Frequently comparing your looks with other people's.
- Looking at yourself in the mirror a lot – or avoiding mirrors altogether.
- Going to a lot of effort to conceal perceived flaws – for example, spending a long time applying make-up or choosing your clothes.
- Picking at your skin to make it 'smooth'.
- Feeling anxious about social situations where others may look at you or take photos.

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF AND OTHERS

'Talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), can give you the tools to manage your symptoms,' says Dr Modgil, 'but your GP may suggest medication, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a type of antidepressant. In the meantime, there are a couple of things you can try...

- Some people find it useful to get together with friends or family, or to try doing something new to distract them from negative thoughts.
- It can be helpful to do breathing exercises to relieve anxiety during a stressful situation, such as before getting ready to go out. Try this simple breathing technique, which can be done anywhere, at any time:

Without forcing it, breathe in through your nose for five seconds (you may not be able to reach five at first). Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable. Without pausing, let the breath flow out gently through your mouth, counting from one to five again. Keep doing this for three to five minutes until you feel in back control.

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NURTURE LASTING LOVE

It's been written about for centuries, but the secret to finding love, and keeping it, is as much of a mystery as ever. Heidi Scrimgeour learns how to cultivate a happy and enduring relationship



CHOOSE LOVE

I'm a big fan of a Rumi quote, and one of my favourites is: 'Close your eyes, Fall in love, Stay there.' If only the 13th-century poet had thought to include a footnote on just how to do that. The older I get, the more convinced I am that the trickiest thing about love isn't finding it, but keeping it. Falling in love is easy. Staying in love? Not so much. And I say that as someone who's been married to a lovely man for 23 mostly wonderful years.

The very things that make us fall in love with someone are often the things that change about them as the years pass. When I met my husband, aged 19, his outlook on life and sense of spontaneity were two of the most exhilarating things about him. But, at 46, and with three children between us, we have little opportunity for spontaneity. And his world view has changed dramatically.

We're lucky: we've discovered new reasons to love each other and fresh things to find attractive. But the things that first drew us to each other have shifted over time. Some days our differences dominate, creating distance. Other days, all I notice is how much he still makes me laugh. He brings me a cup of coffee in bed every morning. He remakes the bed without being asked, when I wash the bedding and leave it languishing in the tumble dryer. These aren't things that I imagined caring about when we said 'I do'. But those thoughtful, loving gestures help keep me head over heels – even when life's challenges make that incredibly hard.

'I think the idea of falling in love is an illusion, and it often renders people powerless,' says the relationship and divorce coach Maxine Clancy. 'If you fall in love, then you can fall out of it just as quickly. Whereas I believe love is a choice. And it's something you have to

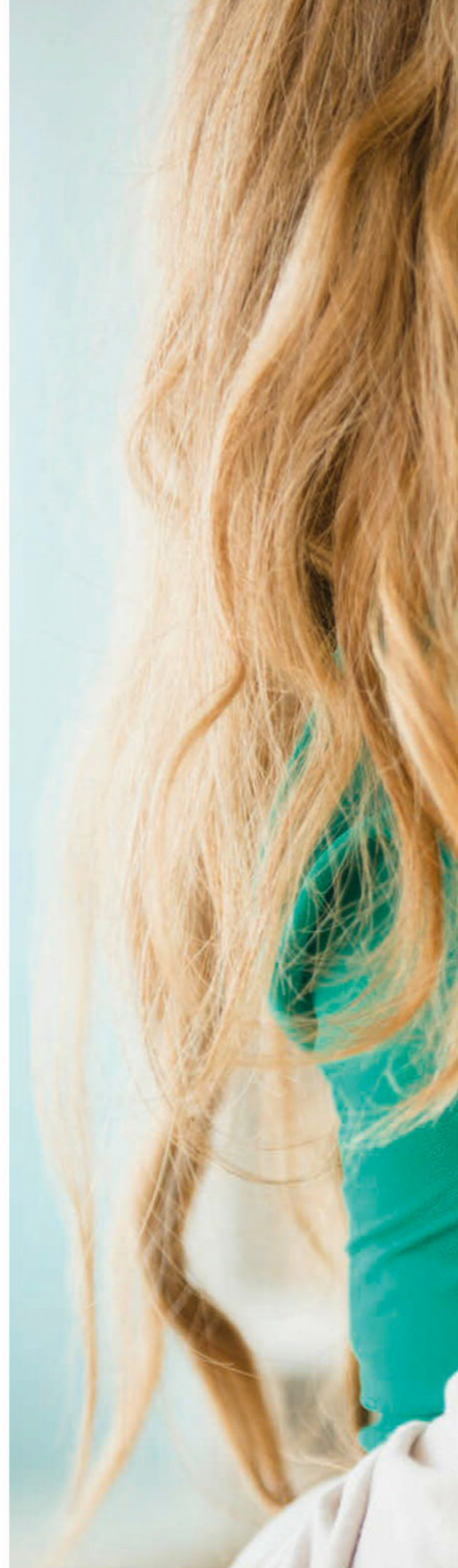
keep choosing over and over again.'

I first heard someone describe love as a choice when I was still in the first flush of falling for my husband. I thought it sounded depressing and unromantic. Why would you ever have to choose to love 'the one'? Of course, I smile at my own naivety now. Choosing to love someone isn't a chore to be endured. It doesn't mean the spark has gone and you're merely finding things to tolerate about each other. Choosing someone – on bad days, when they hurt you, and even when it feels like a sacrifice – is a richer, deeper love than the effortless kind that comes so easily in the beginning. And to be continually chosen by someone – even when you're not entirely deserving of it – is truly a gift.

'When we first meet someone, we project our ideals on to them rather than seeing them for who they are,' says Clancy. 'Then, we move from romanticised projection to unconditional love.' But it's difficult to love someone unconditionally if we're holding on to limiting beliefs about ourselves – because we also project those on to our partner. Working on ourselves is, therefore, the first step towards cultivating a lasting relationship.

'Unconditional self-love is the fertile ground upon which deep love for another can develop,' adds Clancy. 'That requires us to look within and take ownership – with compassionate kindness – of how we show up in our relationships.'

Perhaps even Rumi didn't know the secret to staying in love. But the fact that he urges us to even try convinces me that it's a goal worth pursuing. Which brings me to another of my favourite quotes, this time by an unknown author: 'Being someone's first love may be great, but to be their last is priceless.'



*"Choosing someone – on
bad days, when they hurt you
– is a richer, deeper love than
the effortless kind that comes
so easily in the beginning"*

Believing in

Words: Maxine Clancy, a holistic relationship and divorce coach



love

Experiencing love that lasts always begins with you – not finding the perfect partner. The most fundamental human needs are to be seen, heard, loved and to feel safe. Our beliefs about love and relationships are formulated throughout our childhoods. We absorb the message that love is outside of ourselves, and we have to be a certain way in order to be worthy of it.

Within our being, there is the ego, the inner child, the authentic adult and the higher self. We seek to find wholeness throughout our adult lives because the ego makes us believe that we are separate. This is where relationship problems and challenges arise.

All relationships will eventually bring up our inner childhood wounds. When the ego is in control, it operates from the need to feel safe and secure, and uses coping strategies learned in childhood to be acceptable to others and get love in return. People pleasing, perfectionism, controlling, avoiding conflict and feelings of not being enough surface in our relationships for a purpose: so that we can heal our childhood wounds.

Maybe you had a parent who was emotionally unavailable, highly critical or unable to regulate their own emotions. Your relationship is an opportunity to heal this part of you, to learn to attend to yourself and your needs, and work through your fears of rejection.

This psychological work always starts with you, although we live in a culture that tends to blame external factors, be it partners, work or lack of money. I believe that's because many of us operate from our inner child, so we're disconnected from our sense of power and authority.

*Thinking to shift the power from
your ego or inner child back
to your empowered adult self:*

1. Don't take things personally

Your partner's behaviour is not a reflection of your value or worth – it's a reflection of what's going on inside them. Your reaction or any triggers that come up reveal your inner wounds and what you need to work on and heal.

2. Take radical responsibility for your thoughts and feelings

We are meaning-making machines, and the meaning we give to things is not necessarily the truth. When you take responsibility, you reclaim your power because it helps you see your part in the relationship dynamics.

3. Recognise opportunities for growth

Relationships allow us to evolve old patterns of relating that don't serve us. When you're upset, be compassionate with yourself and observe your inner judgments. What are you labelling 'wrong' about yourself, the other person or your life?





Are you ready for love?

If you have yet to find love that lasts, it can feel like an enigma, a myth made up by those who have had better luck than you. But if you're longing for lasting love – be that a completely new relationship or a happier chapter for the one you're in – there are steps you can take to attract it.

Falling for the idea that finding love is a task to be tackled – like filing your tax return – can mean we end up repelling what we seek. This, in part, explains why people often meet 'the one' when they've given up on love or declared themselves out of the dating pool.

'People in jobs they enjoy often get other job offers, and someone who already has a partner often attracts other potential partners,' says the sex and relationship therapist Cate Mackenzie. That, she believes, is all about the energy we give out. 'When you're relaxed and happy, you're more likely to be fun and engaging to be with, sending signals for others to connect with you. Whereas when you emit a sense of urgency about finding love, that anxiety can be off-putting to other people and might even chase them away.'

Taking steps to ready yourself for a new or deeper relationship can help you welcome those connections when they come your way. 'If you're looking for love, it's important to be ready and open to receive it,' says Mackenzie. 'That someone special could turn up at any point and, if you're not prepared, you may not be ready to swap numbers, let alone welcome them into your life.'

'Most people live with internalised false beliefs about love, and their lovability or worthiness to be loved. You may think "I'm not enough", "no one will love me" or "I need to be perfect to be loved". It's unconscious, so we often end up attracting people who treat us in ways that mirror those beliefs,' Mackenzie explains. The antidote is to recognise that we are the source of our own experience.

How? Start by looking at all the areas of your life where you are not demonstrating love, Mackenzie suggests. 'How do you talk to yourself? How do you talk about your body? Do you spend time doing things you enjoy? Are you cultivating your hobbies, talents or passions? Are you creatively expressing yourself? Listen to your inner voice and demonstrate your worthiness to be loved.'

***"If you're looking for love,
 it's important to be ready
 and open to receive it"***

RECEIVING LOVE

We tend to talk about love as something that can be pursued, but Katie Phillips, a women's empowerment master coach who helps midlife single women prepare to meet their soulmate, says it's less about finding love and more about receiving it – whether you are looking for love, or have been with the same person for decades and want to keep the flame alive.

'I believe one of the biggest blocks to love is the idea that it is something you have to figure out and make happen,' says Phillips. 'But you have enough on your plate, and the idea of figuring out dating or how to meet someone can exhaust you before you even begin. Women don't need another thing to do, and when you are giving out that energy, you may actually repel what you so desire – to love and be loved.'

Phillips believes our relationships hold a mirror up to us, highlighting where we have healing to do. 'Humans are always evolving and growing, and our relationships show us how – if you desire a healthy, emotionally available, intimate relationship, you must be able to have that with yourself first,' she says. 'You must be OK with prioritising your relationship with yourself too. That means dropping the guilt around putting yourself first and valuing your time. When you have an empowered relationship with yourself, you become an energetic match for someone who has that with themselves.'

If you are committed to being the best version of you then you will attract the same in your partner.'

Identifying your limiting beliefs is an important starting point. 'We get what we think about – our thoughts are creating our lives, so start to notice what you believe you are worthy of,' says Phillips. She recommends this exercise to rewire your mind and let go of beliefs that are harming you:

1 Write down your current beliefs about love and relationships.

This could be 'I'm not worthy of a relationship' or 'I'm not as important as other people'.

2 Decide on a new belief that you would like to adopt to replace your current belief.

3 Finally, turn the new belief into an affirmation.

'Affirmations help assert the beliefs you desire to adopt as your new normal, and start with present-tense words, such as I am, I have, I love, I enjoy, I create,' explains Phillips. An affirmation should feel realistic to you and evoke positive, good feelings. 'Display them around your house, set them as reminders on your phone, or record them as voice notes and listen to them while you're getting ready for your day, driving to work or walking the dog,' she adds.

"If you are committed to being the best version of you, you will attract the same in your partner"

"If you desire a healthy, emotionally available, intimate relationship, you must be able to have that with yourself first"





KEEPING LOVE ALIVE

Why do some people stay madly in love for ever, while other couples become irritated by every little thing the other one does before the honeymoon is even over? Do some people simply have better skills at keeping love alive, even against the odds?

Good news: you're not at the mercy of love's whimsical ways. You can actively cultivate lasting love, much like you nurture plants in a greenhouse rather than leaving them out in the frost and hoping for the best. Psychology shows that the way you think about your relationship directly impacts what you're likely to experience within it. Your thoughts shape your feelings and your feelings influence your actions.

A thought consistently dwelled upon can become a belief, and beliefs impact our engagement with the world. If you believe that you're bad at relationships or that partners will always tire of you, your brain will actively filter out interactions that contradict that belief.

If you start to believe that the spark has gone out of your relationship, you're less likely to look for signs that it can be rekindled. And if you're in a partnership but window shopping – even in your daydreams – your relationship will likely feel disappointing. Reframing the way you think about love puts you in the strongest position for experiencing it.

'It may well be that some couples have such great chemistry and

magnetism (or know themselves really well and can communicate brilliantly) that they have harmony for the rest of their days, but in my experience most couples have issues to work through,' says the therapist Cate Mackenzie.

It can feel, in the midst of working through those issues, as if we're pushing water up a hill. Perhaps we fell for the story that real love shouldn't be this difficult. Or maybe we're fooled by couples on social media whose curated highlights make being in love look easy. In fact, cultivating love will always require effort.

'For many people, there may be an initial harmony as the sex hormones dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin,



the hormones of falling in love, rush through their bodies and they feel as if they've met the perfect person,' adds Mackenzie. 'This head rush of Eros energy lasts between six months to two years, depending on the relationship.'

When that first flush of lust wanes, we can reach the conclusion that the spark has gone from our relationship. But actually, this can be the moment when love grows richer and deeper. Rather than defining it as the end of love, Mackenzie recommends reframing it as the beautiful gift of having a long-term partner. 'You get a deep opportunity to grow and develop into a more authentic and

***“You can
actively
cultivate
lasting love,
much like you
nurture the
plants in a
greenhouse”***

well-rounded person as a result of being challenged and learning how to be in a relationship,' she explains.

Instead of dwelling on your partner's faults, shift the focus on to you. Invest in your friendships, make time for fun and consider counselling or therapy. 'These things often mean you walk through the door a friendlier person, which can lift a relationship,' says Mackenzie.

'It can be tempting to conclude that all would be well if your partner changed,' she adds, 'but this moment in a relationship can be an amazing opportunity to heal the past, take responsibility for your own needs and wants, and take a journey into your own vulnerability and authenticity.'



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO ALLOW LOVE TO FLOURISH?

Whether you're single and looking to find your soulmate, or fear the fire in a long-term partnership has fizzled out, take our test to discover what you should foster to let love in, and thrive

Circle the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section, or sections, you circled most to identify your barriers to lasting love

1 Your ideal relationship is based on mutual

- Honesty ☐
- ♥ Support ☐
- ◆ Trust ☐
- Respect ☐

2 In past relationships, you've spent too much time

- ♥ Doing things to please the other person ☐
- ◆ Being jealous for no reason ☐
- Focusing on differences ☐
- Overthinking things that never happened ☐

3 Your biggest relationship worry is

- ♥ Doing all the giving but not getting enough back ☐
- ◆ Being cheated on ☐
- Being trapped with the wrong person ☐
- It all going wrong and leaving you vulnerable ☐

4 Life would be easier if you were more

- ♥ Self-sufficient ☐
- Easy-going ☐
- ◆ Self-confident ☐
- Fearless ☐

5 At a party, you would be most upset by your partner

- Abandoning you if you felt anxious ☐
- ♥ Not leaving when you want to go ☐
- ◆ Flirting with someone else ☐
- Being boring or embarrassing ☐

6 You're at your best when you feel

- ♥ Understood ☐
- ◆ Connected ☐
- Content ☐
- Accepted ☐

7 In your fantasy world, you would always be

- ♥ Adored and approved of ☐
- ◆ Calm and in control ☐
- Relaxed and easy-going ☐
- Prepared to give things a go ☐

8 Sometimes you wonder if you'll ever feel truly

- ♥ Happy ☐
- ◆ Secure ☐
- Satisfied ☐
- Safe ☐

9 People would be surprised at how much you

- Doubt your own judgment ☐
- Worry about what to say ☐
- ♥ Say yes to things you don't want to do ☐
- ◆ Feel jealous of other people ☐

10 If you had a happy relationship, you would feel

- ◆ Better about yourself ☐
- Centred and sure of yourself ☐
- Calmer and less anxious ☐
- ♥ Supported and understood ☐

Turn the page to discover
what's undermining your
relationships





What will bring you happiness in love?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

Self-belief

If you yearn for a lasting relationship, but question whether you deserve one, you may be inadvertently setting your relationships up to fail. You may feel baffled by why you seem to end up with people who let you down or neglect you, especially if you strive to put the other person first. But if you being super-considerate is actually more about people pleasing, it won't take long for resentment to build.

Do you find it hard to ask for what you want from others, yet expect them somehow to know what you need? You may be unintentionally putting yourself into victim mode. And when you make yourself the victim in a relationship, your partner has two options: to become either your rescuer or your persecutor – and they may switch between the two.

Feeling supported and appreciated is a core element of a healthy relationship. But when your self-esteem depends on another person, you have given away your power. Accepting yourself, flaws, faults and all, is the foundation for forming great relationships with others. Before you run that script in your head about being let down, ask yourself: Is what you are expecting from other people reasonable? What could you do to feel more content and fulfilled?

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♦

Trust

When you struggle with trust in relationships, it's easy to get hijacked by insecurity, and the fear that your partner is a heartbeat away from being attracted to someone else. As much as you try and control it, do you still feel yourself overcome with toxic feelings when you catch your partner seemingly deep in conversation with an attractive stranger at a party, or giving a passer-by a second glance?

Your insecurity may convince you that your partner is only with you by chance, and as soon as someone better comes along, they'll be off. You may be well aware that your lack of trust is undermining the relationship, yet still find that your default mode is to expect the worst of your partner rather than the best, draining the joy for you both.

At the heart of insecurity is a feeling of inadequacy, and working on this is the key to freeing yourself from jealousy. When you catch yourself being drawn into a destructive thinking spiral, say 'stop', then consciously focus your mind on what you bring to your relationship: Are you compassionate, adventurous, empathic, motivated, supportive or funny? Next, do some constructive, rather than destructive, thinking: What can you plan to enjoy with your loved one? What funny or interesting information or stories from your day can you share with your partner when you see each other again?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ●

Commitment

It's good to have clarity about what you expect from a relationship, but sometimes high standards become unrealistic expectations. In a healthy relationship, differences are valued, and each partner grows by understanding the triggers for conflict between you. But that can be hard, and sometimes it's easier to give up and look elsewhere for a 'better fit'.

When small irritations spiral out of control, they can trigger an exhausting internal debate about whether or not the relationship is working. But sometimes, being hyper-aware of other people's faults is a defence mechanism to avoid commitment. When we stop ourselves from feeling completely connected, we're protecting ourselves against being hurt by rejection.

It might take your partner threatening to leave for you to feel certain about your feelings for them – which can be painful for both of you. If your partner's 'faults' were there when you met, but didn't put you off, your focus on them as the relationship progresses may be fuelled by commitment anxiety. Explore with compassionate curiosity what scares you about intimacy. Professional help from a therapist can help you gain the perspective you need.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

Courage

Do you ever feel that other people find relationships easier than you do, or that they just don't seem to happen for you in the way they do for others? If you're a natural overthinker or catastrophiser, you can create so many mental hurdles to jump over that even the idea of a relationship seems impossible to you. You may worry whether or not a connection is real or in your imagination, or whether the attraction is one-sided, or get caught up in a thinking spiral about whether or not you really want a relationship at all.

It's easy for you to conjure up all the possible challenges and worries that a relationship might bring: Will they accept me for who I am? Will they think I am not slim or successful enough? What if I get trapped in an unhappy relationship and don't know how to end it? When we are deeply anxious about relationships, we can subconsciously send out 'stay away' signals that keep people at arm's length. It may feel safer in your single comfort zone, but there is also a side of you that craves a deep connection. And as an empathic and thoughtful person, you have much to offer.

Relationships do take effort, and sometimes they can cause us pain. But working through the challenges they bring is a way that we grow as people. Is it time perhaps for you to take that leap?

“Honouring each other’s dreams is vital

Sarah Bramall from St Albans in Hertfordshire met her husband, Jon, on a dance floor in Leeds in 1999. They have three children aged 13, 11 and seven. ‘I had no idea that meeting would turn into love!’ says Sarah, 43. ‘We were university students and just two weeks earlier, Jon had signed up to join the army after his medical degree. It was a 10-year commitment that would mean him moving to Plymouth at the other end of the country. It didn’t seem a big deal, until three years later,’ she says.

‘I was working as an English teacher and it seemed as if our lives were taking us in different directions. I decided to leave my job and go with him, but at a job interview someone said to me: “You’re giving up your career for your boyfriend.”

‘The words struck a chord. I realised we could never be happy if I had to give up my dreams for his. After that, I took a job in Italy, but when I told Jon he went pale – he’d already bought an engagement ring!’ she laughs. ‘Despite the distance that would lie between us, I said yes. It was difficult, but we made it work, even when he was deployed to Iraq. We got married in May 2005, when he made a mad dash home for the ceremony,’ says Sarah.

‘But things got tougher when we started a family,’ she explains. ‘We were living on a military base and I tried to integrate my life with those of the other mothers and their children, but it wasn’t for me. I found that going back to work helped me stay sane, with a sense of my own identity.’

As a parent, Sarah’s support network became invaluable: ‘Having the solid backing of my old friends, along with regular visits from them and my mother, meant I didn’t feel so alone when Jon was away,’ she says.

‘We’ve had rough times but keeping our independence and learning to compromise means we are still here, 22 years and three children later.

‘Jon gave me unquestioning



emotional and practical support when I changed careers to become a life coach five years ago, and knowing that he respected my need to do this meant everything to me.’

What is the secret to their lasting love, despite the challenges? ‘Shared values, friendship and a commitment to making our relationship work are key,’ Sarah says.

‘During the pandemic I’ve been holding the fort at home while Jon works as an ICU consultant. I remember him packing his bag to go to the hospital in the early weeks, saying: “I don’t know when I’ll be coming back.” It felt like it did when he went away to war,’ she remembers.

‘But we’ve gone through so much that I’m confident our relationship can overcome any obstacle. We just need to keep listening and working at it.’

Find out more about Sarah Bramall’s life coaching services at the coachingcatalysts.com

Take part in our reader survey

and help make 'Psychologies' even better!

It's quick and easy to take part at psychologies.co.uk/readersurvey



We want to know what you love about *Psychologies* – and what you're not so keen on – so please complete our reader survey to help us make your magazine even better. All participants in the survey will be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win one of three Amazon vouchers worth £100!*

We've worked hard to improve *Psychologies* in the past year, and now we'd like your help to keep going! All you need to do is head over to our website, psychologies.co.uk/readersurvey and fill in a questionnaire about the magazine, which will help us to craft our

editorial content for the coming year. We want to know what you like – and also what you don't like – about the magazine, so we can focus on what matters to you and bring you more of the content that you love, that really makes a difference in your life.

All participants in the survey will be entered into a prize draw and three people will receive an Amazon gift voucher, each worth £100.

Thank you for your time!

Sally x Editor

*This prize draw is for the Kelsey Media Health & Wellbeing reader surveys featured in 'Top Santé', 'Psychologies' and 'Women's Fitness' magazines. Entries close 4 March 2022. The winners will be drawn on 5 March 2022 and contacted within three working days. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. We take your privacy seriously. You can view our full privacy policy at kelsey.co.uk/privacy-notice. Full Kelsey Media competition terms of entry can be viewed at kelsey.co.uk/competition-terms-conditions

psychologies inspiration

*“A winner is
a dreamer
who never
gives up”*

Nelson Mandela



7 reasons you should be sleeping under a Southdown duvet

Make every night a great night nestled in a wool duvet, designed to last and with your comfort in mind

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'The wool is hypoallergenic and will reduce skin irritations and breathing problems'

4 Southdown duvets are certified flame retardant. They are completely safe and in the event of a fire, the bedding will simply smoulder to a cool residue without igniting or giving off any toxic fumes.

5 Southdown wool adjusts to the microclimate around your body. The wool wicks moisture away from you, where it evaporates through the duvet, leaving you comfortably dry and warm. Our lovely customers who are going through the menopause know they can rely on our wool to combat those dreadful night sweats so they can sleep more comfortably for longer.

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Whether you love or loathe Valentine's Day, 14 February is the perfect time to lavish a little extra TLC on someone special, including yourself!

WORDS: HEIDI SCRIMGEOUR

SWEET NOTHINGS Indulge in everyone's favourite aphrodisiac, chocolate!



The Mindful Cook chocolate-making kit, £47, themindfulcook.co.uk

Learn how to make your own rich, dark chocolate at home with this online course created by the food and eating coach Josie Buck. Everything you need, including ethically sourced ingredients and moulds, is included.

Smash Kiss cake, from £23.99, sweettreebybrowns.co.uk

This creamy Belgian chocolate shell is packed full of an assortment of delicious milk chocolates. It's designed by Sweet Tree by Browns to be whacked like a piñata, and you can personalise it!



