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OUR TEAM

Editor Sally Saunders Art Editor Jennifer Ratcliff Chief Sub-Editor and Production Editor Vee Sev. Features Editor Heidi Scrimgeour Associate Editor Anita Chaudhuri Digital Editor and Wellness Director Ali Roff Farrar The Fix Editor Alex Lloyd Contributing Editors Gut Eve Kalinik

Retreats Caroline Sylger Jones

ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION

Tandem Media, Account Manager Nichola Hollands (07548 306670) nichola@tandemmedia.co.uk

Production and Design Manager Andy Welch (01233 220245) andy@tandemmedia.co.uk

MANAGEMENT

Chief Operating Officer Phil Weeden Chief Executive Steve Wright

Managing Director (Lifestyle Brands & 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

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KELSEY media

Words of wisdom from our contributors...



ANNA MATHUR

Life is a struggle between knowing what we need and being told what we want.' writes therapist Anna Mathur. I need to feel connected... Sometimes a text does the trick, but it never offers the quality connection of a proper catch-up over coffee,' Anna offers tips for more balance on page 55

LUCY MANGAN

We are more at ease talking about almost anything other than money,' author Lucy Manaan declares, How do we break this absurd cycle? We begin by talking to our children. We literally change the conversation.' Learn how to do that on page 50





HONEY LANGCASTER-JAMES

'Slowing down gives you time to make stronger connections,' says psychologist Honey Langcaster-James. 'This is helpful if you are drawn to incompatible partners as it encourages you to be mindful of your choices.' Find out how to embrace a more leisurely pace of life and love on page 36

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



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: Iuliana Alexa (iuliana alexa@ringier.ro) Advertising Manager: Monica Pop (monica.pop@ringier.ro)

PSYCHOLOGIES BELGIUM Edition Ventures, Chaussée de Louwain 431D 1830 Lasne Tel: + 32 2 379 29 90 Editorial Director: Marie-Christine De Wasseige (mc.dewasseige@ventures. be) Chief Editor (French): Christiane Thiry (christiane.thiry@ventures.be)

Chief Editor (Flemish): Barbara Van den Aheele (h vandenaheele@ventures he) Advertising Manager: Mannelle Sepulchre (manoelle.sepulchre@ventures.be)

PSYCHOLOGIES RUSSIA Hearst Shkulev Media, Psychologies Russia

31 b Shabolovkava Street

Moscow 115162. Tel: +7 495 981 39 10 President: Viktor Shkulev (vshkulev@hsmedia.ru) Editor-in-Chief: Xsenia Kiseleva (xkiseleva@hsmedia.ru) Publisher and Advertising Manager: Ekatarina Kerova (ekerova@hsmedia.ru)



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Summer's inner glow

Well, it's been a summer like no other – again! The other day, I received an out-of-office email declaring that its sender was away 'exploring the wilds of Kent'. Another friend explained that she had taken a train, a boat and a plane to reach her summertime haven, and she hadn't even left the British Isles! So, if you're perusing this issue from somewhere rather different to your usual holiday destination, don't worry, we've got plenty to warm you up and inspire you right here.

First, learn how slowing down can turn up the heat in your love life on page 36. It's a homage to taking things easy, and the perfect antidote to the instant swipe left or right culture that was becoming the accepted way to find love. If the idea of swiping anything in any direction fills you with dread, you might need to remember the lost art of making your mind up. So many decisions have been taken out of our hands of late that the dizzying array of choices we now face can feel overwhelming (should we sit inside or outside; is my video call outfit appropriate for work; what's the best way to *get* to work?). Fortunately, we've got some simple ways to help you make decisions confidently again on page 44.

For extra confidence boosters, turn to our Dossier on page 61. We know many people are struggling with anxiety right now, so we've called on a range of brilliant experts (hello, Dr Soph) to share their kind, gentle advice on how we can find a way forward at a pace that suits us. Plus, we've got the hilarious Lucy Mangan on teaching your kids about money (page 50), Kim Morgan's guidance on lockdown shopping (page 40) and Caroline Sylger Jones's guide to creating a rejuvenating retreat, inspired by nature (page 92).

