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UK edition

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- How to create a
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*Rochelle
Humes*

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Welcome...



I love those old wartime posters telling us to keep calm and carry on, but it has to be said, it's not always quite that easy. Yes, most of us women spend all day 'carrying on', keeping our homes running, working, looking after our loved ones, doing a thousand jobs no one seems to notice... until we stop doing them. Because sometimes there comes a point when you feel as if you just can't 'carry on' any more. And given all the challenges we've had to cope with in the past year and a half, I think that feeling is hitting us more than ever before.

It might seem odd that it's now, as things finally seem to be easing a little, that we are feeling overwhelmed by the situation, but that's just human nature. And the good news is there's lots you can do to improve how you feel. We've devoted this month's Dossier, starting on page 51, to helping you overcome this feeling, calm your mind, shorten your to-do list and give yourself a break. The point of dealing with this emotion isn't so you can get back to being your most productive self, it's so you can get back to being the real you, while taking little steps to feeling happier and less stressed. I hope this helps.

On the subject of overwhelm, I've been feeling it too this month, but in a good way. Your response to our new-look magazine last month has been simply wonderful. Change is never easy, but it has been really heartwarming to receive so many lovely messages that you are enjoying the magazine in its latest incarnation. In case you missed last month's issue, we've introduced new sections covering mind, heart, body and soul, as these are key areas that affect how you feel. And we're continuing to break down our advice into small, simple steps you can easily introduce into your daily life, but that add up to make a big difference to how you feel and help you make every day better.

I hope you love the new magazine as much as I do. If you do, why not subscribe today and never miss an issue? It's quick and easy, and we've got an amazing offer for you right now. I'd love to know what you think of the magazine, so please email me at letters@psychologies.co.uk with your feedback. Have a wonderful month!

Sally x

Sally Saunders, Editor

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

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or call 01959 543747*



*FOR FULL DETAILS, SEE PAGE 40

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Subscribe to 'Psychologies' and commit to a happier life. Benefit from life-changing tools, mind hacks and advice, plus free membership of the Life Leap Club – an exclusive coaching club with a supportive online community. See page 40



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*With you
in mind*



Overcome overwhelm

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Soothe a stressed mind and body

Kelsey Publishing Ltd, The Granary, Downs Court,
Yalding Hill, Yalding, Kent ME18 6AL
(01959 541444, email letters@psychologies.co.uk)

OUR TEAM

Editor Sally Saunders
Art Editor Jennifer Ratcliff
Chief Sub-Editor and Production Editor Vee Sey
Features Editor Heidi Scrimgeour
Associate Editor Anita Chaudhuri
Digital Editor and Wellness Director Ali Roff Farrar
In The Mood Editor Alex Lloyd
Retreats Editor Caroline Sylger Jones

ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION

Head of Commercial – Wellbeing and Travel Dominic Eddon
07899 068649; Dominic.Eddon@kelsey.co.uk
Production and Design Manager Neil Hepden
01233 220245; neil@tandemmedia.co.uk

MANAGEMENT

Chief Operating Officer Phil Wenden
Chief Executive Steve Wright
Managing Director (Lifestyle Brands and Circulation) Kevin McCormick
Retail Director Steve Brown
Subscription Marketing Director Gill Lambert
Subscription Marketing Manager Nick McIntosh
Events Manager Kat Chappell
Print Production Manager Georgina Harris
Print Production Controller Hayley Brown

SUBSCRIPTIONS

13 issues of *Psychologies* are published per annum

- UK annual subscription price: £62.40
- Europe annual subscription price: £74
- USA annual subscription price: \$74
- Rest of World annual subscription price: \$79
- UK subscription and back issue orderline: 01959 543747
- Overseas subscription orderline: 0044 (0) 1959 543747
- Toll-free USA subscription orderline: 1 888 777 0275
- UK customer service team: 01959 543747; subs@kelsey.co.uk

Find subscription offers on our website: shop.kelsey.co.uk/psv
Manage your subscription online shop.kelsey.co.uk/site/loginform

DISTRIBUTION & PRINTING

• William Gibbons & Sons Limited, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall
WV13 3XA; 01902 730011; williamgibbons.co.uk
• Distribution in Great Britain: Marketforce, 3rd Floor, 161 Marsh Wall,
London, E14 9AP; 0330 3906 5551
Distribution in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland:
Newsread; 353 23 886 3850

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GLOBAL EDITIONS

Gruppe *Psychologies*, 2-8 rue Gaston-Rébuffat, 75019 Paris, France.
Tel: 01 44 65 58 00

PSYCHOLOGIES FRANCE
Editor-in-Chief: Laurence Folléa

PSYCHOLOGIES ROMANIA Ringier Magazines, 6 Dimitri Pompeiu Street,
Bucharest. Tel: +40 212 03 08 00. Managing Director: Mihnea Vasiliu
(mihnea.vasiliu@ringier.ro) Editor-in-Chief: Alexandra Alexu (alexandra.alexu@ringier.ro)
Advertising Manager: Monica Pop (monica.pop@ringier.ro)

PSYCHOLOGIES BELGIUM Edition Ventures, Chaussée de Louvain 431D,
1830 Lasne. Tel: +32 2 379 29 90 Editorial Director: Marie-Christine De
Wasseghe (mc.dewassege@ventures.be) Chief Editor (French): Christiane Thiry
(christiane.thiry@ventures.be) Chief Editor (Flemish): Barbara Van den Abeele (b.vandenabeele@ventures.be) Advertising Manager: Manonelle Sepulchre (manonelle.sepulchre@ventures.be)

PSYCHOLOGIES RUSSIA Hearst Shkulev Media, Psychologies Russia,
31 b Shabolovskaya Street, Moscow 115162. Tel: +7 495 981 39 10
President: Viktor Shkulev (vshkulev@hsmmedia.ru) Editor-in-Chief: Xenia Kiseleva
(xkiseleva@hsmmedia.ru) Publisher and Advertising Manager: Ekaterina
Kerova (ekerova@hsmmedia.ru)

The advice starts RIGHT HERE!



ALICE BOYES

Struggling with a task you've been putting off? 'Set an "implementation intention",' says writer and former psychologist Alice Boyes in our Dossier on overwhelm from page 51. 'In a study, students who decided when and where they were going to write their essay were more likely to do it!'

MARIELLA FROSTRUP

'It can be near impossible to know whether you are perimenopausal, or grumpy, ill, overworked, in a bad relationship or stressed and – knowing modern women – with a permanent and overriding sense of guilt that it's entirely, if inexplicably, your fault,' explains Mariella Frostrup. Discover how to navigate this time on page 44.



MARIANNE RIZKALLAH

'Listening to music from your youth could be one of the safest (and cheapest) ways of regaining your sense of freedom,' says Marianne Rizkallah, vice-chair of the British Association for Music Therapy. Find out how to make listening to old favourites part of your self-care routine on page 114.

Our mission

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

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

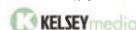
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In the mood

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

COMPILED BY ALEX LLOYD



Forage a feast

Harvest time isn't just for farmers and squirrels, you know. This season is ripe for stocking up with food to see you through the coming winter.

By opening your eyes to nature's larder, you'll see that the trees and hedgerows are full of goodies for your Christmas table.

The Woodland Trust says October offers foragers the chance to collect chestnuts for stuffing and desserts, plus sloes and plums for jams, vinegars and delicious drinks.

Walnuts, hazelnuts, beech nuts and rosehips are also prime for the picking.

Tips on how to hunt for them, along with recipes to create with your hoard, are available at woodlandtrust.org.uk

Positive change

By Katie Piper



How I approach this time of year is similar to how I approached it when I was at school (quite some time ago now!). In the run-up to autumn, I mentally prepare

to focus; I start putting into action new career goals, and sink my teeth into fresh projects. It's a productive season for me! Setting objectives now takes the pressure out of New Year's resolutions; I set bite-sized goals through the year and find them so much more manageable.

My new book, *A Little Bit Of Faith* (SPCK, £14.99) is all about those daily goals and positive moments. I want to encourage everyone to be the best they can be – every single day. It's a great tool and a brilliant gift for someone you feel could use that daily lift. With 365 hopeful affirmations, the book encourages us all to see change as a positive thing.

In autumn, there is a lot of pressure on social situations, from Halloween and Christmas to New Year's celebrations. The change in weather is also difficult for many. As humans, we face change constantly, and so often we don't stop to congratulate ourselves for the strength and kindness we show coping with it. This autumn, after what's been a tough year for many, let's lift each other up, seek out the positives and, as always, look for the helpers!



75% of parents feel smarter after a year of homeschooling.* Find more ways to enjoy education together with the *Family Learning Festival, 16-31 October*, familylearningfestival.com

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*ALL DONE GIFTCARDS



The early bird...

Does the arrival of darker days after the clocks go back affect your mood? It might be time to build a burst of light therapy into the start of your day. The traditional treatment for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is most effective early in the morning, because it triggers a gene involved in mood and sleep-wake cycles. If you can, get outside for a walk within an hour or two of waking, or use a SAD lamp as you eat your breakfast to raise your mood all day long and boost your chances of getting a good night's sleep.

WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



WATCH – The long-awaited adaptation of high-school musical *Dear Evan Hansen* makes its big-screen debut on 22 October, with Amy Adams and Julianne Moore joining a number of the original Broadway cast members.



LOOK – Kosovan artist Petrit Halilaj has turned his childhood drawings from his refugee camp psychotherapy sessions into an art installation, *Very Volcanic Over This Green Feather*. View it at Tate St Ives, 16 October-16 January.



LISTEN – Weekly podcast *Call Your Girlfriend* features long-distance best friends – businesswoman Aminatou Sow and journalist Ann Friedman – as they chat about everything from sex to conspiracy theories and sustainable style.



Practice makes perfect

It's not just wine that gets better with age – your brain can too.

Neuroscientists say that while certain mental functions decline over time, your ability to focus and make good decisions can actually improve.

Scientists from Georgetown University looked at 700 participants aged 58 to 98, and believe this is down to decades of practising these cognitive skills.



NO RUSH TO FLUSH

The scourge of 'fatbergs' – manmade blockages comprised of waste – mean we all need to think before we flush. 'Unblocktober' is a month-long event to educate people about ways to stop our environment going down the drain, and save our seas. It's not just sanitary products and cooking oils that cause problems – even crumbs, contact lenses and dental floss have an impact. But simple changes can reduce flooding, burst pipes and plastic pollution in our oceans. Find out more at unblocktober.org

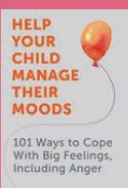


3 reads to boost your PARENTING SKILLS



1 Help Your Child Manage Their Moods by Louise Baty

(Summersdale, £9.99) offers 101 practical and achievable ways to tackle big feelings in little kids.



2 A Year Of Nature Craft And Play by Becky Goddard-Hill and Catherine Hughes (Collins, £12.99) is packed with budget-friendly outdoor-inspired activities to keep boredom at bay and boost wellbeing.



3 The Family Firm: A Data-Driven Guide To Better Decision Making In The Early School Years by Emily Oster (Souvenir Press, £14.99) helps ease the stress of important parenting decisions by explaining the evidence available.



Financial freedom

More British women than ever are financially free of their partners.

Money management in heterosexual relationships has shifted so that women have more spending power and also share responsibility for the household purse strings with their other half.

A survey of 11,730 couples by Lancaster University found a trend towards gender equality,

particularly in younger couples, with women of all classes having more autonomy to use their cash as they please.

The traditional 'housekeeping allowance' system for women who do not work outside the home is also increasingly rare, used by just three per cent of couples born after 1980 compared with 30 per cent of those before 1950.



Melbourne is the best place to be a digital nomad, as more of us move to working remotely. The Australian city came ahead of Dubai and Sydney in the Work-From-Anywhere Index, and is one of a host of cities globally offering a special visa for remote workers.*



"You can't be happy all the time, but you should always try to make other people happy. And that includes everything that lives on this planet"

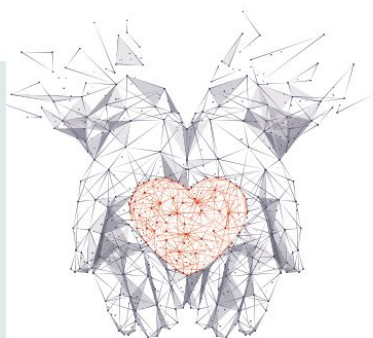
Joanna Lumley

Share and share alike

Kindness is booming, with sharing apps reporting a surge in popularity since the pandemic. Increasing numbers of us are seeking and offering help through altruistic tech, such as Freecycle and Nextdoor. Food-sharing site Olio has gone from two million to four million users, and has just launched a new feature, Borrow, where users can lend items under a certain value, such as tools. Find out more at olioex.com



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BE KIND

Kindness promotes connectedness and reduces stress, anxiety and depression, explains

author and scientist David Hamilton

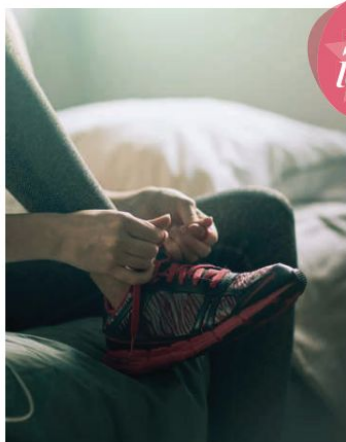
The pandemic has led to increases in anxiety, depression, stress, PTSD and burnout. Researchers from UCLA, Stanford and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, publishing in the journal *Anxiety, Stress And Coping*, recently showed that kindness and compassion fostered a sense of connectedness, and reduced stress, anxiety and depression, while also promoting resilience.

Compassion facilitates a sense of belonging, as we all recognise that suffering is part of a shared human experience – and kindness evolves out of this.

So important are kindness and compassion that the researchers recommended that kindness and compassion-based strategies should be considered by policymakers as methods of supporting mental health as we emerge from the pandemic.

Viewpoint

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



Star
letter

Pages of inspiration

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your new-look magazine (October issue). Each and every article had something that made me ponder and, in some cases, put positive changes into practice. You made me think of ways that I could improve my life or, even more rewarding, share ideas with someone I know to help them.

My favourite article was Harriet Minter's 'Life as I know it'. I am 45 years old and starting to live with the effects of what ageing does to a woman's body. She did make me laugh!

This week, I have begun eating more healthily and am partaking in a morning exercise routine to help tone and strengthen my body, targeting my midriff especially.

I am starting to feel the – very small but encouraging – effects of my actions, and long may it continue.

Thank you, *Psychologies*. Keep up the good work. I am looking forward to the next issue coming through my door.

Lorraine Kelly

Share with us... Share your photographs and comments with us on Instagram @psychologiesmagazine, or tweet us @PsychologiesMag, both using #PsychologiesMagazine



Dr Radha
@DrRadhaModgil

Thrilled to be contributing to a regular feature in the brilliant @PsychologiesMag in their new 'Mind' section. Thank you @PsychologiesMag for working with us to shine a light on mental health and wellbeing and explore the facts about common issues.



The Slimming Foodie
@slimmingfoodie

Love the new-look @PsychologiesMag – I talked to them for the October issue about how I improved my sleep during a stressful period.



Melissa
@Melly
DelReads

The new-look @PsychologiesMag is beautiful! So much more content: the pages are clean and well spaced. It's going to need a full month to read!



You got soul

I absolutely adored the article 'It's a bountiful life' by Vee Sey in the September issue. It resonated with me about the scarcity mindset, but it was the way it was written that touched my soul. I could imagine her grandfather Archie's personality as she described it so well. I also laughed at her description of herself as the 'repurposer of leftovers that had seen better days'.

This article made me smile from my heart, so thank you.

Nicola Cook



PHOTO COMPETITION

The past two years have been challenging for me – a single mother to two toddlers, having to juggle work and home life and living with lockdown. But I was lucky enough to go on holiday to Cornwall with the kids, my amazing parents and wonderful older brother.

Being near the sea and watching the stunning sunsets, one of which I captured on camera, puts life's difficulties into perspective and makes me appreciate the marvellous everyday moments we take for granted, until we stop and look. **Louise Williams**

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

LETTER OF GRATITUDE

I'd like to thank...

The kind student nurse,

You came to my hospital cubicle to do checks on my newborn son. It was day three in hospital. As a first-time mum having a baby during a pandemic, I felt very alone. My husband was only allowed to visit for two hours a day. Some of the midwives taking care of us were amazing, but a few of the comments from the patronising ones stuck.

'This is motherhood,' said one, as I struggled to feed my baby. I burst into tears in front of another midwife. 'Why are you crying?' she demanded. I didn't think I needed to give a reason on a post-C-section ward – isn't it normal to feel emotional?

I didn't have to explain to you. And that was why I appreciated your kindness even more. You saw I was tearful, and asked if I was OK. You listened and understood. That was worth so much to me at that moment. Thank you for understanding and helping me remember it is normal to cry. Thank you for agreeing with me that hospitals can be really tough places to be. Most of all, thank you for your kindness.

I hope you never lose your tenderness – because no matter how strained the NHS is, or how overworked the staff are, patients like me will always need a dose of kindness.

An emotional first-time mum xx

Let's all do our bit

Your article 'Sponsor me!' (September) was thought-provoking. Hosting a fundraising event is a great way to raise money and awareness, and attract sponsors for an organisation. It's more efficient than cold-calling or emailing donors and adds a personal touch.

Lockdown may have reduced people's ideas for sponsorship but, as the nation gets back to normal, events will increase – and this is a good thing.

As a family, we've done a lot, including skydiving, bungee jumping, walking a mountain every day for a month and the Three Peaks Challenge. We also went to Kenya and South Africa five years running to build houses for the homeless. The charities that have benefited have been close to our hearts.



I never miss a chance to donate to others, even if it is only a couple of pounds. Donating money to charity helps people, makes the world fairer and makes you happier.

Thanks for the brilliant article. I am sure it will inspire many readers to undertake a sponsored event.

Kym Yetton



You can say no, enough's enough

Rochelle Humes has become a dynamic force to be reckoned with since her *The Saturdays* days. The broadcaster and writer speaks about setting boundaries, finding confidence, her foray into business and why she's determined to fight racism

WORDS: GEMMA CALVERT

People say the best things are unsaid. I disagree. They're best said. Just get it out.' That type of thinking is why the nation has fallen in love with Rochelle Humes. The effervescent and straight-talking mother of three, who shot to fame 20 years ago on children's TV, then topped the charts for 12 years with *The Saturdays* before becoming a well-known and trusted face on our most-loved TV shows, is never one to mince words, and is characteristically open about times in her life that have been difficult.

'I remember feeling really out of control in my life and it kind of got on top of me,' she recalls. 'It was constant work [with the band] and your life moves so fast on this Ferris wheel that there isn't much time for anything outside of that life,' she says. 'Then we had a load of time off because we didn't have a single out. You were either really overwhelmed with how busy it was or quite lonely. There's no normality with that lifestyle. It was all or nothing. I think there's a reason that bands have a massive couple years and then stop.'

Humes had her first stint in psychotherapy a decade ago during a three-month stay in LA.

'What I love about the American mentality is that therapy is so accepted, so there's no stigma around it,' she says. 'You go and get your nails done, then you go and see your therapist. I was jumping on the bandwagon but I think everybody should talk to somebody who's objective about their situation.'

It must be difficult to be objective when you're at the centre of a whirlwind. Over 12 years, *The Saturdays* sold more than four million records, had 13 top 10 singles and starred in three fly-on-the-wall TV shows (*Chasing The Saturdays* was broadcast in more than 45 countries) but in 2014 the band members wanted out. Since then Humes has evolved into one of the UK's most in-demand prime time TV presenters.

After starting out on ITV's *Ninja Warrior UK* and *The Xtra Factor*, she guest-presented *Lorraine* and has become a regular stand-in for Holly Willoughby on *This Morning*.

Humes also fronts shows of her own, including *The Hit List*, the BBC's Saturday night *Beat The Intro*-style game show, co-created and co-hosted by Humes and her husband, the singer Marvin Humes, which has returned for a fourth series. And earlier this year she presented the hard-hitting *The Black*



Maternity Scandal documentary for Channel 4's *Dispatches*. She's now launching an interior design show, *Interior Designer In The Making*, on W.

Humes has other projects keeping her busy too. She is dipping her toes in the world of business with a children's skincare range, My Little Coco, has written a series of bestselling children's fiction – and her latest project, *At Mama's Table*, is a cookbook packed with her own family recipes, plus time-saving hacks, meals you can batch-cook and play date food ideas.

It's a busy time for the businesswoman and mother, who gave birth to Blake last October, a little brother to Alaia-Mai, eight, and four-year-old Valentina, affectionately known as Valle. And, as a result of all the demands on her time, Humes has never been more mindful about maintaining balance between her home and working life.

'In the past year, I've re-evaluated everything, including how fast-paced my life was before,' she says. 'I've taken stock and become a bit more assertive – like, "I'm not going to be at work, going across to the other side of town for a meeting and breaking my back trying to make everything work. No, there's not enough time for that today."

'Yes, I'm a grafter and always will be – I'm from a working-class background and that's what we do – but you can be human too. You can say, "No. Enough's enough now."

Speaking from their new home in London – the family left their Essex home last July – she explains that everything is kept 'to a minimum' during the eight-week summer break in readiness for the surge of life demands when school resumes: 'I'm looking at the diary and it's scaring me already!' she laughs.

The couple share the childcare. 'I'd be out the door at 3am if the world worked like that – just to do everything and be back for the school run,' says Humes. 'Some weeks I find myself saying, "As soon as this week is out the way, I'll feel more human." Then sometimes that repeats itself for a few weeks in a row!'

Do the demands on her time ever spark tears or get her down? 'Yeah! But every human I know has that. Then it's amazing what can happen when you go to sleep and that day is done. You're like, "How did I do it? Well done, me." It's about acknowledging the little wins.'

Humes says she gets 'headspace' from regular Pilates sessions and describes her 'mother's help', Fi,

as being 'the best human in the land'. Humes's mother, Roz Wiseman, a recently retired paramedic, is equally appreciated. She dotes on her three grandchildren, says Humes, and raised Humes single-handedly after her partner left when Humes was three years old.

Humes says growing up in Barking, Essex, without a father 'one hundred per cent' give her the determination to be an independent self-starter. In her words, she 'wasn't upset' by her father's absence as a child, but it's clear that her adult emotions are complex and deep. Maturity, she says, has generated perspective and specifically the 'penny dropped' about her dad's shortcomings when she saw Marvin wholeheartedly and brilliantly embrace parenting.

'It's a rejection that doesn't bother me because I've literally only ever known my life that way but, at the same time, it's a rejection that I'll never understand,' says Humes. 'It's not always easy for a parent to be involved, but when it was made so easy, and my mum only ever wanted that and there was a choice not to... I don't understand that.'

'I'm sure every child's dream is that their parents grow up together in a happy home, but that definitely wasn't my childhood. I knew my mum adored me but I didn't know that of my dad.'

While Humes chats, Marvin is in the next room rehearsing for a live DJ set and, when Blake wakes from a nap, Humes flips her phone camera to reveal her son hovering halfway up the door frame, supported by an out-of-shot Marvin. 'He's distracting me!' laughs Humes, before bringing him in for a cuddle.

Blake was born five days before England moved to a three-tier Covid system. For the first two weeks, denied the freedom to 'show him off' to 'a houseful' of guests, she relished the peace of being home alone with her newborn, unlike with her older children, when she found herself making endless cups of coffee for well-wishers, despite being 'too tired to entertain'. Her motherhood experience this time around triggered a sense of calm, she says.

'I trust myself so much more, so there isn't anything that scares me. I know how to be a mum. I'm a good mum, I try my hardest and I believe in myself more. With Alaia, I was like, "Oh my gosh. I'm trying so hard and I'm so overwhelmed," says Humes, feigning tears. 'Then, anything that anyone

"I trust myself so much more... there isn't anything that scares me. I know how to be a mum. I'm a good mum and I believe in myself"



Marvin Humes of JLS
and Rochelle have been
married since 2012



The Saturdays – Una Healy, Mollie King, Vanessa White,
Rochelle Humes and Frankie Bridge

said to me, I would take on. When Valle came, I felt more like “I know what I’m doing now, I don’t feel as if I need to message everybody and see how they dealt with this and that. And then with Blake, even more so. The more you have, you more you feel “I’ve got this”.”