Divine chocolate hearts, £3, divinechocolate.com

Divine is the only Fairtrade chocolate company co-owned by cocoa farmers, and these hearts live up to the brand name. They taste heavenly, velvety smooth and very moreish.



Set a date...

Creative ways to keep the spark alive every day



Hello Day Swag planner, from £46, hellodayplanner.com

Make more time for love by pencilling it into your schedule. This spiral-bound planner is perfect for booking in date nights or focusing your mind on your relationship goals for the year ahead. You can personalise the planner with your initials and customise it. We love the inspirational quotes, wellbeing prompts and the daily box for ticking off 10-minute accomplishments.

Mood Cards for Me, £12.50, themoodclub.com

Coupled up? Liven up your chats with these activity cards, designed to help you connect and communicate with thought-provoking prompts that encourage self-reflection, growth and a positive mindset. They are plastic-free and printed on Forest Stewardship Council paper.



A Year of Dates, from £21, ayearofdates.co.uk

Want more love in your life? Whether you wish to spend quality time with a partner or make more time for fun with a friend, this innovative range of date boxes is the ideal creative tool to help you make it happen.



KITCHEN ROMANCE

They say the way to the heart is through the stomach...

1 Heart-shaped chopping board, £20, laurelhousedesigns.co.uk

Nothing says 'I love you' like a custom-made chopping board! This one from Laurel House Designs can be engraved with the wording of your choice and is made from sustainable bamboo.



2 The Chocolate Indulgence box, from £47, meetaegle.com

Ditch the rom-com and ice cream and feed your body some goodness from the Meet Aegle Clinic. This hamper, curated by a nutritionist, contains healthy swaps of foods you love, and will introduce you to new ingredients.



3 Date Night recipe box trio, £160, needi.co.uk

Forget restaurant reservations – choose from a menu of dine-in date-night dishes guaranteed to impress. Buy Needi's Date Night Trio bundle and you can arrange delivery of the boxes – inclusive of any dietary requirements – whenever you're in the mood for love.



Love you!

Because self-care isn't selfish



Espa Connection pillow mist, £25, espaskincare.com

Unplug from the world and connect with yourself or your partner with this sensual pillow mist, containing eight natural essential oils, each with aphrodisiac properties. Mist it on to your bed linen, your skin or into the air and breathe deeply while the blend of ylang ylang, patchouli, sandalwood and jasmine promote a sense of closeness, intimacy and wellbeing.



Seven Days of Self Care, £42, sevenyays.com

Want to show someone how much you care? Treat them to this glorious gift from Seven Yays that's like an advent calendar for a week of everyday life. Choose from 28 box options, and more than 400 treats to be discovered inside. It's perfect for marking an anniversary or just letting someone know that you celebrate their existence!

Adjustable plume ring, from £49, fayah.com

Why wait for someone else to put a ring on it or treat you to a little box of something precious? This feather ring from Fiyah is designed to remind you of the presence of a guardian angel watching over you. It's the perfect love token to you from you.



SOFT TOUCH

Show your skin some love

Green People Glow Wild skincare duo, £28, greenpeople.co.uk

Whether you're glamming up or going about your business as usual, this scent-free day-to-night organic skincare set is a treat for the skin. Included is the 24-Hour cream and Fruitful Nights night cream, which are vegan and suitable for all skin types, ages and genders – so you can buy it for him and use it when he's not looking!



Dr K Nano Emulsified Heating muscle rub, 27.49, drk-cbd.co.uk

Want to turn up the heat? No, not like that! This muscle rub has a mild heating sensation to help ease aches and pains and aid recovery after exercise. It contains 85 per cent active CBD and smells gorgeous. Think Tiger Balm with added zing.



You Melt My Heart lip balm, £4.99, madbeauty.com

Whether you're puckering up for love or need an injection of moisture for dry lips, this cute heart-shaped cherry-flavoured lip gloss from Mad Beauty is mouth-watering.

BIG NIGHT IN

The ultimate accessories to make it one to remember



Country Mouse Herringbone merino wool throw, £75, countrymouse.co.uk

Turn down the lights and get snuggly on the sofa or in bed with this beautiful throw made from 100 per cent merino lambswool. At 140cm x 185cm, it's just the right size for sharing – if you can bear to!

Beeutiful Body candle, £18, beeutiful.co.uk

Get yourself in the mood for love by lighting this candle, made from soy, beeswax and coconut oil combined with a blend of essential oils. It's designed so that the pool of oil left after burning can be massaged into your skin once cooled! Choose from Warm Orange and Ginger, Neroli and Vanilla or Rose Spice.



The Indulge Collection gift set, £15.50, hubbleandbubble.org

Make a date with the bathroom and spoil yourself with this luxurious set from Hubble & Bubble, containing a bath bomb, bath cake, bath salts and wax melts. Or send it to someone you love and ask if you can join them!



PROPOSE A TOAST

Coffee or cocktails, raise a glass in the name of love

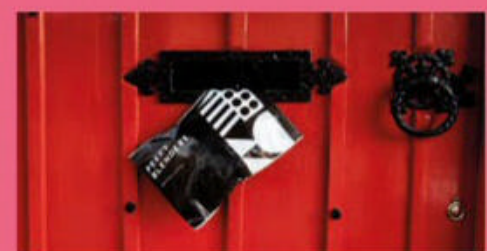
Prosecco Rosé DOC, £9.95, slurp.co.uk

Don't wait for a special occasion to break open the bubbles. This blush Prosecco from i heart Wines is fresh, fruity and floral, making it the perfect tipple for celebrating yourself.



Personalised coffee, £10, perkyblenders.com

Leave the champagne on ice if you're more of a caffeine fiend and celebrate with a personalised pack of the cult favourite Perky Blenders' signature Forest blend. Choose from three pack colours and add your name or a memorable phrase to bring a smile to your face every morning.



Build a Cocktail box, £29.99, moorehousecocktails.co.uk

Whether you're treating the one you love or yourself to a glass of something celebratory, this beautiful set from Moore House will do the trick. Choose three hand-crafted cocktails and add a complimentary hand-written gift note.





Join Ollie's army

**NOW
ONLINE!**

**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**

Despite 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.

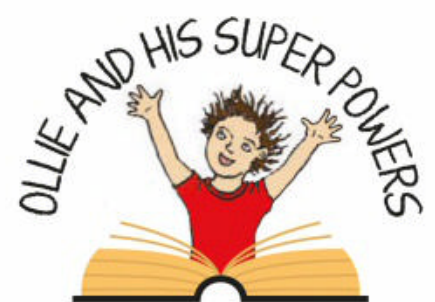
Licence to help

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 us for a prospectus and let's talk about getting you 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, or contact us via email at info@ollieandhissuperpowers.com. We would love 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

I Heart



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



“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for a smile is the beginning of love”

Mother Teresa

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

WHAT EMPTY NEST?

Motherhood is a labour of love, then babies grow up and find their own way in the world... But with a growing number of adult children living at home, the ongoing responsibility can weigh heavily on a parent. Vee Sey steers her family towards modern domestic harmony

Bellies are full, PJs are on, the home is cosy and the wolf has backed away from the door. My two children are watching a film with a deafening soundtrack that pierces right through me, and I can barely hear the news on the radio as I put on a load of washing and finish up in the kitchen. I have brought home the bacon, kept house and nurtured my young for another day.

‘How old are your little ones?’ you might ask, and the answer is somewhat embarrassing for all three members of my nuclear family: my kids are in their 20s and, while I adore the bones of them, I am worn down by this level of parental care, not to mention financial support, which they still need and I desperately want to provide. But I know co-residential motherhood for two and a half decades is taking its toll on me, and I resent it at times.

While some empty nesters are lamenting their aloneness with longing, and liberated others are celebrating time to travel, freedom to pursue their passions and money for themselves once the children have moved out, my offspring are of the boomerang variety: the rising phenomenon of adult children returning to the family home – after their studies

and due to the unattainable cost of housing – to stretch a parent’s tolerance, devotion and bank account. The ONS reports a 46 per cent increase in the number of young people aged 20 to 34 living with their parents, while research by the London School of Economics suggests that intergenerational cohabitation can have a negative impact on a parent’s quality of life. And here we are...

Bethan O’Riordan, a psychotherapist and parenting expert, offers comfort, telling me that I am not to blame for continuing to ‘be mother’ as I did when they were helpless, instead of telling them to look after themselves (which remains on the tip of my tongue). Rationally, I see that I am being my own worst enemy taking everything on my shoulders and doing them no favours with regards independence – but I can’t seem to stop myself. ‘The mother’s role will always be to give, provide and care, and this should naturally end at a point where the child becomes an adult, at around the age of 18,’ explains O’Riordan. But, while they are still under my wing and roof, ‘not taking care of them goes against the grain of everything we are told as mothers’, she adds.

O’Riordan says that my wellbeing may be coming

Expert advice



Bethan O’Riordan is a psychotherapist specialising in parental support. Join her Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/calmparent/bethanoriordan.com



Esther O’Brien is a money coach and mentor. For her free ‘Five things stopping you from reaching your money goals’ tips, go to subscribe.page.com/money-goals



PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY IMAGES

second place to my maternal role, which is inherent within the family system. ‘The difficulty with this situation is that none of the adults have the opportunity to differentiate, individuate and become their own person who is not answerable to anyone else. Living at home means that there will always be a level of emotional and physical enmeshment whereby the child never gets to move away from being a child and the mother remains the mother.’ So it seems we are all doing what comes naturally, but for an unnaturally long time. How, then, do I deal with feeling put upon while we play the extended version of happy families – and then not feel that I have let them down by insisting on change?

‘In practical terms, can the adult children do more tasks and take ownership of more inside the household?’ she probes, and of course I know they can. It’s clear that I will have to snap the rod I have made for my own back and renegotiate our terms and conditions, but how can we thrive psychologically as we recreate the norm? ‘From an emotional perspective,’ says O’Riordan, ‘what the mother can do is take a stand for a better and higher functioning of herself. Families work as an emotional unit, but when one person steps out of their patterned position and away from the mental concept of togetherness towards a more helpful way of being, this changes the dynamic. If the mother changes for the better, this encourages the children to do the same, then being at home together doesn’t feel quite so together.’

The martyred mother

With reflection, I realise that my own mum’s self-sacrificing and long-suffering nature has permeated my parenting and, to deal with my guilt about pulling away for the greater good, O’Riordan recommends self-compassion – although she admits it sounds airy-fairy as a solution. ‘However,’ she stresses, ‘if we look at the function of guilt, it can ease it: Guilt is our mind’s way of ensuring that we do no harm. Imagine how wild we would be if we had no system letting us know that it wasn’t OK to do certain things! But the most important part of guilt is to be able to contextualise it and understand it. The most powerful way of developing the skills for this is by cultivating self-kindness, which is a true mental strength that helps us understand ourselves. It’s like having an inner ally who always



“It seems we are all doing what comes naturally – for an unnaturally long time”

has our best interests at heart. It allows us to see our feelings as valid and offers us awareness and the opportunity to create actionable steps towards alleviating our suffering.’

To complicate matters, we have the flip side of my complaining, which is that motherhood has been my focus all my adult life, I enjoy babying them when I am in the mood and the notion of me being surplus to requirements fills me with sadness. ‘This is a matter of identity,’ explains O’Riordan. ‘Everything we do holds a function, so it’s important to take an objective step back and ask: “What is the function of what I am doing and how do I want things to be?”. Historically, caregiving was the role of women, but things are changing. I think women and mothers are caught in limbo between old stereotypes and the new versions of who we want to be.’ And then she drops the bombshell: It may be that I need ‘re-mothering’ to break the pattern of hard-done-by mothers in our family.

The idea of mothering another person, even myself, is unappealing – but the way my mother felt about motherhood, and how that made me feel as a child, is certainly at play here. But I don’t have to suffer because my mother portrayed herself as a victim of motherhood, and I don’t have to protect my children from feeling that they are a burden, as I felt. ‘Re-mothering is a process of exploring what is helpful and serves the individual and family well, and observing and changing what does not. When we were children, we absorbed our mother’s shadow side – the parts that were unspoken, fears and regrets – and often this is what is repeating itself. It’s about figuring out what mothering values were projected on to you and what are your own,’ she says.

‘The tricky thing about a perceived abandoning of our (even adult) children is that as our children age, our minds and bodies release emotional memories of what it was like to be that age. We remember the hurt and the pain and unconsciously don’t want to recreate that within our children. Many parents are fearful to say no to their children but, in fact, the more that you can be congruent to you, the more that allows a child to be congruent to themselves.’ This speaks to me loud and clear, and I realise that I do not have to be trapped in unwilling selflessness to be a good mother to two grown-ups. It also tells me that I must lead the way and they will follow.

As I prepare to empower myself as a daughter, woman and mother, O’Riordan outlines the way forward: ‘Take the focus away from the children and move it to your process of becoming an individual within the family, because awareness is not enough. Explore your needs – nutrition, exercise, who you spend time with, how you enjoy life, your lifestyle choices and sleep... all the parts that make up you. Gain a greater sense of being you – what makes you feel good, fulfilled and at peace, and do more of it!’



“I do not have to be selfless to be a good mother to two adults”

Perhaps, and in a different world, my children should have moved out by now, but I want my still-full nest to be welcoming and nurturing, for all three of us. I can’t deny that I have regrets about aspects of the childhood my children have had: the years I was physically absent working evenings... emotionally absent, preoccupied with my love life after my divorce and grief-stricken after my mother died, cooked spaghetti for so many days on the trot that they begged me to stop with tears in their eyes. I can see that, rather than my children being selfish giant toddlers, it is I who has shaped the mechanisms of our household – to right my self-perceived wrongs while continuing a legacy of martyrdom that I have fostered. I will always be their mother. I will always love them more than life itself. But it is time for a new era in the family home that we share – because none of us can spread our wings and fly when I am clipping them.



LOVE AND MONEY

Armed with psychological awareness, it's time to address the elephant in the room: the financial burden. Esther O'Brien, a money coach, is adamant I should not be footing the bill if my children are earning. 'The lesson they need to learn is that living expenses do not come for free,' she says. 'Society has changed and children are staying home for longer, but it does not mean that they are your financial responsibility for ever. It's about what each family can manage and having a conversation.'

To figure out how my personality influences my handling of the situation, she wants to determine my 'money type'. She asks me to take a quiz by The Money Coaching Institute – and the results are no surprise. 'The quiz reveals that you are an "innocent", a "victim", an "artist", and a "martyr" when it comes to money,' she says. There's the martyr again. 'The innocent is naive, feels powerless and likes to leave everything to others. The victim is stuck in the past,

blaming everybody else rather than taking responsibility. They may seek to be rescued and can live out a self-fulfilling prophecy. The artist is non-materialistic and spiritual and would prefer not to think about money,' she explains. 'Martyrs rescue people and put others' needs before their own, then resent it.' I know this much is true. But she adds: 'Remember that you are not these things – this is just behaviour that you display, and you can change it.'

O'Brien assures me that payment of board by employed children is not an old-fashioned concept. 'I understand your children may be saving for their own homes but they are living in yours and asking for a contribution is not outlandish,' she says. 'It would cost a lot more if they were living on their own!'

So how do I grasp the nettle? 'Arrange a family meeting,' she advises. 'Explain how much things cost and what you expect them to contribute. It could be a percentage of what they earn or an

actual amount – but be very clear that you expect them to help out.'

She outlines a practical plan: 'Make a list of all the household expenses: food, council tax and utilities, then add it up. Do it properly. Do not guess, because food often catches people out. Explain that this is what it costs to run the house, but you are subsidising them and need them to share the load. Ask them what they feel is fair and have an idea of what you think is fair. You could also make a meal plan for the week together, whereby they could each pay for and make one meal or more, which will massively cut down your food bill,' she says.

'We identified that you have characteristics of innocent, victim, martyr and artist. You don't like confrontation, preferring to bury your head in the sand in the hope everything will be OK, but you must get on top of this to stop the simmering inside,' O'Brien concludes.

**[moneycoachinginstitute.com/
money-type-quiz](https://moneycoachinginstitute.com/money-type-quiz)**



psychologies inspiration

*“How many lessons
of faith and beauty
we should lose,
if there were no
winter in our year!”*

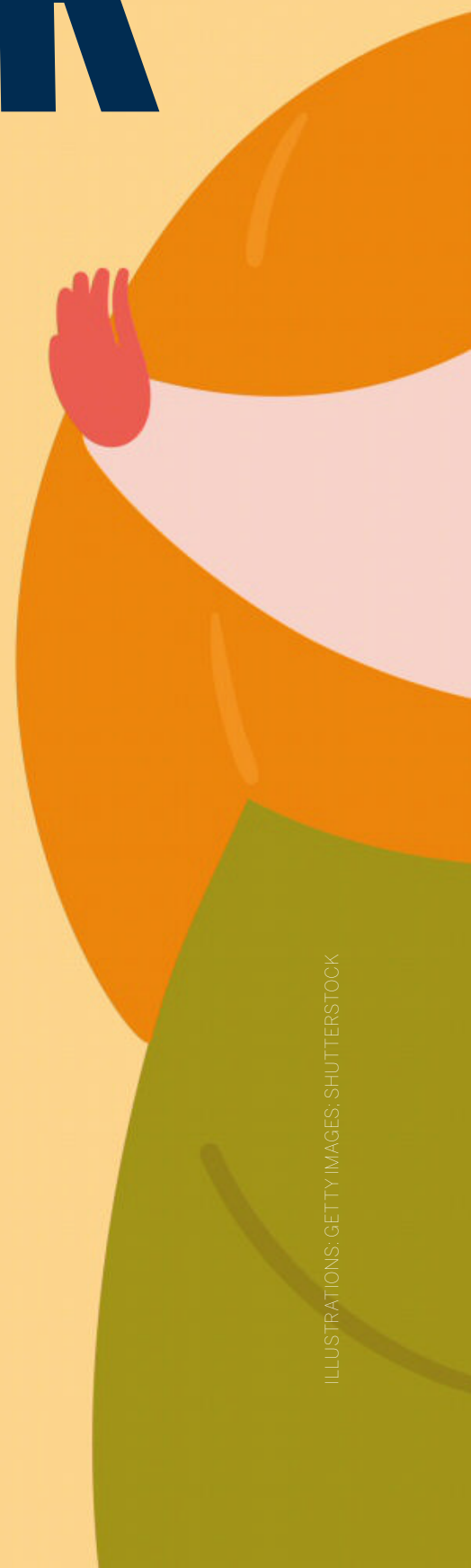
Thomas Wentworth Higginson




MORE THAN A SHOULDER TO CRY ON

The way we react to a loved one's distress can have a profound effect on their mood and ability to cope and, when your own emotional load feels overwhelming, turning to someone you trust can bring you back to a place of control

WORDS: EMMA COOLING



ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK



Whether it's a spark of attraction when you meet someone for the first time or the recognition that you've found that most precious of assets, a new friend, you will notice not only how someone looks and what they say, but how they make you feel.

Beyond the usual social dance of two human beings getting to know each other, there is another introduction occurring: the meeting of two nervous systems. Now experts are beginning to believe that it is how this interaction plays out, rather than your relative intellects or the hobbies you may have in common, that will dictate how you feel in that person's presence. This interplay – between your nervous system and someone else's – is called co-regulation.

But we are not just passengers in this ride. Experts say that through touch, tone of voice and eye contact, we are able to influence and change the emotional state of another person – bringing them from panic to calm, or raising their energy, by changing our own.

Understanding how this system of co-regulation works is a powerful gift. It means that although you may not be able to wave a magic wand over a loved one's crisis and make it go away, your behaviour in the moment can have a profoundly positive effect on their mood, and empowers you to offer friends in distress more than just a listening ear.

What is co-regulation?

Co-regulation is a neurological and biological phenomenon that occurs when two or more brains interact and fall in sync. Put a little more simply, it's the scientific term recognising that your interaction with another person can influence their thoughts and feelings.

According to the cognitive neuroscientist Caroline Leaf, the author of *Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess* (Baker, £10.99), there are recognised neurobiological effects of co-regulating that result in the generation of a healing wave through the brain and body. Gene activity in the part of the brain that is involved in emotional perceptions, the amygdala, is altered, which elicits a positive response in the person being co-regulated.

Our earliest experiences of co-regulation come in infancy,



when we do not have the ability to regulate our own emotions and need the soothing presence of a parent or carer to help us manage fear, frustration and anger. Soft voices, warm physical contact and generally having our physical needs met provide a practical model, teaching us how to self-regulate. But, although we learn to manage our emotions and practise self-control in childhood, there will be times in our lives when we struggle to self-regulate because our emotional load has become too heavy. There are likely to have been moments of distress in your life when you have not been able to calm yourself down and have reached out to a friend or a relative for help, or when a loved one has turned up at your door, unable to manage their own emotions in trying circumstances.

Unity is strength

Human beings are social creatures, we are not meant to exist in isolation and need connection with others. When a friend calls upon you in a moment of trauma, flooded by emotion, your impulse may be to problem-solve and fix the issue for them. We want to be able to offer immediate relief by tackling the root of the pain or distress. But it is our power to provide calm that is key. More often than not, what is needed is for us to regulate the other person's emotions and de-escalate the situation.

According to Razia Sahi, a graduate doctorate researcher at the University of California, we are better off coming together than trying to manage distress alone. 'It can be hard to change our perspective of negative events that are getting us down,' says Sahi. 'But getting a friend's perspective can help us change how we see those events and how we feel about them. My work suggests that leaning in to our close relationships during times of need can make a significant difference when we're having a hard time coping on our own.'

You may have a friend who is so caught up in a negative cycle of thinking that they are beyond being able to think rationally. At that moment, another, more grounded and reasoned perspective is important.

Lay the foundations for co-regulation

The success of co-regulation relies on trust, according to Amira Johnson, a mental health expert and clinician at Berman Psychotherapy in Georgia in the United States. She says: 'In those moments when self-regulation (the ability to manage one's own emotions and behaviour in response to a thought, feeling or situation) is completely and utterly difficult, the act of co-regulating with a partner or loved one can be of great benefit.' Two important aspects of relationship-building, according to Johnson, are vulnerability and trust, and when those key components exist, the foundations for co-regulation to be successful are in place.

Faith in friends

Johnson believes that being able to be truly present for someone means earning their trust. This can explain why some people are better equipped to comfort us than others. If you cannot completely trust someone not to judge you or to divulge your problem to others, then you will not expose the extent of your vulnerability to them. Often the individuals we open up to are family or close friends, people who we have learned to trust, but sometimes a gut

feeling about someone means you may be drawn to confide in them, despite not knowing them very well, and this feeling may be based on the interplay between your nervous system and theirs.

By providing a platform of trust for loved ones when emotional disruption arises, you are taking the first step in being able to help ease their load. 'When someone is having intrusive thoughts or trying to process a past traumatic experience, the individuals with whom they feel safest being vulnerable, and trust with their wellbeing, can help them regulate their minds and bodies in real time if they practise grounding with them,' says Johnson.

A person they can count on

Johnson says grounding is a key part of co-regulation and, to start with, this simply looks like being open and responsive to an emergency text or phone call and having the time for talking your loved one through their experience. Basically, the first step is just showing up – being present, available and giving the other person your full attention. 'It can then mean practising breathing exercises together, going for a walk and, ultimately, assessing the individual's present-moment needs and being there for them in a positive and affirming way,' she says. Johnson recommends discussing with your loved ones the ways in which you would all like to show up for one another in the most authentic ways, in order to have relationships where every individual feels safe, heard and seen.

Psychotherapists co-regulate for a living – their speech, usually slow and soft, their body language open and the fact that a client has their undivided attention – all set the scene for co-regulation to take place.

We cannot be expected to fulfil the role of therapist to our friends and most of us do not have the expertise, but when the moment demands an immediate intervention, we want to be present in a way that allows our nervous system to bring calm to a loved one in distress.



HOW TO BE OF COMFORT

The cognitive neuroscientist Caroline Leaf recommends these steps to become a better co-regulator. This behaviour will allow you to be a calming, supportive influence and help others manage stress

1

Establish eye contact. This will help you show the person you are with them while they experience their emotions.

This helps them feel seen and can be immediately calming. Dr Leaf says: 'It's important that the person doing the co-regulating establishes genuine calm, loving and compassionate eye contact.'

2

Create physical contact. The level of contact must be comfortable for the person trying to regulate how they feel. It could be as simple as sitting near the person.



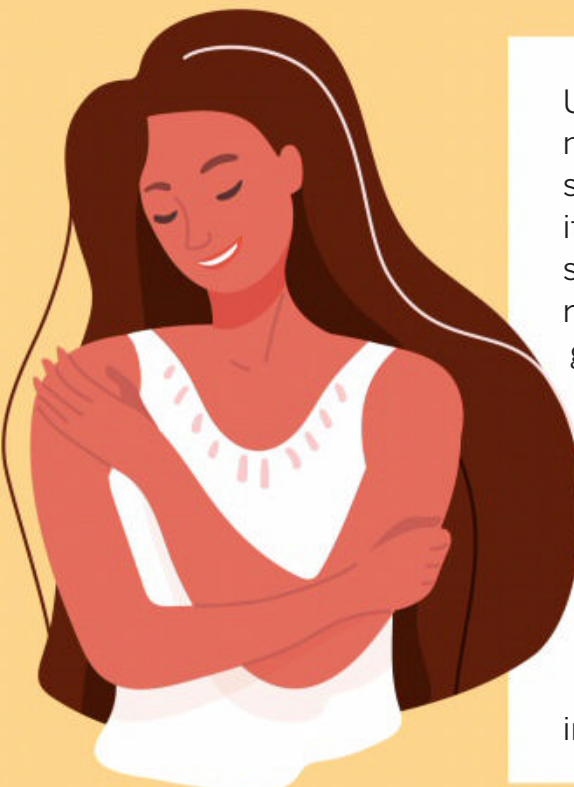
3

Hear and validate their emotions. You may need to help the person by putting words to their experience. You can do this by naming what you observe, then offering calming decompression techniques (for example, breathing exercises or meditations) as needed. Create an environment where all feelings and emotions are allowed.