So get your floppy hat on, kick back and get ready for a burst of *Psychologies* sunshine, whatever the weather and wherever you are...



Sally Saunders
Editor



I'm excited to share that we've been working hard to create a beautiful, new-look magazine, with new mind, body, heart and soul sections packed with even more features to help you create a life you love and enjoy every day. We can't wait for you to see it next month!





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PHOTOGRAPH: TOM CRITCHELI

Viewpoint

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



COUNT ON ME

Star

letter

Thank you for your Dossier on intuitive wisdom (July). Just at the right time, while contemplating and overthinking (your psychological test was spot on) which route to take in my life and career, I came across 'Find your spark'. What can I say but wow!

It meant so much and resonated more than any article I have read for a long time. I felt heard. My intuition kicked in simply by reading the piece, let alone trying some of the strategies. My mind was clearer and my heart opened, so I could trust myself. Thank you for your wonderful and insightful magazine that brings wisdom, joy and clarity every month. Lisa Bailey

BREAKING UP WAS THE MAKING OF ME

Bianca Barton's story, 'Divorce settlement' (June), resonated with me. My partner left me five years ago and, while it felt awful at the time, I now realise that it was the best thing for me and my family.

It took me three years before I saw that I was living in denial, saying I was fine and even liking the 'you're coping so well' comments – and then I hit rock bottom, my career nosedived and I knew I needed help.

It was the start of a difficult but amazing journey to rediscover myself. Now, my ex and I are on amicable terms, my son has two loving homes and I've completed a master's degree. It's often the toughest moments that show us how resilient we are and open up opportunities! Thanks for reminding me how far I've come. Emma

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



@DezitaODP9
Great article 'Kind
boundaries' in July's
@PsychologiesMag. We
can struggle to find a
balance setting and
maintaining boundaries.
Elizabeth Heathcote
nicely sums up how to
approach setting healthy
boundaries that are
essential for self-care

@SharphamTrust
We're in July's edition
of @PsychologiesMag
thanks to the divine
@QueenofRetreats! She
visited our amazing Bathing
House holiday let at water's
edge on the #RiverDart for
her own peaceful
#natureconnection #retreat

@LucyGoBag
Really delicate
process bringing back staff
who were furloughed – for
both those who were and
weren't. Great to see it
tackled in May copy of
@PsychologiesMag. Strong
advice on how to tackle it
in a team meeting as there
are inevitably issues with
self-esteem and resentment

Read all about it! DO ANY OF THESE LETTERS SPEAK TO YOU? IF YOU MISSED A COPY OF 'PSYCHOLOGIES; WANT

YOU'VE TAUGHT ME SOMETHING

The past year has been overwhelming. Isolation, financial and social worries... so many worries, like an avalanche of negativity. I'm a teacher, and there has been so much teacher bashing. We haven't worked enough, we want to be paid more, we don't care, we take too many risks, we don't take enough... It is toughest, however, to see the impact of lockdown on the children, and that anxiety isn't just an adult problem. Our woes have entered the world of children.

Your magazine has opened my mind to the ways that I can distance my emotions when necessary and embrace them when needed. I am filtering those strategies to help the children off-load more, engage more and explore their worries. Vanessa Smith

PHOTO COMPETITION

When I was out walking, I saw this gap in the hedgerow that provided a perfect window on the fields beyond. It brought a lump to my throat because nature frames everything in my life and gives me purpose and pleasure. I feel incredibly lucky to have such beautiful places to walk, and more inspired than ever to help protect them. Wendy Seddon



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 wimner, 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



I'd like to thank...

my mother-in-law, Evelyn,

I would like to thank you Evelyn, my mother-in-law of 46 years, for the support and love that you have given me. We have never had a cross word and that is because you are not judgmental and you see the good in all those you deal with. You help, you don't interfere.

You are patient, you are kind and I have been very fortunate that fate, via your son, brought us together.

Thank you for all your help with your grandchildren (the boys) in the early years; for being there for them and for us. You are my friend. You are my role model. You are an amazing woman.