But, and she’s crystal clear about this, she and Marvin are stopping at three. ‘I’ll always be broody, but I feel as if I’ve done my bit for the human race,’ she says. ‘I could go on forever but three’s good. I can manage three. Let’s not push it and see if four will send that into chaos or not!’

One part of her life that Humes has only recently discussed publicly is her experience of racism. In response to last summer’s Black Lives Matter protests, she and Marvin appeared on Channel 4’s *The Talk*, where she told how as a seven-year-old she attempted to scrub off her colour in the bath after a friend’s father banned her from attending his child’s party. Jump forward 23 years and, when Humes was approaching companies about stocking My Little Coco, five retailers responded positively but rejected Curl Custard, a taming product for naturally curly Afro hair. It’s now her brand’s bestseller.

‘Well, more fool them,’ says Humes. ‘I’ve sat down with a book publisher before and they said to me, “This is great. I think this will be great for the UK and I think it makes sense, but there are certain territories that it won’t make sense because the lead character is a black girl.”’ What territories are those? ‘Well, exactly!’ says Humes, rolling her eyes. ‘I didn’t go with that publisher!’

One year since Humes declared that racism is



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*"Pretending racism doesn't happen
is never going to help our kids and our kids' kids"*

normalised and accepted in our society, she insists that ongoing visible protests and social media activism is crucial to achieve long-term change.

'It's important to keep up that momentum. There's still so much work to do. There needs to be an admission that racism exists – and that's also the problem. We make so much headway and then we have people in government saying that racism doesn't exist. Pretending it doesn't happen is never going to help our kids and our kids' kids. It happens. We saw it again with the Euro 2020 final. It's about what we do and how we move forward,' she says.

One particular area of interest for Humes is maternal mortality, following her *Dispatches* documentary, which revealed that the death rate for a black women during pregnancy or childbirth is more than four times higher than white expectant mothers. Mixed-race women are three times more likely to die and those from an Asian background are twice as likely.

At the time, there was no NHS target to end the disparity, but Humes reports that MPs have since debated the maternal health gap in parliament. She concedes that it's 'a long road' to 'the end game' of no disparity, but she is optimistic that they are taking 'baby steps' in the right direction.

'They're listening. I've had two meetings since then – and I've got another one coming up – to see what we can really do about this target. For me, the documentary was a stepping stone to make some noise and draw attention. I'm just here to amplify the voices of women who can't do that.'

Celebrating the achievements of a woman who works so hard to support others is easy, not least because she is so thankful. Humes even labels the impostor syndrome that she can't shake as a blessing because 'it will always make you grateful'. She says it still 'doesn't feel real' seeing her product range on display.

'I hover when I see people looking at it. With masks, I can get away with being the creepy person on the aisle watching as somebody says "this looks good", then another saying "I've used it, I'm back for another one, you should definitely try it".'

She shakes her head and her expression is one of disbelief. 'There's no feeling like it.'

'At Mama's Table: Easy And Delicious Meals From My Family To Yours' by Rochelle Humes (Vermilion, £20) is out now



Change of pace

It's heart versus head for Harriet Minter as she reaches a crossroads...



A few weeks ago, I found myself browsing porn at 1am. Don't judge me, we've all done it. What is the internet for if not to indulge a

late-night craving for images of country cottages decked out with deVOL kitchens, coastal retreats flaunting a bathroom with a sea view, or a lovingly restored grade II-listed manor house with acres of land and a price tag even the Beckhams would wince at? Oh, you thought I meant sex? Sorry, too old for that now. Nowadays, nothing turns me on more than typing rightmove.com into my browser.

Which is how I've come to spend many a morning sheepishly apologising to estate agents as I cancel the viewings I've booked in fevered excitement the night before. I know deep in my heart that I am ready for a change; I am ready to pack up my little London flat and find something with an equally fast broadband connection but also a view of the sea. Unfortunately, while my heart knows it's ready for this, my bank balance does not – and so I'm stuck.

I'm not alone in this feeling of being ready for change but unable to make it happen. In the past few years, I've seen friends desperate for a baby but unwilling to do it alone, patiently waiting for a partner. I've seen couples pack up their lives and move across the world only to admit that, actually, they miss their friends and family, and come straight back again. And I've seen people vow to quit their job each day, and each day return home saying they'll do it tomorrow.

Apparently, the concept of feeling as though time is moving at a different speed to your life is so common it has a name: pacing. Getting the pacing of our lives right is the thing that sits between you and the frustration you feel when you stare at the price of your dream house and the balance of your bank account. Right now, I feel like the pacing of my life is off. I suspect this is because I'm not very good at owning my age. For a long time,

I've been stuck at 32 (my grandmother did something similar and was still celebrating her 33rd birthday well into her eighth decade). However, the past year has seen me suddenly leap through a decade, and the pace of change has me spooked.

I've experienced pacing problems before. For me it tends to show up in relationships, where one of you is ready to pick out curtains while the other is still swiping away on Tinder. Or in jobs, when you're all set for the corner office, but your pay cheque sees you as entry-level. But I've never before felt out of pace in my own life, torn between a heart that is worrying it's missing out on what it really wants and a lifestyle set up to accommodate me at my most youthful. I'm still dancing to the beat of my own drum, but I seem to have lost the rhythm – and I'm not sure how to get it back. @harrietminter



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HARRISON. HAIR AND MAKEUP: CAROLINE RASECKI. STYLIST: KATE ANYA BARBOUR. FOR WEEKLY WISDOM FROM HARRIET MINTER, SIGN UP FOR HER NEWSLETTER AT TINYLETTER.COM/HARRIETMINTER

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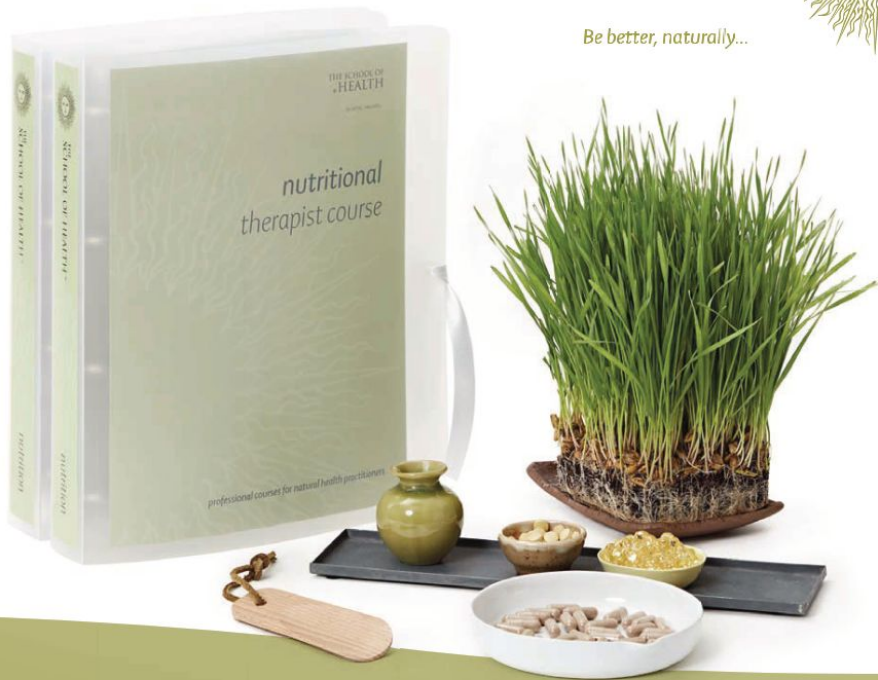
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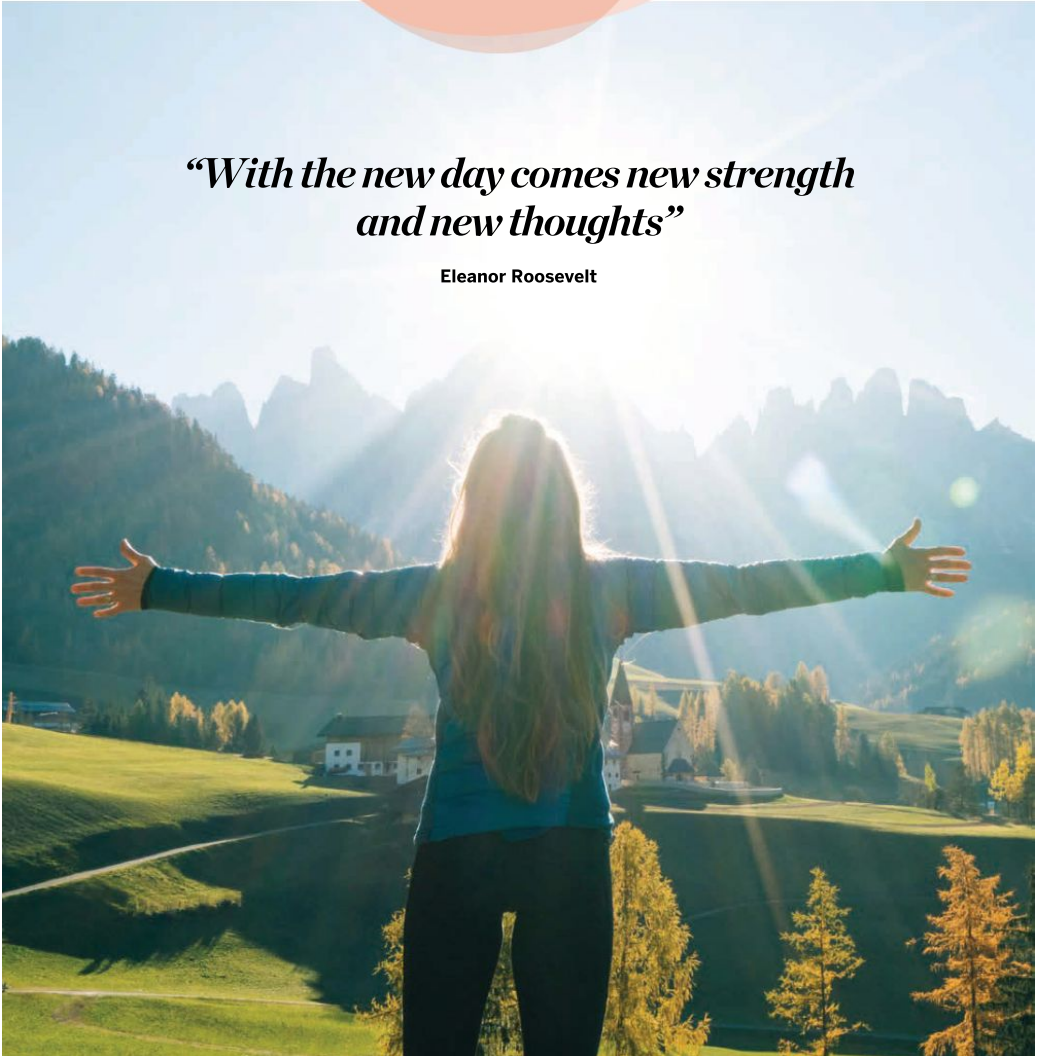


Mind

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***“With the new day comes new strength
and new thoughts”***

Eleanor Roosevelt



Expert advice



Karin Peeters is a life and career coach, counsellor and therapist. She is the founder and director of Vitalis Coaching and Therapy.
vitaliscoaching.com



Ruth Thomson is a career coach and trainer. Her mission is to help women create lives they love, filled with work they love, freedom and purpose.
ruthlouisethomson.com



GIVE YOURSELF A *break*

Are you suffering from attention fatigue? Heidi Scrimgeour discovers why 'soft fascination' is the answer

In the midst of lockdown, I had a moment of simple bliss. It felt like a 'factory reset' for body, mind and soul. It had been a long, tiring day at my desk. I'd been cajoling my reluctant children to complete their online school lessons in between hustling for freelance work and worrying about my parents, who were shielding. Wearily, I looked up from my laptop and glanced outside.

Something about the movement of the trees in the breeze framed against the window in the evening light looked magical. I was transfixed, gazing at the garden and losing track of time. When I came out of my little reverie, I felt different. In a moment of quiet attentiveness, something had been restored.

Teachers used to tell us off for this. They labelled it idle daydreaming but these days psychologists call it 'soft fascination'. To simplify the premise, it does you good to do more of the things that soften your focus. Activities that require intense focus – such as writing a report – can have a negative impact on your wellbeing and performance, while activities that soften your attention – such as getting lost in thought while watching branches dancing in the breeze – can invigorate your brain and boost wellbeing. No wonder working while homeschooling was so exhausting.

'We are not meant to be switched on all the time; balance is crucial for our wellbeing, for sustainable results and for maintaining a sense of joy,' says Karin

Peeters, a coach and psychotherapist. 'The ancient symbol of yin and yang represents the balance between the masculine (activity) and the feminine (receptivity) – they are not opposing, they are complementary forces that form a dynamic whole. The same applies to our attention. Our inner masculine energy helps us focus, set goals, plan, accomplish and achieve. It's the practical, let's-make-things-happen attitude. There's adrenaline and achievement but it can lead to stress and exhaustion if there is no respite. The inner feminine energy enables us to soften our attention. It's a place of trust, renewal, rest and surrender.'

Soft fascination, or diffused thinking, is important because how well our brain functions is directly related to the quality of our work – especially as more of us become knowledge workers, says career coach Ruth Thomson. 'The ideal of working like machines and always being "on" and focused for hours at a time doesn't fit with how our brain works. If we keep working and forcing our minds to focus, we all know that we get tired and the quality of our thinking and output decreases.'

In particular, time outdoors stimulates the kind of attention that does us good. Attention restoration theory is the idea, developed by the environmental psychologists Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, that spending time in nature can help people concentrate



better. In one related study, patients recovering from surgery in rooms with a view of nature fared better than those with only a brick wall to look at.

I'm convinced this is one of the reasons many of us discovered outdoor pursuits during lockdown – it's as if we knew that nature could relieve the attention fatigue caused by too much time on Zoom and endless negative news reports. Perhaps the walks, wild swims and paddleboarding were our efforts at recovery. We didn't call it soft fascination, but that's what we were seeking all along.

When I've been burning the candle at both ends and suffering from attention fatigue, the impact of nature is immeasurable. If you've ever felt soothed by the sight of a raindrop sliding slowly down a window pane, you'll know what I mean. Watching seaweed sway lazily beneath the surface of the water at the beach also does it for me; my shoulders drop and my breathing slows. Problems that seem insurmountable at my desk are put into perspective by the sea. It's not that nature is magic, it's simply that the natural environment stimulates your attention without demanding that your brain work too hard.

But you don't have to lose yourself in nature to reap the benefits. I once had a moment of soft fascination in a coffee shop that wasn't unlike the experience others might have in a forest or cathedral. I'd put in ridiculously long hours amid intense pressure at work. As a migraine swept over me – a sure sign that I'm suffering from attention fatigue – I fled for respite. Sinking into a chair, I caught sight of myself reflected upside down in a stainless steel bin and was transfixed. Yes, really. It took staring at a dustbin to recognise the damage I was doing by giving my attention only to things that were grinding me down. Nowadays, I know to take a break well before a bin becomes my muse.

You know that feeling when you're on holiday and you gradually start to feel energised rather than exhausted when you think about work? That's a sign that soft fascination is working its magic. Letting your mind wander, especially in nature, creates opportunities for ideas and reflection that don't come when you're at your desk.

Peeters explains: 'When we use soft fascination, we give ourselves permission to pause, and by allowing space, we unconsciously invite new ideas, solutions, opportunities and alignment with something bigger.'

***“Letting your mind wander
creates opportunities for
ideas that don't come
when you're at your desk”***



PHOTOGRAPH BY BETTY IMAGES

We allow things to come to us, instead of chasing them with sheer effort.'

It's not just about switching off – soft fascination can turn down the dial on things we find difficult, too. 'There is a difference between switching off and relaxing – watching Netflix or scrolling on your phone is not intense focus, but it isn't soft fascination,' adds Peeters. 'Long-forgotten hobbies such as fishing, football, scrapbooking, drawing, poetry, watching the horizon, dancing or camping trips can all bring the much-needed sense of respite that soft fascination offers. So remind yourself of the things you did that brought you joy when you were a child or a teenager and consider which of them you can bring back into your life.'

You are not a machine. Your mind needs rest. Actively allowing your mind to wander, ideally outdoors, is vital to counterbalance time spent doing things that lead to attention fatigue. 'Soft fascination is a place of loving kindness, compassion and wisdom, which goes beyond the brainy intelligence of the space of intense focus,' says Peeters. 'Intense focus might bring us effectiveness – by which I mean results – if we're lucky, but soft fascination brings us efficiency, which means reaching the desired outcome without wasting time, resources or energy. It's more intuitive and aligned with our heart and soul. And finding balance is more fun and sustainable too.'

It worked for me

“ Lynsey Bleakley, 44, the owner of an online bakery, says: 'As lockdown kicked in, I was faced with many problems. I was pivoting to keep my business going, despite cancelled weddings and events, and I also had a multitude of new challenges to make the company successful. I was working around the clock and soon I was running on empty. I'd forgotten about me time.'

'I'd been burnt out before and felt I was quickly heading there again. I knew I needed to employ some measures to help redress the balance and take better care of myself. So I made a commitment to start my daily walk again. Every morning, come

hail, rain or shine, I got up an hour earlier, when the coastal path and beaches were quiet, and headed out with my husband and our three labradors. We switched off from business. No phones. Just us – talking, soaking up the views and savouring the peace and tranquillity. We walk 5k every morning. It's now an integral part of my daily routine that I never want to be without. It's my sanity and saviour and helps keep my head clear and my body healthy.'

bumbleandgoose.co.uk



EASY DOES IT

Ruth Thomson, a career coach, explains how to weave soft fascination into your life:

1 Rethink the idea of work
Many of us have been taught that work is action – sitting at a computer, writing emails or attending meetings. Reframe a walk in nature or a mindfulness session as work too. Almost everyone has experienced the solution to a problem or a new idea popping into their head while they are in the shower or upon waking... Your brain is still working for you.

2 Recognise the benefits
Take a mindful walk and notice how much better you feel afterwards. Scientific evidence backs up the power of mindful moments, especially in nature. Give yourself permission to make this respite an important part of your working day.

3 Find your soft activity
For me, it's swimming and walking in ancient woodland. For others, it might be meditating and walking in a city. Find the activity that works for you and embrace it.

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *Blue Mind: How Water Makes You Happier, More Connected And Better At What You Do* by Wallace J Nichols (Little, Brown, £10.99)

Watch Neuroscientist Amishi Jha's TED talk on how we pay attention: [ted.com/speakers/amishi_jha](https://www.ted.com/speakers/amishi_jha)

Plan Book a nature retreat in the countryside for an attention reset. Find out more at sharphamtrust.org/mindfulness-retreats

Coaching in action

The presenting issue is rarely the issue...



Last month, we met Naomi,* who sought coaching with Kim Morgan after failing to finish a course and recognising she had a procrastination issue. We catch up with her at her second session

Session two...

I hadn't seen Naomi since our first session a month ago, when she had decided she wanted help getting things done. I had set her a task to complete before our next meeting.

She turned up as bright and breezy as before, announcing: 'Sorry, the dog ate my homework!' She laughed. 'It's a shocker, I know, but I didn't get around to it.'

I had thought a lot about Naomi. She was bright, capable and outwardly confident. We had established that she had low frustration tolerance, which meant she liked things to happen quickly and found it tough sticking at 'boring' tasks. But this didn't seem to be the only reason for her procrastination.

She appeared to be self-sabotaging by missing deadlines and failing to achieve important qualifications. Was she trying to avoid success, or failure? She made jokes about her procrastination – and yet, here she was, asking for help with it, so I figured it must matter to her.

I wondered what reaction she expected from me about not having done her 'homework', so I asked her. Naomi replied quickly: 'I think you will forgive me, like me and see me as a normal person.'

I was taken aback by her reply and asked, 'When have you not been liked or seen as a "normal" person?'

Suddenly, Naomi looked upset. 'Most of my life – by schoolmates and people around me.' She went on to tell me about her childhood. She had grown up in a 'rough' area and had been a high achiever. This led to her being bullied, beaten up and ostracised by her schoolmates and even her siblings. 'They assumed I thought I was better than them,' she said. 'Eventually, I started deliberately failing exams so I would fit in and be liked.'

'And are you still doing that as an adult? You are avoiding success in case people don't like you?' I probed.

Naomi shook her head in disbelief. 'I can't believe I never made that connection!' she said.

I explained to Naomi that as children we learn to cope with difficult feelings and situations by changing our behaviour and developing survival habits. Naomi

had changed her behaviour as a child to get what she needed at the time – belonging, acceptance and safety.

It's not uncommon for us to carry the survival habits we developed in early life into adulthood to protect us from re-experiencing the feelings we had in childhood. However, in adult life these can become self-sabotaging patterns of behaviour and, paradoxically, we end up getting exactly the outcome we were trying to avoid.

'That's what has happened!' Naomi exclaimed, shaking her head. 'I am still not part of the "gang", but this time it is at work, not school, and now it is because I failed on the course and they succeeded.'

I wanted to increase Naomi's motivation to change her procrastination habits, so I asked her to imagine, in detail, how her life would be in two years if she kept doing what she had always done. She imagined herself without qualifications or achievements, and with low self-esteem, full of disappointment and shame.

She painted a vivid picture of a grim future. I asked her to remember that picture whenever she started to procrastinate and to write down the following important question to ask herself every day: 'Is my behaviour today taking me closer to my desired outcomes or further away from them?'

Naomi said she also wanted to ask herself the following question if she started to procrastinate: 'How quickly would I do this if I knew my future happiness depended on it?'

I was reminded that the presenting issue someone brings to coaching is rarely the issue. Changing Naomi's procrastination habit was not just about learning time-management skills.

We agreed to meet again in four weeks. Naomi left our second session in a thoughtful mood and without her usual flippant remarks.

barefootcoaching.co.uk; @BarefootCoaches

Find out what Kim discovered about Naomi's self-sabotaging behaviour in the next issue.

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

Sylvia gets active again with **TURMERIC+**

Turmeric, the popular household spice, has gained quite a following in recent years. You might be wondering what all the fuss is about but more and more people are incorporating turmeric into their daily routine after trying it for themselves.

FutureYou Cambridge has received praise for their Turmeric+ supplement thanks to a special formulation that allows more of the active ingredient to get where it is needed.

Sylvia Pilgrim from Manchester is one of the long-term subscribers. Now in her sixties, Sylvia has always liked to keep fit.

'I am retired now, but even when I was working I always liked to stay fit. Unfortunately, I began to slow down due to wear and tear,' she says.

'I had seen the advertisements for Turmeric+ but thought it was just another fad, then I thought I had nothing to lose by trying it. The difference it made was unbelievable. I was able to work-out and can now continue with my fitness regime.'

Turmeric contains compounds called curcuminoids, the most

notable of which is curcumin. Not only is curcumin responsible for turmeric's distinctive yellow colour but it's also what makes it such a powerful spice.

However, curcumin is difficult for the body to absorb so following extensive analysis the scientists at FutureYou Cambridge chose to use a patented 'Curcuma Phospholipid Complex' formulation, rather than black pepper, to make Turmeric+ thirty times more absorbable than standard turmeric. They also added vitamin C, which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage.

Sylvia continues, 'I've been taking it for a couple of years now. My husband suggested I come off it as I was feeling so much more like my normal self – I told him I'd rather give him up than my turmeric tablets!'



"The difference it made was unbelievable"



'The strangest thing was, I happened to mention Turmeric+ to my doctor, when I went to the hospital for an unrelated issue. I couldn't believe it when he said that he was taking it too!'