4

Model self-regulation.

Co-regulation involves openly modelling how you self-regulate, demonstrating awareness and acceptance of how you feel, and engagement, to encourage the person to mimic your behaviour. Talking through how you manage your emotions is a good place to start.



Understanding co-regulation can not only help you be present and supportive to a loved one in distress, it is also a reminder that your own state of mind can often benefit from reaching out to another. When you get caught in a vicious cycle of thoughts, or feel upset beyond the point of being able to rationalise, the science says that turning to someone you trust can bring you back to a place of control. We are pack animals and our emotions can turn toxic without connection and the calming intervention of a trusted confidante.

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 with 'Mary' 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

“Why do I feel distressed talking about my past?”

Q It's been 20 years since I left my first marriage, but I still get upset by questions about it. I lived in fear of my ex-husband and for ages I'd get heart palpitations and couldn't breathe if I was in the same room as him – at parents' evenings, for example. I hardly see him now that our children are grown up, but someone asked me recently, 'Did he actually hit you?' and I choked on the answer. Can you help me with this?

You are under no obligation to answer anyone else's questions, but it sounds as if it might be helpful for you to work out what you want to say in these instances, and how to frame it for yourself. The question you were asked touches on some of the myths about domestic abuse: 'it must be physical', or 'women make things up'. Perhaps part of you doubts your own experience or wonders why you 'let' it happen.

I talked to the therapist Rita Edah, who wrote *Beauty's Story: Some Cuts Are Deeper Than The Eye Can See* (Panoma Press, £6.45) because she was astounded by the lack of understanding about abuse, especially when there are no visible scars. Her instinctive reaction, on your behalf, was to tell the questioner to mind their own business or do some research about what abuse means.

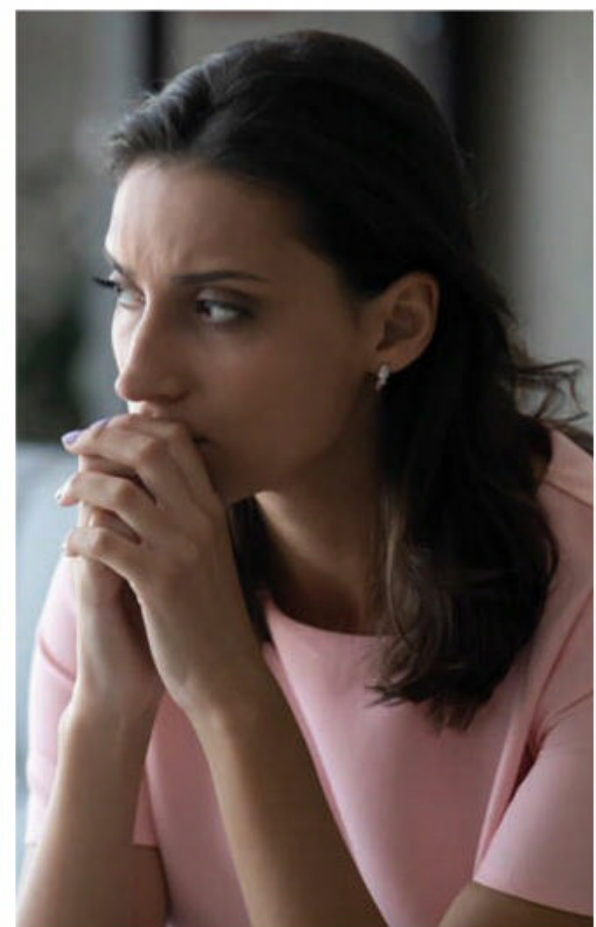
You could point them to the Women's Aid website, which talks about 'physical, sexual,

emotional or psychological violence or threats to control another person's thinking, opinions, emotions and behaviour'. It might be a one-off, it might be a pattern, and it might be 'just' a threat that keeps you in line, but fear has no place in a healthy relationship. The stories on the Women's Aid forum will help you understand your own. It has women asking each other, for instance, 'Is it abuse if I say no to sex and he goes ahead anyway?'

My wish for you would be to find a way to protect yourself, perhaps by turning intrusive questions back to that person: 'I wonder what makes you ask that. It almost sounds as if you are deciding whether or not to believe me.' But even more than that, I hope you find support to explore, honour and heal from your experience. I recommend finding a therapist to help frame the questions you actually want to answer.

ritaedah.com; womensaid.org.uk

“Find a way to protect yourself by turning intrusive questions back to the person”





I'm worried that my daughter is creating conflict

Q What do you do if it might be your child who's the bully? My daughter is eight years old and having problems in her friendship group. At home, she lashes out and makes her sister cry, which I find hard to deal with because it always happens so quickly – to my mind, she strikes like a snake. Her stories from school are jumbled, but I can't help fearing that she might be either starting arguments or making them worse. What do you advise?

With the upheaval of the past two years, children have missed out on the opportunity to practise getting along with each other. And you've missed out on building relationships that support you as a parent. When you use strong words such as bully or snake, I wonder if you're feeling defensive or ashamed, and that could make it difficult to talk about your concerns with your daughter or her teachers.

The NSPCC helpline manager Felicity Aspinall speaks to parents regularly, and indicates that your family is not alone in feeling the strain. The charity also runs Childline, where calls by children aged under 11 increased by 29 per cent during the pandemic.

The NSPCC has excellent online resources, including a section on how to start a difficult conversation with your

child. At your daughter's age, part of the issue might be that she doesn't have the words to explain what's going on in her head, or to relay particular events. Could you find a book about bullying suitable for her age group? Read it together a couple of times before asking some gentle questions about what she would do if she were a character in the story.

Or you could say that a friend of yours needs advice about how to deal with feeling angry and ask if she has any ideas. It's a way to show that you value her opinions, while also finding out how much she understands.

It's important for your daughter to know that deliberately hurting another person by words or actions is not acceptable, but she may need help to start thinking about how it could feel to be on

the receiving end. It's possible that you will need to introduce clear consequences, such as missing out on a treat, if she makes her sister cry and has no interest in making amends.

In parallel, I wonder whether it would be possible to tell your daughter's teacher what you've said here. Teachers have been under immense pressure, and you might not have had the chance to build a frank relationship, but it's going to make both of your jobs easier if you each know what is going on in the other environment. Consistency of messaging at home and school will help your daughter too. Bear in mind two things: children acting like this are more likely to be sad than bad; and you don't need to feel alone in dealing with it.

[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk); 0808 800 5000

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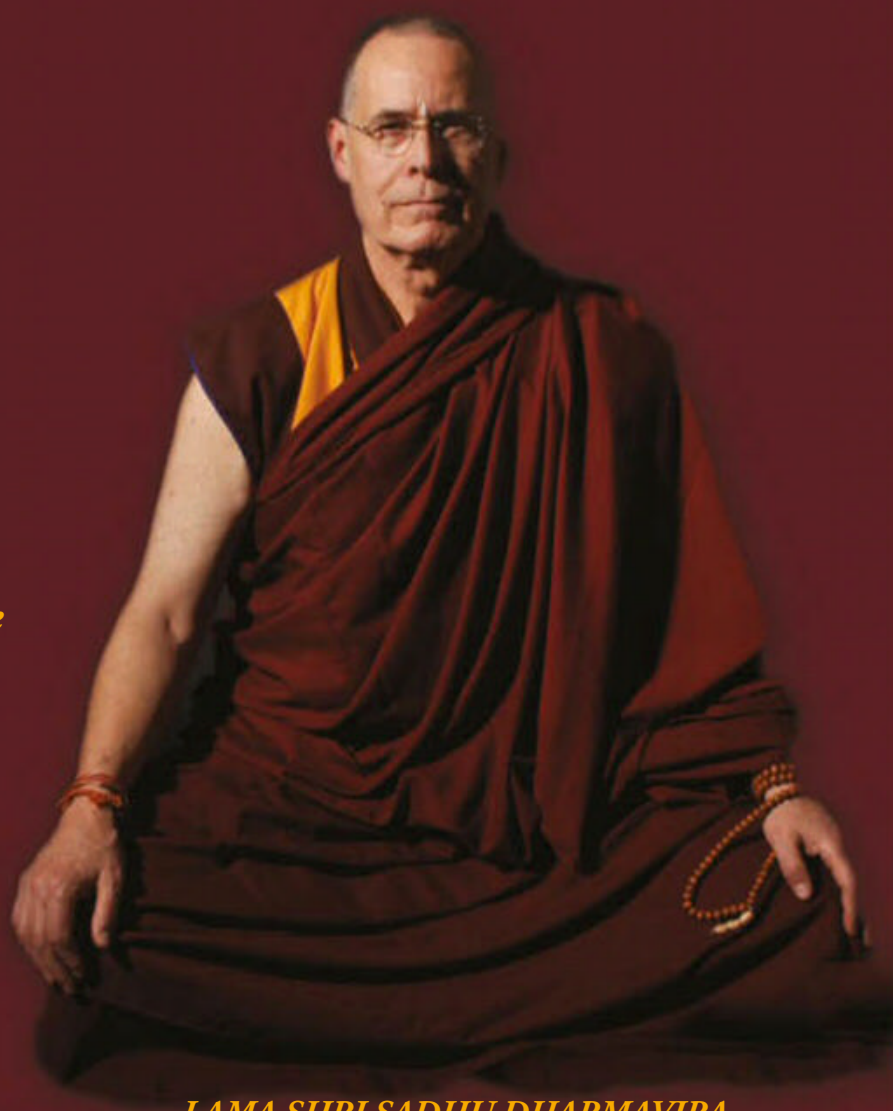
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*“Your body hears everything
your mind says”*

Naomi Judd

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES



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



Get your grains

Carbs might get a bad rap, but including a hearty helping of whole grains in your diet is key for long-term health, according to a recent study by the University of Eastern Finland and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. The study found that one daily serving of whole grains reduces type 2 diabetes. Luckily, there are a heap of options out there to help you get your quota, from oats, quinoa and brown rice to wholegrain bread and pasta.

Brew up

Trying to curb your caffeine habit but still want to partake in the ritual of a cuppa? Your Super Super Brew, £24.90, is a low-caffeine alternative made from slow-release black tea and a blend of superfood ingredients, including dandelion root and chaga mushrooms. Stir, froth or blend with the milk of your choice, and enjoy the latte-like experience.
yoursuper.co.uk





Pantry Fishcakes with Celeriac Slaw

This nutritious dinner is just the ticket for eating well in the new year. Using mostly storecupboard ingredients, including tinned fish, it's a great faff-free weeknight dinner when you're short on time.

SERVES 2-3

For the fishcakes:

- 1 medium potato (skin on), cut into 2.5cm chunks
- 1 medium sweet potato (skin on), cut into 2.5cm chunks
- 2 x 100g cans of salmon or mackerel, drained
- 4 spring onions, sliced into rounds
- 2 handfuls fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 1 egg, beaten

- Zest and juice of ½ lemon

For the celeriac slaw:

- ½ celeriac, peeled
- 4 tbsp milk kefir yoghurt (homemade or shop-bought)
- Salt and pepper

- 1** Preheat the oven to 200°C, 180°C fan, gas mark 6 and line a baking tray with baking paper.
- 2** Bring a medium saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add both potatoes and cook for 20-25 minutes until tender. Remove from the heat, drain and steam-dry for 5 minutes. Roughly mash using a potato masher.
- 3** Transfer the mashed potato to a medium mixing bowl, add the salmon or mackerel, spring onions, half the

parsley and the beaten egg. Mix to combine and season well before stirring in the lemon zest and a squeeze of juice. Using your hands, mould the mixture into 6 fishcakes and transfer to the lined baking tray. Bake for 30-35 minutes until golden, turning halfway through cooking.

4 While the fishcakes are in the oven, grate the celeriac and add to a bowl. Mix in the milk kefir yoghurt, remaining parsley and a squeeze of lemon juice. Season to taste.

5 Serve the fishcakes with the celeriac slaw. Leftover fishcakes and slaw can be stored in the fridge for up to 2 days.

Extract from 'The Gut-Loving Cookbook' by Alana and Lisa Macfarlane of The Gut Stuff

GOLDEN OLDIE

Inspired by the wisdom of Ayurveda, an ancient healing system founded in India and backed by 5,000 years of research, Deja's herbal supplements are a new favourite. We love the Gold Shield turmeric immunity capsules, £29.75. Thanks to the blend of powerful antioxidants, notably turmeric, ginger and ashwagandha, they're an ideal formulation for boosting the immune system in the winter months. **deja.life**



Sleep well



Discover your sleep type

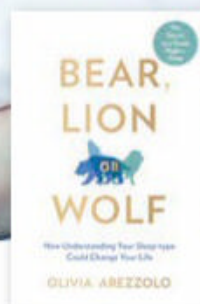
Australia's leading sleep expert, Olivia Arezzolo, has a new way to think about sleep. Her methodology understands that we are all different and puts forward the idea that understanding your sleep profile (bear, lion or wolf) is key to optimising your sleep, energy and routine. Pick up her new book for a fascinating exploration of the topic, and lots of helpful and science-backed advice.

If you're a bear... You rise with the sun, wind down in the evening and tend to dip after lunch. If you struggle to fall asleep, stay asleep or find yourself exhausted during the day, you are a bear.

If you're a lion... You are an early riser, furiously working in the morning, tailing off after midday and going to bed just as the wolves are coming out to play.

If you're a wolf... You get up late and are more energetic at night.

'Bear, Lion Or Wolf: How Understanding Your Sleep Type Could Change Your Life' by Olivia Arezzolo (Bonnier, £12.99) is out 3 February



Wind down

Looking for a luxurious twist on a mug of warm milk before bed? Why not make a healthy hot chocolate with The Cacao Club's herb-infused cacao for a peaceful sleep. The mix of cacao, camomile and passion flower will help you relax and unwind. Add to warm milk then stir for a delicious drink that's sure to help you drift off.

The Cacao Club herb-infused cacao, £9.99, contentbeautywellbeing.com



MILK IT

Proving the old wives' tale once and for all, research from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US found that a glass of warm milk will ease you into slumber. Milk's sleep-enhancing properties are commonly ascribed to tryptophan, but scientists have also discovered a mixture of milk peptides, known as casein tryptic hydrolysate (CTH), that relieve stress and enhance sleep.



Golden hour

January is naturally a time for early nights and the perfect point in the year to get into a good bedtime routine. The ideal time to hit the hay? Between 10pm and 11pm. New research from The University of Exeter found that going to bed in this window carries a lower risk of developing heart disease compared with earlier or later bedtimes. Researchers think that early or late bedtimes may be more likely to disrupt the body clock, with adverse consequences for cardiovascular health. Hoping to get into bed earlier? Try setting an alarm an hour before bed to remind you to start winding down.

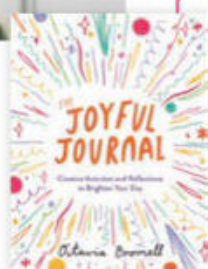


Meditation + mindfulness



The joy of journalling

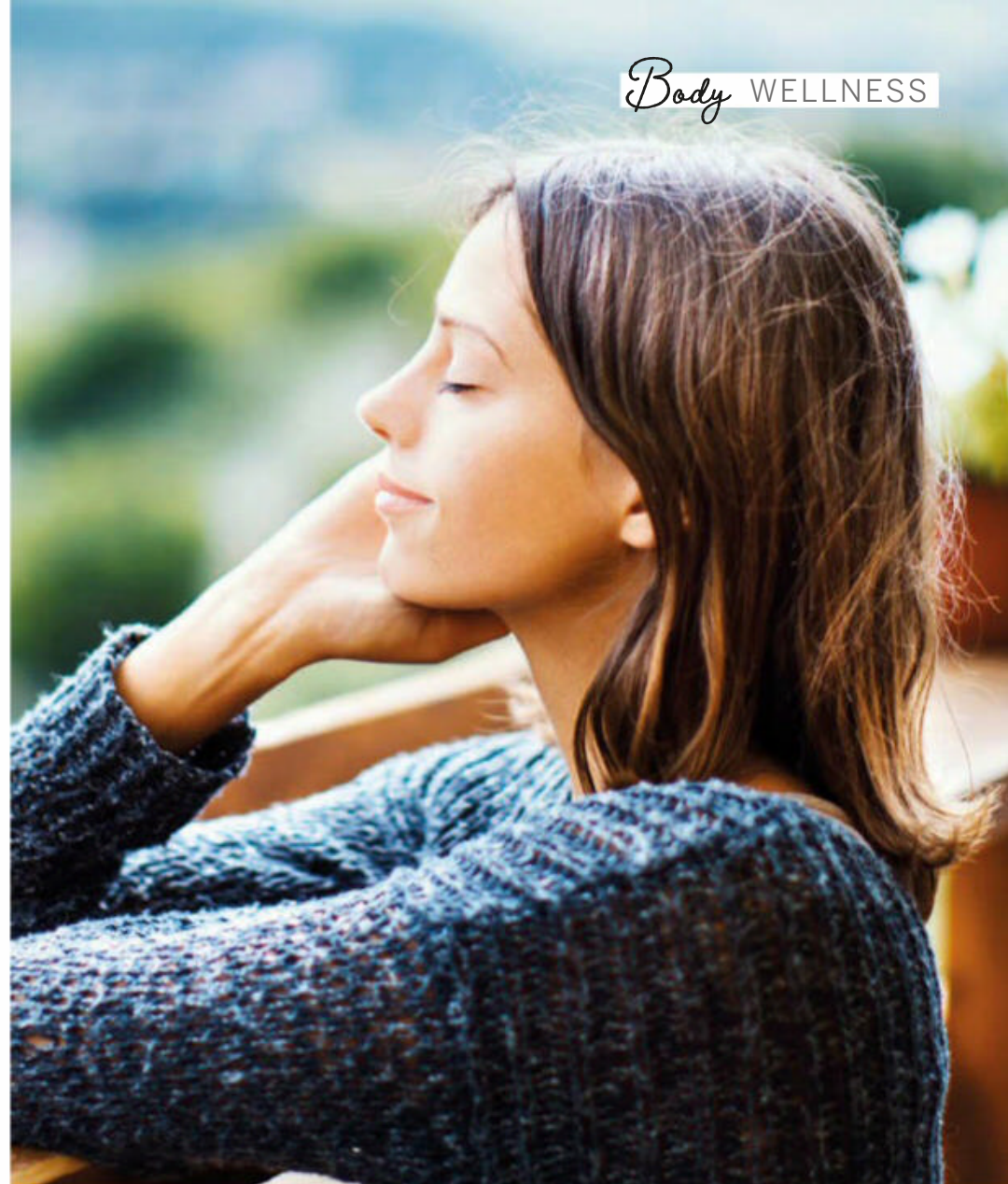
Trying to make journalling a bigger part of your life? This beautiful journal by the illustrator and mental health advocate Octavia Bromell is the perfect everyday companion to spark a little joy, with exercises, positive messages and colourful illustrations. *'The Joyful Journal'* by Octavia Bromell (Michael O'Mara, £9.99)



Top up your vitamin D

Whether it's a week-long beach retreat or a lunchtime stroll, sunshine has a way of making us happy. The feelgood factor is scientific, with research showing that a lack of vitamin D, produced by the sun, can lead to depression. In the UK, getting adequate vitamin D in the grey months can be tricky. So much so, the government advises that everyone take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D during autumn and winter.

Wild Nutrition Food-Grown Vitamin D, £15, wildnutrition.com



TAKE A BRAIN BREAK

Liam James Collins, a coaching trainer and co-founder of The Coaching Masters, shares five reasons why we should all give our grey matter time out:

1 Rest plays a critical role in the functioning of our immune system. Taking a break can help your body repair and restore, ensuring it is functioning properly.

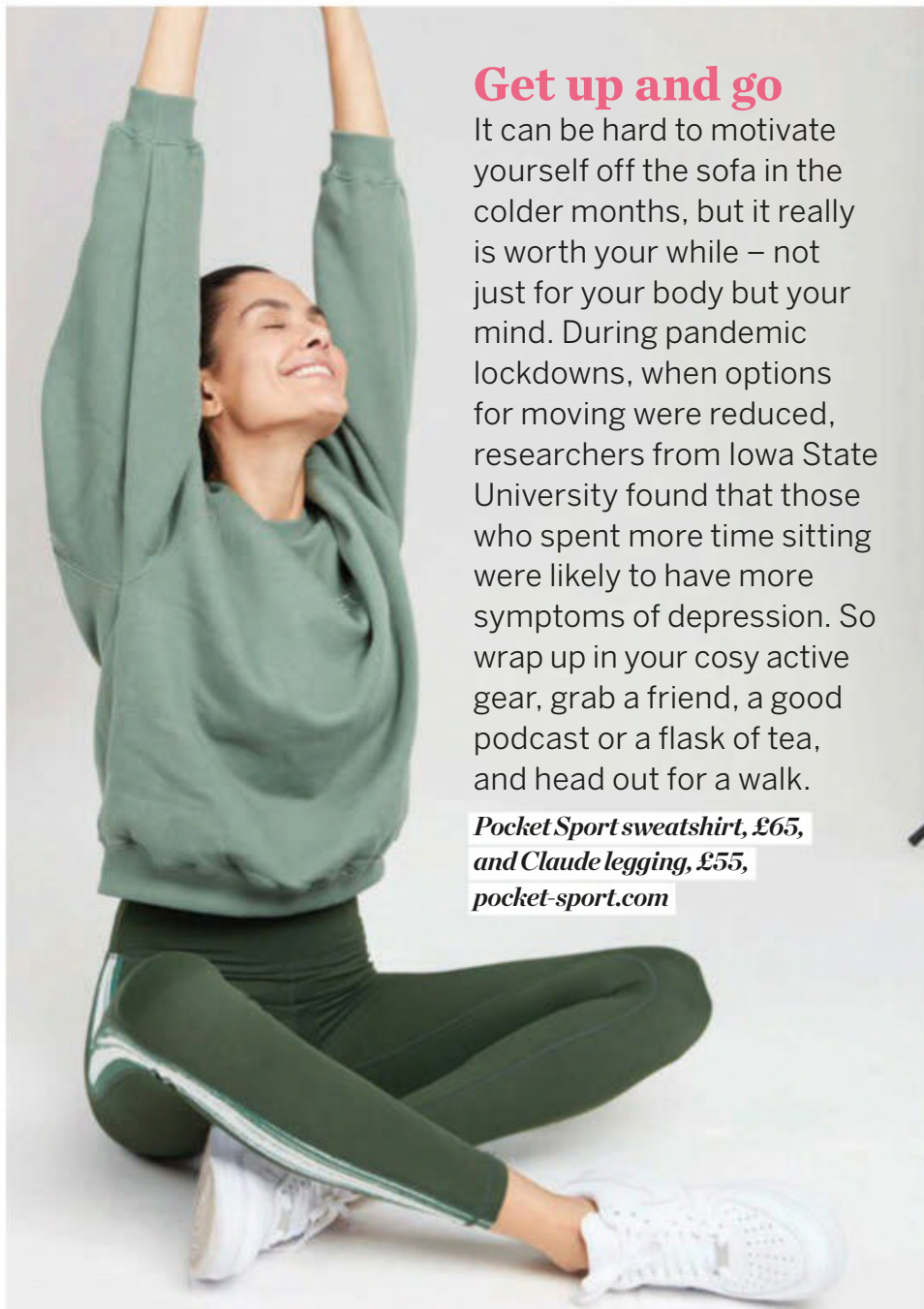
2 When we work our minds intensely we can become preoccupied and lose sight of initial goals. Taking a break can help you realise what you need to get done, help create a clear plan and give you a newfound viewpoint.

3 If we're not rested it's easy to get distracted and prioritise pointless tasks, because we feel we should be working. Taking breaks can help you establish where you should be focused, and channel your priorities. Plus, when we rest or take a break, we analyse what we have learnt.

4 Spending time trying to come up with an innovative idea can be counterproductive, but with regular breaks you allow solutions to come to you rather than chasing them.

5 Our bodies are not designed to cope with excessive stress. Taking breaks when you start to feel overwhelmed is the best way to stop it in its tracks. Listen to your body: if you feel like you need a break, take one.

Move well



Get up and go

It can be hard to motivate yourself off the sofa in the colder months, but it really is worth your while – not just for your body but your mind. During pandemic lockdowns, when options for moving were reduced, researchers from Iowa State University found that those who spent more time sitting were likely to have more symptoms of depression. So wrap up in your cosy active gear, grab a friend, a good podcast or a flask of tea, and head out for a walk.