Thank you for being in my life.

Judy



This month's gratitude letter, star letter and chosen photo win a free copy of our enlightening bookazine, 'Find Your Calm', worth £6.99! Go to shop.kelsey. co.uk/product/BZPSYFYIC to order a copy.

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NEW! from PSYCHOLOGIES

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DEEP DOWN, many of us feel like a fraud – and think that our accomplishments are the result of luck versus talent. This phenomenon is known as imposter syndrome and reflects the belief that you think you're not good enough despite evidence to the contrary. We've asked top writers and brilliant experts to offer their best advice so you can create a self-help plan to manage the way you feel on a daily basis.

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The Fix

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COMPILED BY ALEX LLOYD

Choosing your holiday read is child's play

Our favourite children's books play a formative part of our youth, inspiring our imaginations and introducing us to complex topics and emotions, such as fear, love and loss. But returning to these stories as adults can also be beneficial, reconnecting us with our inner child and bringing a fresh perspective to the trials and tribulations of life. Katherine Rundell, a children's author and academic, calls them 'literary vodka' – a distillation of essential truths we could do with reminding ourselves of periodically. So, whether Harry Potter, Matilda or Paddington is your childhood literary poison, dust off that old copy and drink them in – with a lashings of ginger beer, of course!



DGRAPH; GETTY IMAGES

The Fix Thought-provoking culture, creative ideas, insightful science and inspiring gifts



HACK INTO HAPPINESS



LONGING FOR PERMISSION?

Step out of your own way and allow yourself to do work that brings you joy in life, advises coach Kia Cannons

A top regret of the dying is 'I wish I'd let myself be happier' and a critical factor in experiencing contentment is, in my opinion, to do a job that you love. If you're stuck waiting for approval from someone, picture your last day on earth, and imagine meeting the person you could have become if you had stepped into your potential. Everyone is torn between passion and fear and the quality of your life comes down to which you listen to and act upon. You're worthy of creating a life you love and, remember, the only person who can give you the go-ahead is you.

GROW WITH THE TIDE

Forget about a beach body - focus instead on building a beach brain.

The pandemic has shown how crucial spending time in nature is for mental wellbeing. but being beside the sea has benefits all of

Neuroscientist Heidi Hanna says this is down to the three Ss - sun. sand and surf. Walking barefoot on sand has a grounding effect, and makes you focus on the physical experience of walking, while the sound of waves calms vour heart rate. The atmospheric light from sea and sky at the beach boosts your natural light intake and vitamin D levels.* No wonder people who live at the coast have 40 per cent lower stress levels, according to a study by the University of Essex.**

Recreate this state of mind at home by listening to ocean sounds as you work.

Missed an issue? Complete your mindful living Library. Order back issues of 'psychologies' at



Art for heart's sake



Art by Post sent monthly poetry and visual arts activity booklets to 4,500 people, many of whom were shielding and isolated. The free scheme is part of the growing social prescribing movement that champions community activities to improve health and wellbeing.

An exhibition of 600 pieces created by participants – aged 18 to 103 – will open at the centre on 20 September before touring the UK for five months, giving a unique snapshot of life during the pandemic.

For more, see southbank centre.co.uk/artbypost



OUR ROAD TO RESILIENCE

Remember, remember the joy of September

By Katie Piper



My mind keeps replaying conversations I've had with my children recently. They have spoken animatedly of their hopes and fears about the new school year

in a few weeks' time. They are keen to learn new things, make new friends and have new experiences. For us adults, disappointment as summer starts to fade – and that it wasn't the four gloriously sunny months we'd dreamed of – is common. But my kids have reminded me that this time of year is a chance to regroup, recentre and grow.

Here are my tips to breathe vitality into your life as we head towards the tail end of summer. Let's learn from the attitude of children and treat September as a time for sparkly fresh goals and uncharted, glorious horizons.

Write down all the things you have to look forward to on a planner or calendar – somewhere you'll see them regularly. Be reminded of the moments of light and happiness that autumn and winter bring.