Adam Cleevely, CEO of FutureYou Cambridge comments;

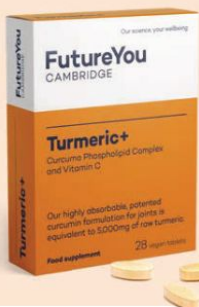
'We want to support more people to get and stay active. We think Turmeric+ can play an important role in that journey, just like it has for Sylvia and tens of thousands of happy Turmeric+ subscribers who regularly tell us their positive stories.'

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Since launching the product the company has continually received positive feedback from happy customers, particularly on Trustpilot, the independent online review platform.

'The product appears to meet all its promises and the service levels from

FutureYou Cambridge is first class,' said another.

'We're very happy to give people their first pack for free so they can experience it for themselves,' says Adam Cleevely, the company's CEO.

'It might sound bonkers but it really isn't. We're that confident in the effectiveness of our formulation.

'I can't think of a better way to convince people. If they like it, they will stick with it. Tens of thousands of customers already do.'

To claim your free 28 day Turmeric+ subscription trial pack worth £16.80, visit **FutureYouOffers.co.uk** or freephone **0800 808 5740** quoting code **TF637**

If it's not for you, simply cancel your subscription at any time, without obligation.

* Discount valid until 30th November 2021. New UK customers only. One free trial per household. Your first box is free (just pay £1.50 postage) and you will be enrolled into a flexible subscription costing £16.80 every 28 days. See FutureYouOffers.co.uk for more information on our subscription service. You can cancel your subscription at any time, without obligation. Trial pack promotion cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotions. **Turmeric+ contains vitamin C which contributes to normal collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage and bones.** Turmeric+ should be consumed as part of a healthy balanced diet and lifestyle. If you are taking any prescribed medication or have any medical conditions always consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking vitamins or supplements.



Work it out

If you're always busy yet feel unfulfilled, you may be spending too much time on unnecessary, draining things. Think about the following:

Balance importance and enjoyment

There are some things we have to do that are important but not enjoyable.

How can you make such tasks more enjoyable or ensure you get them done? Could you give yourself a reward for doing them or a consequence for not doing them? Do you need more skills or confidence to be able to enjoy these things?

There are some things we don't have to do that are not enjoyable. If you do lots of unimportant things that you do not enjoy, ask yourself why you are doing them. Do you have trouble saying no? What can you do to ensure you do less of the things you don't have to do and don't enjoy?

Then, there are things that are not important, but are enjoyable. You probably do these things to enliven yourself or relax but consider whether you are spending time doing these things at the expense of more important tasks...

Finally, there are important, meaningful and relevant activities that you enjoy. Think about why they are meaningful and relevant and why you enjoy them, so you can identify more activities for this category:

Important AND enjoyable things:

Recognise your self-sabotaging patterns of behaviour

If we are honest, we probably know what we do to self-sabotage, undermine ourselves and interfere with our plans and goals. The first step to overcoming self-defeating behaviour is to recognise it. If you don't know what you do, ask a close friend who will probably be able to tell you! Which of the following 'favourite' types of self-sabotaging behaviour do you use?

Behaviour	How does it benefit me?	What does it cost me?	Is the benefit worth the cost?
<i>Procrastination: Avoidance, putting things off, missing deadlines</i>			
<i>Going to excess: Food, alcohol, drugs, shopping, work, technology</i>			
<i>Fierce independence: Pushing others away; creating conflict in relationships</i>			
<i>People pleasing: Needing to be liked at all costs; being a martyr - putting others' needs before your own</i>			
<i>Bottling up feelings: Not showing emotion; being 'tough'</i>			
<i>Jot down any other things that occur to you here:</i>			

IF YOU KEEP ON DOING WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE...

If we don't stop from time to time to see where our current behaviour is taking us, we will 'keep doing what we've always done and keep getting what we've always got', as the old saying goes. Doing the following exercise regularly can increase your motivation to stick to your goals:

Imagine you can see yourself in two, three or five years (you choose the timescale) if you haven't made any of the changes you want to make. Picture your future self in detail: How does she look, how does she feel about herself, what has changed about her and how do you feel when you look at her? What do you want to say to her? What changes do you want to make today to take you closer to the future you want?



psychologies inspiration

“Everyone wants to live on the top of the mountain, but all the happiness and growth occurs when you are climbing it”

Andy Rooney







How to STAND UP FOR YOURSELF

No one likes being the bad guy, but we can learn to handle confrontation without fear, says Claire Cantor

It's a familiar scene: a friend asks you to pick up her children from yet another party, although she never reciprocates, or your boss dumps a piece of work on you last thing on a Friday, expecting it by Monday morning. You know you should assert yourself, but you hold back on confronting the problem for fear of unleashing an ugly scene, with potentially lasting damage.

The desire to preserve friendships tends to override other desires, such as being respected or being acknowledged as right – and it's an issue women tend to struggle with more than men. But why do we find it so difficult? What makes us think that confronting an unreasonable boss, demanding family member or pushy friend will somehow rupture the relationship for good?

Understanding what's happening in our brain when we're faced with a potentially thorny confrontation can be the first step to tackling the issue. 'When we're "confronted", or even just imagine that we are, we feel under attack and the classic fight, flight or freeze response kicks in,' says Gin Lalli, a psychotherapist. 'Imagine you were being attacked by a polar bear: you would either fight by retaliating in anger, flee – run away, or freeze – do

nothing and try to disappear. When we think we are under threat, our brain responds by going into this survival mode, trying to keep us safe.'

Even before getting into a challenging situation, the mere anticipation of the event can set us off to fight, flight or freeze. 'The mind is being super cautious,' says Lalli. 'It's busy working out plans A and B before you have even begun. This makes you feel more stressed, so often you take the easy route and avoid the confrontation altogether because it just seems easier.'

But simply avoiding things isn't a positive experience either, rendering us feeling weakened, undervalued and resentful that our opinion doesn't matter. It can even affect us physically. 'Your adrenalin begins to flow, your blood pressure will rise and you may have trouble breathing,' explains Lalli. 'Over time, you will become exhausted, you may develop nervous twitches, experience hot sweats and rashes or grind your teeth.'

The issue we have is that some level of confrontation is simply unavoidable. We experience it at work and home, with friends and family. We can even feel confronted by the news. There's nothing we can do about that except switching off



for a while, but we can do something about how it makes us feel.

‘In a peaceful moment, when you are not being confronted, you need to take the time to think over your actions for the future,’ says Lalli. ‘If it were to happen again, how would you like to react? Try and visualise that, and create a new template to refer to when confrontation arises again.’ A good starting point is to recognise that you have a problem with confrontation and remember that no one likes confrontation, so you are not alone.

Learn about your triggers. How would you like to deal with them better? Do you lack self-confidence, have low self-esteem or struggle with anger? ‘It’s a good idea to address these issues first,’ says Lalli. ‘Then, try to focus more on what you want, not what you don’t want. Imagine how you would handle the situation if

you were feeling confident and assertive. Then embrace that possibility: you can be assertive without being aggressive.’

It is perhaps this area that proves difficult for many women. Feeling comfortable challenging someone and saying no is not hardwired in most of us. ‘Fear of confrontation can be a learned behaviour from childhood,’ says Lalli. ‘Maybe you learned as a child not to provoke someone’s anger – and this is the template that you created for yourself going into adulthood. Women also tend to be people pleasers, and are usually seen as being more nurturing and caring, and

confrontation simply does not fit into that narrative.’

Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the workplace. According to Hira Ali, the author of *Her Way To The Top* (Panoma Press, £14.99) and CEO of Advancing Your Potential. It’s the fear of backlash and disapproval that means women often avoid challenging issues in the workplace. ‘There is a stereotypical expectation for women to be “nice” – communal and likeable,’ she says. That doesn’t mean, however, that you should be fearful of speaking up for yourself and taking a stand – the alternative is feeling

“Feeling comfortable challenging someone and saying no is not hardwired in most of us”

WAYS TO MANAGE CONFRONTATION WITH CONFIDENCE

- Visualise a positive outcome.
- Calm yourself before confronting someone and take charge of your emotions by using empowering language. Use 'I' speech: 'I am feeling...' and specify the degree of your emotion: 'I am very upset...'
- Be polite. Try using phrases such as: 'It's interesting that you see it that way. I've noticed something different, actually.'
- Don't invite criticism or retaliation. Avoid phrases such as, 'You'll probably scream at me/want to kill me but...'
- Name how you are feeling if someone is negative. Use phrases such as 'that made me feel uncomfortable' or 'disrespectful words are not tolerated here.'
- After you handle a situation, analyse it, learn from it and put it aside.

It worked for me



Claire Middlebrook, 42, runs an accountancy

practice in Edinburgh. The office environment was chaotic, and often saw stand-up arguments, she explains.

'I struggled with anxiety around conflict,' says Claire. 'I sought to please the team because I worried that they would leave if they weren't happy. But I realised I was not being clear about my expectations simply because I was trying to avoid conflict. In fact, lack of clarity itself was causing the conflict.'

'So I created a strategic, defined plan with precise tasks, timescales and expectations. Now everyone knows where they stand and our interactions are better.'

Claire realised that she also avoided conflict with her husband. 'Neither of us had set boundaries or knew



how to behave with the small stuff, such as unloading the dishwasher. I didn't express that I needed help and got annoyed at my husband. Now I state: "Please unload the dishwasher before 7pm as my parents are coming over and I would like it to be tidy."

'Small things used to build resentment, which I don't feel any more,' says Claire. 'I've learned to keep my message simple and not shy away from crucial conversations.'

undermined, confused and trivialised. 'Anxiety can chip away at your confidence, affect your performance and the emotional turmoil wears down self-esteem,' says Ali. 'It can also quash creativity and innovation at work.'

Instead, Ali recommends trying to reframe the issue, and visualise a scenario working differently so you feel more confident in dealing with it. She advises reassessing negative viewpoints, such as 'I didn't get agreement at the meeting' with a positive stance, such as 'I will have another opportunity to work on our differences and persuade everyone individually'.

'It's important to stay calm and be polite and respectful,' she adds. 'Be aware of your body language – stand tall. And use direct "I" messages, such as "I want to let you know how I am feeling

because I believe that it will clear the air between us".'

Unfortunately, the pandemic has thrown up many opportunities for differing opinions between couples, families and friends. As well as raising our stress levels, confrontation seems even more difficult and upsetting for many of us as a result. 'Tensions have been high for some time,' says Lalli. 'This has fuelled already-strained relationships and even damaged harmonious ones.'

'But now things are changing and options are opening up, it's time to look calmly and rationally to the future. We need to do that with the intelligent, rational and objective part of our brain – not with negative emotion. And, above all, without constantly worrying about what may go wrong.'

ginlalli.com; advancingyourpotential.com

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *Big Talk, Small Talk (And Everything In Between): Effective Communication Skills For All Parts Of Your Life* by Shola Kaye (Rockridge Press, £6.54).

Browse Nick Wignall, a clinical psychologist, offers 15 ways to handle confrontation with self-assurance. Read his advice at nickwignall.com/confrontations

Listen Terry Real, a couples therapist, advises couples how to stand up to each other with love – resources.soundstrue.com/podcast/terry-real-fierce-intimacy

Grief explained

We're debunking myths, breaking taboos and equipping you with the knowledge and tools to better understand some of the most common issues that have an impact on our mental health

Grief will touch all our lives. It can be tough to navigate and feel all-consuming, but there are ways to cope with the pain of loss. Radha Modgil, a medical doctor, and experts from the Mental Health Foundation shine a light on grief, offer reassurance, explain how grief manifests in our minds and bodies and share tips for how we can help ourselves and others. 'Grief is a natural process following loss and it can have a big impact on our emotional wellbeing and mental health,' says Dr Radha. 'It's vital that we understand grief so we are able to seek support for ourselves and be there for others.'

Grief is a feeling often experienced by people who have lost someone or something dear to them. People often associate grief with bereavement, such as the passing of a loved one or a family pet, but other things can trigger grief too,' she explains.

'Grief may be experienced following the breakdown of a friendship, leaving your home or a job that was part of your identity for a long time or when we leave a period of our lives behind us. Loss can be challenging and, what's more, the symptoms of grief can affect people in vastly different ways, so it's important we know how to spot the signs of grief.'

UNDERSTAND THE STAGES

As a general rule, there are four phases of grief:

- 1 Accepting that your loss is real.
- 2 Experiencing the pain of grief.
- 3 Adjusting to life without the person or thing you have lost.
- 4 Gradually putting less emotional energy into grieving and more into something new.

'It's important to keep in mind that these stages are personal for every individual and will vary in duration and order,' explains Dr Radha. 'Grief can seem chaotic and doesn't always follow a perfectly linear path or particular order, so don't assume you "should" feel a certain way at a certain time – your journey will be uniquely yours.'

When to seek help

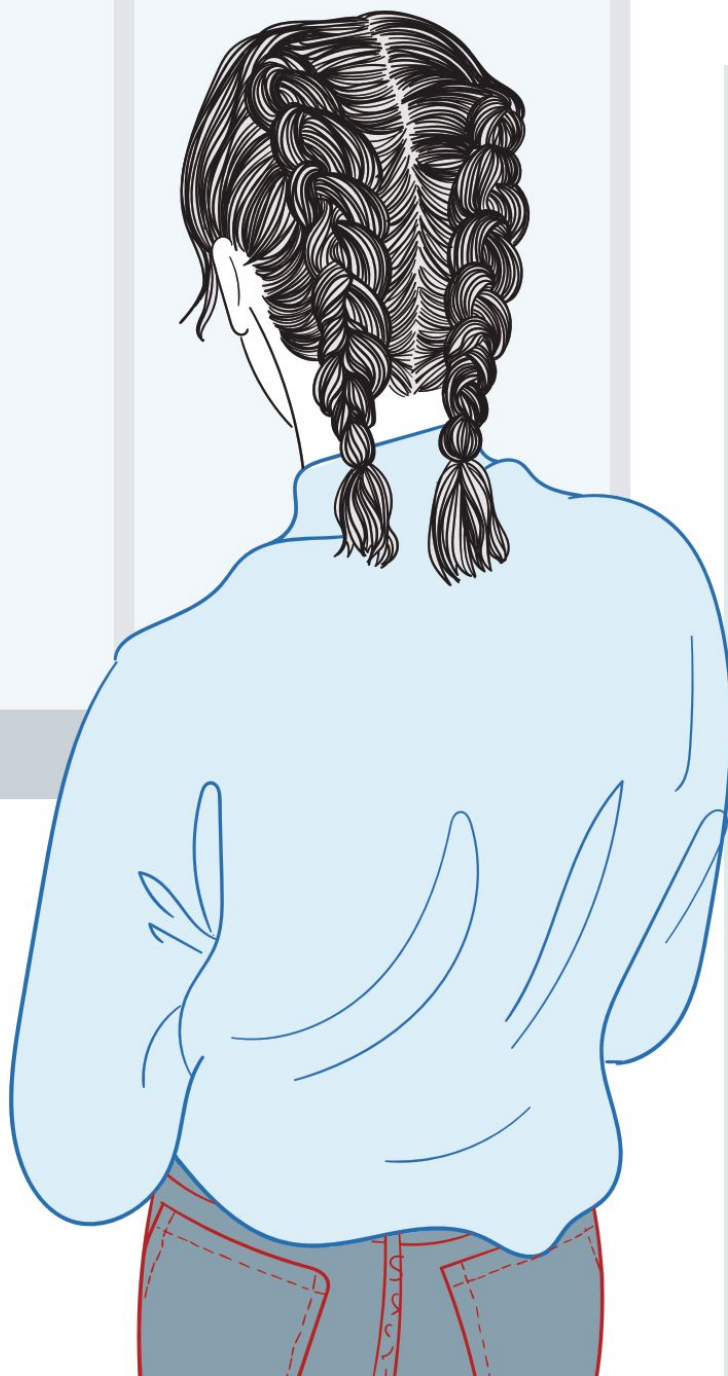
'Grief will place a strain on day-to-day life and can feel like a "one step forward, two steps back" scenario,' says Dr Radha. 'If your feelings are prolonged, intense, stopping you from carrying out self-care or limiting your life, it's crucial to see your GP or contact a charity, such as Cruse, The Loss Foundation or Mind, or seek advice from your local NHS trust.'

cruse.org.uk; thelossfoundation.org; mind.org.uk; nhs.uk

Identify the signs

'It's not always easy to recognise when grief is at play because it is different for everyone,' says Dr Radha. 'Feelings may be transient, mild or extremely powerful, which can make it difficult to understand how a person is feeling at any given time. However, some of the most common symptoms include:

- Shock and numbness – this is usually the first reaction to loss, and people often talk about being in a daze.
- Sadness – often with tears, but not always.
- Tiredness or exhaustion.
- Anger – sometimes directed towards the reason for your loss, sometimes at yourself or sometimes at life itself.
- Guilt – for things you think you did, could have changed or feel you should have said or done.'



HOW TO HELP YOURSELF AND OTHERS

'Grief is experienced differently by everyone, but one common element is the type of comments grieving people might say or thoughts they may think, such as "I should feel differently", "I should be able to cope" or "I should feel the same as others",' says Dr Radha. 'It's important to try to allay these fears and worries for yourself and others and understand that although grief is a personal experience, it's beneficial to:

Feel the feelings: Allow yourself space to be with the feelings you are experiencing – try not to feel bad or guilty or compare yourself with others. Understand that difficult feelings come with loss.

Understand that grief is timeless: For many people, the intensity of feelings will diminish over a period of time but, for others, it may take longer. It's important to remind yourself and others that there is no set time for grief.

Take care of your body: Physical care can fall by the wayside when going through the turmoil of grief, but looking after your physical health will help you get through psychological stress. This includes getting a good night's sleep, eating well, exercising and taking time out for mindfulness and reflection.

Distract yourself: Doing something that makes you feel good can often be a welcome distraction from challenging thoughts and feelings. Try something absorbing, such as drawing, gardening, reading a book or watching a movie to help give your mind a break.

Give to others: Sometimes, giving to others or an act of kindness can help you feel better. Consider volunteering, delivering groceries or calling someone who may be lonely – compassionate acts might help you with your grief.'

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You're a superhero



Who do you see when you look in the mirror? Your self-concept is a powerful influence, but if that impression is frozen in time, you may be re-enacting an old fable that does not serve you, writes Vee Sey



Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the... weakest of them all? If I had a bit part in a jumbled modern fairy tale, this would be the resigned question I might ask my

younger self because that's what I believed was true. I started life in an incubator, too darn piddly to breastfeed, and the runt of a litter of three. I had a robust sister on either side, so I toddled into my role as the troubled middle child too. Sensitive and prone to melancholy, I was afraid of the dark to the point of drinking the contents of my hot-water bottle while weeping at my own patheticness rather than heading for the bathroom tap, and a barking dog, even a teeny fluffy one, filled me with shrieking terror. I was the timid, trembling wimp, and my family told me so.

Experts do a lot of work to shed light on family roles and personalities and there are various models that define the part you may be convinced is yours for life. In family systems, you might be the hero, the clown, the black sheep or the lost child... And the 'big five' personality types, in which we thankfully operate on a spectrum – extroversion, openness agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism – are blessings and curses, although it seems to me that the extrovert embracing new experiences gets all the adventure in a fun life, while some of us are more hardworking doormat. In the drama triangle, you might be the victim, the perpetrator or the rescuer. The lists go on... That's a whole lot of labelling and from laymen too, and my classification as the disempowered one – the lost child, rebel and victim – was sticky and durable. I was also the funny and clever one, so it wasn't all bad. My point is that my beliefs about myself were set early, until I twisted open my blinkers for a wiser, more up-to-date view.

If you asked yourself: 'Who am I? What am I like?',

what would you say? Your self-concept warrants some reflection, because sometimes you've been telling yourself the same lame story for so long, you forget there's Tippex for emotional evolution, and freedom, and you can write yourself a new one.

The way others see us in the present can shift a self-image trapped in the past. My children have helped me change the way I perceive myself and I don't care that it's biased. When we had a conversation about what our roles might be in a zombie apocalypse, as I'm sure all families do while watching *The Walking Dead*, although my son jokingly told me I would look after the children (caregiver I can handle), my daughter said, 'You'd be a warrior, Mum! Look how capable you are and how far you can run... And you jumped out of a plane!' I was strapped to another person who gave me no option but, yes, yes I did.

So, to my darling family, and maybe you want to set the record straight with yours: I was not a weakling. I was born small. Anxiety about our circumstances aside, I was petrified of the dark because I watched Bela Lugosi shuddering towards me across the wall from a rickety old projector at the age of five, and I was scared of dogs because I saw one, a teeny fluffy one, bite my sister's face. I can't defend drinking my hot-water bottle but let's call it resourcefulness. I was sad because I'm an empath and soaked up all our dysfunction and actually that's a noble role and saved you from it while you were playing the hero and the rescuer, and I thank you for being the hero and the rescuer.

I blindly accepted that I was fragile for too many years on the disadvantaged back foot but I've revised my self-image and relinquished the weakling role, even if I have to fake it till I make it at times: Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is, maybe, the bravest and strongest – or at least trying to be – of them all? Try it, it's liberating, and you can be anything you want, even a superhero, because it's your story. @veejanesey

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOSIE GILBERT GETTY IMAGES



NAVIGATE THE MENOPAUSE MAZE

We've been taught to dread the menopause – but author and broadcaster Mariella Frostrup remains determined to speak out about this natural and empowering stage of life





The puzzling thing about menopause, of course, is that it's not a direct diagnosis, but a retrospective one. The moment itself, going 'through' the menopause (how can you possibly know that it's the last time an egg will pop into the fallopian tube?), will probably go unnoticed and unmarked. It's all about the years before – and after.

It's said that more than 80 per cent of women will have some symptoms

before and after the menopausal moment. They may start a few months or years before, and last an average of four years after the menopause – but they might be as long as 10 years before and 12 years or more after your last period, which adds up to a good quarter of our expected lifespan. Incidentally, the oldest recorded menopause was said to have occurred at the age of 104, which seems both unlikely and a particularly low blow.

The accepted wisdom is that the perimenopause starts in your mid-40s. But the perimenopause is the stealth pilot of the process. Most of us are unaware that the effects of see-sawing hormones may have quietly begun in our early 40s or even late 30s. The perimenopause is only now being recognised as a significant marker on our biological journey.

Initially, as in my case, changes may well be vague, and get gradually worse over time. It can be near impossible to know whether you are perimenopausal, or grumpy, ill, overworked, in a bad relationship or stressed and – knowing modern women – with a permanent and overriding sense of guilt that it's entirely, if inexplicably, your fault. That's why ignorance becomes our enemy. Without

being aware of what we might be looking for, it can take quite some time to recognise what's actually taking place.

The psychologist and menopause specialist Meg Arroll tells me that women generally access healthcare only when functioning decreases: 'That's the point at which you can't achieve all your activities in daily life. You are overwhelmed. That's why we need public health consolidation. Women wait a long time for help, but once they have a diagnosis and the right treatment, they realise that they've had a few years of feeling lost, and that it didn't have to be that way.'

This is little comfort when you're on your knees with exhaustion and finally make a GP appointment! And, perhaps even more aggravatingly, the moment you near 50, every emotion you display is likely to be dismissed as being caused by the menopause rather than perfectly justified dismay, displeasure, anger or frustration.

The menopause mystery

The menopause is genuinely one of the world's greatest mysteries. Humans are one of only two mammalian species that go through the menopause, the others being various types of whale: orcas, belugas, narwhal and short-finned pilot whales – names that are otherwise helpful only if you take part in very demanding pub quizzes.

There are all sorts of theories as to the point of an exemption from pregnancy in the second half of our lives. Much of the animal kingdom is destined to procreate from puberty almost to the grave, so we are pretty unusual in our extended post-fertility phase, where we have time to focus on pursuits not determined by our gender. In a still-unexplained diversion from our chimpanzee ancestors, and along with those previously acknowledged whale communities, we are still fit and well enough to live a full life for decades



“The moment you near 50, every emotion you display is likely to be dismissed as being caused by the menopause”

after our last period. Why should that be?