Pocket Sport sweatshirt, £65, and Claude leggings, £55, pocket-sport.com

Massage magic

Massages may seem like an indulgent treat, but a study indicates they're more than relaxation for the mind. Research from Harvard's Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering has shown that massages help heal the body, especially after injury. 'Our work shows a clear connection between mechanical stimulation and immune function. This has promise for regenerating a wide variety of tissues, including bone, tendon, hair and skin,' says the researcher Bo Ri Seo.



It's all about BALANCE

Cindy Jourdain, a personal trainer and movement coach on the community wellness and fitness app TRUCONNECT by TV.FIT, shares how to find the sweet spot between pushing yourself and burning out when it comes to fitness:

'It's important to understand exertion on an individual basis,' says Jourdain. 'I always come at it from a biopsychosocial perspective, that is, considering the biology, psychology and socio-environmental demands of each individual. Having the right amount of good stress in your workout will support improved health, and to achieve it you should consider how hard you're working out against factors such as the recovery strategies you employ and day-to-day strains.'

'Burnout can be a result of a number of factors, so asking yourself questions such as, "Am I getting good sleep?" and "Am I getting good nutrition?" will set you on the pathway to success. I think we can all get to a point where it's not about "Am I training too hard?", but "Work as hard as you can handle!" The key takeaway is that fitness and wellness must go hand in hand in finding the right balance for you.'



Look well, naturally

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH... bakuchiol?

If you have been looking at youth-enhancing skincare, chances are you have spotted bakuchiol on ingredients lists. As more of us turn to natural products, this 100 per cent plant-based substance is garnering attention. Derived from the seeds and leaves of the psoralea corylifolia plant, native to eastern Asia, when used in skincare it can soften fine lines, even out skin tone and improve elasticity and firmness. In fact, in a number of studies it's been shown to have similar effects to retinol, the gold standard anti-ageing ingredient. For best effect apply a bakuchiol serum under your moisturiser morning and evening. We like Herbivore Bakuchiol Smoothing Serum, £49, while Boots Ingredients Bakuchiol Serum, £7, is a wallet-friendly and effective alternative.

cultbeauty.co.uk;
boots.com



Drops we love!

One of our all-time favourite sensitive skincare brands, Pai Skincare, is upping its innovative offering with a new range, under the name Pai Labs. First to launch: Pai Concentrates, a collection of high-performance natural boosters specially formulated for sensitive skin. Each can be used alone or mixed with your other go-to products, such as moisturiser. Try the vitamin C booster to brighten dull skin, the peptides booster for increased smoothness and the prebiotic booster for calming sensitivity, £19 each.

paiskincare.com



Ultrasun SPF50+
Face Fluid, £28,
ultrasun.co.uk



THIS IS WHY...

YOU SHOULD WEAR SPF IN WINTER

'UVA rays are a year-round skin damager, penetrating cloud and glass and impacting the skin's surface. According to the World Health Organization, up to 90 per cent of the visible changes commonly attributed to ageing may be caused by sun exposure. High protection should be part of a daily skincare routine. SPF in moisturisers and make-up often aren't water-resistant and, by the very nature of their intended use, are applied thinly and don't provide the same level of protection. Instead, choose photo-stable products of SPF30 or above, with a UVA filter of over 85 per cent.'

Abi Cleeve, founder of Ultrasun UK





Food for thought

Take a mindful approach to mealtimes with versatile and vibrant vegetable dishes that reduce waste, reinvent leftovers and boost wellness. The sustainability chef Sophie Gordon leads the way in her cookbook, *The Whole Vegetable*

Baked Sweet Potatoes, Crispy Chickpeas and Tahini Dressing

'Baking a sweet potato whole is, in my opinion, one of the greatest ways to cook it. The skin caramelises so perfectly and the insides are soft and sweet yet earthy at the same time. This recipe is simple but effective, with a subtle crunch from the chickpeas that really lifts the dish, and a creamy dressing to finish it off, creating the perfect balance of textures and flavours. A handy week-night dish that also makes great leftovers!'

- 4 medium sweet potatoes
- 600g cooked chickpeas (2 × 400g tins, drained, or 300g dried)
- 2-4 tbsp olive oil
- 4 heaped tsp ground cumin
- 2 heaped tsp ground coriander
- 2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 5 cloves garlic, crushed or finely chopped
- A hefty pinch of salt
- 2 tsp fine or coarse black pepper
- A small handful fresh coriander, finely chopped, stalks included
- 1 lemon, juiced, ½ zested
- 3 spring onions, finely chopped
- Fresh chives (optional)

For the dressing:

- 2 lemons, juiced, ½ zested
- 2-4 tbsp tahini (depending how thick you want your dressing)
- 2 level tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp chilli sauce (optional)
- 2 tbsp soya sauce or tamari
- 2 tsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- Water, or plant-based milk for a creamier option

1 If you are cooking chickpeas from dried, you'll need to soak them overnight in water with a pinch of salt. Once soaked, drain and rinse well, then put them into a pot of cold water. Make sure they are submerged in the water. Typically, when cooking chickpeas from dried, you'll want double the amount of water to chickpeas. Add a large pinch of salt, cover and bring to the

boil. Once boiling, lower to a simmer and cook until soft. This usually takes around 40 minutes but can be longer. Once cooked, drain, rinse and set aside to dry.

2 Preheat your oven to 220°C, 200°C fan, gas mark 7. Wash the sweet potatoes well, scrubbing them if necessary. Using a sharp knife or fork, prick the potatoes a few times (over the whole surface), about 1cm deep.

3 Place the potatoes on a baking tray and put into the oven to roast. They will take around 30-40 minutes, until the outside becomes golden brown and the inside soft. The potatoes may start to ooze a caramel-type liquid. This is normal and is due to the sugars in the sweet potatoes.

4 Put the cooked chickpeas into a large mixing bowl and toss with the olive oil, cumin, coriander, smoked paprika, ground cloves, turmeric, garlic, salt, pepper and the stalks from the fresh coriander. Add the lemon juice and mix until the chickpeas are well coated.

5 Spread the chickpeas on a baking tray and put into the oven to roast. They will take around 20-30 minutes, depending on how crispy you want them. After 15 minutes, take out the chickpeas, sprinkle the lemon zest over and mix well, freeing up any chickpeas that may have become stuck at the bottom of the tray.

6 For the dressing, place all the ingredients apart from the water (or plant-based milk) in a blender and blitz. If you don't have a blender you can do this by hand, using a fork or whisk. To loosen, slowly pour in a little water (or plant-based milk) and continue to whisk until the dressing reaches the desired consistency. Set aside.

7 To serve, slice the potatoes lengthways. Top with the crispy chickpeas and drizzle over the tahini dressing. Sprinkle over the fresh coriander leaves and spring onions. If you are using chives, scatter those over as well.

WASTE-NOT TIPS: You can use a variety of sweet potatoes instead of regular orange ones: purple skin and white flesh or orange skin and white flesh. You could incorporate harissa or pesto in this dish, serving as a dollop on top or adding to the chickpeas.



WASTE-NOT TIPS:

Any variety of cabbage works well in this sauce – it's super garlicky and creamy, despite having no cream in it. The white wine makes the dish feel like a real treat, but you can omit it or try adding soya sauce, tamari or vinegar – just go in with less initially. You could roast any leftover veggies, or try adding another vegetable to the sauce if you don't have or like mushrooms. The sauce will keep in the fridge. If you have extra sauce, you could serve it differently by dishing up the pasta then pouring the sauce over – it's totally up to you!

Lazy Day Pasta and Garlic Kale Sauce

'A few years back, my family got into making a cavolo nero sauce for a quick midweek spaghetti dinner. I tried it a handful of times and loved the vibrancy, so I've recreated my own. A pinch of chilli and lemon zest brings this dish to life.'

- 1 large bunch kale, any variety, chopped (cavolo nero is also great)
- 1 large shallot or white onion, finely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic (4 crushed or finely chopped, 2 thinly sliced)
- 2-4 tbsp olive oil
- 2-4 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 4 tbsp white wine
- 1 tsp dried chilli flakes
- 1 lemon, juiced, plus a dash of zest
- Salt and pepper

- Approximately 340g dried pasta shapes
- 200g mushrooms, sliced thinly

1 Bring a pan of salted water to the boil. Add the kale and cook for 5-7 minutes, until wilted and cooked through, or steam it. Once cooked, drain and blanch in cold water briefly to stop the cooking process.

2 Transfer the kale to a blender and add the shallot or onion, the 4 crushed or finely chopped cloves of garlic, the olive oil, nutritional yeast, mustard, white wine, chilli flakes, lemon juice and zest. Season with salt and pepper and blend until you have a relatively smooth but thick sauce. You can add water to loosen if necessary. Season to taste, then pop to one side.

3 Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil and add your desired pasta. Cook

until al dente, about 10-12 minutes.

Drain, then put back into the pot and cover. While the pasta is cooking, heat up about 1 tablespoon olive oil in a saucepan. Once hot, add the 2 sliced cloves of garlic and saute until golden and fragrant. Make sure you stir frequently to prevent burning.

Add the mushrooms to the garlic and sweat until soft. You can add a dash more olive oil or water to the pan if it is a little dry. Season with salt and pepper. The mushrooms will sweat and wilt quickly.

4 Pour in the kale sauce and heat up over a low heat, stirring frequently. Heat until warm through. Pour the sauce over the pasta in the pot and stir well. You can do this over a low heat if your pasta has cooled too much. Season with extra salt and pepper, chilli flakes and olive oil to taste. Serve and enjoy!

Upside-Down Pear Cake

'I'm not usually one for desserts, or much into "tea and cake" but this upside-down number is the exception. The pear becomes soft and gooey and the cake is light and fluffy, with nutty tones throughout, thanks to the buckwheat flour. It is delicious served with a dollop of coconut yoghurt and a cup of tea or coffee.'

- 3 ripe pears (2 sliced into eighths, 1 diced)
- 240g buckwheat flour
- 120g coconut flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 165g brown sugar (coconut sugar will also work), plus a little extra for dusting
- 2 heaped tsp of either cinnamon or mixed spices (nutmeg, cloves and cardamom, for example), plus a little extra for dusting
- A pinch of salt
- 125g coconut oil
- Approximately 500ml unsweetened

plant-based milk of your choice
(I like to use coconut milk)

- 2 tsp vanilla extract

1 Preheat your oven to 200°C, 180°C fan, gas mark 6. Line a round cake tin (approximately 20cm) with coconut oil or greaseproof paper. Sprinkle a dash of cinnamon and brown sugar evenly over the base of the tin.

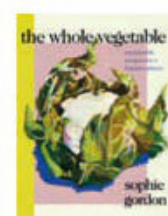
2 Place the slices from two of the pears around the bottom of the tin, arranging them neatly in a fan shape. You can overlap them. Put the tin to one side.

3 In a mixing bowl, combine the buckwheat flour, coconut flour and baking powder. Add the rest of the brown sugar, the cinnamon or mixed spices and salt, and mix well. Slowly pour in the coconut oil, plant-based milk and vanilla extract. Stir until you have a smooth batter, making sure not to over-beat. You want a 'dropping consistency', so if the batter is a little stiff, add a dribble more liquid.

4 Mix the diced pear into the batter and pour it into the lined tin, spreading it evenly. Remove any air pockets by carefully banging the tin a few times on a surface, then bake in the oven for about 50-55 minutes.

5 When done, the cake will be relatively spongy to touch and a lovely golden brown on top. Test the inside by using a sharp knife or skewer. It can be a little tricky if you hit a pear when testing, but you'll be able to tell if the batter is done.

6 Set aside to cool for 5-10 minutes. Once cool enough, turn the tin upside down on a cooling rack. Carefully remove the tin and greaseproof paper, if used. To serve, dust with a little extra spice.



'The Whole Vegetable'
by Sophie Gordon
(Penguin, £25)
is out now



WASTE-NOT TIPS: This dish is a good way to use up pears on the turn. You could swap in apples if you have some, or use a combo. My flour preference for this recipe is coconut because of the taste, but feel free to experiment with other fine flours.

Good mood food

KEEP CALM WITH CARDAMOM

Supporting your immunity and soothing your stresses, the unique and distinctive taste of cardamom pairs perfectly with many a dish, sweet and savoury

Part of the fiery ginger family, spicy cardamom has a more subtle flavour, making it a great addition to a variety of meals. The punchy pods come in two colours: green and black. The green have a sweet flavour, perfect for drinks and desserts, while the black are subtly smoky, ideal for savoury dishes. They may be diminutive, but the health benefits of cardamom are plentiful, says the nutritionist Alison Cullen, from balancing blood sugar and boosting blood flow to calming anxiety and supporting your immune system.

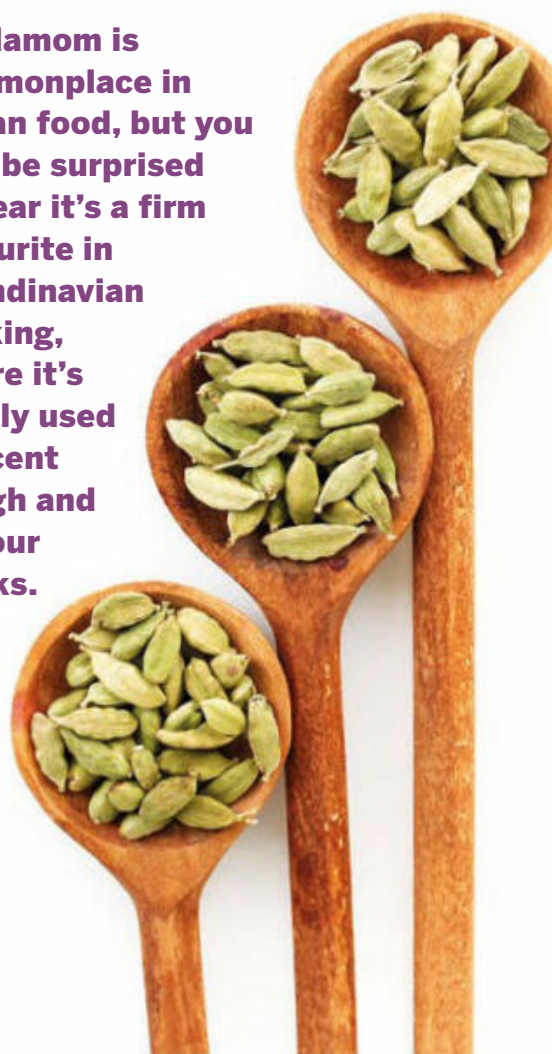
Stress saviour

‘Feeling anxious from time to time is completely normal and there are a number of easy lifestyle tweaks you can make to stay calm and relaxed – including adding a little cardamom to your diet,’ says Cullen. ‘A 2017 study on cardamom discovered it may hold the key to helping ease feelings of anxiety. It’s believed this is due to its stores of powerful antioxidants, low levels of which can be linked to anxiety and other mood disorders.’

Sweet harmony

‘Thanks to cardamom’s antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and cholesterol-lowering properties, it’s thought of as something of a hero when it comes to balancing blood sugar too, which is vital for keeping our bodies and minds on an even keel,’ says Cullen. ‘Meanwhile, its diuretic properties help your body excrete higher levels of sodium and potassium, lowering blood pressure and improving blood flow, leaving you feeling calm and balanced, and improving blood flow to vital organs, such as the brain.’ avogel.co.uk

Cardamom is commonplace in Indian food, but you may be surprised to hear it’s a firm favourite in Scandinavian cooking, where it’s widely used to scent dough and flavour drinks.



SIMPLE SWAPS

Green cardamom isn’t unlike cinnamon in flavour, so substituting a topping of ground cardamom for your usual sprinkling of cinnamon is a wonderful way to add variety and reap the healthful benefits of this powerhouse of a spice pod.



WHAT A CRACKER!

Add cardamom to herbal tea or hot chocolate for an easy way to include it in your diet, or try Alison Cullen’s tasty cardamom cracker recipe:

- Mix 250g plain or spelt flour, ½ tsp baking powder, ½ tsp ground cardamom and ½ tsp salt.
- Add 40ml olive or rapeseed oil and 100ml water.

- Knead to make a soft dough and refrigerate for at least an hour.
- Roll the dough to 5mm thick and cut out cracker shapes (roll again if you prefer a flatbread consistency).
- Preheat the oven to 200°C, 180°C, gas mark 6 and bake for 10 minutes (if you’ve gone for the thicker crackers, flip them on the other side for 2-3 minutes more).

Race for (mid) life

Pull on your trainers and
benefit from a wellbeing
boost as you navigate
a new phase of life ►►

WORDS: REBECCA FRANK. PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY IMAGES; HORST VONBOHLEN

Expert advice



Kerry Sutton is an ultramarathon runner and coach. She hosts online running clubs and offers coaching for all ages and abilities. perpetualmotioncoaching.com



Juliet McGrattan is a former GP, a running coach, the health lead at 261 Fearless running clubs and the author of *Run Well* (Bloomsbury, £12.99). 261fearless.org

What if someone told you there was an exciting new exercise they'd seen on Instagram, which you could do in as little as 20 minutes a day, that would

lift your mood, raise your energy levels, reduce stress, shrink your waist and generally make you feel like a happier human? And, most surprisingly of all, it won't cost you a thing. We bet you'd be grabbing your phone and frantically searching for this new wonder cure, right? Well, it turns out there *is* an exercise that ticks all those boxes, apart from the 'new' bit: running. And while it might sound like hype, it's so good for women in midlife it's a wonder we're not being urged to do it by the government. But before you turn the page because you're 'not a runner', take a moment to listen to what the experts – and the women who are out there doing it – have to say...

Ask most women how they feel in their 40s and 50s and the word 'tired' will invariably be uttered, possibly several times. It's not surprising when you consider that many of us are sandwiched between ageing parents and teenage children, juggling a career with the demands of family life, while our hormones are doing their own wild dance in the background. Our bodies can suddenly stop behaving as they used to, with problems such as stiffness, weight gain, sleepless nights and anxiety cropping up out of nowhere, flooring even the strongest and most sturdy among us. Amanda Thebe, a personal trainer and the author of *Menopocalypse* (Greystone, £14.99) describes how, at 42, she 'got hit with a wrecking ball of crap'. She adds: 'It felt as if after 25 years of understanding my health, my body was letting me down.'

Kerry Sutton, a running coach, comes across many women in their 40s, 50s and beyond for whom running has become a lifeline as they navigate this new time of life. 'The first thing I say to women who come to one of my groups or talk to me about starting running is that it's *not* about running fast. A lot of

people expect to be able to run like they used to when they were younger, so they go out once, run too fast, find it really tough, get put off and don't go again.' Sutton encourages anyone who has had a break from running to begin with a walk-run combination, rather than attempting non-stop pavement pounding. 'Even if you can run for half an hour without stopping, if you haven't done it for a while everything will have a jolt, you'll hurt the following day and you probably won't want to do it again,' she says. 'If you're going to stick with it, you need to build fitness and enjoyment in parallel.'

Understanding your body and how to adapt to physical changes is key to enjoying exercise and feeling confident when everything can feel a little unstable, from your bones to your bits. Juliet McGrattan is a former GP turned running coach who has recently written a book, *Run Well*, to answer all the questions she is frequently asked by women about running and their health. 'Running is a journey of discovery,' says McGrattan. 'Not just of routes and new places but of your own human body: Your resilience and courage, and your ability to harness the power of running and use it in other areas of your life. But like any journey, there are ups and downs, delays and setbacks.'

Many people are put off by running as they age because of aches and pains, often in the knees, hips or back. However, in most cases, and when combined with strength exercises, running will be more beneficial than not. 'Running certainly stresses the musculoskeletal system, but stress isn't necessarily a bad thing because it's only by stressing something that it's made stronger,' says McGrattan. 'Muscle mass declines from your 40s and every decade beyond that, so you want to put things in place that will slow that progression,' agrees Sutton. She always recommends that people support any running programme with some plyometrics (jumping or dynamic exercises) and strength work to 'scaffold your body, which will help you run further for longer without losing form'. Before you think you don't have time for that, these exercises can be a short add-on to your run and are easy to do at home (see 'How to be a happy runner', overleaf).

The emotional benefits of running can be every bit as powerful as the physical. When you run, it causes chemical changes in the brain, releasing endorphins that make you feel good during and for a time after your run. It also gets you outdoors, allowing you to see new places and experience the calming powers of nature. 'Running helps you develop a positive sense of self,' says McGrattan. 'It can make you appreciate the power your body has and what it can achieve, which is usually way beyond what you thought your capabilities were.'

She also talks about how running helps bring people into your life, something that she and Sutton



TARGET TRAIN
Set yourself a goal. It could be 'this month I'm going to run or walk 50K' or 'I'll do two loops of the park rather than one'. Make it achievable, with a little bit of stretch.

LOOK THE PART
Put on your kit in the morning and you'll be more likely go running that day. Treat yourself to new gear and up the odds!



experience every day in their running communities. 'When you run in a group or with a friend you've got to turn up, and you will work that bit harder,' says Sutton. 'When you come to a hill and you want to stop, if your friend does it, you'll do it too, even if you don't feel like it.'

As well as the extra energy, you get emotional support from exercising with others. You might offload what's worrying you that day or, if you're in a group, you can listen to other people talking about things and pick up advice and support organically. 'It's much easier to talk to people when you're running side by side rather than sitting face to face,' says Sutton, who regularly sees women thrown off-kilter by menopause, divorce or illness gain a noticeable lift through running. 'There's the flush of endorphins and a feeling of achievement. You're in control again.'

If life feels too busy and you're worried running will become another thing to get stressed about, it's important to remember that time spent running is never wasted time. On the contrary, it can be used to learn, plan, make decisions and come up with ideas. 'I've done all sorts of things while running, from planning children's parties and developing business ideas to listening to useful podcasts,' says Sutton. A study at Stanford University found that people are 60 per cent more creative when they're walking or running. And if you feel guilty because you're heading out of the door leaving work unfinished, a pile of dishes in the sink or a child wanting help with homework, remind yourself that you're modelling healthy behaviour and teaching your kids lots of important life skills by getting out there and tackling something challenging. And you can go out for your run safe in the knowledge that you'll come back to your work, partner and family a happier and calmer version of yourself.

*"Running brings about a
flush of endorphins and
a feeling of achievement.
You're in control again"*

Pelvic power

One thing that puts some women off running is the impact on their pelvic floor after childbirth and as they approach menopause. 'If you're leaking urine, feel heaviness, dragging or bulging, then you should seek advice before running because your symptoms may worsen,' says Emma Brockwell, a physiotherapist.

If you're feeling OK down there, it's still important to do pelvic floor exercises as you get older, because the decline in oestrogen levels can lead to weakening of the pelvic floor

(as many as half of women over 50 experience some urinary leaking regularly). 'Pelvic floor dysfunction does not mean you can't ever return to running,' says Brockwell. 'You may just need to build up gradually with a programme of strength training and pelvic floor exercises, but it's important that you do this with the right help and advice.'

In the meantime, fast walking offers many of the benefits of a run without the same high impact on the body.

HOW TO BE A HAPPY RUNNER

● **Do strength work.** Simple exercises, such as squats and lunges, building up to jumping squats and walking lunges are beneficial. Do step-ups on the stairs, single-leg squats off a chair and the plank position to strengthen your core.

● **Mix it up.** If you don't feel like running, go for a cycle or a swim instead.

● **Push through the first 10 minutes.** The start of a run is always the hardest, especially as you get older, when warming up takes a bit longer. Know it's going to happen and just run-walk for the first 10 minutes, adding in a few skips and sidesteps.

● **Try going off-road.** Walk if it's hilly or difficult terrain, but using footpaths rather than roads will add variety and you'll see more interesting things.

● **Vary your runs.** Introduce speed and hills. Try running for 20 seconds hard followed by three minutes easy, increasing the number of repeats as you get stronger.

● **Involve your family.** Run with your kids or dog, do a family event such as Race For Life, or set challenges everyone can tackle, such as each running your age in kilometres over the course of a month.

● **Buddy up.** Run with a friend or as part of a running group for extra motivation and support.

● **Get a coach.** A running coach can help you gain confidence and give you a plan that's tailored to you. Regular contact will keep you motivated and ensure that you reach your goals safely.

● **Don't forget...** your pelvic floor exercises!

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *Run Well: Essential Health Questions And Answers For Runners* by Juliet McGrattan (Bloomsbury, £12.99)

Download The Squeezy app from the NHS, which has exercises, reminders and information about your pelvic health

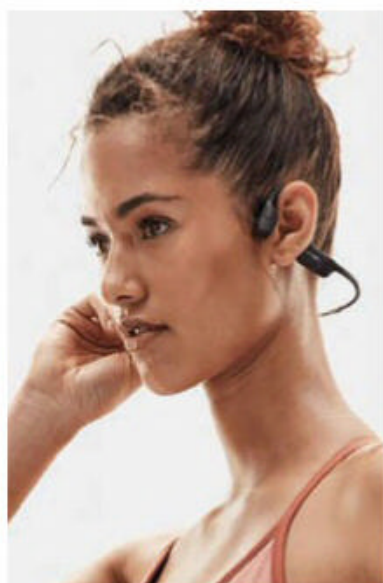
Join A running club near you. Check out Parkrun for 5K runs on Saturday mornings around the country; parkrun.org.uk

Geared up

Stay on track

Polar Ignite 2 fitness watch, £199.50, runandbecome.co.uk

If you don't want to wear a tracker that looks like it was stolen from a 12-year-old boy in 1986, this is the one for you. It's customisable with various straps and faces, and tracks heart rate, sleep and recovery. This watch will even make workout suggestions based on your goals and let you access weather reports, music and push notifications as you run.