Forget about your resolutions for this year – situations change and so do human minds! The best way to set goals is to keep them short-term, and 90 days is perfect. Is there something you'd like to change or achieve by December?

For children, this is an exciting time because new experiences are guaranteed. Let's follow their lead. Could you look into that volunteering post you always think about? Or book the salsa classes you fancy? Don't underestimate the power of doing.

The flush of motivation when receiving a new timetable at school is powerful. Create your own itinerary to help you feel on top of your commitments, while also seeing at a glance how much spare time you have for wonderful things.

For uplifting escapism, read 'The New Me' by Elizabeth Neep (Bookouture, £7.99). I loved it!

Go to psychologies.co.uk for more words of wisdom and strength from our monthly columnist, the indomitable Katie Piper



QUESTIONS TO LIVE WELL

Do you feel nervous about stepping out into the world again? Our in-house coach, Nikki Peterson, shares key questions to ponder if the thought of re-emergence fills you with dread:

- If reintegration scares you, what small steps can you take to re-enter society?
- What are you most afraid of about returning to normal?
- What boundaries can you put in place to protect yourself?
- What can you practise to reduce your social anxiety in certain situations?

Read our Dossier about social anxiety on page 61. Follow @nikkipeterson... and find out more at tigerbeecoaching.co.uk



FILM OF THE MONTH

THE DUKE. DIRECTED BY ROGER MICHELL

A splendidly British comedy heist movie that pairs the brilliant Jim Broadbent and Helen Mirren and neatly does away with the idea that 'they don't make 'em like they used to' to deliver a tale reminiscent of the classic How To Steal A Million. It's Newcastle

in the 1960s and Kempton Bunton is a man fighting for social justice, namely that a pensioner should get a free TV licence! Impulsively, he steals Goya's Portrait Of The Duke Of Wellington and issues a list of demands.

This enjoyable and heartwarming film has a charming and understated quality, with a nostalgic mise en scène using a lively soundtrack and footage of vintage England. It has a light tone but does not shy away from weightier issues, such as grief and prejudice. Expect charismatic performances and an acerbic and humourous script. MB



Can't resist a salty chip?

The hankering for certain foods is vital for survival, research shows. Taste is the way your brain evaluates what it is eating before it is swallowed, and certain foods trigger a pleasing response because they contain essential nutrients.*

Ecologists think humans have evolved to be drawn to particular foods because they supply elements we can't live without but aren't widely available.

This is why an aged steak will delight your umami taste buds – meat is rich in nitrogen, needed to make muscle protein. The accompanying chips have

the perfect amount of sodium, making them tastier and more appealing than a handful of table salt!



Loop de loop

Getting a song stuck in your head can be an irritation, but a new study found that night-time earworms can also disrupt your rest. While many of us listen to music to wind down before bedtime, this habit could have the opposite effect for people prone to involuntary musical imagery.**

Sleep researcher Michael Scullin tested the theory by playing original and instrumental versions of three catchy songs – Taylor Swift's Shake It Off, Carly Rae Jepson's Call Me Maybe and Journey's Don't Stop Believin' – to 50 participants before bed. Those who caught an earworm had greater difficulty falling asleep, more awakenings and spent more time in light stages of sleep.

Evict earworms by engaging in a task that requires full focus to distract your brain before bed. Just don't hum Can't Get You Out Of My Head at the same time!



SHIFTING
YOUR
BEDTIME
AND WAKE TIME AN HOUR
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RISK OF DEPRESSION BY UP
TO 23 PER CENT. SCIENTISTS
FOUND EARLY RISERS WERE
LESS LIKE TO SUFFER LOW
MOOD, POSSIBLY DUE TO
MORE DAYLIGHT EXPOSURE[†]



project RATE OF BRAIN AGEING
Compassionate and benevolent thoughts keep you



Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Harvard Medical School compared the brain of a Tibetan Buddhist monk with people in the general population and

found that the monk's brain was ageing at a significantly slower rate.††

They concluded that the reason for the slower ageing was his intensive meditation practice, which involved both mindfulness and loving-kindness.

voung, explains scientist and author David Hamilton

Scientists imaged his brain four times over a 14-year period and compared his scans with those of 105 non-meditating people aged between 25 and 66. Using machine learning data analysis to accurately compute the rate of brain ageing, they discovered that at the age of 41, the effective biological age of the monk's brain was only 33.