The least inspiring theory is that, historically, once we were unable to have babies, we would probably die anyway. As our baby-making potential came to an end, so did we, assuming we hadn't already expired from blood loss or infection during childbirth itself. But you need to take infant mortality into account when looking at life expectancy. Many historians remind us that maximum human lifespan hasn't changed a great deal since classical times; the oft-quoted 'three score years and 10' is actually from the Bible. It's just that fewer of us used to achieve that age.

Grandmother Hypothesis

My favourite explanation of the menopause is – I believe – also the most likely. What's known as the Grandmother Hypothesis was first put forward in the 1950s. This theory suggests that women have the menopause because we are so useful to society in later life.

Let's return to our whales, who are a fine example of the Grandmother Hypothesis. They are made up of small communities headed by a 'grandmother'. This matriarch offers evidence that the foraging, experience and hands-on help with calf-rearing supplied by mature females make their post-reproductive skills of equal value to their procreative.

In a nutshell, this is what sets us apart from the apes, dogs and cats. Post-menopausal women aren't going to take up time and resources having babies, so they can forage, farm, help raise families or – these days – run global corporations.

Those of us who are indebted to our mothers, mothers-in-law or an older female relative for helping out with childcare, as I am, will particularly relate to the Grandmother Hypothesis. Those of you who are grandmothers, and now realise that you are vital to the survival of the human race, may be rethinking your free babysitting policy and considering some sort of minibreak.

The grandmother, argues historian Susan Mattern, is one of the key reasons humans were able to evolve successfully. Imagine this: Old women are useful! Hold the front page... though, not likely.

Either way, nature most definitely wants to keep us alive, even if society



“There clearly needs to be more focus, training and a roll-out best-practice policy for this issue”

considers us redundant. It's a conundrum. The fact that our fertility does decline as we age is frequently argued as being a sexist point, and that women should be allowed to have babies at any time of life. But maybe we should start seeing our infertile later years less as a punishment and more as a gift? Clearly, having choice is important, but we can't deny our biology.

The information maze

We know what the menopause is, and why it may occur. So, how do we find out what to do about it? There is currently no clear path to illumination. My contemporaries may remember the slender books about sex and pregnancy handed to us by our mums in our early teens, probably rather furtively, back in the 1970s and 1980s (less so, I gather, in these more enlightened times).

I certainly wasn't aware of a step-by-step introduction to the menopause, with easy-to-follow diagrams, but I'd be hugely grateful if my daughter was given one. For women now approaching or in the throes of menopause, knowledge is essential. Equally, for young girls, preparation for what's to come counts as an essential part of the toolkit for life.

Until recently, there's been no sense that women need any sort of literature or chat about the end of our fertility, even though it's just as significant a process as the beginning. How has this happened, and especially in a world where we now talk openly about breast cancer, periods and our sex lives (to a greater or lesser degree)? You'd think that an automatic perimenopause GP meeting in your mid-30s or early 40s would be an obvious and positive step. It's certainly part of what we should be asking for, in terms of a new, enlightened approach to women's health – not just in regard to fertility, but all the decades beyond.

Ever since the Garden of Eden and

its spare-rib fantasy, society has been in denial of the fact that women are not physically lesser beings than men, nor are they made from men's bit parts. Women are unique, in our biology and in our symptoms. For way too long we've been regarded as secondary components of human (men's) health, so female-specific conditions (aside from childbirth, in which the whole world has an interest), have been left relatively unexplored. There clearly needs to be more focus, training and a roll-out best-practice policy for this issue, which has the potential to negatively impact the present and future health of all women in midlife.

Every GP surgery in the land needs at least one Dr Menopause. We are fortunate enough to have all manner of automatic health checks and screenings: cervical smears, bowel and breast cancer checks, and the over-40s health checks. But why is menopause not on that latter agenda? Surely it should come with a mandatory menopause update so that we know to recognise symptoms such as sleepless nights or aching joints as a possible first sign of diminishing hormones?

What we do have springing up all over the place is a change in attitude. In the past few years, menopause has landed firmly on the agenda for discussion. And we also have all the brilliant people campaigning for better awareness: Louise Newson, Meg Mathews, Liz Earle, Diane Danzebrink, Nighat Arif, Kate Muir, and groups such as The Menopause Charity, MPowered Women, Pausitivity, Henpicked, the politicians taking up the cause and, of course, the British Menopause Society. There are plenty of excellent free sources of information all around, if you only seek them out. There is campaigning for education, laws, workplace acknowledgement and more GP training. There is – in a nutshell – hope.



‘Cracking The Menopause’ by Mariella Frostrup and Alice Smellie is available to buy now (Bluebird, £20)

A moment of calm



UPLIFTING LEMON BALM

Let anxious thoughts fade away, relax tired muscles and transform your mood with minty, medicinal lemon balm

Fresh and citrusy with a hint of mint and similar in appearance to oversized mint leaves, it's no surprise to learn that lemon balm belongs to the mint family, and it's just as useful as its cousin.

'This ancient, perennial and often overlooked herb has been used for centuries to treat all manner of ailments and it's also thought to work wonders for reducing anxiety and stress with its sedative and calming effects,' says Chris Etheridge, a medical herbalist and chair of the British Herbal Medicine Association.

Mind salve

'It works by tweaking enzymes in the brain, lifting mood and lowering anxiety,' says Etheridge. 'Among its ingredients are rosmarinic acid (a natural polyphenol antioxidant named after rosemary), which acts as an antidepressant and is said to have the potential to alleviate an overactive thyroid, which can cause mood swings and irritability.'

'Another impressive feature of lemon balm, backed up by a

clinical study, shows a reduction in agitation and an improvement in thinking and memory in patients with Alzheimer's,' says Etheridge, 'proving what a powerful impact leafy lemon balm can have on the brain.'

How to harness it

'Lemon balm is a well-tolerated, gentle herb with few side effects when used correctly,' he says. 'Studies show it is effective both when ingested, in tincture or supplement form, and when used topically on the skin.' As an antibacterial, anti-inflammatory agent, lemon balm has been shown to soothe common skin conditions such as cold sores and eczema, and ease muscular pain. It is also used as an essential oil in aromatherapy. 'But it's important to note that lemon balm should never be ingested as an essential oil, unless directed by a qualified practitioner,' adds Etheridge. bhma.info

PICK OF THE PRODUCTS

Try calming lemon balm for mild anxiety as a supplement with Holland & Barrett lemon balm, £9.99 for 30 capsules.

hollandandbarrett.com

Cope with daily stresses using balancing Melissa Organic Essential Oil, £43, from Neal's Yard Remedies.

nealsyardremedies.com

For a regenerating lip soother, we love a lick of nude Puresential SOS Lips Repairing Gel, £9.50.

uk.puresential.com



Lemon balm is like honey to bees. Its Latin name, *Melissa*, comes from the Greek word for 'honey bee' which refers to the fact that bees just love zesty lemon balm flowers!



ILLUSTRATIONS: SHUTTERS LOCK

Lightbulb moments

I think, therefore I am

Are you distressed, or primed for action? It may be a matter of perspective – and neuroscience. Kimberley Wilson, a psychologist and author of 'How To Build A Healthy Brain', offers her insights...

If I told you that you are the creator of your experience, what would you say? Would you roll your eyes and write me off as another woo-woo merchant with a ropey understanding of physics? Please don't – because that's not the kind of creation I am talking about. The kind of creation I'm referring to is grounded in the neuroscience of how your brain predicts and interprets the world around you and your place in it.

Here's a simple example: You're about to give a talk. You are prepared and you know your subject. Turning your attention to your body, you notice that your breathing is shallow and you have butterflies. Now, tell me, are you feeling anxious or excited? Physiologically, there is no difference. That surge in cortisol as you step up to the mic is simply your body readying for action – to provide your limbs and brain with the extra energy needed to perform. Whether you experience those sensations as anxiety or excitement is largely a matter of interpretation based on the concepts that are most readily available to you.

If your primary examples or social messages skew towards an interpretation of nervousness, you will be more inclined to 'feel' anxious. Alternatively, if someone explained those sensations to you as being 'pumped' or 'charged' while you were growing up, those same sensations would be transformed into a sense of anticipation. Same sensations, different experience.

I hope you can see why this matters. It's the difference between saying 'I feel



nervous' and 'I feel ready'. It's the difference between feeling disempowered and feeling enabled. These interpretations affect performance, your enjoyment of the experience and the likelihood of you doing it again. Whether you call it grit or a growth mindset, learning to associate those physical sensations with a sense of positive challenge or readiness for action helps foster psychological resilience.

Here's what worries me: well-intentioned but misguided scope creep for psychological or mental health terminology, particularly on social media, means that people offering seemingly benign advice might be undermining others' resilience.

Messages intended to reduce stigma, such as 'it's OK to feel anxious' may, for some, increase the likelihood of an interpretation of anxiety. I am not suggesting that all anxiety is a case of mistaken identity, but I am concerned that terms intended to describe specific mental health conditions are being generalised to normal sensations – and that this all contributes to the pathologising of everyday life, and the erosion of wellbeing.

I suppose this is a word of caution. Clinically, we know that a person's interpretation of their experience is as important as the experience itself. Therefore, we all need to be mindful of the mental health messages we expose ourselves to and the ones we reinforce.

Choose your concepts carefully – they have the power to create your world.

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

Beat night sweats and sleep easy

Night sweats are one of the main causes of disrupted sleep during the menopause, but help is at hand for a cool and comfortable night

Some women may never have problems with night sweats until they go through the menopause, during which they can result in discomfort and exhausting restlessness.

Does this sound familiar? You settle down and go to sleep... After a couple of hours, you wake boiling hot, feeling clammy and sweaty. You chuck off the duvet to cool down but within minutes you feel cold, so you grab the duvet and settle down – only to wake in a matter of hours feeling hot and sweaty again! And so a cycle of disturbed sleep is established. In the morning, quite understandably, you feel dog-tired and struggle to face the day having had insufficient rest.

Wool and wool duvets cannot prevent night sweats – our Southdown sheep are clever but not that clever! What our products can do, however, is reduce the discomfort of night sweats and the associated sleep disruption.

Wool wicks moisture away from your body and it simply evaporates through the duvet. Wool has the ability to absorb

up to 30 per cent of its own weight in moisture, so it works all night long – doing what it does best, keeping you warm but dry.

Feathers and down cannot wick moisture in this way – these fibres evolved to repel moisture away from them (ducks rely on the waterproofing that their feathers provide otherwise they would sink) so under feathers, your sweat gets trapped between you and the duvet. That's what wakes you in a hot and clammy state of discomfort.

Synthetic duvet fillings are only likely to worsen the symptoms of night sweats. Many of our happy customers say that sleeping under a wool duvet for the first time is a revelation. Others take a little while before they begin to feel the benefits, but the consensus is unanimous – there is

no going back to other bedding once you've tried a wool duvet.

We send our duvets out in lovely carrier bags and customers are increasingly using them as travel bags because they are not prepared to sleep under anything else.

As one of our customers recently said: 'This is a great product. My wife had been having hot sweats at night, waking up in discomfort. We were using a high-quality goose down duvet. We then started using one of your lambswool duvets and hey presto, no more night sweats and a perfect night's rest for both of us.'

"We started using one of your wool duvets and hey presto, a perfect night's rest"

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OVERCOME *Overwhelm*

There are days when life just feels like too much and the old adage 'keep calm and carry on' is a big ask. Anita Chaudhuri learns how to keep your head when others are losing theirs ➤



The other day, I had a meltdown in my local hardware store. I went in to make a simple purchase – a new bulb for the hall lamp. Alas, this was no longer a straightforward errand. Did I need an LED or an eco halogen bulb? How many lumens was I looking for? Was I interested in a smart wifi-enabled dimmable bulb with colour-change option? It was all too much and, close to tears, I slunk home feeling downcast and useless.

It might sound trivial but the experience was a wake-up call – a lightbulb moment even... Evidently I had reached a tipping point and was in danger of becoming totally overwhelmed with the minutiae of daily life. I felt like a fraud for talking to anyone about it. After all, what did I have to feel overwhelmed about? It's not as if I'm a key worker facing long shifts with people's lives in the balance.

Whatever the reasons, while surveying the towering piles of books, papers and mail taking over every surface of my living room, I knew I needed to take action.

In her viral BuzzFeed post on millennial burnout, the writer Anne Helen Petersen coined the phrase 'errand paralysis', which seems to perfectly sum up one of the major symptoms of our collective overwhelm regardless of age. Errand paralysis is the syndrome where you keep moving items from one to-do list to the next without ever taking action.

As Petersen describes it: 'None of these tasks was that hard: getting knives sharpened, taking boots to the cobbler, getting my new dog a microchip, sending someone a signed copy of my book, scheduling an appointment with the dermatologist, donating books to the library, vacuuming my car... Emails festered in my personal inbox, which I use as a sort of alternative to-do list, to the point that I started calling it the "inbox of shame".'

All this sounds horribly familiar to me. Since when did we stop being able to cope with the business of life, and what can we do about it?

"Emails festered in my inbox to the point that I started calling it the 'inbox of shame'"

Expert advice



Audrey Tang is a psychologist and author of 'The Leader's Guide To Resilience' (Pearson, £14.99).
draudreyt.com



Alice Boyes is a former psychologist and researcher turned writer. She is author of 'The Healthy Mind Toolkit' (Random House, £11.99).
aliceboyes.com



Kerri Richardson is a lifestyle designer, coach and author of the bestselling book 'From Clutter To Clarity' (Hay House, £12.99).
kerririchardson.com



Create a calm mindset

If everything seems to be getting on top of you, it's pointless charging ahead with a battle plan. Instead, take a couple of days to focus on attaining a calmer state. 'A helpful thing to do is a body scan meditation,' suggests Audrey Tang, a psychologist. 'It's a lovely practice that keeps us calm and gets us deep breathing. Starting from your feet, go through each part of your body, tensing and relaxing each in turn. Recognise how you feel. Notice those areas where you're holding tension, and release.'

Tang also likes to tackle overwhelm with a daily gratitude stretch. 'I stretch my legs and think of all the people in my life I'm grateful for. Then I stretch out my arms and I think of all the things I'm grateful for. Over the week, I guarantee you, certain patterns will arise. There will be certain people who always crop up and others who never crop up.' Tang suggests that in this way we can start to actively seek out the people and things that matter most to us, and spend less time on the ones that don't.

Another mindset tool is to become aware of rigid thinking patterns. Alice Boyes, the author of *The Healthy Mind Toolkit*, suggests that we pay special attention to what she calls 'sneaky, self-imposed rules'. 'By these, I mean the type of rules that inevitably create overwhelm,' says Boyes. 'For example, if you feel you must make three types of Christmas dessert every year... Actually, you can make just one. Or if you have the idea that when someone asks you for a favour, you must always say yes. Do you really have to say yes?'

She points out that rigid thinking might help you stick to your goals today, but it won't be sustainable because flexibility allows for self-care in the moment. For example, say you believe you can only get fit if you run every day. Then one day you have to attend a conference in another city. You arrive late so really should go to bed and get some rest – but instead you force yourself to go to the hotel gym and then sleep badly. 'That's not helpful,' says Boyes.



When clutter is so much more than clutter...

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of an overwhelmed life is clutter. By clutter, I'm not talking about the glamorous type involving 10 pairs of party shoes and military campaigns to reorganise your sock drawer, such as those in the realm of Marie Kondo, the famous organising consultant.

The clutter of overwhelm is what the author of *From Clutter To Clarity*, Kerri Richardson, calls 'a temper tantrum of the soul' – basically, all the stuff our stressed-out brains just can't deal with any more.

Looking around my home, I am surrounded by this stuff – online shopping returns, forms that need signing, documents that need shredding in my 'one page at a time' shredder, magazine articles I might read, recipes I might cook... Every time I look at the growing pile, I want to cry.

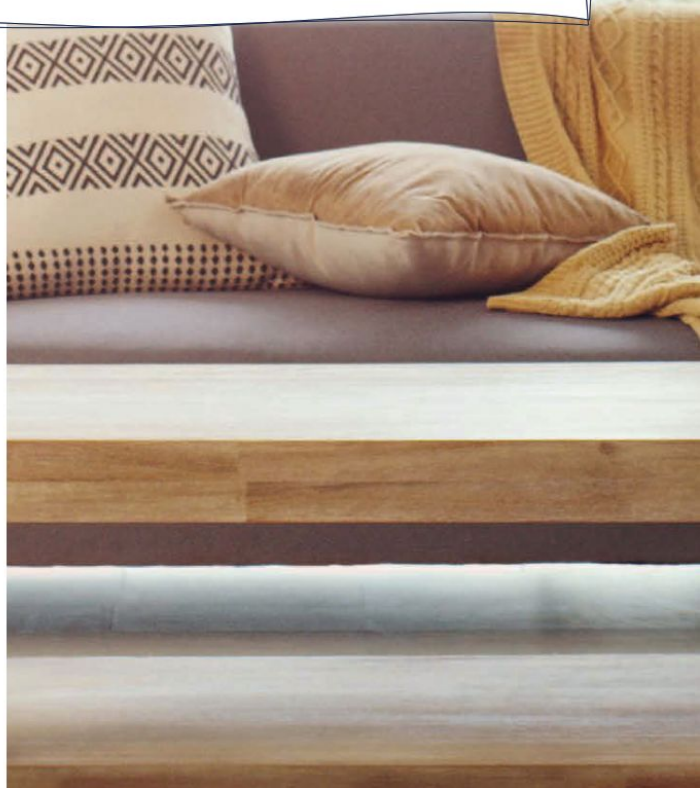
'A growing stack of mail is what I like to call "symptomatic" clutter,' says Richardson, when

I explain my problem. 'You'd like to have it out of your life but you just can't seem to take the action to get rid of it. There's something more going on than the mail. At the root of it, there's always one of three things – unrealistic expectations, limiting beliefs or the need to set boundaries.'

She suggests that I look at the pile of mail and identify the stories I'm telling myself. Maybe there are bills I can't pay or a letter from someone I don't want to hear from... Is there something in that pile that I'd rather not deal with? She's right about that – there is a document that, once signed, might lead to a difficult decision.

'Clutter can be a fantastic distraction, and also an excuse to avoid taking action,' says Richardson. 'Take on the role of investigator. Get curious about what your resistance is about. What are you avoiding? What can help you move forward. Do you need more information? Do you need help from a professional?'

"Take on the role of investigator. Get curious about what your resistance is about. What are you avoiding? What can help you move forward? Do you need help?"





No is a complete sentence

One other common source of overwhelm is other people, even those we love the most. 'I'm seeing people struggle with this, particularly as we try to return to normal after lockdown,' observes the psychologist Audrey Tang. It's definitely something I've battled with, trying to strike a happy medium between rest and peak socialising.

'This is where we have to get really honest with some people,' says Tang. 'A lot of us have changed our perspective during lockdown and may no longer enjoy doing the things we did before. For example, I've started replying to friends who invite me to their amateur dramatics productions with words along these lines: "I'm happy to come – I want to support you and love seeing my friends, but I wouldn't want to go otherwise." This sends the unspoken message that you don't want to be invited to the number of events you once attended.'

In general, it can be helpful to have an idea of how you are going to say no to the invitation or request for help. 'The first step is getting clear on what your priorities in life actually are, and these change all the time,' says Tang (see 'Focus wheel' on page 60). Once you know what you want out of life, what you enjoy doing most and with whom, you can actively seek more of those experiences. Then the next time someone invites you to take part in a sponsored 10k or asks you to volunteer at the community garden, you will be more conscious in the moment that you don't have time for that.

'It's much easier to say "I'm sorry, I'm actually too busy" when you are fully engaged in what matters most in life,' says Tang. 'Even with close friends, I am now able to say that, much as I'd love to see them, I want to spend my free time with my dad right now. One thing that really helps is to rehearse what you're going to say ahead of time – we only get good at something with practice,' she says.

'The other thing that is useful is to buy yourself time. So if someone invites you somewhere or asks a favour, don't jump to respond, especially if you're a people pleaser. Instead, tell them you'll get back to them by the end of the day or tomorrow.'

How should we handle the person who is perpetually asking for favours? 'Communicate a clear time limit. If agreeing to help, tell them you can do the thing at 3pm on X date and can spare 30 minutes. Or you could give them a template – forward them an instructional video or online resource that might empower them to help themselves.'





Connect with a broader circle

One aspect of the pandemic that created a sense of overwhelm in many people is loneliness. 'Feeling isolated decreases our perception of social support,' says author Alice Boyes. 'The more you expect people to reach out to you, the less support you feel you have. Feeling unsupported contributes to feelings of overwhelm.'

But often when we're struggling to cope, we imagine that it's only appropriate to reach out to our nearest and dearest. 'We can

overlook other great sources of support – people we went to school or university with or former colleagues. Not only can they offer fresh perspective, the people closest to us can soon become fatigued by hearing your problems on repeat. They've heard it all before, it's boring and if they communicate that to you even unwittingly, it can feel invalidating,' says Boyes.

By confiding in what's known as 'weak ties,' you will more than likely present your story in a slightly

different way. 'You tend to be a bit more proactive and take more responsibility for yourself when talking to people you don't know as intimately. And an added bonus is that people from diverse backgrounds may offer more original insights and solutions than your closest associates who are likely to think in a similar way to you.'

This makes perfect sense to me. Who knows, maybe there's even someone in my wider network who can advise me about LED lightbulbs!

Project-manage your to-do list

If you are tackling a large task, it is easy to procrastinate until you're feeling inspired. This, however, isn't helpful in moving forward. Boyes recommends that in this scenario you halve your daily workload.

'The mistake a lot of people make is working themselves to exhaustion on a project. But research shows that your strongest memories of an activity are at the peak and how you felt at the end. So if you feel depleted at the end, it will be much harder to get back to it the next day.'

Another trick Boyes suggests is to tackle familiar tasks first. 'Sometimes, when you are struggling, you need behavioural activation that boosts your mood a little – then you can move on to something challenging.' If you are procrastinating over a difficult job, Boyes recommends that you describe what needs to be done as if you were outsourcing the project to someone else. 'This works especially well if you are a perfectionist because when you're giving a task to another person, you will likely simplify it and not have such impossibly high standards.'

'Also, research shows that you're more likely to succeed if you set an "implementation intention" – essentially preparing the road ahead. In one study, students who decided when and where they were going to write their essay were more likely to do it. People underestimate how much planning and sequencing – basically, project-management skills – contribute to successfully completing a task. If a task is unfamiliar, we don't know how to break it down into concrete steps.'

Another surprising tip is to do something physical before a mentally challenging task. 'Research shows that using muscular strength is good for focus. Every Monday morning, I move furniture around the house to vacuum and that sets me up for the week,' says Boyes. ➡



***"Set an 'implementation intention'...
In a study, students who decided when
and where they were going to write their
essay were more likely to do it"***

I learned to prioritise and simplify

Tackling overwhelm is an ongoing process for Louisa Burford, who shares her methods

WORDS: ALEX LLOYD





Rushing to make the children dinner after a hectic workday, I could feel a familiar bubble of stress rising inside me,' says Louisa Burford, 48, a freelance psychology translator.

'It happened every few months when life became a treadmill of tasks and it all got too much for me,' adds Louisa, who is originally from Sutton Coldfield and lives in Madrid, Spain, with her husband and two sons, aged 14 and 12.

'My mind would fill with negative thoughts as I ruminated about the jobs I had to complete and the burdens I felt were being placed on me by others. I was grumpy and snappy and, I'm embarrassed to admit, played the victim too,' she says. 'But luckily, I'd learned over time to recognise those negative emotions for what they are and what actions to take to overcome them when necessary.'

'Whenever I became overwhelmed, I told myself to prioritise, simplify and lower my standards – as well as find half an hour just for me,' she explains.

'The first time I struggled with being overwhelmed was when my children were very young. We had just moved cities and my husband, Alejandro, was working longer hours. I had two boys under the age of two to look after, with no family nearby to help as I tried to juggle motherhood with my business.'

'Even though we have a pretty balanced relationship, I was taking on the lion's share of tasks at home, partly because I was there more of the time, but also out of force of habit. I'd see other mothers taking on those jobs and get a case of "comparison-itus". It also meant I was shutting out Alejandro, taking too much control and not giving him a chance to share the burden for fear of standards slipping,' she says.