Aftershokz Aeropex headphones, £149.95, runnersneed.com

Uptempo tracks or inspirational podcasts are great motivation, but you need to stay safe and be aware of your surroundings. We love these next-generation 'phones that enable you to listen to your chosen sounds through your cheekbones, leaving your ears open. They also have noise-cancelling mics for calls on the trot.

Leg it!

Inov-8 women's winter tights, £109.99, ellis-brigham.com

Waterproofs are useful, but can leave you dripping with sweat, which is why we like these winter tights from Inov-8: The front panel is made from three-layer nylon, which keeps the rain out, while the back has a stretchy knitted fabric that allows your skin to breathe. Plus they have pockets for your phone and even a snack, and reflective details to make sure you are visible on dark days.



Top marks

Advantage long-sleeved tee, £30, uk.gympluscoffee.com

We're all looking for ways to be kinder to the planet, so thumbs up to this cute training top. It's made from recycled plastic but is super-soft and comfortable, and comes in a flattering shape with a high neck and long sleeves so you won't feel like your body is on show.

Renounce the bounce

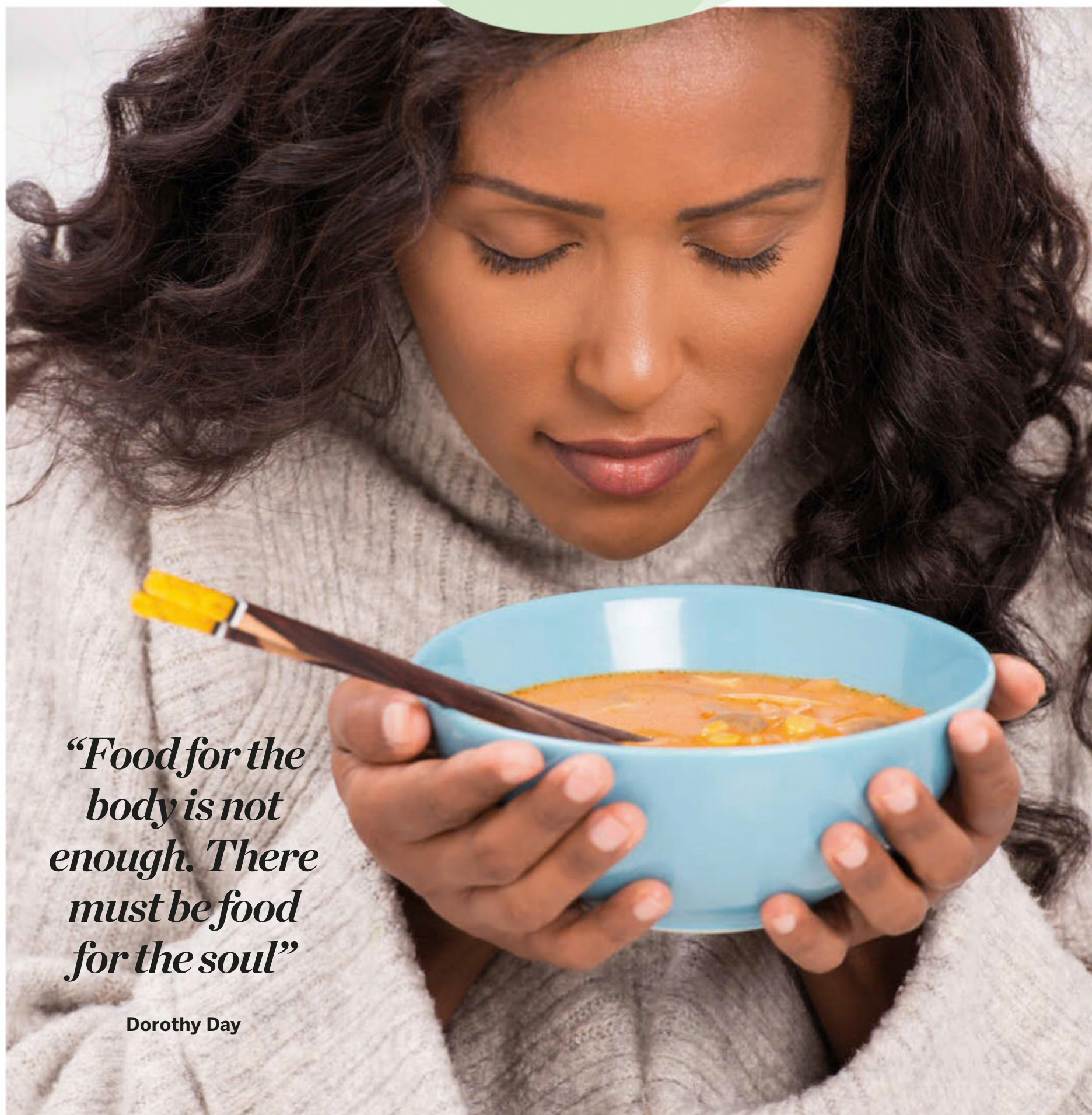
Shock Absorber Ultimate running bra, £46, wiggles.co.uk

Too often sports bras are sized simply small, medium or large. If that's not good enough for day-to-day life then, in our opinion, it's definitely not good enough for running. This bra is designed in regular bra sizes up to a 38G to give you brilliant bounce control, so you can enjoy your run in comfort.





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



*“Food for the
body is not
enough. There
must be food
for the soul”*

Dorothy Day

Time to **MOVE ON**

If you are one of the millions of people who have switched jobs, been made redundant or even walked away from work as you knew it in the past year, you may be battling challenging emotions. Jenny Stallard discovers ways to help you come to terms with change

It's the stuff many of us dream about after a bad day at work: your boss has handed you yet another report that you're sure *they* should be producing, or taken credit for your work for the hundredth time, and you picture yourself standing up and declaring – so the whole office can hear – 'I quit!', before striding purposefully out of the office (think Rachel from *Friends*) with a box of personal items, and always a pot plant. However, the Hollywood fantasy can be far removed from most of our actual experiences, and the reality can leave us floundering. Whether you have left a job with a flourish, declaring you are off to bigger and better things or to go it alone in self-employment, or you're facing redundancy or

post-furlough changes, leaving a job is rarely an open-and-shut case. As the dust begins to settle once you clock off for the last time, there will probably be a raft of unexpected feelings and, surprisingly, they all come under the umbrella of grief.

It's a scenario I've experienced many times over the past year. After a career as a writer, I decided to retrain as a coach, and became so involved in the idea of my new career that the old one felt almost toxic, with the idea of leaving it behind making me feel euphoric.

But, as you may have noticed, here I am, still working as a writer... and happily so. Spoiler alert: what I actually needed to do was let go of parts of the 'old me' that weren't working any more, and blend them with the 'new me' I was creating. And to do

that, I had to allow myself to grieve.

The coach and author Eleanor Tweddell says a career change is similar to a break-up. 'You go through exactly the same feelings. You're grieving your old self, and you have to say goodbye really well to create space for the new you. If you don't do that,' says Tweddell, 'then you're constantly fighting with the old you.'

With my career reboot, I chose to retrain, but there have been many times in my career when the same feelings of grieving have come: due to redundancy or quitting because I didn't like a job, or leaving for a new, shinier role. However you've said or plan to say goodbye to the old work you, here's how to navigate those moments of grief – and to grow into the new you, gradually and happily. ➤

Expert advice



Eleanor Tweddell is a coach and the founder of Another Door. She is the author of 'Why Losing Your Job Could Be The Best Thing That Ever Happened To You' (Penguin, £9.99). eleanortweddell.com; anotherdoor.co.uk



Susan Quilliam is a relationship expert, including relationships in the workplace. She is an advice columnist, writer, broadcaster, consultant, trainer and coach. susanquilliam.com

Are you thinking of quitting your job or changing career? You're by no means alone: almost half of workers are considering it, according to a survey by Microsoft, in a movement termed the 'Great Resignation'.

Making the decision to change career

Oh, the times I've been in this position! That feeling of triumph and nervous excitement as you travel to work knowing you're going to hand in your notice... So why, after the act, is there a feeling of guilt? The relationship psychologist Susan Quilliam says: 'Resignation feels like you're holding the winning cards – you have a new role to go to, a big plan, and you are declaring that you're "off to bigger and better pastures new". It happens in relationships too, but there's a stronger tipping point with a resignation. And when you come to the point of grieving, in comes the feeling of guilt. You wonder, "Did I make the right decision?", then ask yourself, "How on earth could I feel like this?". After all, it was you who chose to resign. And then there's the shame of having effectively told your employer to "stick it". This is where saying goodbye is really important – a leaving do and saying what you need to say to colleagues, even if that means difficult conversations, and acknowledging that you may miss the old role. Be prepared for the surprise of wondering if you did the right thing.

Saying a proper goodbye

For Tweddell, the key message is about taking ownership – however things have ended. There will always be something that crops up to remind you of your old role, but how you choose to deal with that is completely within your control. 'Saying goodbye in a positive way is part of it. Write a heartfelt and meaningful letter to your old self or your previous company, saying things such as "I really enjoyed our time together" and give thanks for all the experiences the role gave you. If you present yourself with that narrative then, actually, any memories that pop up will be happy ones, and you can move on.'



Wanting the best of both

This sense of conflict is a tricky customer – you want the new role and are excited about it but, just as when we move to a new house, the decision to leave doesn't come grief-free.

Unlike storming out of a job or resigning with a flourish, leaving a job you like for another job you think you'll prefer can make the grieving even harder.

We are living through a time when we are all rethinking areas of our lives, and some of that rethinking will involve letting go. But just because you let something go, doesn't mean you don't want to keep hold of elements of it. You might come around to thinking: 'I've let go of this, but I find that I want to reclaim some of its parts.' I did!

Feeling the rage of career grief

If you're leaving a role because of feelings of being thwarted in your career progression, difficult relationships with colleagues or other reasons of dissatisfaction, you might have feelings of anger that things did not work out the way you wanted them to in your job.

Shahroo Izadi is a behavioural change specialist and reaffirms that it is natural to have moments of fear, ambivalence or anger, even when it's your choice to move on, and it can work much like the traditional phases of grief.

'It can be helpful to keep a list on your phone of your reasons for leaving, which you can glance at in moments of low motivation, regret or euphoric recall (a psychological term for the tendency of people to

remember past experiences in a positive light, while overlooking negative experiences),' Izadi says.

But remember, there's no shame in looking back, adds Quilliam: 'Most roles include happy moments, which are often linked to the people with whom you worked. You may miss colleagues, the fun and the lunches. But when you don't miss the job itself, it can cause conflict.'

'That's why it's vital to do all you have to do before you leave, even if it's through gritted teeth,' says Quilliam. 'Making peace with people is important too.'

In the same way that you might go for a final drink at the end of an amicably ended relationship, this will help give you closure, so you are ready for a new chapter.



THREE STEPS TO MOVING FORWARD

1 Remove reminders of the previous career. I used to have lots of magazines with my published articles on the shelves next to my desk. I packed them away into a box and then a cupboard, because I knew I needed the physical representation of my old career to be out of sight. But Quilliam advises against throwing out items too soon as you may want to look back.

2 Make a list of what you need to move forward. 'Even if it's difficult to spend time thinking about negative experiences, write down the things on which you want to achieve closure,' says Quilliam. 'If you want to talk to a boss before you go to express a grievance, think calmly and sensibly about what you need to say. Commit to paper the emotional journey of your time with the company – things you've learned, what's worked for you since you joined, and the way you feel now.'

3 Take time out. A spa break can be a good idea. Something that is just for you and creates separation between the old and the new. Treat yourself, and take time to process your feelings.

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *How To Fail* by Elizabeth Day (HarperCollins, £9.99) charts Day's life story along the theme that we all fail, which makes us who we are and are supposed to be in life. It is also a popular podcast of the same name in which Day interviews guests about their failures in life. elizabethdayonline.co.uk

Listen The *Squiggly Careers* podcast covers everything from ego at work to rediscovering your inspiration. There's plenty to help you through and bring on a few smiles.

Visit Audrey Online and the Audrey Restart Club is a site and community from the former magazine editor Marina Gask-Ajani. It's packed with inspiring interviews and resources for women going through life changes.



I REALLY WORRY
WHEN MY OWNER
LEAVES – I DON'T
KNOW WHERE
SHE'S GONE.

When you go out, your dog may be struggling to cope. Discover how you can be [#DogKind](#) and help your dog feel better when left alone:
www.rspca.org.uk/dogkind

be**DOG**
KIND

Replenish before the spring

Channel winter's fallowness as you reflect, restore and prepare for growth, writes Jackee Holder



There's a lot we can learn from nature at this time of the year. With many trees dispelling their foliage, those with bare branches hug the big skies of winter days, from city streets to country lanes. Winter

trees are not dead. The loss of leafage is a way for them to conserve their energy in order to rest and prepare for new shoots in the spring. Rest is the goal.

The journal comes into its own in the winter months, offering seasonal messages of slowing down, going inwards and making precious and much-needed space and time to rest. What looks like loss is not loss at all, as the novelist Paul Theroux reminds us: 'Winter is a season of recovery and preparation.'

One of my clients booked a couple of days away from her family and friends before the year ended, took herself away and spent two days at a spa, where she was free to journal in solitude. As a way of preparing for the year ahead, she reviewed the previous year's journals, gathering the themes and insights and unanswered questions over two pages I had encouraged her to leave blank at the end of each book. The process offered much insight and she was able to use this in planning and visualising the year ahead. If you're able to take the time, it's a useful exercise.

Don't let the cold weather keep you inside during the winter. Grab your journal, wrap up warm and get outside for a spot of forest bathing. Winter wears its own palette in nature, despite the disappearance of leaves and plants. Use your journal to record the colours you see in the landscape around you. Bring them to life with photographs, create a colour palette in your journal or sketch the scenes of your wintry walk.

Chase the colour red while out walking, explore the varying shades of green left on the trees. Delight in the bare-bones features of naked branches, which make them even more distinguishable against the sky as they rest for the season. Use the metaphor of the naked tree to ask yourself what habits, behaviour or mindset it



might be time to release, stop doing and literally lay to rest.

Indulge in outdoor aromatherapy. Inhale the heady aroma of pine needles and pine cones. Capture the scents of a winter walk in a list in your notebook. What are the indoor aromas associated with this time of the year in your household? My list includes the smell of fresh herbs on a Sunday roast, orange essentials oils in the diffuser and lemons freshly squeezed for a hot cuppa. Certain scents are known to lower levels of stress and improve your mood.

As we take cues from winter to rest and replenish, create a list of nourishing activities or rituals to take you through to the springtime:

- **What seasonal gifts associated with winter could you give yourself more of? Will it be more sleep, maybe a wish to dream more deeply or simply more time to yourself?**
- **Could you create a winter menu of nourishing foods that you will enjoy in the depth of the season?**
- **What winter walks, trails or other outdoor movement will you treat your body to on chilly days, no matter the weather?**

jackeeholder.com; [@jackeeholderinspires](https://www.instagram.com/jackeeholderinspires)

A close-up photograph of a woman with long brown hair, smiling and holding a Corgi puppy. The puppy is yawning, showing its pink tongue and teeth. The background is a soft-focus green field.

A woman's best friend

Rather than the predicted baby boom, the pandemic prompted a craze for pets, and puppies in particular. Rebecca Frank explores why we feel such a special bond with our four-legged companions

It's a drizzly, cold morning and I'm watching my little one play in the leaves. 'How old?' asks a smiling woman, strolling towards me. 'Still a baby,' I say, dashing over as Lola lunges into a muddy puddle. 'Just you wait for the teenage phase,' she says. 'That's when I nearly handed Bertie back!' I look behind her as Bertie bounds towards us, all long limbs and scruffy hair, tongue hanging out of his open mouth. 'Cute!' I say, and she smiles proudly.

We're talking about dogs, of course, although anyone listening might easily think we were new mothers, rehoming jokes aside. Since acquiring Lola the labradoodle, a lockdown puppy, my early morning pre-work routine involves a trip to the park or woods, where I invariably end up talking about feeding and sleeping habits, toilet training and behaviour with similarly obsessed, slightly crazed new puppy owners. After passing a few more pleasantries with Bertie's mum, I do a couple of laps of the park, whizzing off the odd email as I walk, and wondering if Lola is tired enough yet: too soon and I'll regret it in an hour, when I'm having a soggy ball repeatedly placed on my lap as I work. I think how it's just like a decade ago when my children were toddlers... only this time I am, marginally, less tired.

Head to any park in the morning, especially during this National Walk Your Dog month, and you'll probably find a similar scene. Recent figures show a steep increase in the number of dog adoptions and purchases since the pandemic, with the number of pet dogs in the UK rising from nine to 12.5 million between 2019 and 2021. It's not hard to understand why, in these uncertain and anxiety-provoking times, many of us have felt the pull of a puppy. In numerous studies, pets have been proven to make us feel happier, providing company, and

something to love and feel loved by. The vet Rory Cowlam, author of *The Secret Life Of A Vet* (Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99), has observed the rising number of new dog owners at his practice.

'Some of it comes down to simply having more time to take on a new pet,' he says, 'but there is also a psychological aspect. The past couple of years have been stressful, and we know from studies and our personal experiences that dogs are excellent for our mental health and wellbeing. They help tackle depression and myriad mental health issues.'

It's probably unsurprising then that many of the new pup parents I meet in the park have teenage or grown-up children. 'It's nice to have someone in the house who's pleased to see me when I get home from work,' admits one guy I talk to, who

has teenage girls who 'rarely come out of their bedrooms apart from when they need money or lifts'. His dog looks up at him adoringly. 'You love your daddy, don't you, Monty?' he laughs, but clearly there's more than a grain of truth in it.

It's not just empty nesters who are filling their quiet homes with the patter of tiny paws. Millennials are in on the act, choosing to get a dog rather than have a child

during uncertain times. 'So many couples get a dog as a bit of a trial for having a baby,' says Cowlam. But while the number of people acquiring puppies rose, pregnancies have fallen, and in 2021 birth rates dropped to the lowest ever recorded, with the average child per family in the UK now just 1.5.

Whatever life stage you're at, there are certainly plenty of positive reasons to own a dog. Apart from horses, they're the only pet that ensures you get some daily exercise, with one study showing that dog owners take an average of 2,760 more steps every day and have around 30 minutes more activity. At this time of year, the difference is even more marked, when non-dog owners tend to reduce

"It's not hard to understand why, in these uncertain and anxiety-provoking times, many of us have felt the pull of a puppy"

their exercise and time spent outdoors.

Owning a dog can also bring social support and help combat loneliness, from the little conversations that spring up between fellow dog owners to puppy training groups and dog walking, dogs provide easy ways to meet new people.

However, as anyone who has adopted a puppy will know, it's not all fluffy cuddles. Dogs have a way of consuming your time beyond what you might envisage. They can't be left on their own for too long, so those days out or evenings in the pub will require some forward planning, and dogs are a considerable expense. The early weeks can feel like a whirlwind of sleepless nights, toilet accidents, chewing and biting, not dissimilar to the first few months of parenthood. Then, just as you think you're out of the woods, things regress as they hit adolescence.

Anxiety among new dog owners is common and, according to Dogs Trust, many people who acquired puppies during the pandemic are having second thoughts. It reported a 182 per cent increase in traffic to the 'giving up your dog' pages on its website after restrictions lifted in the summer of 2021 as the reality of caring for a dog around work, family and social commitments became clear. Cowlam says considering factors such as time, space and expense before you commit to adopting a puppy is vital but, once you have a dog, so is being a relaxed pet owner. 'I have clients who worry more about their dogs than themselves, or even their family. It can be really anxiety-inducing,' he says. 'And if you're constantly anxious around or about your dog, they could develop behavioural problems. Being a constantly anxious parent can breed a poorly behaved dog.'

So why then, when our children finally become more independent, and we have the first taste of freedom in years, do so many of us go out and get a new puppy? 'It is the era of people using dogs to mimic a baby,' says Cowlam, who warns that while dogs can provide great companionship, over-humanising our pets can be detrimental to their general demeanour and health. 'If we treat our pets like babies or children, they don't always learn to socialise with other dogs, and this can form behavioural issues,' he says. 'Dogs can become so bonded to you

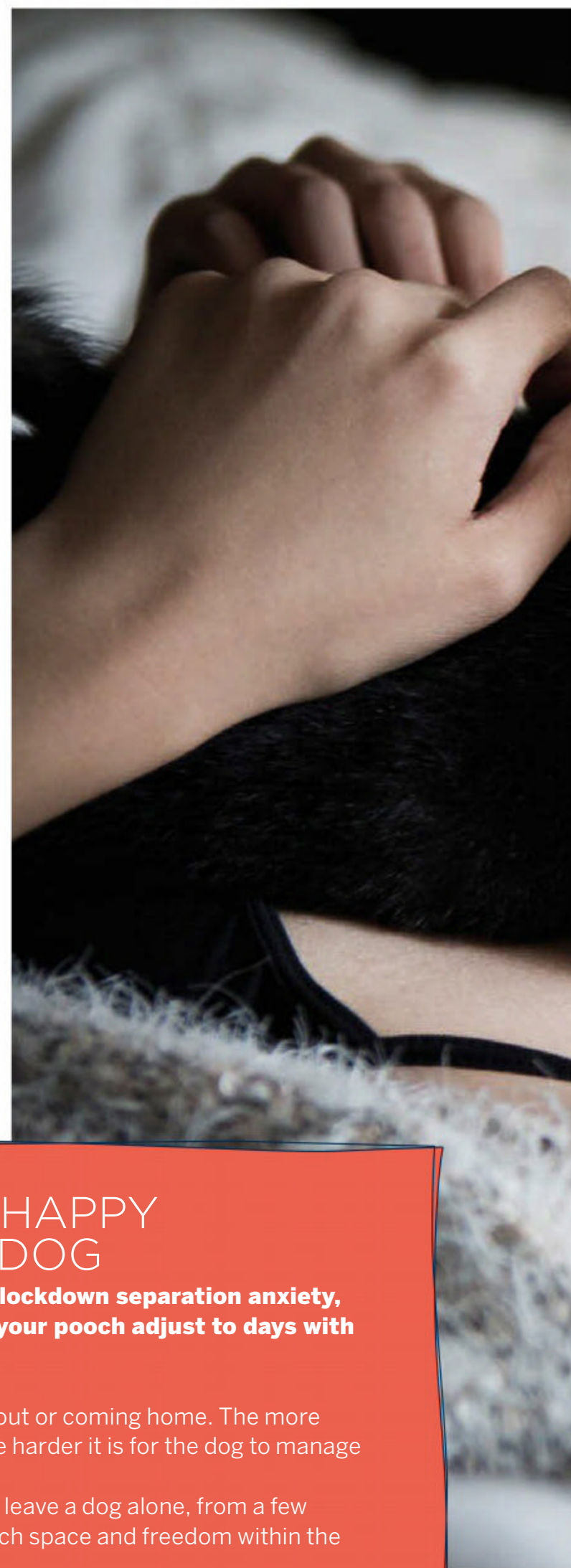
that they become aggressive towards other people,' he explains. A closer look at the industry that is growing around our pet dogs, from special pooch pampering packages at hotels to a recent debate around whether people should be offered 'pawternity' leave, and you can see how we're in danger of getting carried away and projecting human behaviour on to our dogs. As an attentive yet busy new puppy owner, it's reassuring to hear Cowlam advise: 'You've got to remember that dogs are dogs, and they will be fine. They don't need to be with you 24 hours a day or given treats constantly,' he adds.

There's no denying that owning a dog is a big responsibility, but if you have the capacity for that, the rewards are even bigger. There's no way I'd go out for a walk on a chilly, drizzly morning if there weren't a pair of puppy-dog eyes gazing at me. And while it can feel like a chore, I always feel so much better afterwards, whatever the weather. I've even grown to enjoy the late nights and early mornings standing in the garden noticing the stars or listening to the dawn chorus while waiting for Lola to 'do wee-wees'. And, well, having a warm, furry body curled up at my feet as I work never fails to make me smile.

HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY LIFE WITH YOUR DOG

If your dog is suffering from post-lockdown separation anxiety, read on for advice on how to help your pooch adjust to days with a little less of you in them...

- Don't make a big thing about going out or coming home. The more exciting it is when you come home, the harder it is for the dog to manage when you're not there.
- Gradually build up the time that you leave a dog alone, from a few seconds initially, and give them as much space and freedom within the home as is safe.
- Don't be tempted to get a second dog to keep a dog company. If your dog is panicked when you're not there, it's about not being able to cope without you, and another dog won't relieve this. You could well end up with two dogs who have separation anxiety.
- While a strong bond with your dog can feel great, it's not healthy for them to become too attached to one person. Allow your dog interaction with other people in your house and outside of the home, and take turns with the feeding and walking if possible.
- Never punish your dog if he's been to the toilet indoors or destroyed anything because he's just trying to cope.



THE SEVEN-YEAR MYTH

Is one dog year equivalent to seven human years? The simple answer is no. It might be a useful approximation for an adult dog, but it's way off for the early stages of a dog's life. For example, dogs hit puberty at around six months old – when was the last time you saw a three-year-old boy who needed a shave? A better way to think about it is to imagine that a dog has their 21st birthday when they turn two. After that, add five dog years for each human year that passes. For large breeds, it might be closer to six or seven dog years for every year, as larger dogs tend to have a shorter life expectancy, especially the giant breeds.


Extract from 'What Dogs Want' by Mat Ward (Bloomsbury, £12.99).

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

READ *What Dogs Want* by Mat Ward (Bloomsbury, £12.99) is an easy and entertaining insight into the world of dogs from the dog behaviourist Mat Ward. Ward is based in Edinburgh and also does video consultations; petbehavioursorted.com

VISIT Dogs Trust offers advice on how to train and care for your dog and lists puppy training classes near you; dogstrust.org.uk

WATCH *12 Puppies And Us* on BBC iPlayer is a series following 12 puppies and their owners in the first few weeks together.



*“The key to
successful
leadership is
influence, not
authority”*
Ken Blanchard

WORK IN PROGRESS

*How can
I avoid
feeling that I’m
destined to fail?*

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've taken on an exciting project, but I'm scared I will be unsuccessful. I'll have to persuade people on my boss's level and from other departments to get on board. In the long run, the idea will make life easier and save money for the firm, but right now it's no one's priority but mine. How do I handle this?

As your career develops, the actions that you take start to affect more and more people, so feeling scared is normal and doesn't necessarily affect your chances of success.

One way of reassuring yourself is to create a map so the initial direction becomes clearer. I spoke to Oscar Lyons, a doctor and leadership researcher at Oxford University, who suggests starting with a list of stakeholders. You might be surprised how many people have a vested interest in what you are doing.

Include customers, suppliers, your family, as well as the internal people you mention. It's worth pushing to get individual names, not just 'the IT department', because at a later stage you'll need to understand each person's motivation.

The website Mind Tools has a useful graphic for creating a stakeholder map. It's a grid with interest on one axis, and power on the other. The names you've identified will fit into one of four categories:

- High-power, highly interested people: Put in your greatest effort here. Find out whose idea this was initially and share your map with them to see if you've missed anyone.
- High-power, less interested people: Keep them in the loop, but don't bombard them with detail. Ensure they know who to contact if they want to know more.
- Low-power, highly interested

people: People in this category can often be helpful with the detail of your project. Ask them to alert you if they see any major issues arising.

- Low-power, less interested people: Keep an eye on them in case anything changes, but don't over-deliver.

Your boss, for example, would be in the first category, with a lot of power over how much time you give your project and with a high interest in it. Your family, however, may have high interest in your project, but won't have any power.

Next, start understanding what type of influence might work with each person (see right). You might add colours to the names on the map – green for positive support, red for people who might block you, and yellow if they could go either way.

It's surprising how often people will tell you their position straight out, if you ask: What interest do you have in this work? What is your current opinion? What might change your mind? What is the best way of communicating with you?

Another good opening question is asking for advice: 'You've done this before, so what do you recommend?' – it's flattering and can be the first step in building a relationship. Even if the project doesn't achieve its objectives, this new knowledge about how power and influence work in your organisation is gold, so you really can't lose. *mindtools.com*

Mary Fenwick is a writer and director of coaching at 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 with 'Mary life' or 'Mary work' in the subject line



The how of influence

Influence might be an art, but the science helps. Researchers have come up with nine tactics that people actually use in the workplace. Some of these are 'hard' tactics. They get the leader's ideas into action, but don't invite others for input. This might be useful in an emergency or crisis. However, while they may seem slower at first, 'soft' tactics get people more involved, so have greater impact in the long term. Give these three key approaches a go:

RATIONAL PERSUASION

This has elements of hard and soft approaches: a direct request, backed up by facts and logical argument. It doesn't work as well if you lack power or authority. You might try saying: 'Given what our competitors are doing, the facts suggest three reasons for moving ahead with this project.'

CONSULTATION

The aim here is to pull in others to suggest improvements or help plan a project. It is sometimes known as participative leadership, building on ideas that might not have come from the leader. You might say: 'My suggestion is we do X, Y and Z. What would you suggest?' Or: 'In your opinion, what would be the advantages and disadvantages of doing nothing?'

INSPIRATIONAL APPEAL

The most effective way to get people truly committed is to appeal to their values, ideals or emotions. You might say: 'I'd like your support on this because you care about both business performance and our impact on the environment,' for example.

FURTHER READING

When Execution Isn't Enough: Decoding Inspirational Leadership by Claudio Feser (Wiley, £22.99)

"The most effective way to get people truly committed is to appeal to their values, ideals or emotions"

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PSYCHOLOGIES

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Your Questions in Mind... to help and inspire

Q I have constant negative thoughts about myself, what can I do to change this??

A) Negative thoughts are a result of an untrained mind with untrained thoughts, I call this the "puppy mind" as it needs taming and guidance. The mind works like a programme and will repeat what you tell it, so if you're constantly criticising yourself, these same thoughts act like magnets to each other. To change your thinking, start to notice what your inner self talk is saying, slow it

down, acknowledge it and then reframe it. Switch it into something more helpful, even if you can get to neutral. E.g "I feel unattractive" switch to "I'm ok with how I look today" and repeat this several times a day. Allowing the mind silence is pivotal to taming your puppy mind; find time to allow space and silence in your day so you can recharge and connect within.

Web: www.carolinerushforth.com

Email: caroline@carolinerushforth.com



Q 'I enjoy taking a bath for some 'me time', but how can I make it more relaxing?'

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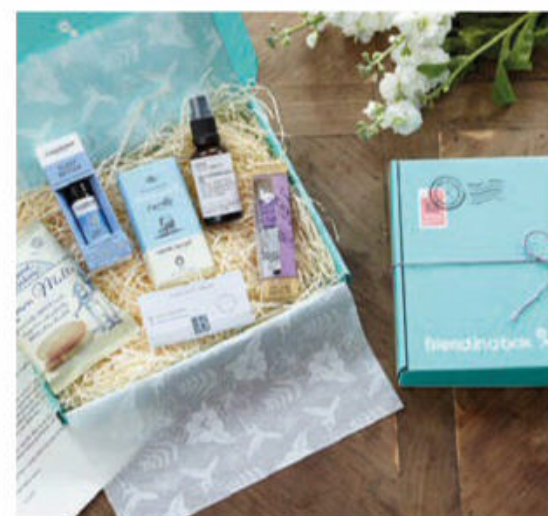


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illness, hospital stays but also for birthdays, thank yous and friendship appreciation. Popular boxes include Be Kind to Yourself, Sleep & Sympathy, Pick-Me-Up, Friendship, Pamper, Gin & Chocolate, Happy Birthday, and A Nice Cup of Tea. We offer vegan options for most of our boxes. If you don't find what you are looking for, owner Jane will help you to create a bespoke box. Prices start from just £12.

friendinabox.co.uk jane@friendinabox.co.uk



OR EMAIL HANNAH.LEES@KELSEY.CO.UK

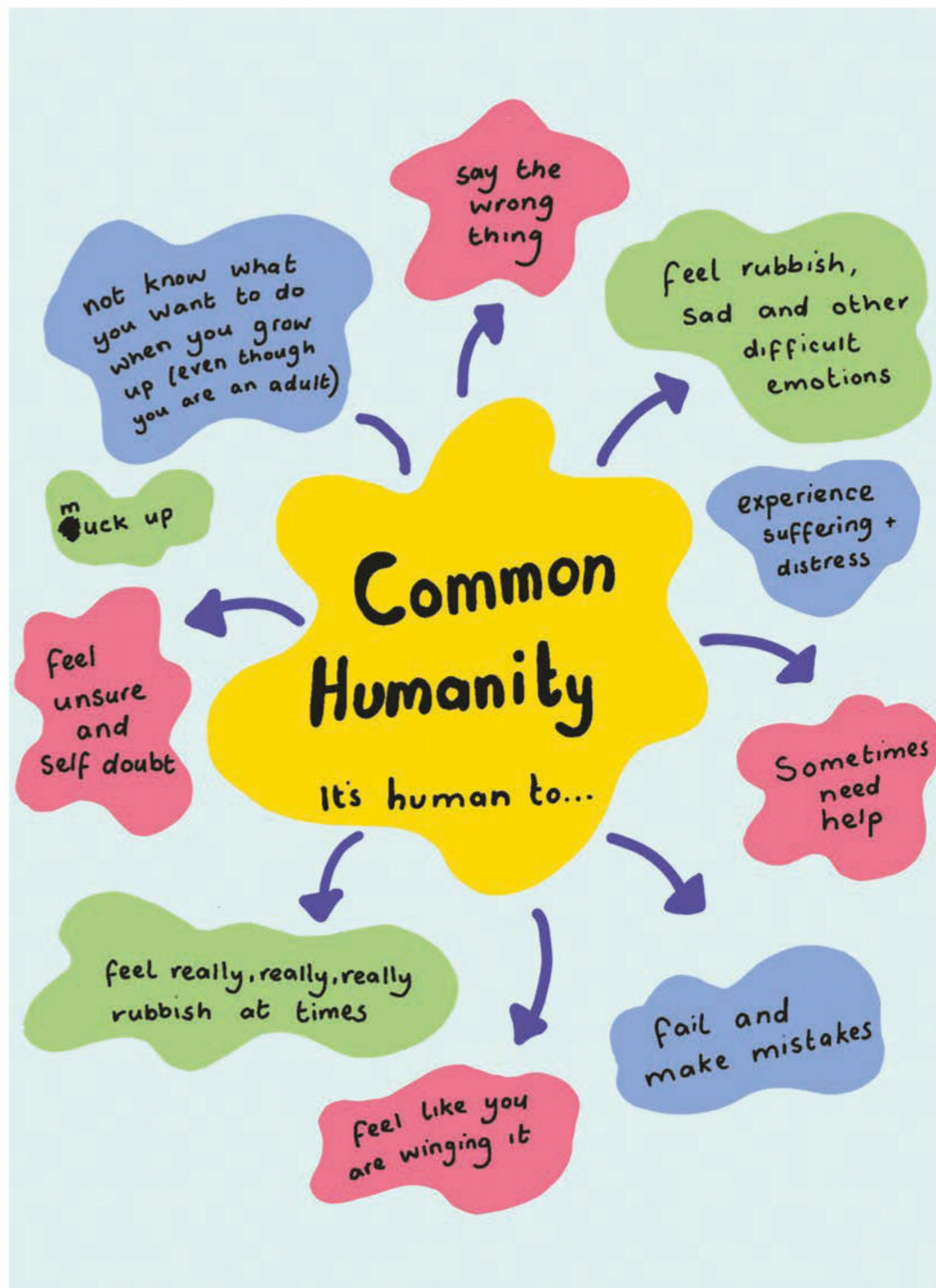
How to be happier

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

When we go through tough times, it can make us feel different from others and as if we are not responding how we should. Societal beliefs about emotions and happiness have a part to play here: we believe we should be coping and happy all the time, but that is unrealistic. Common humanity is about recognising difficult emotions and suffering as part of life, something we all experience that binds us, rather than separates us.

Start by noticing when you are judging your emotions, responses and experiences. You may be telling yourself it's not 'normal' to feel like this, that nobody else feels this way, or you may be calling yourself odd. It could be more subtle, such as saying 'I should be coping' or 'other people cope better than me'. These statements make you feel different and isolate you. Use the range of statements in the image to remind yourself that suffering, difficult emotions and distress do not make you different. They are part of what connects you with other people, because they are part of the human experience.

You may want to come up with your own statements to remind yourself of our commonality when you notice judgmental and isolating thoughts – and you can add those to the image.



Follow Emma Hepburn on Instagram @thepsychologymum for more inspiration

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

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*Nielsen GB ScanTrack Total Coverage Value and Unit Retail Sales 52 w/e 09/10/2021. UK's No.1 beauty supplement brand for skin, hair and nails. To verify contact Vitabiotics Ltd, 1 Apsley Way, London, NW2 7HF. †Vitabiotics has received the Queen's Award for Innovation on two occasions, in addition to twice for International Trade.

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10-minute YOGA CALM





Feel Come

Some people have the ability to walk through life seemingly unaffected by stress and anxiety. Indeed, many thrive on it. I, perhaps like you, am not one of those people.

Learning to be kinder to ourselves when under pressure is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves. It's all too easy to battle on, often unaware of how we really feel or the impact the situation is having on our health and wellbeing. But asking for help, letting go of what you cannot change or making space in your day for just 10 minutes of yoga and meditation can help you find a supportive pathway through a difficult period in your life. That has certainly been my experience.

I wrote this book during a challenging family crisis. What I was reminded of, however, was the deeply healing power of yoga and meditation. Many of the sequences in this book arose out of my feelings and needs at the time. When I was particularly anxious, I compiled the Calm anxiety sequence using myself as a guinea pig. If it worked

for me, it would work for another. And I experienced for myself just how effective Abdominal breathing can be at slowing a racing heart.

The most dramatic proof of the calming benefits of yoga came when, after a particularly stressful day, I lay in a crumpled heap on the sofa, my jangled nerves 'buzzing' from overstimulation. Just 10 minutes later, after resting in one of the poses, my body and mind felt transformed. My breath was calm, my body soothed and the previous exhaustion I felt had subsided to the point where I simply felt mildly tired.

Whatever brings you to this book, I encourage you to use it in whichever way works best for you. If you find a pose or sequence that resonates with you, practise it as long as it is helpful, then move onto something else when you need. Trust your instincts and your body. They know what's best for you. Namaste,

Eve Boggenpoel

Author, 10-minute Yoga Calm



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eve Boggenpoel has been practising yoga and meditation for 25 years. Self-taught initially, her formal yoga journey began with a Iyengar teacher when she learnt to value the significance of good alignment, and went on to include vinyasa and yin styles with inspirational teachers Shiva Rea, Sarah Powers and Simon Low. In 2013, Eve studied to become a yoga teacher at triyoga in London, under the expert guidance of Mimi Kuo-Deemer and Jean Hall, and is a member of The British Wheel of Yoga. She is a qualified homeopath and health journalist, and in *10-minute Yoga Calm* brings together her intuitive understanding of healing and a deep appreciation of yoga and meditation.

*'Do your
practice and
all is
coming'*

Sri K Pattabhi Jois



About YOGA

More than just a physical workout, yoga also calms and focuses the mind, bringing a host of benefits from easing pain to alleviating stress

In the West, yoga is often seen just as a way to stretch and condition the body. But this ancient practice is so much more than that. Yoga is a complete system of exercise, breathing, meditation and relaxation that helps you deal with the demands of life. Far from just a feel-good workout, it has a host of clinically proven physical and mental benefits, from easing aches and pains and reducing blood pressure to alleviating insomnia, depression and stress.

THE ROOTS

Yoga originated around 5,000BC from an ancient Indian philosophy called Vedanta, which emphasises the connection between mind and body. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' which means 'yoke' or 'union'. This is because over time, doing yoga helps connect your body and mind, bringing you closer to understanding and being more compassionate to yourself. Yoga can

give you the space to breathe and reconnect to your body's needs. Around 2,500 years ago in India, an author and sage named Patañjali wrote the first real practical yoga guide – a book called *The YogaSutras*. Patañjali defined yoga with the Sanskrit phrase 'citti-vrtti-nirohdah' which translates as 'the cessation of the turnings of the mind'. Even today, the basic definition of yoga has changed little. It's ultimately about stilling the chatter in your mind through focus – whether that is on your alignment and breath when doing postures, or on a mantra, your breath or an object during a breathing exercise or meditation.

THE EVOLUTION

In the 20th century, teachers from India developed different forms of hatha yoga. BKS Iyengar created the structured Iyengar form, while Sri K Pattabhi Jois created the dynamic ashtanga style. In the second half of the century, yoga began to flourish in

the West as enthusiasts travelled to India and brought their knowledge back home. Now, there are many hybrids, from hot yoga to dynamic yoga. But certain elements are always present: focus, centring and a returning to our inner selves and a more peaceful state.

YOGA AND YOU

While the human mind tends to focus on the past or future, the body exists only in the present. Coming back to your body through yoga postures brings your mind back to the present moment. And for that moment, your worries drop away. The more you practise, the stronger your body will become and the more powerfully connected you will feel to your body. The more connected to your body you feel, the less you'll be susceptible to the stresses and strains of everyday life. A calm mind, stronger body and glowing skin are just some of the benefits you'll reap from regular practice.

The five pillars...

The main aim of yoga is to bring your body and all its cravings, passions, worries and urges under the control of your mind. Indian sage Patañjali defined yoga through methods such as controlling your breath and holding your body in steady poses – these days, known as hatha yoga. Today, yoga has evolved into many modern-day hybrids – from the physically challenging ashtanga and Bikram yoga to restorative yin and meditative raja yoga. But the basic principles of hatha yoga remain the same and can be broken down into five essential principles that create a total conditioning system for your body.

EXERCISE In yoga, exercise takes the form of ‘asanas’ or postures which lubricate, strengthen, stretch and tone your body. Though they can be demanding, yoga asanas are different from other forms of exercise as they incorporate both challenge and recovery. Rather than only focusing on dramatically expending energy, yoga focuses on conserving and renewing your energy, so that after each

session you’ll feel refreshed and energised.

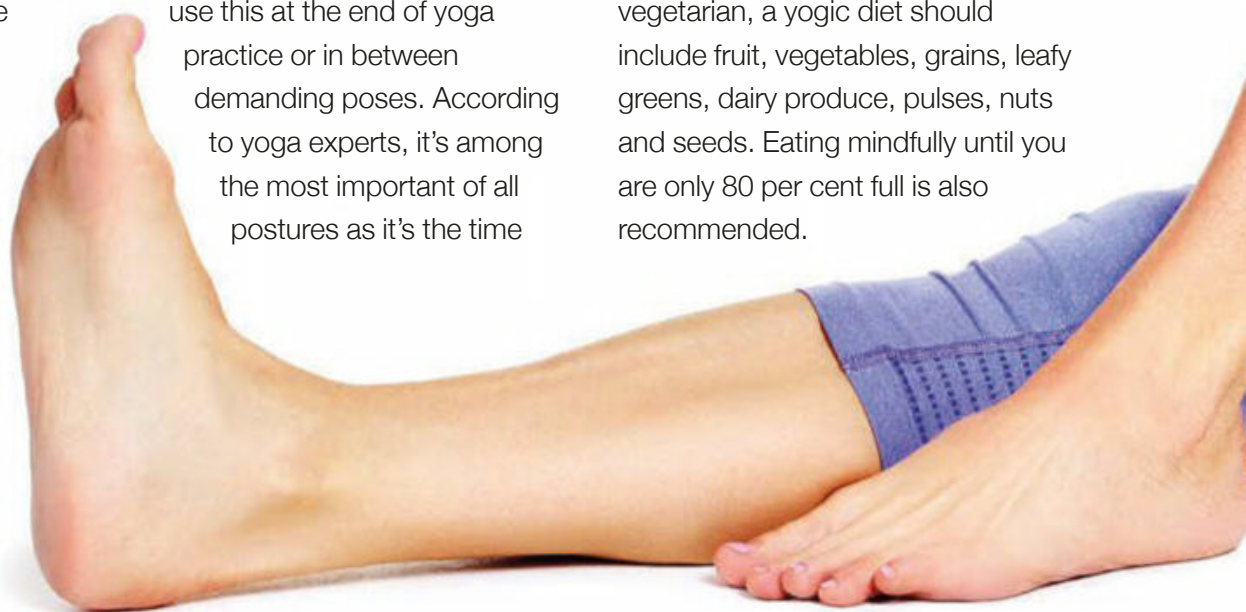
BREATHING Correct breathing deepens your yoga practice and has a direct impact on your nervous system. A range of yogic breathing techniques, known as pranayama, can help calm, restore and energise your body and mind. Your breath links your body to your solar plexus, located deep in your navel where potential energy is stored and created. The yoga breath helps release this energy for mental and physical restoration.

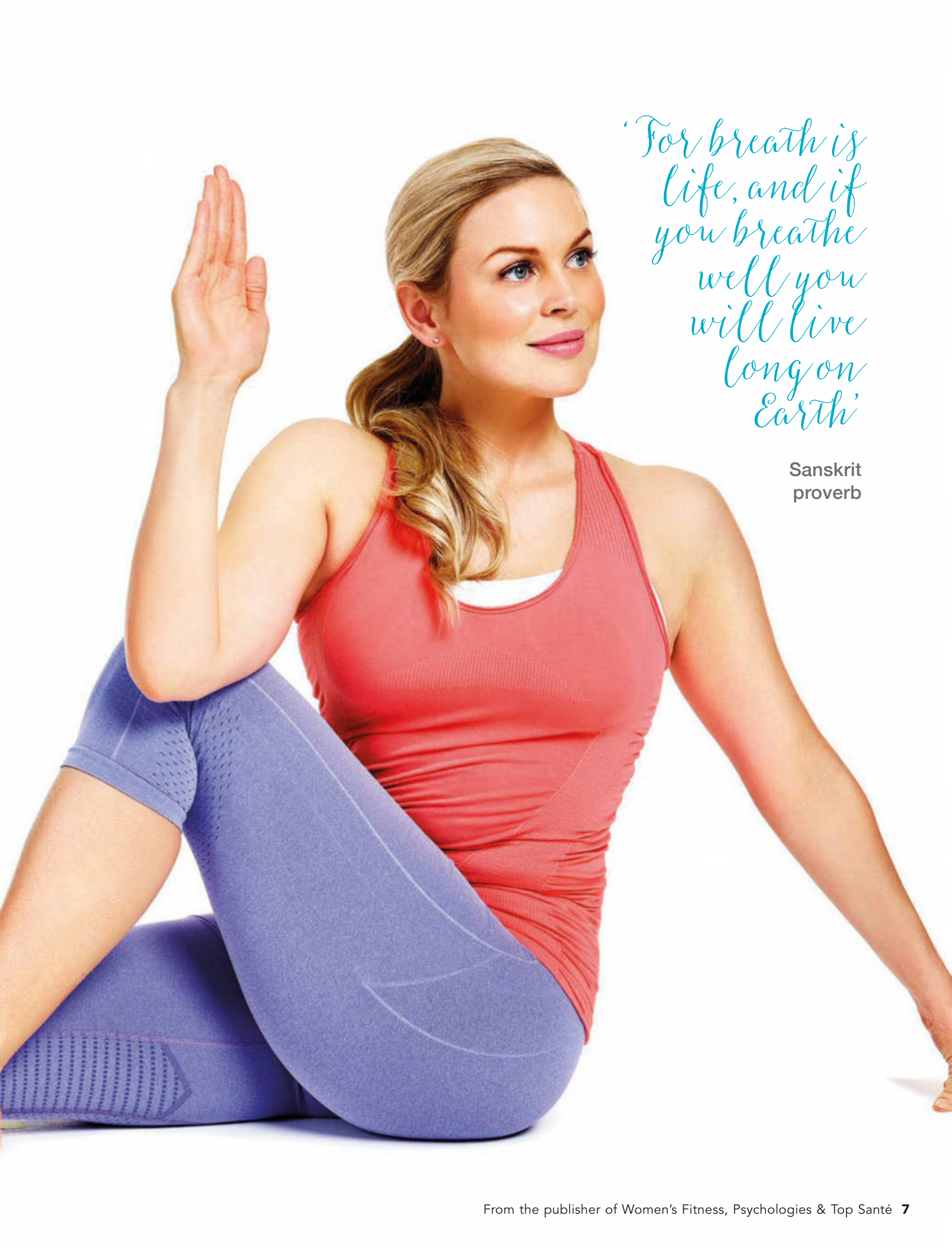
RELAXATION Yoga recognises that proper, regular relaxation releases tension and allows you to make new energy, even when you’re tired and overworked. Relaxation is therefore a central part of any yoga practice. The most powerfully restoring posture is Savasana where you lie flat, face up, with your eyes closed. You can use this at the end of yoga practice or in between demanding poses. According to yoga experts, it’s among the most important of all postures as it’s the time

when your body assimilates the accumulated benefits of the preceding practice.

MEDITATION Meditation and mindfulness – even a few minutes a day – are an essential part of yoga because they help control, focus and refresh your mind. But, don’t worry, meditation doesn’t have to mean sitting in Lotus position for hours. Meditation simply requires observing your thoughts as though they’re clouds in the sky, shifting and changing. Meditation can take place at the end of your yoga practice or for 10 minutes in the morning. You can even do it for a minute on the bus or train or between meetings. A little regular meditation done often is better than a lot, done sporadically.

DIET Yoga philosophy recommends a diet of simple, natural foods that are easily digested to promote good physical and mental health. Ideally vegetarian, a yogic diet should include fruit, vegetables, grains, leafy greens, dairy produce, pulses, nuts and seeds. Eating mindfully until you are only 80 per cent full is also recommended.



A woman with blonde hair tied in a ponytail is performing a yoga pose. She is wearing a red tank top and blue leggings. Her right leg is bent and her right hand is raised, palm facing forward. Her left arm is extended to the ground. She is looking upwards and to the right with a serene expression.

*'For breath is
life, and if
you breathe
well you
will live
long on
Earth'*

Sanskrit
proverb

Yoga BASICS

Don't rush straight into your yoga positions. Tune into your body and do warm-up poses to avoid any injuries

A friend of mine has a blog entitled 'the mat is my friend', which is a wonderful way to approach your yoga practice. Each time you get on your mat, it's an opportunity to get to know yourself more and to discover what it means to listen to and trust your body – which is, after all, your best teacher. Your body knows its limits, and will soon let you know all about it if you push it too hard. On the other hand, if you respond to what it needs, whether that's a fast-paced wake-up routine or a calming evening sequence, you'll invariably feel better after your session than when you began.