When things came to a head for her emotionally and she felt overwhelmed to the point of feeling unwell, Louisa knew that she had to make changes.

'It was a big lesson about the benefits of lowering the bar and how it was kinder to everyone,' she explains. 'I started to consciously pass tasks to Alejandro,

although I still need to remind myself to do that sometimes.'

'The other realisation I had was the importance of alone time and "social rest" for my sanity,' says Louisa. 'I didn't appreciate how motherhood would affect that part of my life, so hadn't kept myself as balanced and happy as I might have done.'

So what action did she take to find peace? 'I started to actively carve out solo time, even if it was just for a walk,' she says.

'Over the years I've developed other strategies, such as preparing for the day ahead the previous night and meal planning at the weekend, with a few emergency dinners up my sleeve for days when things go to pot.'

'Identifying my priorities by writing down my "Most Important Tasks" has also helped, along with creating a time log for my day. This is a simple sheet of paper containing three columns – "Time", "Focus" and "Later". The latter is anything that comes up to distract me while I am focusing on my main task, so I can note it down and return to it at a better time.'

And how are these mechanisms working in the long term? 'The pandemic put my coping strategies to the test. I was incredibly stressed during the first lockdown, worrying about my family in Britain. My husband navigated the juggle of being at home better than I did. I fell into the trap of feeling as if I couldn't complain because we were "lucky" to have a comfortable house, and I neglected to find the alone time that I needed.'

'Eventually I realised I needed to help myself though my overwhelm, so I took the "High vibe journey" course by Kelly Pietrangeli, which is about conscious living. It changed my mindset completely, helping me break unhelpful patterns and procrastination.'

'Overcoming overwhelm is a work in progress, but nowadays it's a lot easier and quicker to dust myself off after a big meltdown,' says Louisa.

'Most of all, I cut myself some slack, find some headspace and, before I know it, I'm back on track.'

'Heartful Spanish' is Louisa's podcast for all levels of Spanish learner; heartfulspanish.com; myprojectme.com





Focus wheel

Use this technique, based on the classic coaching tool, the wheel of life, to identify time spent on tasks that don't light you up, and create more space for things that energise you

WORDS: AUDREY TANG

We can end up focusing too much on our competencies – the things we're good at but don't love doing, as opposed to our strengths – the activities during which we're happiest and most effective. Say you're good at baking cakes or figuring out tech, so people always ask for your help in those areas. You might be great at them, but perhaps those tasks exhaust you. However, because you are praised for your ability, you've lost sight of what you truly enjoy doing.

A way to find a balance of strengths and competencies is to create a wheel of life. Draw a circle and divide it into eight segments. Traditionally, coaches use this exercise to mark out life categories – work, family, relationships, health and so on, so clients can find harmony in

life. I use it to get people to choose eight areas that are really important to them – it might be the aforementioned list, but it may include fashion, art, reading, gardening and creativity. The idea is that you mark on the wheel from 0 (the centre) where you are in terms of time devoted to the activity (with 10 being the maximum).

By creating the wheel, you begin to focus on what's really important to you, as opposed to what other people tell you is important. It's a wake-up call.

Say you feel family is important to you, but time spent on family is only at a 2, whereas work is a 10... With a visual representation of what's important to you and how much time you spend on it, you can work to change how you use your time and beat overwhelm.



WHAT'S YOUR OVERWHELM TYPE?

If you're struggling to find or foster a calm state of mind, take our test to identify where your life is out of balance

Circle the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section (or sections) you circled most to find out the source of your overwhelm

1 Faced with a free weekend, your feeling is...

- ♥ What am I missing out on?.....☐
- ♦ Why can't I relax and enjoy it?.....☐
- Great, I can clear my inbox.....☐
- How can I make this time meaningful?.....☐

2 You find it hardest to find balance in...

- Your thinking.....☐
- ♥ Your social life.....☐
- ♦ Your emotional life.....☐
- Your work life.....☐

3 Your core values revolve around...

- ♥ Building relationships.....☐
- Always doing your best.....☐
- ♦ Caring about what matters.....☐
- Finding deeper meaning.....☐

4 Sometimes you worry that...

- Your overthinking keeps you stuck.....☐
- You spend your life on your phone.....☐
- ♦ You overreact.....☐
- ♥ You come across as insincere.....☐

5 Which of these changes would

make you feel more on top of things?

- ♦ Having a period with no drama or conflict.....☐
- Having a cut-off time between work and home life.....☐
- ♥ Not worrying about what other people think all the time.....☐
- Being able to make decisions quicker.....☐

6 You wish you could feel less affected by...

- ♥ Other people's reactions.....☐
- What might happen in the future.....☐
- ♦ All the terrible things in the world.....☐
- What you read on social media.....☐

7 When you feel stressed and frazzled, you crave...

- ♥ Somewhere peaceful to be on your own.....☐
- ♦ A break from your feelings.....☐
- A retreat with a digital detox.....☐
- A good conversation.....☐

8 You feel more in control of your life when...

- You spend less time on your phone.....☐
- ♥ You're feeling good about yourself generally.....☐
- ♦ You're taking a break somewhere.....☐
- You know you're making a difference.....☐

9 You know you're overwhelmed when you...

- ♥ Lose touch with what you really care about.....☐
- ♦ Feel like you're on an emotional rollercoaster.....☐
- Lose touch with the joy of everyday life.....☐
- Feel disconnected from life around you.....☐

10 Deep down, you know life would be better if you could...

- ♦ Get things into perspective.....☐
- Stick to your digital boundaries.....☐
- Stop overthinking everything.....☐
- ♥ Let go of the need to be liked.....☐

Turn the page to discover what area of your life is overwhelming you



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Which part of your life is too full-on?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

Social

At the heart of social overwhelm is often a fear of missing out. Low-level anxiety and self-doubt can convince you that saying no to a social event is just too much of a risk to take. It's often a fear of your own feelings, and doubts that you could cope with the disappointment if it turns out you said no to the best get-together all year. Social overwhelm can also be mixed up with other people's feelings and what they think about you. Do you ever wonder whether your motivation to help someone or get involved comes from a genuine place, or is driven by a worry that if you say no, you risk being disliked? People pleasing is closely linked with social overwhelm, and the irony is that by agreeing to commitments that you don't really want to do, you could be alienating people anyway by coming across as insincere.

At the heart of fear of missing out is often a poor sense of self-worth – do you still feel surprised and flattered that people seem keen to see you? Saying no and learning to enjoy time on your own might be difficult at first, but until you make space in your life, you'll never have a chance to work out who you really are.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♦

Emotional

At the root of emotional overwhelm is often conflict or drama in close relationships or situations where it's unavoidable, such as work. What's going on in the wider world via the news, particularly human tragedy or injustice, can add to emotional overwhelm. When you're empathic and sensitive, you naturally absorb the impact of what's going on around you. Feeling tired all the time and finding yourself withdrawing from seeing friends and family can be a sign of emotional overwhelm. A trigger might be worrying about someone close to you, or finding yourself or a loved one in a difficult situation that isn't easily solved. Emotional overwhelm can also be a side effect of regularly taking on others' problems while forgetting that you have needs too. Sometimes, periods of emotional overwhelm can be temporary – a side effect of dealing with a specific stressful situation that increases your general sensitivity to emotionally triggering events. But in emotionally sensitive people, it can become a regular pattern.

It's tempting to turn to quick-fix ways to numb the feelings, but a more effective strategy is to manage your response to the feelings, rather than try to pretend they're not there. That means making space every day for something that you find soothing and calming. It's not a luxury for you – it's an essential.



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ●

Digital

Digital overwhelm can creep up gradually, but the impact can be debilitating, undermining your focus, energy and motivation. It may be that you feel you've lost control of the boundaries between work and leisure time, and are finding it hard to resist checking work emails on your phone at all hours. You may feel under pressure – whether external or self-imposed – to go the extra mile, but the impact is that you never feel as if you have a life away from work, so it's not surprising that you feel overwhelmed. Spending much of your work time alone and working online can add to digital overwhelm if your job revolves around a screen. If you spend work breaks scrolling through social media or messaging friends, your brain never gets a break from digital stimulus. While a scrolling habit may seem like a harmless way to fill time – or even helpful if it connects you with others – rather than offering you the true relaxation you need, it can overload your mind with fragmented information.

When you next feel that nudge to pick up your phone, try experimenting with taking a deep breath and grounding yourself instead, and ask yourself: what do I really need right now?

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

Mental

A tendency to question, analyse and self-reflect can be a superpower, but it's also a weakness because a constant questioning mental narrative can become overwhelming. Do you switch between analysing choices, events or conversations that have happened in the past and predicting possible outcomes for future events? When something stressful or uncertain happens, an analytical mind can easily become an overthinking one, undermining mental wellbeing, draining resilience and leaving you feeling exhausted and mentally overwhelmed. Knowing when you've crossed the line into thinking 'too much' isn't easy, but a red flag is feeling disconnected from your present life because you're caught up in thinking about events that may never happen or are already in the past. You may also notice that the feelings of overwhelm never truly go away, even when life is quieter or you're on holiday. Sometimes overthinking starts as a defence against anxiety – if you can think through every eventuality, you can prepare for it, goes the logic – but left unchecked, it becomes the cause of your feelings of stress.

It's time to take relaxation seriously, which means devoting time and effort to finding ways to rest your mind every day. Meditation can be challenging for overthinkers, but a guided relaxation exercise, or a creative task in which you become immersed, might be more doable.

Deal with paperwork, aka the “clutter shuffle”

WORDS: KERRI RICHARDSON

Paper of all kinds is one of the biggest issues that I help my clients with when they are overwhelmed. Paper comes into our homes all the time in some form. It can be easy to pick up piles and move them around, tidying up when they get out of hand, but what you need is a consistent system.

Tackle paper the minute it comes through the letterbox or out of your bag. First discard all the obvious recycling material that doesn't involve any decision fatigue, then sort into the following three piles:

1. File:

These are the items that need to be kept for reference – insurance documents, product guarantees, invoices... If you don't have a home filing system, now is the time to start one.

2. Follow-up:

Items where an obvious next action step is required – making an appointment, phoning someone back, ordering an item... Schedule a time in your diary for each action.

3. Figure-out:

These are the things that you're not sure about. Do I need to keep this? What is the next step? The crucial thing with this pile is that you create an action step to tackle it, for example, 'call Tom', then schedule it – otherwise you will simply keep adding items to the pile.

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WORDS: HEIDI SCRIMGEOUR



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Worry Not spray, £9.99, highernature.com

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Innermost The Relax capsules, £18.95, liveinnermost.com

Nip stress in the bud with these capsules containing research-backed ingredients that promote relaxation and reduce stress.



Skincare

Invite tranquillity
with the topical
application of oils



Alexandra Kay Time to Smile essential oil blend, £20, greenpeople.co.uk

How about a massage to relax your body and restore your mind? Add this natural essential oil, with mood-boosting lemon, cedarwood and sweet orange, to a carrier oil and rub gently into your skin for a pleasurable pick-me-up.



**Dr.Lipp CBD
Calm Balm, £10.99, drlipp.com**

If stress shows up on your body, apply this totally natural multi-use balm to soothe your skin. It contains CBD oil and medical-grade lanolin.



Osmosis Calm, £74, osmosisbeauty.eu

Make your daily skincare routine a relaxing ritual with this gentle and comforting serum. It contains vitamin A plus seven antioxidants and soothing botanicals.



3 of the best CALMING BEVERAGES

We call it serenitea! But these drinks don't all need hot water

1 The Cacao Club Stress & Anxiety blend, £9.13, guanako.com

Treat yourself to a cup of this medicinal drinking chocolate. It contains ashwagandha, a mild antidepressant, and Siberian ginseng, which encourages the adrenal glands to secrete stress-fighting hormones.



2 Bumble Zest Calm + Comfort CBD Shot, £28.95 for 10 bottles, b-zest.co.uk

Take a sip of quiet on busy days. This boosting drink contains lavender, chamomile and blue spirulina, plus CBD. Note: Not suitable for children or pregnant and breastfeeding women.



3 Natur Boutique Organic Lemongrass tea, £2.99, naturboutique.co.uk

Pop the kettle on – but skip the coffee and try a cup of this refreshing, zesty tea instead.

Studies have shown that lemongrass may help reduce anxiety and tension, and relax muscles.



Bath time

Every busy person everywhere knows the curative power of a soak in the tub and a cleansing scrub



Moa Fortifying Green Bath Potion, £27, moa.co.uk

Hectic day? Wash it away and relieve aches and pains with this revitalising bath elixir. It contains peppermint, fennel, fir needle, sweet birch and calming yarrow to lift your spirits.

Arran Aromatics Glen Iorsa handwash, £16, arran.com

Washing your hands has a stressful connotation these days, but this blend of lavender and spearmint turns it into a soothing and mindful experience. It smells heavenly too.



psychologies
BEST BUY
★★★★★



Eco Warrior Beauty Edit Chill-Out Bar, £4.50, littlesoapcompany.co.uk

Wind down as you wash, why don't you? This soap is made with shea butter and a blend of relaxing, pure essential oils, including lavender and sweet orange.

SCENTS

For instant comfort, breathe in a more easy-going frame of mind

psychologies
BEST BUY
★★★★★

NEOM Wellbeing Pod Mini essential oil diffuser, £50, neomorganics.com

If your home office is the site of highly anxious moments, pop this diffuser on your desk. It creates a lovely scent in small spaces in seconds without water. Simply charge it, choose your oil and switch it on.

Relax room and surface spray, £40, greenandspring.com

Travelling is trying at the best of times but factor in a pandemic and – eek! This antibacterial spray leaves all surfaces, from train and taxi seats to restaurant tables, safe and sweet-smelling. It's made from natural ingredients and pure essential oils.



Olivia's Haven Under the Palm Tree candle, £29, olivias-haven.co.uk

Create a calming, holiday-like atmosphere at home with this delightfully scented, hand-poured candle. It's hard to feel frenetic with the scents of creamy coconut, sweet vanilla and a hint of pineapple reminding you of sunny days.



ORGANISATIONAL

We love a diary, and we love a list to tick off... Make planning a calming ritual that gives you mental clarity and space



LifeStyled planner, £45, lifestyledplanner.com

This prettiest of organisers streamlines a jam-packed life and tames your monkey mind in the process. Plus, we love good old-fashioned stationery!

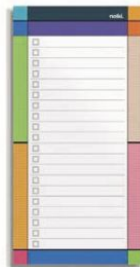
HappySelf Journal Grown-up Edition, £19, happyselfjournal.com

Take a mindful moment for yourself every day with this lovely three-month journal.



Do This, Do That notepad, £6, nolki.com

Sort out your life and declutter your mind with this colourful daily to-do list. Perfect for calming mental chaos and freeing up brain space.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Smart digital aids for stillness

Sketchbook Club, £4, jenniemaizels.com/sketchbook-club

How about an online art class to help quieten inner noise? This one includes step-by-step instructions, video tutorials and secret cheats to help you create a masterpiece – guaranteed!



Subconsciously app, from £99, subconsciously.com

This hypnotherapy app transports you into a state



of relaxed awareness so you can achieve your goals by beating anxiety and mastering manifestation.

Mindshine app, from £29.99, mindshine.app

Practise mental fitness with this wellbeing app designed by experts in psychology, digital health and leadership coaching.





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

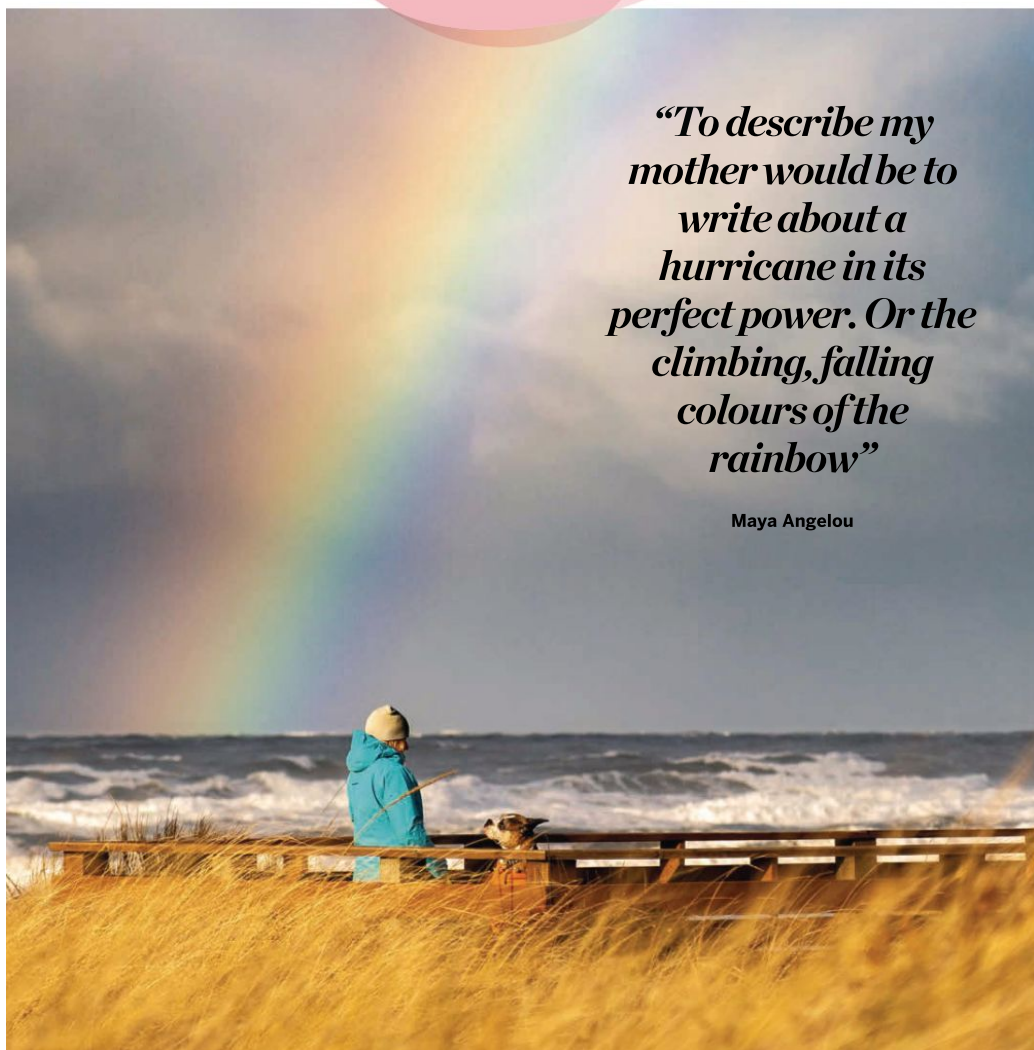


Heart

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

“To describe my mother would be to write about a hurricane in its perfect power. Or the climbing, falling colours of the rainbow”

Maya Angelou



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 mary@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

I can't forgive my cousin for her cruel comment

Q I am 39 years old, have a good job and consider myself fortunate when it comes to friends and family, although I don't have children of my own. Recently, at a family gathering, one of my cousins said: 'If you don't have children, you don't have a life.' I am finding it hard to forgive her. Can you offer some guidance?

Next month, I'll have to spend time with a person who I struggle to forgive, so my comments are offered in a humble spirit.

The need to forgive nearly always springs from being hurt – even if it feels like anger, the anger is a reaction to pain. I find it helps to acknowledge the pain, phrasing it specifically as 'a part of me feels hurt. What this person has done touched me somewhere painful, but it's not the whole of me'.

The meditation teacher Tara Brach uses the acronym RAIN in her work on forgiveness – recognise, allow, investigate and nurture. The steps are gentle: Take a moment to recognise the pain and allow it to be there without judgment. Notice if you have thoughts such as 'I'm silly for feeling like this', but don't fight them. Investigate what that pain needs – if you imagine it as a physical wound, does it need to be cleaned out, protected or given sunlight?

Only after giving ourselves the care we need,

do we pay attention to the other person. Can you expand your awareness around your cousin? It's possible she was having an unconscious reaction to something that hurts her. Might there be a part of her that fears children have taken over her whole life? I know there have been times like that for me. I also know that I've said stupid things, and perhaps the worst have been completely thoughtless.

Would it be possible to have a follow-up conversation? The aim would not be to shame her, but to let her know that she hurt you, even if it was unintentional. Wouldn't you want to know that if the situation was reversed? Saying 'when you made that remark, I felt hurt' combines vulnerability and courage and that kind of approach tends to bring out the best in other people. Even if it doesn't, it's worth the effort to spring-clean resentment out of your life and beautiful heart.

tarabrach.com/forgiveness



"Saying 'I felt hurt' combines vulnerability and courage, which brings out the best in others"



My niece has an issue with eating but we can't get her expert help right now

Q My niece has developed a difficult relationship with food. It started three years ago and settled down for a while but now she is having problems again. She has stopped eating during the day. Her school is aware of the situation and my sister is trying to get her to a counsellor or psychologist but they are all fully booked. Do you know anyone who works with teenagers who have an eating problem, as well as their families?

I'm so sorry to hear this and, unfortunately, I'm sure your family is not alone. The main UK charity for anyone affected by an eating disorder, Beat, confirms that waiting lists for treatment grew during the pandemic. Even so, the first port of call needs to be making sure that your niece's GP is in the loop.

However, we don't want to jump to conclusions – many people have a form of 'disordered eating' without it becoming a diagnosable mental illness. Some would say that a strange relationship with food is almost normalised in Western culture, especially for women.

The positive aspects in this situation are: your niece has found techniques that helped previously; more information and support is now available online; and, most importantly, she has shown some willingness to talk about it.

Don't assume that the only people who can help her must be professionals. If the emotional connection is there, you could be in a good position to support her. However, it's a tricky balance. Allow her the choice of opening up to whomever she feels most comfortable with, while avoiding the impression that she's being ambushed or her every move is being watched.

The key thing to remember is to focus on feelings, not behaviour, which could include making up rules about food, purging or exercising too much. It feels difficult to start the conversation, but people in recovery agree that breaking the silence is the right thing to do because eating disorders thrive on secrecy.

Choose a time when you are both calm, and it's not just before or after a meal – perhaps on a walk, while experimenting with make-up or driving to the cinema. Try not to centre the conversation around food or weight, but say something along the lines of, 'I wondered if you'd like to talk about how you're feeling.' Beat has more detailed suggestions in a downloadable guide for friends and family.

A useful acronym to consider is BLAST – for bored, lonely, angry, stressed or tired, all common triggers for eating. From the background given in your longer letter, it sounds as if there may be some anger at play. If this comes out towards you, try to see it as the illness speaking, not your niece.

beateatingdisorders.org.uk



Love is kind

When the passing of time redefines your relationship with a parent or elderly loved one, show you care with warmth and respect. Heidi Scrimgeour explores tenderness that leaves no room for regret



There is a moment in adulthood when you realise that your relationship with your parents has significantly altered course. The shift is almost imperceptible, but suddenly the dynamics aren't quite what they used to be. One moment your parents are the supporting actors to your starring role and the next, your priorities change and their needs are taking centre stage.

It's difficult to paint a picture of the way parent-child relationships evolve as we get older without

succumbing to lazy descriptions of doddering elderly folk becoming reliant on their offspring out of the blue. In truth, things change more subtly than that: They might ask, laughingly, for your help with new technology... You may find yourself instinctively offering an arm as they get out of the car... And instead of foisting your children on them for the weekend or relying on them to sort out your overgrown garden, you're ordering their groceries online and offering to pick up their prescriptions.

It's natural for parents to lean

on their offspring as they get older and for grown-up children to adopt a caring role as the years pass. There can be a gentleness to the way your interactions change, and opportunities to show care can feel like a chance to pay back some of the love you've received over the years. But the change can also be fraught with difficulty. To someone determined to keep their independence, the offer of a supporting arm can feel insulting.

Here's how to lovingly convey to an older person how much they mean to you without upset...

1 Give the gift of time

I had plenty of opportunities to show my father what he meant to me in the year before he died.

I accompanied him on countless hospital visits and enjoyed a memorable car trip where we chatted about our hopes and dreams. I count myself lucky – many people face the loss of a loved one without the peace that comes from knowing that you fully expressed your love for them.

My dad's ill health underlined to me the importance of making time count. I was intentional about offering to drive him to appointments or inviting my parents over for a cuppa. But you don't have to face losing someone to lavish them with love – make time for those you'd hate to lose. There's no better way to make someone feel loved than by spending time with them.

'When life changes in this way, we must rely on the quality of our relationships to provide comfort to ageing parents,' says Samantha Carbon, a psychotherapist. 'Love is conveyed by choosing to spend time with someone – on their terms – or by reminding them how they have inspired you, along with recognising the qualities that you admire about them.'

samanthacarbontherapy.co.uk

2 Keep boundaries in place

The tricky part is working out appropriate boundaries in your evolving relationship. It's easy to slip into patterns of behaviour around ageing relatives that, though intended as loving gestures, can create awkwardness or even cause offence.

Illness or the death of a parent can accelerate a shift in dynamics. My interactions with my mum changed profoundly after my dad died. Keen to support her, I took decisions and made arrangements that under normal circumstances would have been my father's domain.

And although my mother was too kind to point it out, I realised that I was overstepping an important boundary. Instead of knocking on her door as I have done since I left home 25 years ago, I began letting myself in using a spare key. My intention was to save her the inconvenience of answering the door while arranging a funeral, but I realised that my unannounced arrival may feel like an intrusion. At a point when everything around my mum must have felt unfamiliar, it was important to keep some of our usual boundaries firmly in place.


3 *Think cared about, not cared for*

In my effort to understand how to navigate the new landscape of my relationship with my widowed mother, I happened upon an article that outlined the difference between feeling 'cared for' and 'cared about' by those you love. The subtleties between the two scenarios were explained by a retired woman whose daughter had a habit of rifling through her fridge to discard out-of-date food.

But this well-intentioned habit had almost become a sport. The woman's grandchildren delighted in examining the best-before dates on every item, shrieking with horror when they found something past its best. The daughter meant no harm; finding herself in the thick of the 'sandwich generation' years, she was spinning so many plates that she had neglected to go about the fridge-raiding process with the respect and compassion her mother deserved.

The woman explained that her daughter's actions made her feel cared for, much like a paid carer might fulfil a clinical duty. But what she wanted was to feel cared *about*. She longed for her daughter to ask how she was feeling or how she had slept. Instead, those important moments of conversation were overridden by her daughter's approach which, the woman said, left her feeling incapable and humiliated. Her fridge was cleared out, but her more pressing need – for connection – went unattended.

After reading that, I stopped using my key to let myself into my mother's house. I no longer felt like I was stepping uninvited into my dad's shoes, and less like I was clumsily stepping on my mum's toes at a time when she needed to feel loved rather than looked after.



*"In a desire to help
my widowed mum, I
attacked the mildew
in her bathroom,
until I realised
I was being like a
bull in a china shop"*

4 *Make new memories together*

'Parents feel loved when they are told how much they are appreciated and how you feel in their presence, says therapist Samantha Carbon. 'As well as recognising what makes them special and letting them know, it's important to continue to create memories.'

'Older loved ones can be embarrassed by expressions of love but it's still worth letting them know how much they mean to us – let it come from

the heart and, if they gruffly brush you off, know that they've heard it deep down,' adds Eve Menezes Cunningham, a counsellor and coach. 'Don't force anything, obviously, but little acknowledgements matter. Listening to their stories can be an expression of love. Make the most of the time you spend together without embarrassing them by making a big deal about it.' selfcarecoaching.net



5 Resist the urge to rescue

Being dependable, reliable and consistent for ageing parents establishes 'an environment of emotional stability' – but it's easy to inadvertently do something that the person would prefer to do themselves.

'It's important to avoid deciding what a parent or relative needs,' Carbon cautions. 'Instead, ask if they need help before taking action. It is important to validate loved ones and recognise the value in their wishes, reactions and emotions.' This might mean choosing to relinquish the role of being 'helpful' to ensure your parents retain

full autonomy. 'They may not want to feel like they are being rescued.'

In a frantic desire to help my widowed mum, and probably distract myself from my own loss, I began attacking a patch of mildew in her bathroom – something my dad hadn't got round to fixing. Eventually, I realised I was being like a bull in a china shop. The next day, I gave her the specialist cleaning stuff along with a bunch of flowers. It was a small change of approach, but hopefully one that felt less abrasive and, ultimately, much more loving than marching to the bathroom with my rubber gloves on.

HONOUR AND TREASURE

The urge to do a clearout for an elderly person may strike and the feeling of lightness it can bring might be welcome, but tread carefully. Lesley Spellman, a decluttering expert, shares a few pointers:

● **Look through old family photos together and write important details on the back of them, so information can be preserved for future generations. Understanding family history is easier now that we have digital records, but we still need to fill in the gaps.**

● **If a parent tells you they want an item to stay in the family, ask why. If you know its history, you can share that with others and the sentiment won't be lost.**

● **Occasions when you stop, listen and talk to your parents afford you valuable insight into their lives.**

declutterhub.com

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

READ: *We Are The Sandwich Generation: Keeping Everyone Happy* by Claire Gillman (Albert Bridge, £6.99)

WATCH: *It's Not A Burden; The Humor And Heartache Of Raising Elderly Parents*; itsnotaburden.com

CREATE A PRECIOUS RECORD: *Mum, Tell Me: A Give & Get Back Book* by Elma van Vliet (Penguin, £16.99)

CLICK: For advice or to volunteer as a befriender, contact Age UK; ageuk.org.uk



psychologies inspiration

*“Take time
to enjoy the
little things”*

Robert Brault

Lead the way as a creator of change

Is it your dream to become a coach? If you want a fresh start in your life and career, training to be a coach could be the exciting adventure you crave. But where do you start, and what does it involve?



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

Lucy Hayward, a massage therapist and business founder, started sessions with Barefoot-trained coach Lucy Tulloch when she felt she was at a crossroads in her career as a sales manager. 'I felt confused, unhappy, stressed and stuck in a rut,' says Lucy. 'I didn't know which direction to take my career.'

1 I always had an unrealistic to-do list and dwelled on what I hadn't achieved. While working with Lucy, I realised that I couldn't remember the last time I felt content. Coaching helped me understand my unhelpful feelings of not being good enough and comparing myself with others.

2 During coaching, I learned to appreciate my strengths. Lucy helped me understand the negative labels I gave myself that were holding me back. It was a powerful and emotional process. I now feel in a much stronger place mentally – calm, content and relaxed.

3 Lucy introduced me to the 'career timeline' – a supportive and reflective journey through my career. It gave me clarity about what I like, don't like, what was important to me and gave me satisfaction. It highlighted what was missing and was the start of me becoming unstuck. I began believing that anything was possible and became positive and hopeful. I wrote in my journal after that session: 'This was a game changer'. As a result of coaching, I changed my 20-year career to retrain as a massage therapist and now run a successful practice.

lucyhaywardmassage.co.uk

***"It was the start of me becoming unstuck...
I began believing anything was possible
and became positive and hopeful"***



FIND A COACH OR TRAIN TO BE ONE

Do you want to hire a coach, or help transform someone else's life by becoming a coach? Barefoot Coaching is here to help...

FIND

Psychologies' partnership with Barefoot Coaching gives you the tools to find a coach who meets your needs. Barefoot Coaching has been at the forefront of coaching and coach training for 25 years. It has a proven track record as a provider of high-level coaching and coach training to organisations and senior executives, nationally and internationally.

TRAIN

The Barefoot Coaching ICF ACTP-accredited PG Certificate in Business and Personal Coaching is one of the most well-established coach training courses in the UK. Barefoot Coaching runs regular, free introductions to coach training throughout the year. Book now for a taster morning.



**BAREFOOT
COACHING**

HOW I BECAME A COACH

Lucy Tulloch

For 20 years, I managed teams and had a reputation for problem-solving. I am passionate about overcoming obstacles through self-awareness. My values at work evolved, so I studied a postgraduate degree in coaching and now work with clients to identify strengths, values and purposeful work.



Raha Sepehrara

My knowledge of coaching was limited until I met a coach by chance years ago. The encounter was the start of my personal development. Being coached was like an awakening and I decided to help others experience the same. Training to be a coach with a reputable company helped me build strong foundations, acquire valuable skills and confidence.



Kate Hammer

I'm proud of my credentials but it is within client relationships that I have become the coach I am today. Their courage to embrace change emboldens me. While I'm grateful for all I've learned, self-awareness, self-acceptance, intuition and humility are essential for a coach. Coaching, for me, is compassionate improvisation.





Floradix Magnesium Liquid

Magnesium contributes to normal



MUSCLE



NERVE functions

Is stress tying you in knots?

Today's lifestyles are demanding, and one of the things they demand most is the mineral magnesium, which allows the nervous system to function properly and the muscles to relax. Magnesium is available in healthy foods such as wholegrains, dried fruit, green leafy vegetables and nuts, however there are times when your diet can lack the goodness needed and be deficient in magnesium.

If you are feeling irritable and snappy, with knots in your shoulders and tension stiffening your neck, bump up your magnesium and lose those knots. **Floradix Magnesium** contains highly absorbable magnesium in a delicious herbal formula which could make the difference to your nerves - unlock the knots and survive the stress.

Available from selected **Holland & Barrett**, **Boots**,
health food stores and pharmacies nationwide



Body



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



“The secret of getting ahead is getting started”

Mark Twain

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES



Eat well



Eating almonds (including yummy almond butter) has been found to improve diet by making you more likely to eat other healthy foods. A study* found that eating three tablespoons of almond butter (one tablespoon for children) improved diet quality through participants choosing to eat more healthy proteins, plant proteins and fatty acids, and fewer empty calories. We love this Pip & Nut Dark Chocolate & Cornish Sea Salt almond butter – a wonderful alternative to sugary chocolate spreads, with all the health benefits of almonds!

*Sometimes the simple ones are the best: latest research** has found that eating fruit and vegetables is associated with reduced stress. The study found that people who ate 470g of fruit and vegetables a day had 10 per cent lower stress levels than those who consumed less than 230g. For perspective, 470g is the equivalent of roughly one banana, one pear, and four carrots. Easy!*



PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK. *AMBURNS ET AL. DIET QUALITY IMPROVES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN WHEN ALMONDS ARE INCORPORATED INTO THEIR DAILY DIET. 'NUTRITION RESEARCH'. 2016. *SRADAVELLI-BAGATINI ET AL. FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INTAKE IS INVERSELY ASSOCIATED WITH PERCEIVED STRESS ACROSS THE ADULT LIFESPAN. 'CLINICAL NUTRITION'. 2021



AVOCADO SASHIMI WITH GUACAMOLE GARNISHES (Wakamore aji no abokado sashimi)

'This sliced avocado dish is a perennial favourite at izakaya (bars that serve small dishes) and in home kitchens across Japan, thanks to its foolproof, crowd-pleasing nature,' says chef and *MasterChef* champion Tim Anderson.

SERVES 2

- 1 red onion
- 1 tomato
- ½ garlic clove, minced or finely grated
- 2 tbsp ponzu (shop-bought or homemade)
- ½ tsp sesame oil
- Pinch salt
- 1 avocado
- ¼ jalapeño, very thinly sliced
- 10-12 coriander leaves, picked

I Slice the red onion as thinly as you can and place in a small dish. Cover with cold water and add an ice cube,

which will make it extra crispy and remove some of the harsh raw onion flavour.

2 Scorch the tomato all over by holding it with tongs over the flame on your hob, or by setting it under a very, very hot grill, turning frequently until its skin is completely charred. Remove the tomato skin, core, and finely dice the flesh, then combine, along with any of its juice, with the garlic, ponzu, sesame oil and salt.

3 Cut the avocado open and remove the stone. Scoop out the flesh from each half in one piece with a spoon, then cut each side into 6-8 slices. Arrange the slices on a plate, then spoon over the tomato ponzu mixture, drain the onions and place on top with the jalapeño and coriander leaves.

Extract from 'Your Home Izakaya' by Tim Anderson (Hardie Grant, £25)

FRESH START

Drinking every day, versus binge drinking one or two days a week, poses a much greater risk for developing serious liver disease at any age, studies' have found. Sober October invites us to take a break from alcohol for 31 days, but that doesn't mean we have to abstain from all the fun – there are amazing alcohol-free alternatives out there to enjoy without the health risks!

Ellie Webb, founder of delicious alcohol-free spirit *Caleño*, has some advice for the month ahead: 'Instead of gritting your teeth and counting down the days to a glass of wine, start the month by making an exciting (but achievable) list of things you want to do... you'll have something great to show for your efforts at the end of the month,' she suggests.

'Make mornings your time to shine; you'll hopefully start to notice your sleep improving, and with renewed energy you can really make the most of the start of the day.'

Caleño Dark & Spicy, from £12, calenodrinks.com



Sleep well



Goodnight
sleep cami and
sleep shorts, £29.95
each, boody.co.uk

26.5%

is the average amount of REM sleep recorded when sleeping naked, compared with an average of 17.5% REM sleep for PJ wearers.* Don't like sleeping in your birthday suit? Try T-shirts and shorts for a restorative average of 26%.

Pyjama party!

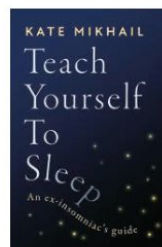
Many of us listen to music in bed to help us fall asleep, but it turns out certain types of music can actually disrupt our sleep quality by provoking earworms. These earworms are experienced during night-time awakenings, with researchers suggesting that the brain continues to process musical melodies while we sleep, specifically instrumental music.**



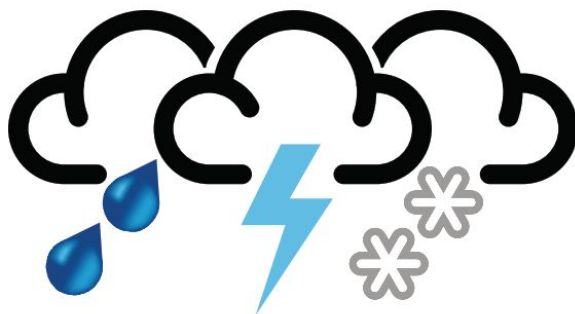
MYTH BUSTER: *Despite what we may have been told in the past, research has found that it's not possible for us to 'train' ourselves to function on less than six hours sleep.*** Though there is a small percentage of people who may be able to maintain their health on less than six hours, one study found this was down to genetics rather than sheer will.†*

Sleep training for grown-ups

More than 35 per cent of us have had sleep problems for more than five years† – Kate Mikhail was one of those people, until she decided to research the science of sleep in the mind and body, developing techniques to help her sleep more soundly. In her brilliant new book, *Teach Yourself To Sleep* (Piatkus, £14.99), Mikhail delivers accessible science to help you take back control of your bedtime and your sleep.



*DATA COMMISSIONED BY THE DOZYNAL CO.UK; **M. SCULLIN ET AL. BEDTIME MUSIC, INVOLUNTARY MUSICAL IMAGERY, AND SLEEP; †PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE, 2012; ‡ROBBINS ET AL. SLEEP MYTHS: AN EXPERT-LED STUDY TO IDENTIFY FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT SLEEP THAT ARE COMMON IN THE GENERAL POPULATION; ††SLEEP TRAINING FOR GROWN-UPS: A GUIDE TO IMPROVING SLEEP QUALITY AND REDUCING SLEEP ACCUMULATION DURING ACUTE SLEEP DEPRIVATION IN TWINS; SLEEP, 2012; †††RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE SLEEP COUNCIL

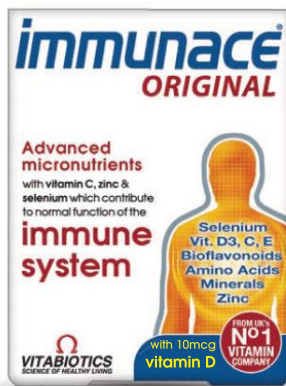


SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM[†]

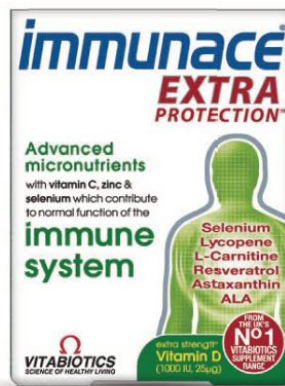
Immunace® was developed over 20 years ago by Vitabiotics' experts. It was one of the first immune health supplements to pioneer the inclusion of vitamin D for the immune system.

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ORIGINAL



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The UK Department of Health recommends that all adults should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10mcg of vitamin D, particularly in Autumn and Winter, as found in Immunace Original.

Britain's No.1 Vitamin Company*

*Source: Nielsen GB ScanTrack Total Coverage Value and Unit Retail Sales 52 w/e 17 July 2021. To verify contact Vitabiotics Ltd, 1 Apsley Way, London, NW2 7HF.

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www.immunace.com



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VITABIOTICS
 SCIENCE OF HEALTHY LIVING

Move well

Quality over quantity

We've been advised to aim for a goal of 10,000 steps a day to stay healthy, but when you're sitting at a desk all day, that can feel like quite the hike. But there's good news for people short on walking time – research has found that it's not necessarily about the number of steps, but more the intensity of your walk.

Interval walking training has been found to be more effective in increasing fitness levels and decreasing lifestyle-related disease. So how can you make strides towards improved health? Walk at about 70 per cent of your maximum capacity for three minutes, then bring it down to 40 per cent of your maximum capacity for the next three minutes. Repeat five or more sets in total across your walk. Fewer steps, more results...

Chelsea boots in
Pumpkin Orange, £80,
paddyandblack.com



Leg it!

Suitable for all kinds of workouts, from weight training to yoga, these shorts are made from recycled polyester and spandex, with a handy phone pocket to boot. Snake print cycling shorts, £30, perkypeach.com

3 yoga poses for: HEADACHES



1 Child's pose (shishuasana): This calming pose soothes the nervous system. The gentle pressure from the ground on your forehead as you rest it down on to the mat can feel blissful, especially if you rock your head slowly from side to side.



2 Downward-facing dog (adho mukha svanasana): This gentle inversion gets your head lower than your heart, allowing blood to flow to the head, which can relieve headaches. Don't overdo it though; stay for a few breaths then rest in child's pose, above.



3 Legs up the wall (viparita karani): Hugely restorative, this pose helps reduce both physical and mental fatigue. Shimmy your bottom to the wall and rest your heels against it, elevated above you. Placing a weighted eye cushion over your eyes could also help block out light and provide a soothing sensation.

Look well, naturally

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH... sulphates?

Sulphates are used in many cosmetic and hygiene products, predominantly as a foaming and degreasing agent, so you'll find them in many shampoos and body washes, for example. There is speculation around carcinogenic factors, although no studies have found evidence for this yet. However, sulphates have been found to irritate skin and damage hair health, especially thick and curly hair. Sulphates are also synthesised from petroleum, a fossil fuel, so the eco-conscious may prefer to use sulphate-free products.

Leaf + Seed haircare products, from £24, are sulphate, paraben and silicone-free, infused with botanical power and CBD to soothe the scalp and increase blood circulation. They're also completely natural, sustainable, cruelty-free, pH-balanced and vegan. wildscienceclub.com



THIS IS WHY...

you get dry skin in winter

"We lose water transepidermally every day, but in winter our skin is subjected to colder temperatures, wind and low humidity, which increase water loss. We are also more likely to have heaters blowing hot air on to our skin which exacerbates the problem. Regular moisturisers are not able to fulfil our needs, so it's a good idea to introduce a hydrating serum"

Melanie Black, Pierre Fabre

The Avène range is great for hydrating skin without irritation. The Thermal Spring Water Spray for sensitive skin, £8.50, is a year-round staple, but turn up the hydration power in winter with the Hydrance Intense Serum, £20, which is clinically proven to soothe and soften skin by forming water reservoirs to replenish the skin barrier. avene.co.uk



78%

That was the increase in sales of skincare products as opposed to make-up over the past year, suggesting that lockdown reangled our focus towards products that promote a natural glow through skin tone and care.*

A person is silhouetted against a bright sunset over a beach. Their arms are raised in a qigong pose, and a sheer fabric flows around them. The word 'Qigong' is written in a large, white, cursive script across the top of the image.

The rising star of wellness...

Welcome to the tranquil power of qigong, an ancient meditative practice joining tai chi, yoga and mindfulness on the complementary therapies stage

WORDS: ANYA LUKOVER

You can't walk through a park without seeing groups of zen people practising tai chi, and you can do yoga at any hour of the day or night with classes around the country and online. But a lesser known Eastern system of physical and breathing exercises is gaining ground – and with good reason. Qigong (pronounced 'chee-gong') is a meditative practice that uses movement, breathing techniques, postures and visualisation to balance mind and body and boost wellness.

While qigong has had periods of popularity in the West and is enjoying a resurgence, this dance-like therapy has been practised in China for 4,000 years, making it the longest practised movement therapy on record. It shares similarities with tai chi in its slow movement, breathing techniques and rich history, but tai chi is practised as a martial arts form which happens to have health benefits, while qigong is practised specifically for its health benefits. Happily, qigong is easier to learn, as its movements are repetitive, rather than the longer sequenced sets of tai chi. Qigong is also suitable if you find seated meditation challenging and, because of its simple and repetitive movement, it is suitable for all ages.

Force against stress

But what are the benefits of qigong in modern society? It's not news that stress is one of the biggest factors to have a negative impact on our mental and physical health. When you break down the stresses you encounter on a daily basis, it can be helpful to see which areas of your life require attention:

Emotional stress – for example, work, finances, family, relationships, loss, health concerns and the pandemic.

Physical stress – for example, bad posture from sitting at a desk for too long, poor sleep positions, over-exercising, under-exercising, slouching in front of the TV and injury.

Chemical stress – for example, processed foods, water supply, alcohol, recreational drugs, sugar, food intolerances, medication,

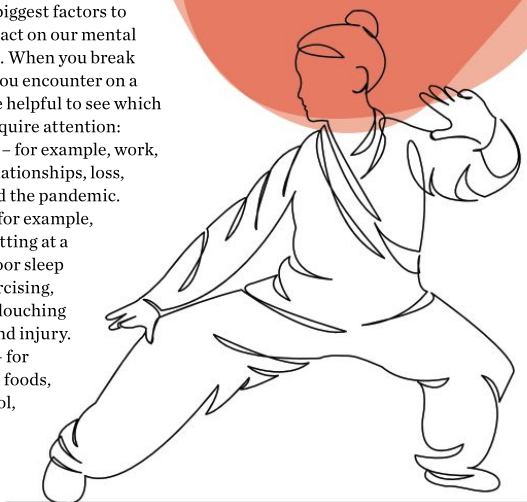
hormone replacements, environmental toxins and electric and magnetic fields from technological devices.

When you consider the three types of stress, it's clear that we put ourselves through a lot of overstimulation and pressure. When stress management is neglected, it leads to conditions such as anxiety and depression, and can also have a knock-on effect on the immune system, which has been in the spotlight over the past couple of years.

'One of the first things you notice when you practise qigong is your breath. Qigong helps you open your lungs, breathe deeply and calm the nervous system, which naturally relieves the symptoms of stress in the body,' says Jemma Hewitt, a qigong teacher.

In traditional Chinese medicine, every symptom that the body presents tells you something, and problems arise when the flow of qi, or the life force, is interrupted

'Qi' is the Chinese word for 'life force energy' and is the power that exists within all living things. 'Gong' translates as 'skill', 'cultivation' or 'mastery', so the meaning of qigong can be described as the mastery of moving life force energy through your body.



by stress and becomes stagnant. By aligning the posture, regulating breath and controlling the mind, stagnation is removed from the body and the qi flow, and health is restored.

Qigong dissolves stress-related symptoms such as anxiety, depression and insomnia, and is also a treatment for conditions that can cause stress, such as painful joints, skin conditions, hypertension, menstrual problems, fatigue, headaches and poor digestion.