There may be times when you feel frustrated at not being able to do a pose in the way you'd like but everyone is different, and your unique anatomy will have a significant impact on which postures are easy for you and which are challenging. Here's a simple example: it's not just your flexibility that determines whether you can touch your toes in a sitting forward fold, it also depends on the length of your arms.

How you approach yoga is likely to be a reflection of how you treat yourself in life. So notice if you push yourself when you get on your mat. Or are you

self-critical when you find a posture difficult? Your yoga journey is an opportunity to encounter yourself on a deep level. If you can, meet yourself with kindness and compassion.

CHECKING IN

When you're driven by stress, it can take a while to peel away the layers of activity and to tune in to what you're feeling beneath the surface. A useful time to do this is when you're warming up. Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes and, after a few centring breaths, bring your attention to the area below your navel and ask yourself how you feel physically.

Then become aware of your heart area and tune into how you feel emotionally. Finally, take your attention to the space between your eyebrows, and connect to what you're thinking. Once you have a clearer sense of how you are now, simply acknowledge it and allow the understanding to recede into the background as you return your attention to your breath.

WARMING UP

If you prepare your body for yoga practice, you're less likely to sustain injuries. Ideally, an effective warm-up will move your spine in three planes of movement – flexion and extension

(forward bends and back bends), a lateral stretch and a twist.

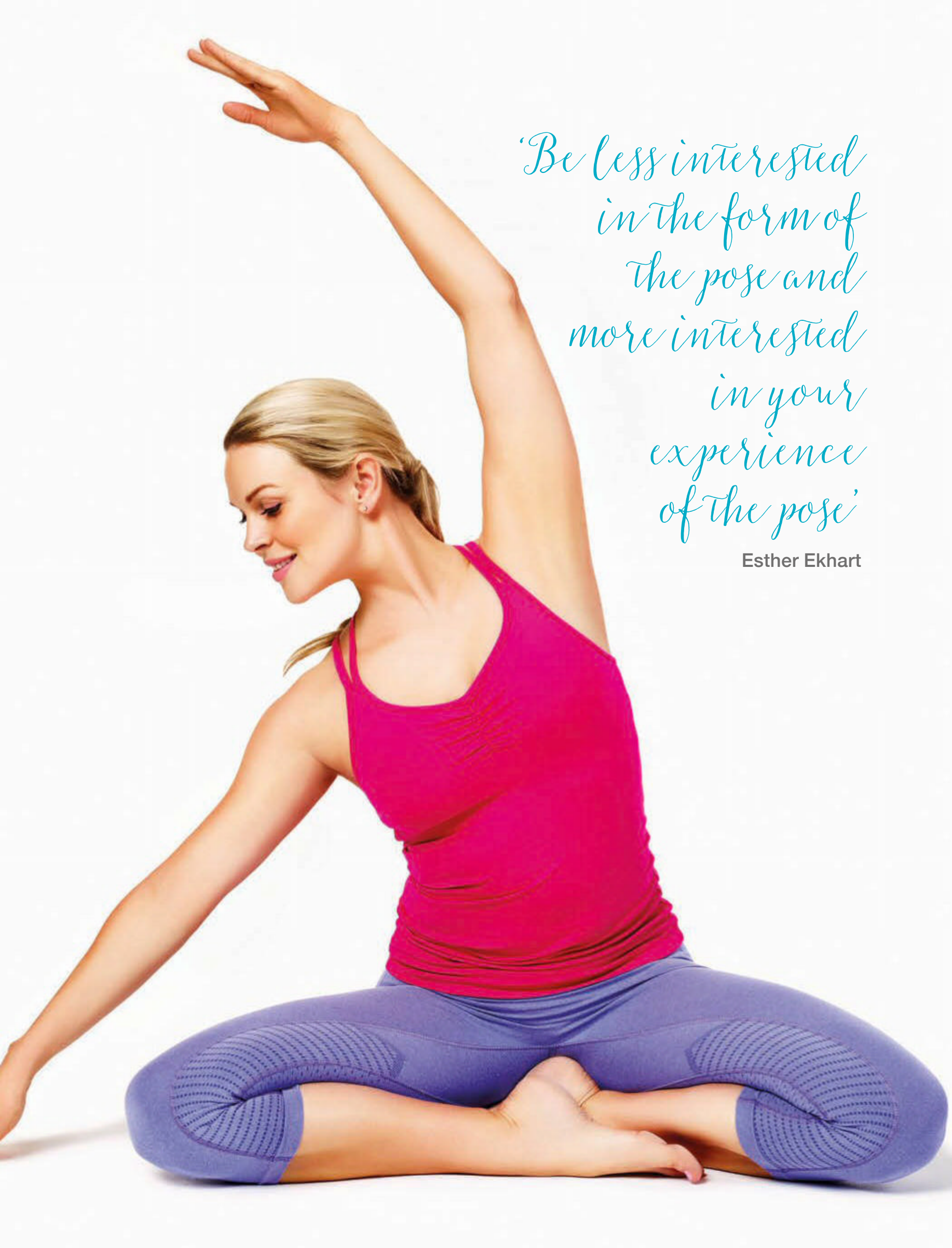
FORWARD BENDS: Folding forward from the hips, whether in a standing or seated position, is a key technique for reducing stress. When your head is lower than your heart, it calms the brain and rests your circulation system.

BACK BENDS: Gentle back bends create space in the front of your body and open the heart area. Not only does this support a deeper breath, it can help you learn to be a little kinder to yourself. This is very necessary when you're under pressure.

SIDE BENDS: As well as being refreshing, expanding your spine on a lateral plane opens the side ribs, helping you breathe more deeply. This activates your para-sympathetic nervous system, bringing a feeling of calm.

TWISTS: These compress and release the muscles and organs of your torso, helping remove built-up tension and improve blood circulation to the area, which floods it with nutrients. Lengthening your spine before twisting creates space between the vertebra, allowing for safer and deeper twists.





*'Be less interested
in the form of
the pose and
more interested
in your
experience
of the pose'*

Esther Ekhart

Control YOUR BREATH

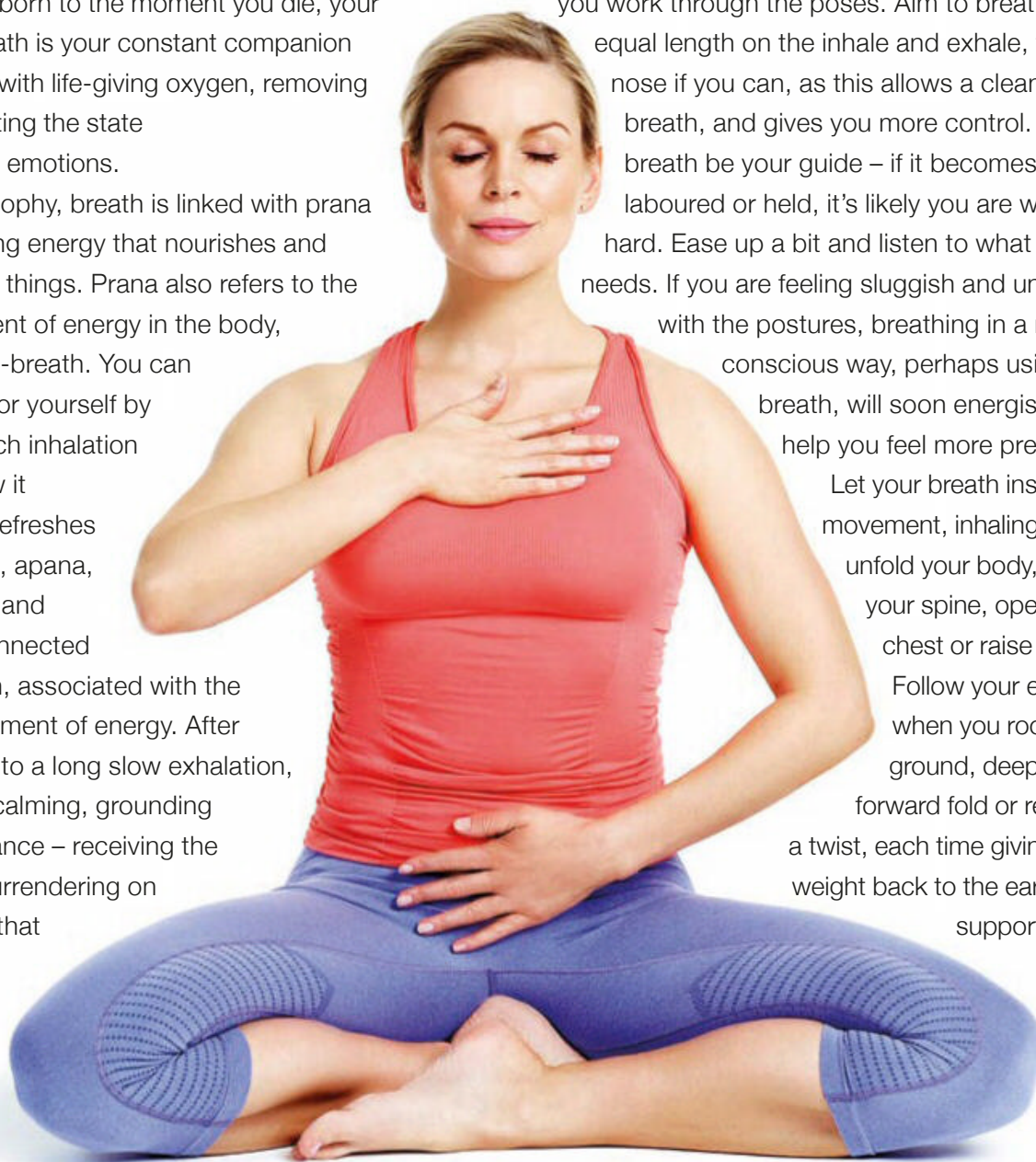
Soothe your nervous system, still your mind and energise your entire body with these powerful pranayama exercises

On average, your body takes around 23,000 breaths a day. From the instant you are born to the moment you die, your breath is your constant companion – providing cells with life-giving oxygen, removing toxins and reflecting the state of your mind and emotions.

In yogic philosophy, breath is linked with prana – the all-pervading energy that nourishes and sustains all living things. Prana also refers to the upward-movement of energy in the body, created by the in-breath. You can experience this for yourself by taking a deep, rich inhalation and noticing how it invigorates and refreshes you. Its opposite, apana, removes toxicity and waste, and is connected to the out-breath, associated with the downward movement of energy. After inhaling, let go into a long slow exhalation, and observe its calming, grounding effect. It's this dance – receiving the inhalation and surrendering on the exhalation – that

feeds your yoga practice. It will help you attune to your natural rhythm and bring a sense of rooted stillness as you work through the poses. Aim to breathe for an equal length on the inhale and exhale, through your nose if you can, as this allows a cleaner, warmer breath, and gives you more control. And let your breath be your guide – if it becomes strained, laboured or held, it's likely you are working too hard. Ease up a bit and listen to what your body needs. If you are feeling sluggish and unengaged with the postures, breathing in a more conscious way, perhaps using Ocean breath, will soon energise you and help you feel more present.

Let your breath instigate movement, inhaling as you unfold your body, lengthen your spine, open your chest or raise your arms. Follow your exhalation when you root into the ground, deepen into a forward fold or release into a twist, each time giving your weight back to the earth that supports you.



OBSERVE THE BREATH

Becoming aware of your breathing habits can lead to a more balanced emotional life. For one week, keep a breathing journal, checking in three times a day to observe how you are breathing in that moment. Is it shallow or rapid? Are you breathing only from your chest? Maybe you'll discover you've even been holding your breath.

After a few days, you may see some patterns begin to emerge. Notice if you repeatedly pause your breath around a particular person or task. What situations leave you taking shallow breaths? When do you take deep, easeful breaths, and how does that make you feel?

As you understand about your individual breathing patterns, see if you can intervene before they become established. Take a few slow, deep breaths when you meet that 'challenging' person. Breathe deeply into your abdomen before you write your to-do list, and notice if it changes what you want to make a priority.

ABDOMINAL BREATHING

- Lying flat on the floor, as below, gently close your eyes and take a moment to let go of the day and arrive in your body.

- Take a deep breath in through your nose, then exhale through your mouth, letting go of any tension on your out-breath. Do this twice more, releasing any thoughts as you do so. Make any minor adjustments you need to feel comfortable, then let your breath settle, your heartbeat quieten and your mind gradually become still.

- Bring your attention to your breath and, without trying to change anything, become aware of your natural breathing pattern as it is now. Is it fast or slow? Shallow or deep? Do you take a full in-breath and completely empty your lungs when you breathe out? Remember, there's nothing to change, just observe how you are breathing in this moment.

- Become aware of any movements in your body as you breathe. Can you feel your chest lifting or your belly expanding? Maybe you notice your back presses slightly into the mat as you inhale. Start to become conscious of the micro-movements in your body as you breathe in and out.

- Take your hands and place them on your lower belly, beneath your navel, with your fingertips touching and the heels of your hands resting on your hips (pictured). Allow your belly to soften, and see if you can notice it rising as you inhale and gently falling as you exhale.

- Gently slide your hands to your side ribs, thumbs beneath your back, fingers wrapped round your front ribs. As you breathe, notice if you can sense any movement beneath your hands. If you're finding it hard to feel anything, very gently draw your abdomen towards your spine. Continue for a few breaths, following your natural rhythm, and tuning in to the movement of your ribs as they respond to the action of your diaphragm.

- Finally, slide your right hand back to your lower belly and your left hand up to your chest, to rest over your breastbone. Notice how your hands move as you take a few slow, deep breaths. Maybe they both move, maybe just one moves.

Now, begin to direct your breath, first filling your abdomen, then your ribs and finally your upper chest, as if you were filling a vase with water – first the base, then the middle and lastly the neck. As you exhale, reverse the process, emptying from the chest, then the ribs and lastly the belly.

Like the vase, your diaphragm and lungs are three-dimensional, so allow your breath to travel to the back and sides of your body as well as the front.

Continue in your own rhythm for a few breaths, then gently let your breathing return to normal.





OCEAN BREATH UJJAYI BREATHING

Also known as Victorious breath, ujjayi breathing soothes and tones the nervous system, and energises every cell in your body.

- Lie in Mountain brook pose (above), and take a few moments to allow your breathing to settle.
- Gently close your eyes and gradually deepen your breathing, inhaling to a count of three and exhaling to a count of six, allowing the pause period between breaths to naturally lengthen. Consciously release any tension as you exhale, letting your body melt deeper into the mat with every breath.
- Let your breathing return to normal then, in your mind's eye, as you inhale, imagine a fine golden thread of light streaming down from the sky to enter the front of your throat. Sense it travel to the back of your throat, then, as you exhale, feel the light move from the back of your throat to the front and return up to the sky.
- Continue attuning to this golden ray of light with each breath, focusing on it entering and leaving your throat. Allow your breath to be gentle and to naturally slow down. Be here for a few minutes, allowing a softness and stillness to settle around you.

● Gently release this contact, then slowly and mindfully come up to a comfortable seated position, sitting on a block or bolster if your back rounds.

● Allow your breath to settle once more, then continue to imagine you are drawing golden light into your throat, this time from the horizon rather than the sky. Once you sense a quietness enveloping you, continue for a few more rounds, then softly let go and let your breath return to its normal rhythm.

● Maintaining the sense of softness you have found, gently open your lips and this time breathe in and out through your mouth, making a soft 'haaa' sound as you do so. This action slightly closes your throat, and is the central physiological action of Ocean breath. Aim to keep the quality of your breathing very gentle, so the sound would only be audible to someone sitting very close to you. Continue in this way for a few minutes then gently let it go, and softly open your eyes.

● You may find yourself naturally moving into Ocean breath without thinking about it. This is quite beautiful when it happens; just trust that your body knows what it's doing, and is supporting your practice in the way you need.

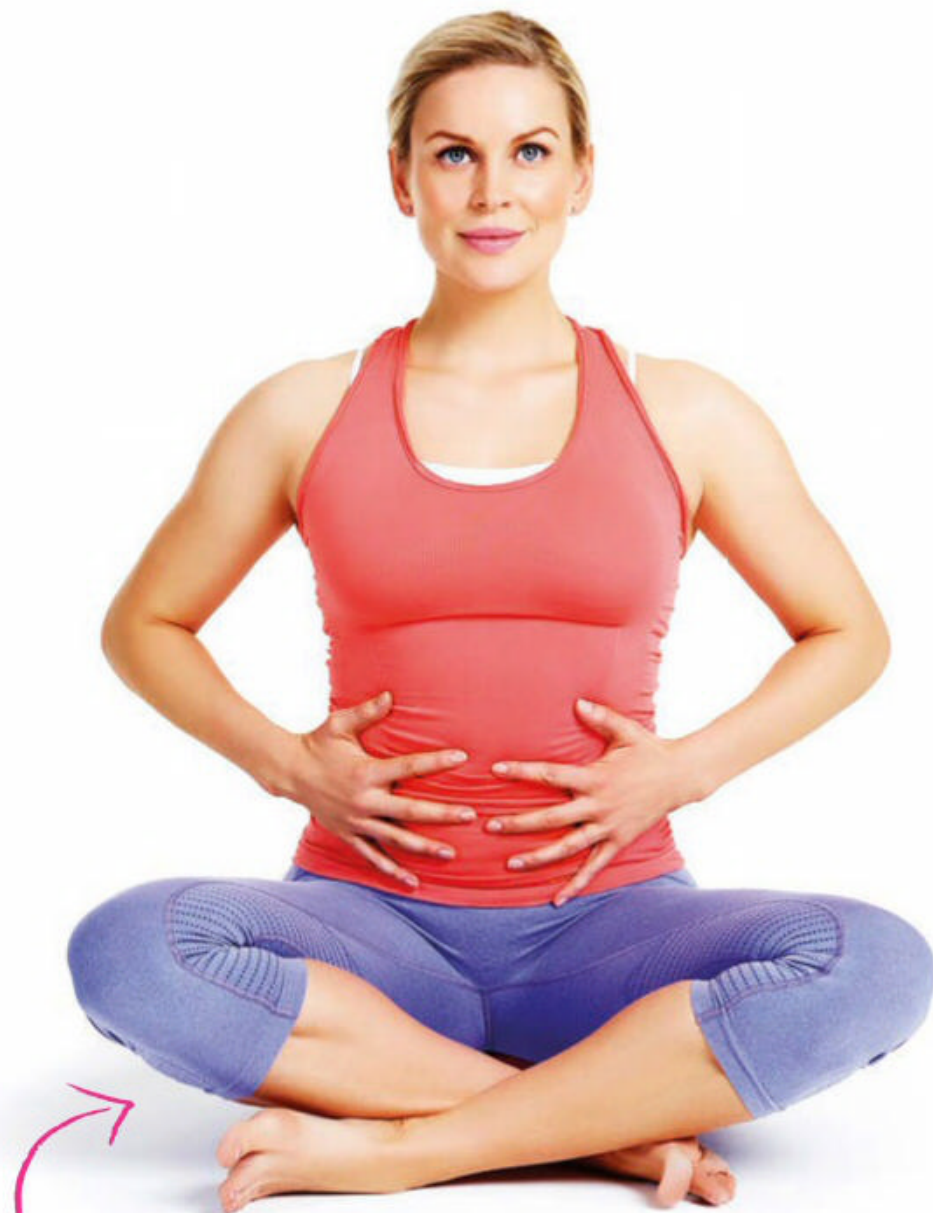
ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

NADI SHODHANA

In yogic philosophy, a nadi is an energy channel, and shodhana means to cleanse. This practice calms the nerves, stills the mind and balances the left and right sides of the body.

- Sit in a comfortable position and take a moment to centre yourself. Bring your right hand to your nose, and rest the tip of your thumb on the fleshy part of your right nostril and the tips of your index and middle fingers between your eyebrows. Curl your ring and little fingers under, and rest the inside of your ring finger on your left nostril.
- Close your left nostril with your ring finger and exhale fully through your right nostril. Keeping your left nostril closed, inhale fully and slowly through the right nostril. Close your right nostril with your thumb, then release your ring finger to open your left nostril and exhale slowly.
- Pause, then slowly inhale through the left nostril. Close off the nostril with the ring finger. Pause, release the right nostril with your thumb, then exhale slowly and steadily through the right nostril.
- This is one round. Repeat, breathing slowly and mindfully for five minutes.





BELLOWS BREATH KAPALABHATI BREATHING

Also known as the Cleansing breath, this breathing exercise energises your whole body very quickly. Do not practise it if you are pregnant, menstruating or after eating.

- Sit in a comfortable position and connect to your breathing for a few moments to centre yourself.
- When you are ready, place your hands on your belly and draw your navel in and up as you quickly exhale through the nose. Rather than consciously

breathing in, allow inhalation to happen naturally.

- Repeat this pattern four to eight times, noticing your belly move in and out like a bellows beneath your hands, and ending with an out-breath. This is one cycle.
- Do another three or four cycles, gradually increasing the speed of your breath, so each exhalation lasts around one second. Take a few, deep Ocean breaths (opposite) after each cycle to rest your lungs and diaphragm.
- As you become more experienced, you can build up to 15–30 breaths per cycle.

GROUNDING BREATH PRANAYAMA

Yogis believe that energy follows thought. I learnt this delightful practice from Alexander Filmer-Lorch. It teaches you to build up a connection with your lower body and the ground beneath you, increasing your sense of security.

- Sit in a comfortable position and, once you're centred, place your hands palm-down on your thighs. Align your spine so your shoulders are directly above your hips and allow your weight to sink down through your sitting bones.
- Gently close your eyes and bring your attention to the tip of your nose. On a long, slow inhalation, travel with your mind's eye to a point 12 fingers' width above the crown of your head.
- Pause, then, on a long, slow exhalation, imagine you're travelling back to the crown of your head and down through the centre of your body to your tailbone. Once there, have a sense of your out-breath, attention and energy dispersing beneath you into the ground.

- Pause, bring your attention back to your nose, and repeat the cycle for five to 10 minutes, travelling up to the 12-finger point on an inhale, down to the floor on an exhale. Keep your breathing very soft, and allow a stillness and peace to settle around you.
- When you have finished, open your eyes and pause for a moment or two, to absorb the effects of the practice.



SEQUENCE TO CALM ANXIETY

Whether you're apprehensive about an exam or an interview or are under pressure to complete more things than you have time for, the effects of acute anxiety are similar. Your mind is likely to be in overdrive, your breathing shallow and your heart rate increased. This sequence begins by soothing your nervous system, then gradually reawakens your connection to strength and openness.

Arrive

● Easy cross-legged pose (p16)

Take a few Abdominal breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. If necessary, count each breath to lengthen the out-breath until you feel calmer and your heart rate begins to slow down. Then complete the Grounding breath pranayama on the previous page.

Warm-up

- Easy twist (p17)
- Heart awakener (p18)
- Cat flow (p19)

Complete two rounds.

Tip

Extreme anxiety can sometimes leave you feeling paralysed – unable to move, unable to think. Just the act of getting on your mat can begin to shift things.

Poses

1 Mountain pose (p20)

Allow your breath to settle, then take five or more long slow breaths, with your eyes closed. Direct your out-breath down your legs and through the soles of your feet. Be aware of your back body. When you feel more centred, inhale to sweep your arms out to the side and overhead. On an exhale, take your arms out to the side, into...

2 Standing forward fold (p21)

Take five or more breaths here, resting your hands on a crosswise bolster if more comfortable. Exhale and step back into...

3 Downward dog (p22)

Five or more breaths. Walk your hands round to the right into...

4 Wide leg standing forward fold with bolster (p23)

Five or more breaths. Bend your right leg to come into...

5 Extended side angle pose (p24)

Five breaths. Straighten your right leg and lower your right hand to come into...

6 Triangle (p25)

Five breaths. Step your left foot in, place your right hand on the floor/block to come into...

7 Half moon (p26)

Three to five breaths. Lower your left leg, step your foot back out and pivot on your feet to face the opposite direction. Repeat 5 and 7 on the left.

8 Head to knee pose (p27)

Five to 10 breaths.

Closing pose

● Reclining butterfly (p28)



ARRIVE

EASY POSE

SUKHASANA

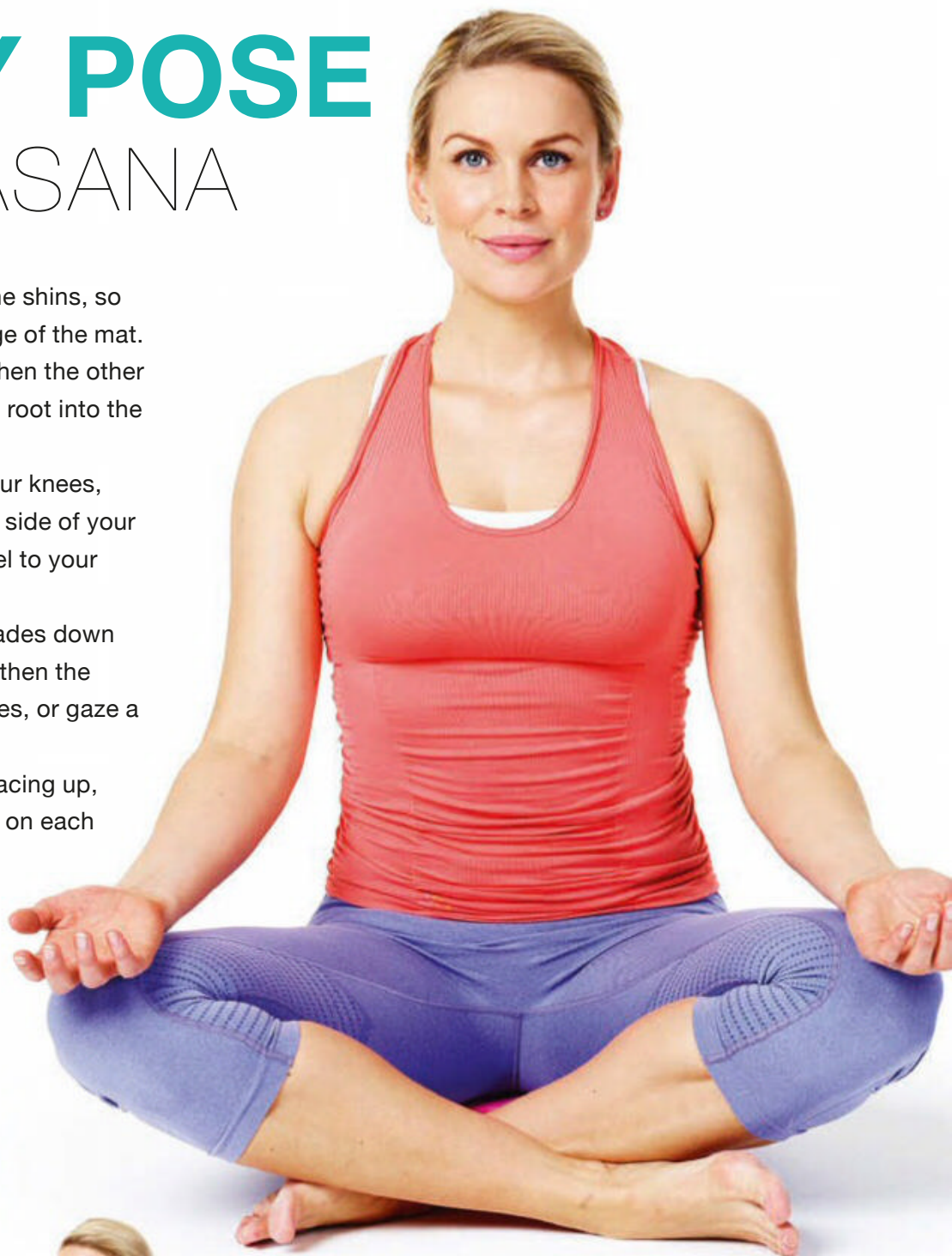
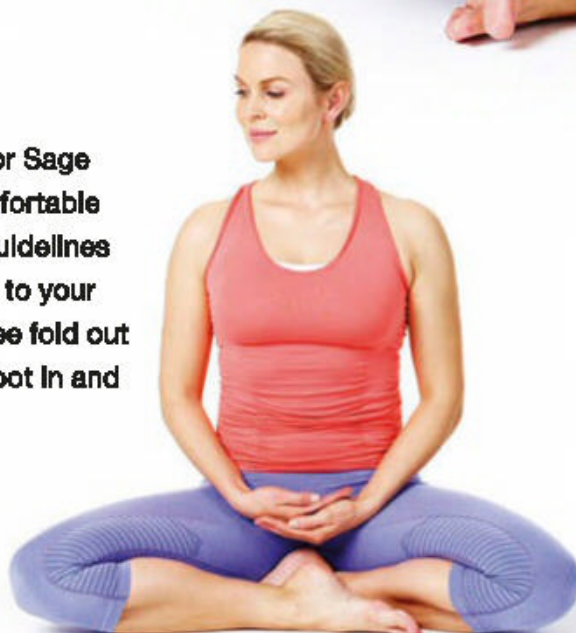
- Sit on your mat and cross your legs at the shins, so your lower legs are parallel to the front edge of the mat. Use your hands to draw one buttock and then the other away from your mid-line. This will help you root into the ground through your sitting bones.
- Flex your feet to stabilise and protect your knees, then place your hands (or fingertips) either side of your hips, and root down as you draw your navel to your spine and lengthen up out of your pelvis.
- Open your chest, draw your shoulder blades down your back and lift through the crown. Lengthen the back of your neck and softly close your eyes, or gaze a few feet in front of you on the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs, palms facing up, and allow your weight to sink into the floor on each exhale. Let your mind become still.
- Breathe calmly **and evenly into your abdomen as long as is comfortable**, then gently open **your eyes**.

Benefits

- Grounding and **centring**
- Soothes the **nervous system**
- Calms and **settles the mind**

Variation

You may find **Accomplished or Sage pose (Siddhasana)** more comfortable than Easy pose. **Follow the guidelines** above, but take **your left heel to your perineum** and let **your left knee fold out to the side**. Bring **your right foot in** and align your heels.



Tip

If **your back is rounded**, or **your knees are higher than your hips**, sit on a **block** or the edge of a **bolster** to bring your **pelvis** into neutral.

EASY TWIST

Place your right hand on the floor behind your right buttock, fingers pointing backwards, and rest your left palm on the outside of your right knee. Inhale as you root through your sitting bones to lift your spine out of your pelvis. On an exhale, slowly rotate your spine to the right, moving in a spiral from your waist initially, then the upper body. Inhale, lengthen through the crown of your head, exhale further into the twist. Draw the kidney area forward and abdomen towards your navel. Inhale one last time, exhale, release further into the twist, turning your head to look over your right shoulder if comfortable for your neck. Inhale back to centre and repeat on the other side.

Tip

Take your time with this movement, and don't overstretch yourself. It might feel a challenge at first but you will find you become more mobile if you keep up your practice.

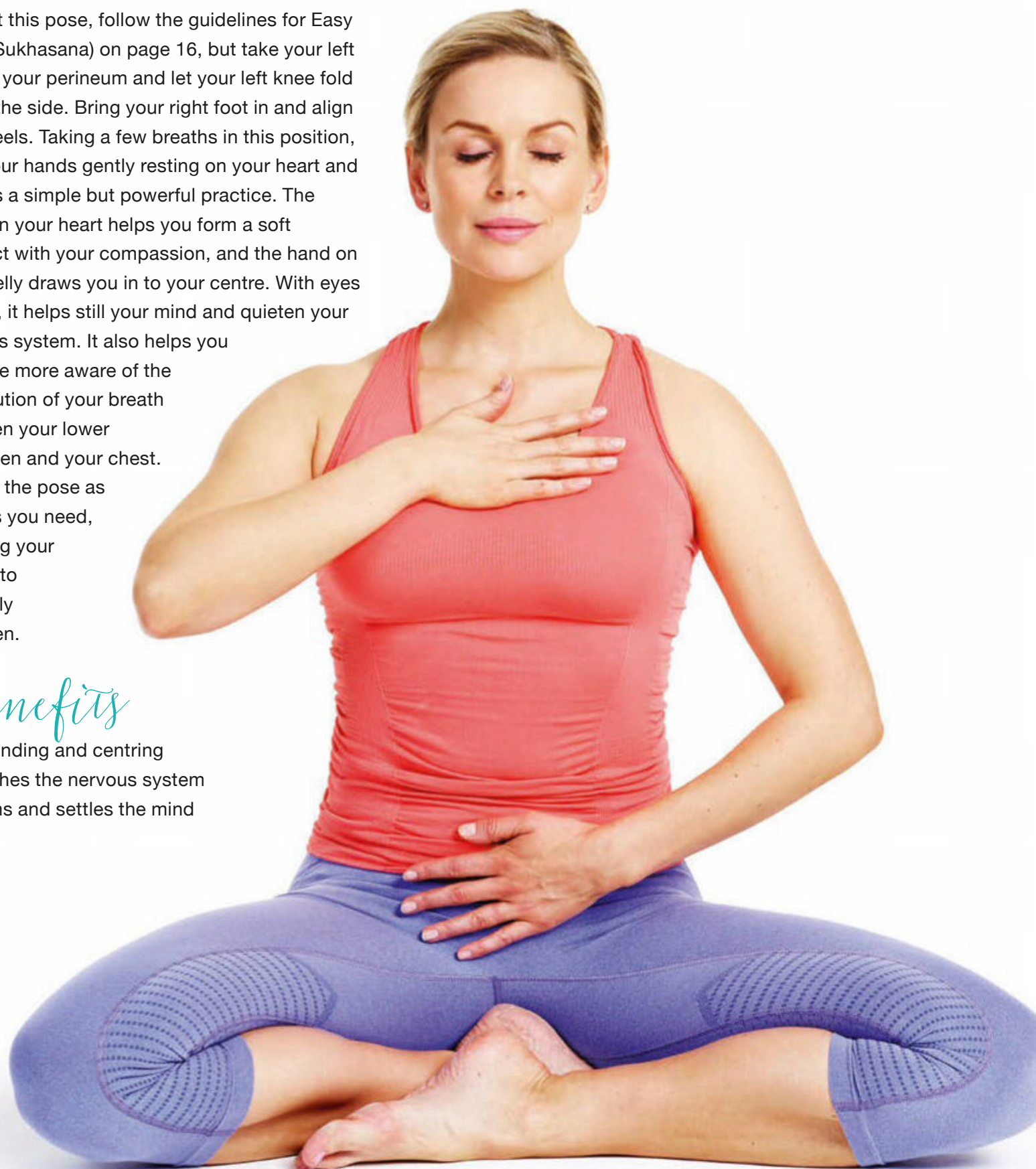


HEART AWAKENER

To start this pose, follow the guidelines for Easy Pose (Sukhasana) on page 16, but take your left heel to your perineum and let your left knee fold out to the side. Bring your right foot in and align your heels. Taking a few breaths in this position, with your hands gently resting on your heart and belly, is a simple but powerful practice. The hand on your heart helps you form a soft connect with your compassion, and the hand on your belly draws you in to your centre. With eyes closed, it helps still your mind and quieten your nervous system. It also helps you become more aware of the distribution of your breath between your lower abdomen and your chest. Rest in the pose as long as you need, allowing your breath to naturally lengthen.

Benefits

- Grounding and centring
- Soothes the nervous system
- Calms and settles the mind



Cat FLOW

This sequence is like a mini Sun salute. You can use it to stretch your body when your energy levels are low. Synchronise your movement with your breath, moving slowly and mindfully so you become more sensitive to the subtle nuances you experience.



1 Hero

Sit on your heels and take a moment to become soft and still. Relax your shoulders, lift through the crown of your head and gently close your eyes. Take three deep breaths.

2 Extended hero

Inhale and kneel up as you take your arms forward and overhead, palms facing each other. Draw your navel to your spine, lift out of the pelvis and reach through to your fingertips. Slide your shoulder blades down your spine and open your chest.

3 Extended child's pose

Exhale as you fold forward from the hips. Reach forward with your arms, hands shoulder-width apart, fingers spread and arms drawing back into the arm sockets. On a long slow inhale, root into your hands, lower your elbows to the floor and slide your nose forward, almost touching the mat, towards your hands.

4 Cow pose

Still inhaling, ground through your hands to lift up into Cow pose. Your tailbone tilts to the ceiling, back arches, shoulder blades melt into the spine and crown lifts.

5 Cat pose

Instigating the movement from your pelvis, exhale as you root firmly through the hands and knees, to slowly release the tailbone to the floor and your nose to your navel. Let your spine undulate upward, vertebra by vertebra, into an arc.

6 Extended child's pose

Pause your breath as you sit back on your heels into Extended child's pose.

7 Extended hero

Inhale, slide your hands back to either side of your hips, then root through your knees and feet to lift up into Extended hero. Exhale as you softly sit back onto your heels, moving into Hero again, taking your palms to your thighs.



1. MOUNTAIN POSE

TADASANA

- Place your feet together or up to shoulder-width apart, inner edges parallel. Balance your weight evenly over each foot, perhaps swaying from foot to foot until you sense the central position. Spread your toes and root through the base of your big and little toes. Lift your inner arches by drawing your ankles away from each other.
- Check your kneecaps are in line with your mid-toes, gently lift them and draw your leg muscles towards your bones. Align your pelvis over your feet, relax your buttocks and allow your tail and sitting bones to release to the floor, bringing your pelvis into neutral. Breathe.
- Draw your navel towards your spine, then inhale as you open your chest and, on an exhale, release your shoulders back and down your spine. Let your arms fall naturally to your sides and allow them to extend gently through to your fingertips.
- Lengthen the back of your neck and soften your throat. Let go of any tension in your jaw and let your gaze be soft.
- As you inhale, ground through your feet and feel the corresponding lift in your spine as you lengthen through to the crown of your head. Let your breath be gentle, feeling the length and lightness of each in-breath, a sense of grounding and stability on the out-breath. Become still like a mountain for up to one minute.
- Exhale to release and take a moment to absorb the effects of the pose.

Benefits

- Calming
- Grounding
- Steadies the breath



Hand variations

PRAYER HANDS

Bring your hands to your heart, elbows down, palms together and fingertips pointing upward. Softly, but actively, press each palm into the other. Release and lengthen the back of your neck.

SALUTATION SEAL

From prayer, gently draw your thumbs away from each other and open your palms towards the ceiling, as if making an offering to the sky.



2. STANDING FORWARD FOLD

UTTANASANA

- From Mountain pose, with your feet hip-distance apart, take your hands to your hips and, on an inhale, root through your feet to lengthen your torso away from your pelvis.
- Exhale, bend your knees slightly and fold forward from your hips, keeping your hips in Dog tilt and your back flat. When your spine is parallel to the floor, let your pelvis come into neutral.
- Keeping your knees bent, inhale to lengthen your spine once more, then, as you exhale, continue folding and allow your chest to rest on your thighs. Release your arms and rest your hands on your shins, ankles or the floor.
- If it feels comfortable, straighten your legs, keeping a microbend in your knees, then allow your upper body to relax fully. Take your tailbone towards the ceiling, and your head closer to the floor.
- On each in-breath, feel your spine lengthening; on each out-breath, fold a little deeper.
- Consciously surrender, breathing softly and evenly for several breaths, then inhale to gently uncurl your spine to return to standing.

Benefits

- Calms the sympathetic nervous system
- Relieves fatigue
- Reduces insomnia
- Regulates blood pressure



Tip

When you have folded fully, cross your elbows and allow the weight of your arms to draw your head closer to the floor.

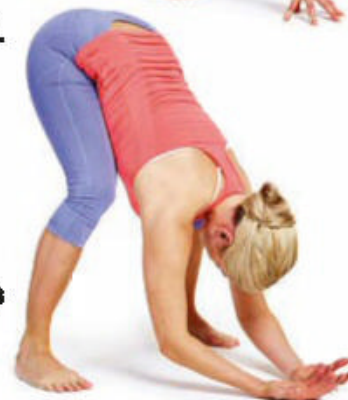
Variations

HALF FORWARD FOLD

From Standing forward fold, **knees bent** or straight, place your hands a **few** inches in front of your feet. Inhale **as** you lengthen your crown away from your tailbone to come up to a **flat back**. Root through your hands and **feet and** draw your shoulder blades down **your** spine. Take five deep breaths **and** release back into Standing **forward fold**.

LUNAR FORWARD FOLD

Bend your knees and let your **torso** drape over your thighs. Release **your** neck and rest the backs of **your hands** on the floor. Allow your breath to find its natural rhythm, slowing down **as your** body surrenders to the **ground**.



3. DOWNWARD DOG

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

- Begin on all-fours, with your hands a palm's length in front of your shoulders, shoulder-width apart, fingers spread and wrist creases facing the front of the mat. Have your knees directly beneath your hips and your shins parallel. Tuck under your toes.
- Root through the base of your thumbs and index fingers, then raise your knees off the mat, drawing your tailbone back and up to lengthen your spine.
- Keep your knees bent initially, checking they are in line with your middle toes, and focus on extending your spine by grounding through your hands (imagine you are pushing the floor away from you). Rotate your upper arms externally and draw your shoulder blades down your spine. Lower your front ribs toward your thighs and release your neck.
- Take a couple of breaths here, then bring your attention to your hips. Lift and broaden your sitting bones, checking your hips are comfortable, and gently draw one heel and then the other towards the mat, stretching out your hamstrings in a walking motion.
- Spread your toes and lower both heels. If they reach the ground, check your weight is evenly distributed through each foot and your inner arches lifted.
- Take five long slow breaths in the pose. When you feel ready, exhale, gently lower your knees and sit back in Child's pose.

Benefits

- Tones and relaxes the nervous system
- Relieves extreme fatigue
- Reduces palpitations and breathlessness
- Eases insomnia



Variation

HALF DOG

Stand a leg's distance from a wall and rest your palms against it, or use a sturdy chair. Walk your hands down the wall until your spine is parallel to the floor. Actively root through your hands, draw your shoulder blades down your spine and extend your tailbone away from your crown to lengthen your spine. Ground through your feet and take a micro-bend in your knees. Enjoy the sensation of this stretch for five deep abdominal breaths.

4. WIDE-LEGGED FORWARD FOLD

PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

- Take a couple of breaths in Mountain pose to centre yourself, then step your feet wide, inner edges parallel, toes spread and arches lifted. Anchor the outer edges of your feet into the mat.

- Rest your hands on your hips and, on an inhale, root through your feet to lengthen your spine. As you exhale, fold forward from the hips with a flat back, to take your spine horizontal to the floor.

- Place your hands on the floor beneath your shoulders, then continue lengthening your spine as you inhale, folding deeper as you exhale, allowing the crown of your head to slowly edge closer to the mat.

- Draw up your kneecaps and engage your thighs, turning your inner thighs in slightly to open your sitting bones.

- Move your hands between your feet, fingers spread wide and forearms vertical, and let your neck and head release to the floor. Root your hands into the

mat to lift your shoulders and create space around your neck.

- Breathe deeply and evenly for five to 10 breaths, then, taking your hands back to your hips, inhale to come back up to standing.

Benefits

- Rests the heart
- Calms and cools the mind
- Removes fatigue
- Increases blood flow to the head



Variations

VARIATION 1

When you've been sitting all day, enjoy a deeper chest opener and shoulder release by interlacing your fingers behind your back and, as you inhale, drawing shoulder blades together. On an exhale, raise your hands and allow your arms to cascade over your head.

VARIATION 2

If you would like a more restorative version of this pose, rest your head on a bolster for up to a minute, to refresh mind and body. Breathe softly and deeply, right down into your lower back, feeling the tension melt away. When you're ready to come out, gently press your hands into the mat to take the weight off your head, then inhale to come back up to standing.

VARIATION 3

For a gently dynamic version of Wide-legged forward fold, walk your hands over to your left foot, feeling an intense stretch in your right side body. Take five deep breaths, then walk your hands over to your other foot.

5. EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE POSE

UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

- From Mountain pose (p20), step your feet slightly more than leg's distance apart and turn your right foot out 90°, your left foot in 15°. Align your heels and root through your toes and outer edge of the left foot.
- With your weight balanced evenly between both feet, inhale to raise your arms to the sides, shoulder height, parallel to the floor and palms facing down.
- Exhale, bend your right knee over your ankle, keeping a micro-bend in your left leg as you take your right forearm to your thigh and your left hand to your left hip.
- Tilt your tailbone towards your back heel and rotate your chest open. Then, on an inhale, sweep your left arm overhead and alongside your ear, palm facing down.
- Ground through the outer edge of your back foot to lengthen your entire left side body, from your foot right through to your left fingertips. Gaze at the floor or, if comfortable for your neck, your upper hand.
- Take five deep breaths into your belly, savouring the stretch. When you feel ready, exhale and return to standing. Pause for a moment before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Strengthens the legs
- Grounding
- Supports deeper breathing
- Aids balance



Variation

For a more grounding, centring pose, place **your right hand** on your lower **belly**. Focus on directing **your in-breath** towards the **area** beneath your hand; **as you** exhale, imagine your **breath** softly travelling down **your legs** and into the earth.



6. TRIANGLE POSE

UTTHITA TRIKONASANA

- Stand sideways on the centre of your mat and take a moment to arrive in your body, breathing deeply into your belly. When you feel ready, step your feet a leg's length apart.
- Turn your left foot out 90° and your right foot in 15°. Align your heels (or left heel to right instep), then root down through your big and little toes, the centre of your heels and the outer edge of your right foot. Breathe.
- Place your hands on your hips and tilt your left hip down and your right hip back and up. On an inhale, extend your arms out to shoulder height. As you exhale, keep your arms parallel to the floor as you reach your left hand outwards as far as is comfortable, before releasing it down to rest where it naturally lands, on your calf or ankle.
- On your next inhale, float your right arm overhead and rotate open your chest, so your right shoulder is above the left and your arms are in a straight line. Let your gaze rest on the floor, directly ahead or, if comfortable for your neck, turn your head to look up at your top hand.

- Breathe into the pose, making micro-adjustments, until you feel rooted but open, using your in-breath to ground through your feet and lengthen your side body, and your out-breath to release further into the twist. Rest in your final position for five to 10 breaths, breathing deeply into your belly.
- When you are ready, root through your feet and inhale up to standing, then exhale as you lower your arms and step your feet together. Pause for a moment to register the effects of the pose, then repeat on the other side.

Benefits

- Relieves stiffness in the legs, hips and neck
- Relieves tension in the back
- Opens side body/ improves breathing
- Eases menstrual symptoms



Variations

For a more contained pose, reach your top arm behind your back, rest your forearm across your back waist and tuck your fingertips over the top of your thigh. Alternatively, lightly drape your top arm along your side ribs and hip.

7. HALF MOON

ARDHA CHANDRASANA

- From Triangle pose (previous page), to your right, step your back foot in slightly and place your right hand on a block about a foot in front and slightly outside your right foot.
- Keeping your right leg bent, place your left hand on your left hip and root through your right foot as you lean into the block until your left leg feels 'empty'. Inhale as you float your left leg up to hip height. Flex your rear ankle, spread your toes and extend through the ball of your left foot.
- Ground your right foot into the floor as you straighten your supporting leg and rotate your chest and pelvis open to the left, so your hips and shoulders are stacked one above the other.
- Keeping a soft gaze towards the floor, inhale and raise your left hand up to the ceiling.
- Breathe evenly from the belly for three to five breaths, imagining there are lines of energy travelling from your centre out through each limb.
- Exhale to lower, then pause in Wide-legged forward fold (p23) before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Eases fatigue
- Aids balance and focus
- Helpful for stress and anxiety
- Opens the ribs/improves breathing

Variation

FULL POSE

Once you can balance well using the block, place your hand on the floor instead, remembering to spread your fingertips and root into the ground to lift your torso upwards.

Tip

For extra stability in this pose, and to experience the correct alignment, try practising it with your back against a wall. As you progress, rest only your back foot against the wall.



8. HEAD TO KNEE POSE

JANU SIRSASANA

- Sit with your legs out in front of you, spaced wide apart. Fold your left leg in, so your left heel touches your pubic bone and the sole rests on your inner thigh. Draw your right hip back and your left knee forward to square your hips.

- Flex your right foot, spread your toes and reach through the ball of your foot. Lift your right kneecap and place your hands either side of your right thigh. Draw your navel to your spine.

- Inhale and root through your fingertips and sitting bones to lengthen your torso. Then, on an exhale, lead with the crown of your head to fold forward from the hips, taking your chest to your right thigh. Keep your spine long, core engaged and shoulder blades drawn in and down. As you get lower, take your hands to your shin, ankle or sole of the foot.

- Inhale again, to lengthen, then exhale and fold a little further forward.

Continue in this way until you feel a resistance, then pause and wait for your muscles to soften before folding a little deeper. When you reach your edge, release your head down towards your right knee.

- Enjoy the sensation of surrender and find your still point, breathing evenly and deeply for up to two minutes. Release to come up to sitting and pause before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Improves circulation in the spine
- Strengthens the spine and legs
- Relieves tension in the lower back
- Quietens the mind

Tip

The aim of this pose is to lengthen the front body rather than take your head to your knees, despite its English name!



CLOSING
POSE

RECLINING BUTTERFLY

SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA

PROPS: Bolster, two thick blocks, one thinner block or folded blankets, a strap (optional)

- Place the bolster lengthwise down the centre of your mat, and the thick blocks either side. Balance the thin block or blanket on the far end of the bolster.
- Sit cross-legged with your buttocks against the short edge of the bolster, then draw it towards you so it snuggles into your sacrum. Bring the soles of your feet together and let your knees fall out to the sides, then place a block beneath each knee, so there's no strain on your groin.
- Rest one hand on either side of your buttocks, inhale, then as you exhale, slowly lower your spine onto the bolster, resting your head on the block or blanket so your neck is comfortable. Place your arms out to the sides, palms up.
- Make any minor adjustments you need, so there is no strain on any part of your body, perhaps adding a thin block or folded blanket beneath your buttocks to lessen the curve of your lower back.
- Gently close your eyes, connect to your breath and surrender your weight to the earth. Rest here for as long as is comfortable for you, up to 10 minutes. Then gently bring your knees together, shift your bottom to the left, let your knees fall to your right and slowly roll your body over to the right, so your



back comes off the bolster. Pause here for a moment, before using your hands to gently bring you up to sitting.

Benefits

- Calms the nervous system
- Regulates blood pressure
- Opens the hips and heart area
- Works on the liver, kidney and spleen meridians

Variation

If your feet have a tendency to slip forward, or you feel any strain in your legs or groin, a strap will make the pose more relaxing. Place the centre of an open strap around your lower back, bring the ends forward and let them fall over your thighs and calves. Take one end and loop it under the outside edges of both feet. Tie the strap so the buckle doesn't push into your legs when you lie down.



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10-minute
YOGA
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