Ancient wisdom meets modern science

In contemporary medicine, we now understand that the four key elements of qigong – postural alignments, breathing techniques, mindfulness and movement – all help regulate the autonomic nervous system by stimulating the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is the longest nerve in the body and plays a key role in our stress response. It carries signals between the organs and the brain and there is extensive evidence that stimulating this nerve has a positive impact on a variety of health conditions, including hypertension.

In a clinical trial published in the *International Journal Of Neuroscience*, qigong was found to significantly decrease the three main blood pressure markers and elevated stress hormones. Due to results like this, combined with the pressures on the healthcare system and the fact that official guidelines now recommend the use of complementary therapies alongside conventional medicine, qigong is soaring in popularity.

'Since discovering qigong four years ago, I have noticed how popular it has become, particularly among younger people,' says Hewitt. 'I predict that in years to come, it will become just as well known and commonly practised as yoga.'

Easy to introduce

One of the other benefits of qigong is that you can incorporate daily exercises without having to find time for yet another class in your schedule. You can take a few moments to connect with yourself while waiting for your toast to pop, taking a screen break or going for a walk. Each of these is as beneficial as setting an alarm to squeeze in a session before the day begins. *mindbodylove.me*



“Qigong gives me clarity and helps me accept elements of myself I previously criticised. I sleep better, I breathe better and I laugh more”

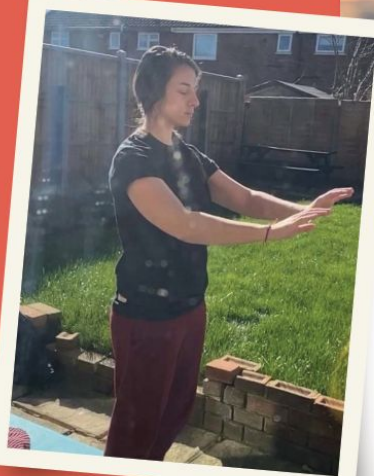
It worked for me



I first started practising qigong two years ago with a friend who had trained as a teacher,” says Laura Collins, 35.

‘I’d spent years suffering from anxiety and she said qigong would help.

‘During my first class, my legs didn’t stop trembling, which I learned was my body’s way of releasing stress. I felt so much lighter once the class was over, although my legs certainly felt as if they’d had a workout! Qigong gives me clarity, which enables me to self-reflect in a way that nothing else has ever done. It helps me accept elements of myself that I previously criticised. I sleep better, I breathe better and I laugh more.’



Three qigong actions to practise at home

Let yourself sink into the meditation of each movement. If your mind takes you elsewhere, that's OK. Simply notice that it has, and bring your focus back to one of the four aspects – posture, movement, breath or visualisation. These actions may also be practised while sitting in a chair.



1

Raise hands over the lake
Regulates your breathing, calms your nerves and eases painful knees.

Posture: Stand with feet facing forward, shoulder-width apart, with a slight bend in your knees. Lean your weight into the soles of your feet so your heels are touching the ground but feel light.

Movement: Bring your hands in front of your hips, arms reaching out, with palms facing the ground and fingers pointing forward. Float your arms up until they reach shoulder height and then sink them back down again. Repeat for five minutes.

Breathing: Breathe in through your nose as you float your arms up, and out through your nose as you sink your arms back down.

Visualisation: Imagine you are in front of a beautiful lake and water is rising up from your feet and into your body.

2

Tapping the kidneys
Boosts energy. Great for when the afternoon slump hits and you want a nap.

Posture: Stand with your feet facing forward, shoulder-width apart, with a slight bend in your knees. Relax your body.

Movement: Create heat by rubbing your hands together, then bring them around to your lower back just above your hips and firmly tap for two to three minutes.

Breathing: As normal.

Visualisation: Fill up your kidneys with whatever colour you imagine your life force energy to be.

3

Nature's fragrance drifts up from the stream
Calms the mind and refreshes the body.

Posture: Stand with feet facing forward, shoulder-width apart, with a slight bend in your knees. Lean your weight into the soles of your feet.

Movement: Place your hands in front of your hips, fingertips facing inwards towards each other, palms up. Lift your hands up the centre of your body until they reach your chin, then turn your palms to the ground and sink them down again. Repeat for five minutes.

Breathing: In through your nose as you raise your arms, out through your nose as you sink your arms back down.

Visualisation: Imagine you are moving your life force energy colour in a loop – up the centre of your body, over your head, down your spine and underneath back to the starting point.

SWEET RELEASE OF SLEEP

Professor Sarah Niblock, CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and UKCP psychotherapist Heather Darwall-Smith discuss the importance of a good night's rest, why we may be wakeful and how therapy can help



We all sleep, yet when we have problems getting the rest we need,

we don't typically look at the psychological undertones regarding why. How do we know whether we are simply having a few bad nights or need professional support?

In the accompanying podcast, I speak to psychotherapist Heather Darwall-Smith to find out how prevalent sleep difficulties are – and when psychotherapy is best placed to help.

Sarah

CEO of the UK Council
for Psychotherapy

Heather Darwall-Smith, who specialises in sleep, explores our inner experience of sleep in order to improve it

When it comes to sleep, our needs and how we sleep are unique. When thinking about how we sleep in times of difficulty, we must understand the importance of looking inward at our experience of sleep. For example, if you feel anxious about sleep, take longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep, wake regularly during the night or if you are experiencing excessive daytime sleepiness, it may be time to seek support.

A global increase in sleep problems has been reported during the pandemic. Our sleep has been affected due to the ongoing anxiety we feel about the unknown. We can think of sleep as the ultimate in letting go and, if we can't do that, we may struggle. Or perhaps we are sleeping, but the quality isn't great. Either way, there's no quick fix, but there are steps we can implement to help.

When a client comes to see me, there

are three levels to the initial sessions. Firstly, a screening to identify what is going on – there may be a need to refer to other services. The next step is to look at what 24 hours looks like for you. Here we consider your thoughts and cognitions about sleep and what you do to relax, among other things. Often sleep issues have deep-seated roots, which is when psychotherapeutic support is essential for exploring the reasons and options.

There is no answer to when someone might see a change. Some may find relief in a few weeks, others may take months and, for some, there are long-term issues that are trickier to alter. But a therapist can help those with ongoing difficulties find acceptance and coping mechanisms.

Our sleep needs change throughout life, as do our external environments. We can't always control our sleep, but we can work on other aspects of life to give ourselves the best chance for better rest.



Listen to the podcast

Everyone has experienced issues with sleep at some point – but how do we know when we need professional support? In this episode, UKCP's Sarah Niblock and psychotherapist Heather Darwall-Smith, a sleep specialist, discuss problems with sleep and the ways in which psychotherapy can offer assistance to someone who is struggling. Listen at psychologies.co.uk/how-get-good-nights-sleep-a-podcast-ukcp



Three tips to help you sleep tonight

If you need immediate help with your sleep, here are three pieces of advice that may offer swift relief:

1 Create the opportunity to sleep well. Time and your environment can make a big difference. Being in a cool, quiet and dark space, having a relaxed mind and body and carving out proper time to rest are important factors.

2 Don't worry about sleep. Biologically, your body will sleep, taking what it needs when it can. People often believe that you have to have a perfect night's sleep to have a good day, but that isn't true. Sleep ebbs and flows.

3 Be consistent. Getting up at the same time every day can help you find a rhythm. Getting outside into the light will reset your body clock. Stick to the rhythm of the day – the light and dark. This is nature's way of helping us prepare for rest. Combining this with a consistent routine can help you find a way out of sleeplessness.



How I became a therapist

Heather Darwall-Smith trained to be a psychotherapist after experiencing the benefits of therapy herself.

In my 20s, I worked as an art director, but felt I wanted something else. I went to therapy for multiple reasons and experienced the profundity of feeling heard and seen without judgment.

My progression into training as a therapist evolved from a foundation year in counselling and psychotherapy to an MA

in Core Process Psychotherapy and specialisation in sleep. I continued training in sleep medicine.

I see sleep as the ultimate release – a biological necessity, but often hard to do. Bringing awareness to the parts of us that are trying to stay awake helps us let go and go to sleep.

heatherdarwallsmith.com

About UKCP and how to find a therapist

The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) is the leading research, innovation, educational and regulatory body working to advance psychotherapy for the benefit of all. We have a register of more than 8,000 individual members who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups.

We also have over 70 training and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become therapists. To find the right therapist for you, or learn how to become a therapist, visit psychotherapy.org.uk





PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL STEWART, LEFT; LEVON BISS, MAIN

As long as we're together...

There's nothing like gathering your loved ones and sharing some good old-fashioned comfort food, indoors and out, as Jamie Oliver reminds us

Tangerine dream cake

Serves 16

A pleasure to make, this cake is joyous served with a cup of tea – make sure you pack your flask. Any leftovers crumbled over ice cream will also be a treat. I like to make the whole thing on the day, but you can absolutely make the sponge ahead and simply store it in an airtight container overnight.

- 250g soft unsalted butter
- 250g runny honey
- 250g self-raising flour
- 200g ground almonds
- 1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste
- 6 large free-range eggs

- 4 tangerines
- 100g icing sugar
- Optional: natural yoghurt, to serve

ON THE DAY Preheat the oven to 180°C and generously grease a 2-litre non-stick bundt tin with butter. Place the remaining butter in a food processor with the honey, flour, almonds, vanilla paste and a pinch of sea salt. Crack in the eggs, finely grate in the tangerine zest (reserving some for garnish) and blitz until smooth.

Pour the mixture into the bundt tin, scraping it out of the processor with a spatula, then jiggle the tin to level it out.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until

golden and an inserted skewer comes out clean. Leave for a few minutes, then turn out on to a wire rack and leave to cool completely.

Sift the icing sugar into a bowl, then squeeze and stir in enough tangerine juice to make a thick drizzle. Pour or spoon over the cool cake, easing some drips down the sides in an arty way, then sprinkle over the reserved zest. Peel the remaining tangerines and slice into rounds, to serve on the side.

A spoonful of yoghurt also pairs with it very nicely, if you like.

Energy	Fat	Sat fat	Protein	Carbs	Sugars	Salt	Fibre
348kcal	22.3g	9.3g	6.9g	32.1g	20.1g	0.4g	0.6g



Satisfying veggie bake

Serves 8

We all need extraordinarily tasty ways to get in the good stuff, and with five of your 5-a-day per portion, this dish makes me very happy.

- 3 onions
- 3 cloves of garlic
- Olive oil
- 3 level teaspoons ground coriander
- 3 teaspoons olive tapenade
- 3 mixed-colour peppers
- 3 sweet potatoes
- 3 large portobello mushrooms
- 3 courgettes
- 3 x 400g tins of quality plum tomatoes
- 3 large free-range eggs
- 500g Greek-style yoghurt
- 100g feta cheese
- 1 bunch of oregano (20g)
- 1 packet of filo pastry (270g)
- 1 mug of basmati rice (300g)
- 1 x 400g tin of butter beans

GET AHEAD You can prep this on the day, if you prefer. Peel and finely slice the onions and garlic, and place in a large casserole pan on a medium heat with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, the ground coriander and tapenade, stirring regularly. Alongside, we're going to lightly char our veg in a large dry non-stick pan on a high heat to intensify the flavour, so deseed the peppers, scrub the sweet potatoes, then chop into 3cm chunks with the mushrooms and courgettes. One veg at a time, lightly char all over, moving them into the casserole pan as they're done.

Add the tomatoes to the mix, breaking them up with a spoon, along with 2 tin's worth of water. Simmer gently for 30 minutes, or until the sweet potatoes are soft. Season to perfection, tasting and tweaking, leave to cool, then cover.

Meanwhile, beat the eggs into the yoghurt, roughly crumble and mix in the feta, then cover. Refrigerate both overnight.

ON THE DAY Assemble the bake as your last prep job. Use half the oregano as a brush to coat the inside of a large roasting tray or baking dish with oil. Layer in all but one of the filo sheets,

leaving an overhang and brushing with oil as you go. Evenly sprinkle in the rice, drain and scatter over the beans, then pour in your veggie stew. Scrunch over the remaining sheet of filo and fold in the overhang, brush the top with oil, then cover, until needed.

TO SERVE Preheat the oven to 180°C. Cook the bake on the bottom of the oven for 1 hour. Remove from the oven and use the back of a spoon to crack the top of the pastry, then spoon over the creamy topping. Pick the remaining

oregano, rub in a little oil and sprinkle over, then return to the middle of the oven for another 40 minutes, or until golden. Great with a simple salad.

Energy	Fat	Sat fat	Protein	Carbs	Sugars	Salt	Fibre
580kcal	13.7g	5.3g	24g	96.2g	21.3g	1.3g	11.2g



'Together: Memorable Meals Made Easy' by Jamie Oliver (Penguin Random House, £26) is out now



Good mood food

THE AWESOME ARTICHOKE

Dine on this substantial and versatile thistle – and reap its many health and wellbeing benefits

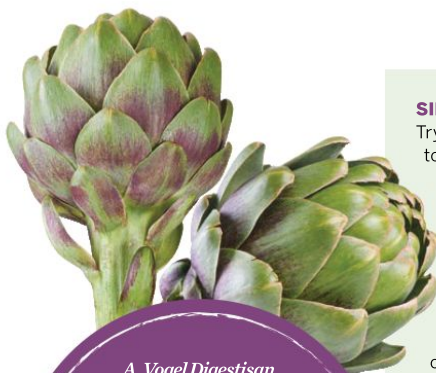
That's right, it's a thistle! 'While the artichoke is often referred to as a vegetable, it actually belongs to the thistle family – which makes sense, given its globe-like appearance,' says nutritionist Alison Cullen. 'The regal-looking artichoke, with its mild, nutty flavour, might not be the first ingredient people reach for, but there are so many reasons to include it in your recipes this season.'

Harmonise hormones

'One of its most impressive qualities is its ability to help us synthesise good fats (HDL cholesterol) and get rid of the bad (LDL cholesterol),' explains Cullen. 'For years, people have assumed that cholesterol is a bad thing but, in fact, we need good cholesterol for many essential functions, including hormone production and brain function. HDL cholesterol plays an important role in protecting the integrity of our brain cell membranes and keeps our hormones in balance, both of which have a great impact on our mental wellbeing and cognitive abilities.'

Avoid the sugar crash

'Artichokes are also thought to assist in balancing blood sugar levels, which, as anyone who has ever had a blood sugar crash will know, is vital for keeping our mood on an even keel.'
avogel.co.uk



A. Vogel Digestisan drops, £10.85, contain fresh artichoke and peppermint extracts, and can be added to water to help ease indigestion. 'They say your gut is your second brain, so keeping it happy is essential for mind and body,' says Cullen.



SIMPLE SWAPS

Try artichokes as an alternative to mushrooms. 'I am a big fan of mushrooms and they're a fantastic source of vitamin D,' says Cullen, 'but artichokes contain even more goodness, and they're not dissimilar in texture, so make the ideal substitute in tagines and other dishes. I also often find artichokes can do a good job of replacing meats, such as chicken, in salads and pasta dishes. They're quite robust, so can be used as a successful and healthy alternative if you're trying to cut back on your meat intake. I recommend cooking them first, though, as they can be a little bitter when raw.'

DIP INTO THIS!

Available fresh right now, or in a jar for convenience, one of the most accessible ways to eat artichokes is as a flavoursome dip...

- 150g artichoke hearts (you can use a jar of hearts preserved in oil, for convenience – just drain off the excess oil first)
- 1 clove garlic

- Handful fresh basil
- 2 tbsp Greek-style plain yoghurt (or any alternative thick vegan yoghurt)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp lemon juice

Place all the ingredients in a bowl or a food processor and blend together as desired for a smooth or chunky dip. Enjoy with salads, pasta or crudites.



STUCK FOR FRESH IDEAS OF WHAT TO BUY FOR YOUR LOVED ONES THIS YEAR?

Active living



The ultimate Christmas treat

Why not give your loved one a real boost this year? Psychologies is the UK's No.1 emotional well-being magazine that focuses on the mind, heart, body and soul. Every issue will be wrapped in a little hug from you! Our Christmas offer also includes a candle from Scentered worth £16.95.

Visit Shop.kelsey.co.uk/PSYGIFT



Explore our beautiful coastline

A subscription to Coast magazine is like sending your loved one on a journey of discovery that lasts the whole year. Plus, we've included a Travel Candle from Coast Candle Co. to remind them of somewhere special.

Visit Shop.kelsey.co.uk/COAGIFT



Every horse rider needs a little boost in winter

Dark winter days can challenge even the most dedicated rider. Why not give your favourite rider a boost this Christmas with a pair of warm winter riding socks and a subscription to Your Horse, the magazine that inspires its readers to enjoy every single second that they spend in the saddle.

Visit Shop.kelsey.co.uk/YHGIFT



Everyone needs a little me-time

We all know how important it is to live a healthy lifestyle, so why not gift your loved one a helping hand? Top Santé is packed full of life-enhancing tips and advice on health, fitness, food and beauty. Plus our Christmas offer also includes a candle from Scentered worth £16.95.

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Got a fisherman friend?

Sea Angler is the perfect companion for every sea fishing enthusiast. As well as receiving 13 issues of the UK's best-selling fishing mag, we've thrown in Shore Fishing Special Edition and a Sea Angler beanie hat to complete the gift - what a catch!

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Celebrate the joy of the land this Christmas

If you want to support your loved one in their lifestyle choice, then what better way than with practical help and advice from The Smallholder magazine. Our gift pack includes eight issues packed with practical advice for growing food, rearing livestock, and country crafts, plus a pair of cosy Alpaca socks.

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Hobbies



Hot Stuff – the perfect gift for gadget fans

Stuff magazine is packed full of news, reviews, and all the best deals on the hottest new gadgets. Treat a friend to 13 issues of Stuff and receive a Nacion PS4 stereo gaming headset, worth £25.50.

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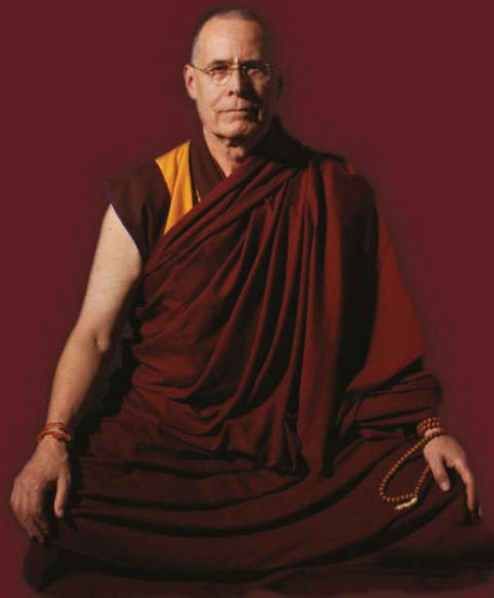
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***“Autumn is a
second spring
when every leaf
is a flower”***

Albert Camus

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

The substance of style

From comforting woollens to lucky pants, the clothes we wear have immense power to influence how we feel, writes Gemma Calvert

One late summer's afternoon, the celebrity stylist Gemma Sheppard was in a London brasserie when a couple approached her table to deliver a compliment. 'The man said, "We want to tell you how wonderful it is to see someone wearing such beautiful colours, and what a fantastic dress!" His wife added, "You look lovely,"' recalls Sheppard, who has worked in the fashion industry for 25 years.

'I regularly get stopped by people who say they love my hair and clothes. I wear a lot of colour, so I guess I make an impact! That thumbs up from a stranger or someone you know can have a positive impact on your day and boost your mood. It's not just recognition of your appearance, it's about being "together", making an effort and being comfortable with yourself.'

In her role as the fashion expert on *10 Years Younger In 10 Days*, Channel 5's hit makeover show, this is the aim of Sheppard's game – to help people with depleted self-esteem and who have lost their way with their image get back to looking and feeling their best. It's a role that seems relevant right now. After months of living in yoga pants and hoodies, 45 per cent of professionals admit feeling anxious about their back-to-work wardrobe, with 76 per cent saying a casual workwear policy could help them feel less nervous.'

But Sheppard believes clothing is not the only issue. Before she takes a single garment from her rail to start a visual transformation, she takes participants on a journey of

self-reflection. 'A lot of people get lost in themselves because life takes over and, thanks to a Pandora's box of situations, circumstances and emotions, people are suffering from lack of confidence and self-belief,' she says.

'Many people on the show have never vocalised those insecurities, so I'm often the first person in which they have confided. From that point onward, it's about reprogramming the negative internal narrative. I advise looking in the mirror and, instead of focusing on what you don't like, to speak kindly to yourself and pinpoint what you love.'

Sheppard describes fashion as 'saying "hey, this is me" without speaking' and believes in embracing individuality. She refuses to be a slave to trends and encourages her clients to break free from constricting sartorial patterns and habits and hone their own identity. 'Stop giving yourself a list of dos and don'ts when it comes to fashion,' she says. 'Experiment with colours, prints and structure but, first and foremost, try on the contents of your wardrobe and remove what doesn't fit. That will leave you with 10 to 30 pieces. Then, get your hangers and create total fashion looks. Doing this will lead to more experimentation and boost your confidence as you tune into what feels and looks good.'

The ability of clothing to affect human behaviour fascinates Carolyn Mair, a cognitive psychologist and author of *The Psychology Of Fashion* (Taylor & Francis, £11.99). 'Clothes



*Expert
advice*



*Gemma Sheppard is a
leading fashion stylist
and speaker and runs
the style consultancy
SheppardStyle.
@SheppardStyle*

can help us achieve who we want to be,' she says. 'They are the gilding – the decoration that enables us to feel good. And you don't have to go out and spend thousands of pounds on a couture item to look and feel amazing. It's simply about having confidence in trying something new and taking a risk. Ask yourself: "How can I help myself be the person I would like to portray?" You don't have to be that person forever.'

Mair also believes that sometimes we should be prepared to do a bit of the dressing-up role play we enjoyed as children for positive effect. 'If someone historically hasn't excelled in job interviews and wants to be seen as conscientious and professional, for example, in our sociocultural world, we associate a business suit or glasses with those attributes, so those items would be ideal. Another option is a garment or accessory that the person associates with success. Perhaps they excelled in an exam while wearing a particular watch or piece of jewellery. This goes back to the idea of lucky pants and the belief that an item can affect not just our confidence, but our physical output and productivity.'

It's an approach backed up by science. Researchers at Northwestern University in the US studied how what we wear can influence what we think and feel and how we function. Subjects performed awareness tests while wearing a doctor's lab coat, a painter's coat and no coat. They performed better while wearing the doctor's coat – a job with perceived greater status.

'How you feel in your choice of work clothes depends on the strength of your belief in their symbolic meaning,' explains Mair. 'Someone's belief might be that when they're wearing their work clothes, they feel more conscientious. Others might not feel that, but worry they won't be taken seriously if they are relating to people who have that belief.'

'Many people like a dress code because it removes the question of what to wear and ensures they fit in. Uniforms also help unite people in a shared value system that many companies strive for these days. On the other hand, others prefer to wear what they want as they believe it allows them to express their identity and creativity.'

Mair says the debate links back to one simple psychological question: Who am I? 'We are so much more than our appearance, our job or what we have in our wardrobes, although each plays an important part in establishing our self-identity,' she says. 'When any of these changes, or seems less relevant, we begin to question who we are. Thinking about our positive characteristics, how we contribute and what gives us pleasure is a useful exercise in building confidence.'

Yet, in a recent survey of 2,000 British women, 52 per cent reported feeling anxious over the contents of their wardrobes, citing too many clothes and the pressure to be sustainable as major causes."

'We want to know where an item is being made, who's making it and under what conditions. That's where some of the pressure lies,' explains Dawnn Karen, a fashion psychologist and author of *Dress Your Best Life: Harness The Power Of Clothes To Transform Your Confidence* (Penguin, £14.99).

'To mitigate this, shop with intention – know why you want to buy something and ask yourself "do I really need it?". Think about how it would feel to wear that garment. Evoke mindfulness in your shopping experience. Place something in



"The debate links back to one simple psychological question: Who am I? We're so much more than our appearance, our job or what we have in our wardrobes"



Make emotional wardrobe space

The government-backed recycling and reuse organisation Wrap reports that two in five of us performed a clearout of our wardrobe during lockdown and, according to the celebrity stylist, Gemma Sheppard, this is the first step towards creating emotional breathing space.

'The minute we have a canvas of clarity, we feel as if we are thinking more clearly. When we are working in and around chaos, we replicate that in our day-to-day behaviour,' says Sheppard, who advocates creating yes, no and maybe piles when sorting through your clothes.

'You've got to get on top of what fits and what doesn't. If it's really special, pop it in a box, label the box and, in six months' time if the item still doesn't fit, it's time to let it go.

'Then, after summer or winter, launder and pack away all the clothes that you think are going to fit you next year using ziplock bags to suck out all the air. Making physical room in your wardrobe gives you the freedom to rethink what you want to look like and what you want to wear.'

Sheppard then advises investing in classic 'hero' pieces. 'A great trouser suit is every woman's best friend. Ensure that you also have a great black dress, a quality and perfectly fitting pair of jeans, a high quality cotton T-shirt, a trench coat, a denim jacket and a biker jacket,' she says.

'These garments add extra mileage to your wardrobe. For example, team a floral maxi dress you wore to a wedding two years ago with a pair of white trainers and a biker jacket and it becomes a whole different storyboard. Don't be afraid to mix and match. Try all the clothes you own with something you wouldn't think of ordinarily. Mix it up!

'And most importantly, have fun. Clothing should always make you feel good,' she adds.



your online shopping cart for 24 to 48 hours, then see if you still want it. It may just be a random or compulsive purchase.'

Mindful shopping, says Karen, is an escape from the trap of compulsive shopping – which may, for some, fall under the umbrella of 'retail therapy'. 'Through this type of shopping, clients mask their true feelings and don't deal with them,' she says.

'By constantly stuffing things into your wardrobe, there's no organisation to the contents and, eventually, when you open the door, everything will fall out. Having too many clothes, being unable to remember when you purchased items or the last time you wore something can create feelings of overwhelm.'

psychology.fashion; '10 Years Younger In 10 Days' is available on My5

Take a sensory journey to tranquillity

Pen your way to feeling present and grounded by communing with nature using all your senses, writes Jackee Holder



I recently used the creative practice of tuning into my natural environment after a long-haul flight to the Caribbean to recover from jet lag. Describing the landscape

outside my balcony in a five-minute free-writing exercise in my notebook helped me land and feel as if I had fully arrived.

But writing words in a notebook does not always need to be your starting point for journalling. If the words feel stuck, try taking a photo of the same tree or plant over a number of consecutive days or weeks. Each day, you are bound to notice something different. As soon as I arrive in a new place, it's my go-to habit to take a short walk. I grab a notebook and pen, and walk with an agenda. I start with a colour walk: I focus on one primary colour, and capture as many different versions of that colour as I can.

You can take your walk to the next frequency by listening attentively to the sounds around you. Lean in to the backdrop of birdsong, usually accompanied by the rustle of tree leaves in the breeze, or the ebb and flow of the sea; both have been shown to promote calmness and tranquillity. Tuning into sounds in nature lowers stress levels and blood pressure, and is a natural pick-me-up. Write down as many different sounds as you hear in your notebook.

Next, turn your attention to the smells and aromas that accompany you on your walk. This may require more effort as you seek to switch on one of our most primal senses, which has been severely dulled in the modern world.

And, finally, don't forget touch and taste. Use your fingertips as a sensory detector. How many different surfaces can you reach out and touch in your immediate environment? Feel the crinkled bark of a nearby tree or be soothed by the velvety skin of a delicate flower or plant...



Take a moment to savour the many small and simple treasures that nature holds.

It all seems pretty straightforward, but planting words or images in a journal or notebook using pen and paper is a way of becoming more grounded and present in the moment, and the place in which you immerse yourself.

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



**Rewilding The Page:
The Urban Forest Writing
Map (available from
jackeeholder.com, £7.99)**

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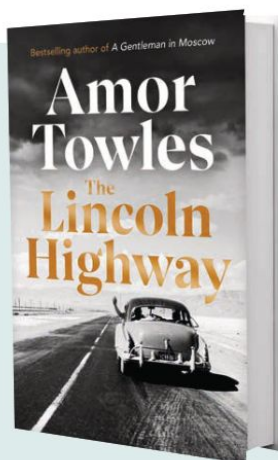
our towns and cities: flourishing gardens, parks and city forests create a green belt around us. In *Rewilding The Page*, discover 12 creative writing prompts to invite you to continue deepening your connection with the green spaces on your doorstep. The practices of writing, walking, drawing and meditation help you connect with the colours, seasons, trees and plants in and around the spaces you inhabit.



PHOTOGRAPH: LAURA RICHARDSON

The words

Eithne Farry presents this month's riveting novels, resplendent with adventure and complex emotion



Book
of the
month

The Lincoln Highway

By Amor Towles, Cornerstone, £20

It's 1950s America, and 18-year-old Emmett Watson and his young brother – earnest, innocent and quick-witted Billy – are determined to change their lives. Newly released from juvenile detention on a charge of involuntary manslaughter, Emmett is weighed down with guilt and regret, but is hopeful about making a fresh start.

His plan is immediately scuppered when he discovers escapees Duchess and Woolly, fellow inmates from the prison work farm, in the boot of his car. Taking place over 10 days and with multiple viewpoints, Towles's novel is packed full of characters who are marked by their pasts, struggling with demons in their present, and hopeful about their futures – despite their missteps. A sweet, charming and wonderfully astute take on humanity and all its foibles, this is gorgeous storytelling.

Crossroads

By Jonathan Franzen
HarperCollins, £20

December 1971, and the five members of the Hildebrandt family are each heading towards a crossroads in their lives. Pastor Russ has a crush on a widowed parishioner, wife Marian wants out of her marriage, son Clem is in the grip of a moral conundrum about the Vietnam War, strait-laced sister Becky is getting involved with a counterculture singer-songwriter, while Perry – the youngest and most volatile – is going off the rails, accelerated by drink and drug use.

This ambitious and absorbing novel is packed to the gills with tricky emotions, illuminated by flashes of intense joy.



Burntcoat

By Sarah Hall
Faber & Faber, £12.99

Astonishingly beautiful, this emotionally charged novel, set during the pandemic, tells the story of sculptor Edith Harkness as she recalls her past and the people with whom she has shared her life. Her mother, who suffered from a stroke when Edith was eight, and her lover, Halit, are at the forefront of her mind and central in her heart, but there are also memories of the father who abandoned her, old relationships and the ever-present work that sustains her in the face of a virus laying waste to the population.

Spare and vivid, *Burntcoat* glows with passion and love, resistance and resilience.

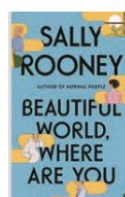


Beautiful World, Where Are You

By Sally Rooney
Faber & Faber, £16.99

Sally Rooney's third novel is an addictive, psychologically astute study of people in their mid-20s, who are worried about the world and their place in it. In a series of emails, Alice, a bestselling novelist who's suffered a breakdown, and best friend Eileen, an editor on a literary magazine, ponder philosophy and politics, friendship and family, sex and desire, while dealing with on-off relationships. Alice is trying to work out how she feels about Felix, who works in a warehouse, while Eileen is involved with Simon, a family friend.

This must-read will get under your skin.





WORK IN PROGRESS

“Who will hire me if I lose my job at 53?”

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

*“Reorganising can
be a wonderful
method for creating the
illusion of progress while
producing confusion,
inefficiency and
demoralisation”*

Petronius Arbiter

Q I'm worried about being made redundant. I'm 53 years old and have been in the same job for almost 15 years. I know the business is doing OK, but there's talk about restructuring, partly as a result of the pandemic. The employment market has changed so much since the last time I applied for a role, and who's going to want me at this age?

I'm going to divide my comments into two parts: emotions and practicalities. Your mantra should be: it is not personal. A role is made redundant, not a person. Please be aware of how you talk about this, even to yourself. It's 'the role might be made redundant' rather than 'I might be made redundant'.

At the moment, the worst feeling is probably not knowing, which leads to a sense of powerlessness and fear. We are coming out of a long period of uncertainty and everyone has had enough. If you're not anxious or exhausted, you are probably feeling a bit meh. In a piece in *The New York Times*, the psychologist Adam Grant described this as 'languishing' – it's not depression, but it's not functioning at full capacity either.

In my work with businesses and organisations, we've stopped talking about resilience because the very idea of bouncing back is too hard – nobody feels bouncy after this long, and bounce back to what?

An antidote to languishing is rediscovering what you enjoy. That might sound too simple to be effective, but I'm talking about the kind of enjoyment where you are absorbed, lose track of time and everyday worries slip away. For some, it's running, for others it's playing music, knitting or doing a puzzle. In psychology, this is called

flow, and it's the key to a meaningful life, of which work is one part. It's worth identifying whether this applies to an aspect of your job, and if that could be developed.

In terms of practicalities, check what support is available through your workplace, and consider your network of relationships in this job and outside of it. Is there an employee assistance programme at work? It will offer advice as well as counselling. You will also find excellent resources (see right) from the workplace advisory body Acas.

The world of work is changing. *The 100-Year Life* by Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott (Bloomsbury, £10.99) suggests that we should look at a longer working life, and keep updating our skills and networks. For a reminder that you are not alone as a working woman in midlife, see the website Noon, set up by the journalist Eleanor Mills when she lost her job after 22 years.

Research suggests we are five times more likely to find work via people we know than recruitment agencies. What are your former colleagues doing? Who is working on something fun in a similar field? Most people respond well to 'I'd love a job like yours – how did you get it?'

You've adapted to a lot of change already, and you've got this one too.

acas.org.uk (0300 123 1100); noon.org.uk

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 mary@psychologies.co.uk with 'Mary life' or 'Mary work' in the subject line



Know your rights in the workplace

If you are worried about your future at work, you can access free, impartial advice on your rights, the rules and best practice, including with regards redundancy, from Acas. This is its advice for this situation:

WHO GOES?

Before your employer selects anyone for redundancy, by law they must follow a consultation and selection process. They might consider changing working hours, offering voluntary redundancy or moving employees into different roles. Your employer must consult you and meet with you at least once, even if you're not at risk of redundancy yourself.

You can choose to put yourself forward for redundancy before being selected (voluntary redundancy). This is not a right, but if you are stopped from volunteering because of your sex, age, disability or another 'protected characteristic', it could be discrimination.

Your employer must also not use criteria that indirectly discriminates against you. For example, if they use flexible working as a criterion, they could be discriminating against women.

YOU HAVE A VOICE

Your employer is legally required to:

- Listen to your ideas
- Try to come to an agreement with you

HOW MUCH NOTICE?

Your notice period depends on how long you've worked for your employer, and possibly the terms of your contract.

- Calculate your statutory redundancy pay at gov.uk/calculate-your-redundancy-pay
- If your employer is insolvent, you can apply for redundancy pay from the government's Redundancy Payments Service. Call the helpline on 0330 331 0020.

FURTHER READING

'Why strategic networks are important for women and how to build them' by Herminia Ibarra of London Business School; herminiaibarra.com



Thank you for the music

Katy Georgiou discovers why the allegiances we make to musical genres in our youth, from Britpop to punk, hold such power for us as adults

Expert
advice

Kelly Jakubowski is an assistant professor and Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Durham University.
@kj_jakubowski



Marianne Rizkallah is vice-chair of the British Association for Music Therapy and a registered music therapist.
northlondonmusictherapy.com

10 am, 31 July 1997: The morning after Noel Gallagher famously partied at No 10 for a Cool Britannia bash, amid Labour's landslide election win, I was standing outside Noel's front door in the rain – an excited and carefree 14-year-old, dizzy with Britpop fever. I buzzed his doorbell...

They say don't meet your heroes, but I'm glad I did. As a north Londoner, I didn't live far, and with Oasis mania at its peak, it was standard for fans to visit Supernova Heights (as Noel named his house). Pre-internet, the only tweets I cared for were in the opening sequence of *Hello* on the band's second album; I had paper, a Biro and a postcard for Noel to sign. It was all I needed.

Nowadays, when I listen to Oasis, my ears prick up and memories of that summer come flooding back. It's been a source of comfort over the past 18 months, and I'm not the only one indulging in a little Britpop nostalgia: a film showing the band's legendary 1996 Knebworth gigs, where they played to 250,000 adoring fans, has just hit the cinemas.

It reflects the unique power of music to access emotion and memory. Personally, my fandom has grounded me with a sense of belonging amid uncertainty. Social media and TV is awash with 1990s nostalgia; Britpop communities exist online, with fanzines dedicated to the era. Nostalgia isn't exclusive to the 1990s, of course, but music is a common theme.

A recent study from York University showed that nostalgia is a port in the storm during times of hardship and transition, and there is growing evidence showing how nostalgic music, in particular, helps us regulate emotion in times of uncertainty, and why 'reflecting on the past to bring perspective to the present' is linked with greater wellbeing.

'Nostalgia is a complex emotion,' says Kelly Jakubowski, assistant professor and co-director of the Music and Science Lab at Durham University. 'It involves looking back on the past in a positive yet sentimental light. Music is a trigger for nostalgia, primarily because it's coupled with autobiographical memories.'

And there's also a reason why it's

the music of my teens, rather than my 20s or 30s, that I turn to: 'Memories formed during adolescence are remembered more vividly and accessed more easily than memories from other periods of our lives,' says Jakubowski. A phenomenon known as the 'reminiscence bump', theoretical explanations indicate that memories may be encoded better during this time because of hormonal changes, and that it's also a key period in identity formation. She highlights the age of 14 as the most likely time you'll form allegiances to popstars – the exact age I was when I met Gallagher. 'Our research shows that the age of 14 is the "peak" for the musical reminiscence bump,' Jakubowski explains. And it's the reason why you'll recall more memories between age 10 and 30 than any other period of your life.

Personally, Oasis transports me back to feelings of yearning and possibility. I use this as part of my self-care and channel that energy in times of discomfort. But it's when an Oasis song catches me unawares on the radio that I'm really taken by just how powerfully I'm moved to primal feelings of joy or melancholy. 'This is known as an involuntary autobiographical memory,' says Jakubowski. 'Involuntary memories are more vivid than voluntary recall, partially because we're not trying to rack our brains for a memory, and aren't emotionally prepared for it when it comes. Music is a particularly effective stimulus for these types of memories.'

But don't fret if you feel that spirit's been lost amid the demands of your adult life. The spirit of your youth can easily be recaptured and harnessed via music, suggests Marianne Rizkallah, vice-chair of the British Association for Music Therapy. 'Listening to music from your youth could be one of the safest (and cheapest) ways of regaining your sense of freedom post-pandemic,' she says.



'Our favourite tracks transport us back to memories we've associated them with: The music itself, the structure of a song, provides a safe container for us to experience those feelings for the length of the song, giving us the option to come back into the present once it's over.'

And it's this containment that's key: boundaries are essential in helping you explore complex feelings safely. Simply being met where you are emotionally without judgment is precisely what songs can offer you. So, over the past 18 months, whether you've given birth, got divorced, returned to an office, lost your job or income, fallen in or out of love, or found yourself burnt out, this process is helpfully grounding, without removing you from obligations for too long.

'Listening to old records or re-engaging with memorabilia is also a great reminder of a simpler time,' Rizkallah adds. 'It's physical media that we can hold, whereas digital music can make the fan experience feel much more ephemeral.'

But music's power goes beyond just giving us a trip down memory lane. 'Music can activate the brain's reward system, the same areas that are activated by eating when you're very hungry or having sex,' says Jakubowski. 'This is striking, given that music doesn't outwardly seem like something we "need" for survival, unlike food or sex.'

Importantly, there will be occasions in your life when feelings are simply too elusive to express in words. Opening up is important for mental wellbeing, but music is so useful precisely because it relieves us of the burden of words when we're too raw. Countless studies demonstrate the clinical uses of music for all sorts of complex physical and mental health experiences where cognition is affected, such as dementia, psychosis, autism, chronic pain, palliative care, PTSD, perinatal care and more.

Indeed, music is with us pre-verbally, from the womb. 'The auditory system develops much earlier on than the visual

system,' Jakubowski explains.

'Foetuses can hear and respond to sounds from as early as 25 weeks. When born, babies may be able to recognise music they've heard in the womb. The fact they can hear voices and their mothers' heartbeats before birth may be connected to the fact that vocal music and music with a rhythmic beat can feel particularly primal or instinctual.'

This may go some way in explaining what happens to us in large, communal settings such as festivals, or in times of national disaster when music brings us together. I often think back to the 2017 Manchester bombings and how, in the televised aftermath, crowds of people burst into *Don't Look Back In Anger* while mourning. 'This goes back to one of the likely evolutionary functions of music,' Jakubowski explains. 'There's accumulating evidence that music evolved as an effective means of eliciting social bonding as human group sizes increased. Music activity can be done collectively by thousands of people at once, unlike other social exchanges. Therefore, music has the power to bring together larger groups of people and unite them rhythmically and emotionally.'

Rizkallah suggests that Oasis's fanbase in particular traded on this emotional connection experienced at live gigs: 'Research shows that our heart rate can match the BPM of the music we're listening to, and the powerful image of heartbeats connecting to the rhythm coming through the speakers in one contained, connected space provides a strong sense of unity and belonging.'

When watching footage of Knebworth, there's no doubt my heart will be fluttering. Goosebumps, I'm ready for you.

Five ways to reconnect with your musical past

CHECK WHAT WAS IN THE CHARTS

Jakubowski recommends looking up the top three songs in the charts when you were 14 – the peak for the 'musical reminiscence bump'.

MAKE A MUSICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

'Make a playlist of the music that was playing at the key events in your life,' says Jakubowski. 'Go through your life in 10-year periods and think of two to three songs that exemplify that time.'

"Music has the power to bring together groups of people and unite them rhythmically and emotionally"

HEAD TO A GIG

If it's a well-loved band, all the better, but Rizkallah suggests that being in the same space as the live music will evoke nostalgia and fun memories.

DIG OUT YOUR MERCH!

'Wear your Oasis tour shirt proudly and remember where you were when you got it,' says Rizkallah. Frame your favourite posters, tickets and album covers. 'Visual reminders around your house can trigger recollections of that part of your life.'

MAKE A MIXTAPE

'Think about the feelings you had during a favourite gig,' Rizkallah says. 'Sometimes you feel up, excited, ready to dance; other times, the music is slower, quieter, more suited to waving your lighter in the air... Group the tracks into sections, take yourself through the feelings. Choose a track you want to end on, or the feeling you want to be left with.'

▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *In You Are The Music* by Victoria Williamson (Icon, £9.99), the music psychologist reveals how tunes physically reshape our brains.

Listen *The Sound Affects Podcast: Music & Mental Health* unpicks the impact of music on mental health, via interviews with experts, high-profile musicians, music therapists and fans.

Attend *The Music and Mental Health: Recovery conference*, to be presented by North London Music Therapy on 20 November, asks how we can build resilient mental health care after global trauma. northlondonmusictherapy.com



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COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the mental well-being of children across the UK. As one of the most effective ways of supporting children struggling with their mental health, Play Therapy will be instrumental in helping them negotiate 'post pandemic' life.

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CAREER SOS?

- Facing a career crossroads
- Sleepless nights, dreading work tomorrow
- Overwhelmed by your workload, feeling weighed down
- Confidence low, fearful of difficult people or situations
- Need help to get a new job, with your CV and/or Interview Skills.



If work is impacting how you feel, it's time to take back control of the situation. As a qualified career and life coach I specialise in working with you, the human behind your job title. I've helped 100's of professionals like you develop the clarity, skills and confidence needed to make the changes you want, happen.

Telephone or Zoom/Teams 1-2-1 coaching sessions

Be career confident and make your career work for you

Use this link to book a **free** "Let's Talk" telephone consultation and find out exactly how I can help you:

www.achievemorelivemore.com/book-online

Appointments available up to 8.00 p.m. (Mon-Thurs)
and Saturday mornings

Life Changing Career Coaching with Michelle Tranter



BECOME A

One Source Personal Development Consultant

We currently require a number of individuals to join our team as Personal Development Consultants. If you have a desire to help people increase the quality of their lives, create lasting change & eliminate negative behaviours; we want to talk to you.

- Work from home
- No experience necessary
- First month completely free

This is a genuine opportunity to join a group of like minded people who all use a proven system of personal development to enrich the lives of the clients they work with.

If you would be interested in learning more about this exciting opportunity and to be considered to become part of our network, please contact us via email or phone as detailed below:

Email: shaun@onesourceict.com

Tel: 0845 338 7047

<https://www.onesourceict.com>

PSYCHOLOGIES

psychologies promotion

Your Questions in Mind... to help and inspire

Q My friend is going through a really difficult time, how can I show her that I really care even though I am far away?

A) Friendinabox offers thoughtfully curated gifts for both difficult and happy occasions. The gifts are carefully packaged in an eye-catching blue box which fits through most letterboxes. You can write a letter of unlimited length to show care and support rather than being limited to a short message. They are ideal gifts to send for bereavement,

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**



Q I am looking for a unique birthday present for my best friend. Any ideas?

A) Potter and Mooch is a small, family run business offering a range of beautifully handmade gifts, jewellery and homeware. If you are looking for something special and a little different from the 'norm' then look no further. Delivery is just £2.95 and arrives within

1-2 days in the UK. Head over to their website where you can browse the stock, order online or even over the phone.

www.potterandmooch.co.uk

01903 331744

**Use code PSYCHOLOGIES
for 10% off your first order**

Featured product is 925 sterling silver with Swarovski cream pearls £24



Q Lately I've spent far too much time feeling completely overwhelmed, tearful and panicking that things will never get better. Is there anything you can recommend that I take to help?

A) Flower Essences can be extremely effective in cases like this and are being used by more and more people. They are completely safe to take if you are using medication and they help shift negative emotions and thought patterns to help you

feel like life is manageable again.

Saskia's Flower Essences Strength and Support combination essence is the one to use to help you feel more hopeful, less out of control and supported on all levels. Taking just a few drops under the tongue several times a day can bring you back to feeling like you can cope with life again.

You can find Saskia's award winning essences at www.saskiasfloweressences.com They cost £12 + £3.70 P&P



Q I've had both the flu & the covid vaccines but still worry about getting sick & feeling run down. Are there any natural remedies which can help?

A) Colder weather, less sunlight and spending more time indoors can lead to falling ill more often as well as feeling drained and fatigued. There are a number of ingredients shown to help support the immune system including bee propolis, elderberry & olive leaf which have natural antiviral & antibiotic properties &

are found in Bee prepared immune formula along with other immune supporting nutrients. For energy- bee pollen, ginseng, rose hips & vitamins B12 & B6 are helpful and can be found in Bee energised energy & focus supplement along with organic spirulina and more. Capsule contents of both may be opened into juices & they may be taken together. Find in Holland & Barrett, Ocado & online.



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How to be happier

We've teamed up with the wonderful clinical psychologist Emma Hepburn, aka The Psychology Mum, to help you bring more joy into your life

Feeling good is a fundamental part of happiness. We often describe these feelings as positive emotions, and that's because not only do they make us feel good, they also have a positive impact on our body and health.

Feeling emotions such as joy, pleasure, pride and calm sets off a series of reactions in our brain and body that can manage stress, help us relax, help our body heal, our immune system work better and, ultimately, help us function better and live longer. So, these emotions are an extremely important part of our lives. Experiencing regular feelgood emotions is a fundamental part of happiness.

However, all too often we don't place enough importance on these emotions. Of course, you can't feel good all the time, and many of the things in our lives have an important purpose (such as work to keep us financially sound) but might not always make us feel good. But we do need to prioritise building the things that make us feel good into our lives as primary objectives, not just when our to-do list is done, or slotted in when possible. Feeling good should not be an afterthought, it should be an end in itself.

Follow Emma Hepburn on Instagram @thespsychologymum for more inspiration



'A Toolkit for Happiness' by Emma Hepburn (Quercus, £14.99) is out 30 September





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