Join Psychologies' kindness tsar David Hamilton live on Facebook @Psychologiesmagaine for his free kindness challenge and monthly broadcasts — next on 18 August at 12pm. Catch up via Psychologies TV at tinyun! com/psykind. For more, join the Psychologies' Life Leap Club, free when you subscribe to the magazine. The Little Book Of Kindness' Octopus, £6.99 and The Five Side Effects Of Kindness' (Hay House, £12.99) by David Hamilton are out now



Join Ollie's army

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

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

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

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

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

Licence to help

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

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



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Just when you think you've got things sorted...

BY HARRIET MINTER

HE NEW PODCAST FROM SELF-HELP guru Glennon Doyle unexpectedly upset my apple cart. In an episode of We Can Do Hard Things, she focuses on boundaries and how important they are for our mental wellbeing. If you've read this column before, you will know that I heartily agree with her, because saying a polite but firm 'no' is one of the basics for a happy life. I was, however, intrigued when she raised the idea that perhaps, as well as learning when to assert our boundaries, we also need to stretch them. When does a boundary stop being a fence that protects us and become a cage that locks us away?

Isn't it always the case that just as you think you've got an area of life nailed, somebody comes along to show you that you're not as good at it as you think you are? As I listened, I started to see boundaries that might be causing me more problems than they were solving. There was the work boundary that said that unless a commission fell exactly into the topics I was focusing on, I wouldn't take it – which meant I turned down work I might have found interesting and would have earned me more money.

There was the boundary that said I wasn't to buy anything until I'd reached my savings goal – which resulted in me badly mending jumpers that had seen better days and having to restart my laptop 20 times a day

because I wouldn't admit that I needed a new one.

And then there was a boundary around relationships that set out exactly how I should be treated and what I wanted in a partner. Helpful to some extent, but blocking me from allowing someone to express their own version of love for me, even if it wasn't quite what I had envisaged.

It threw me into a tailspin. Had I been doing boundaries wrong all this time? Did I need to figure them all out again? The last time I did that, I ended up on a 10-year personal development quest and, to be honest, I could just do with a little break from all the growth. But that's never how life works, is it?

So, I've spent the past few weeks having a reassessment and looking at the boundaries I've sneakily put in place without telling anyone, and I've spoken up about them. I've let myself lower some that have been my protection over the years and I've experienced what that feels like. (Spoiler alert - it feels terrifying and I've had to remind myself that it's OK to put them back if necessary.) And I've come to the conclusion that, when it comes to boundaries, I'm a beginner again, and that's fine. In fact, being

back at the beginning is a blessing because it means there are still lessons to be learned and adventures to be had and, after a year in which we've all felt stuck, that is something for which I can only be grateful.

For weekly wisdom from Harriet Minter, sign up for her newsletter at tinyletter.com/ harrietminter and follow her on Twitter and Instagram @harrietminter

66 Perfection does not exist... We all feel we're not enough and failing 99

I'm A Celebrity... winner, author, TV presenter, influencer extraordinaire and mother of three Giovanna Fletcher on why it's her calling to support other women

WORDS: GEMMA CALVERT

VERY WOMAN NEEDS
a Giovanna Fletcher in
her life – non-judgmental,
always with a willing ear
and compassionate, wise words to
turn negatives into positives.

Most of us don't personally know the mother of three, vlogger, author and YouTube star, but anyone who has listened to her acclaimed podcast, *Happy Mum, Happy Baby*, based on her bestselling book of the same name (Hodder & Stoughton, £10.99), feels as if they do. In its seventh series, in just four years the podcast has been downloaded more than 14 million times – and the draw is crystal clear.

Relatable, warm and delightfully honest, Fletcher is also brave. She insists that she is not shy to tackle any topic of motherhood-related conversation and has covered the whole gamut, from the loss of a baby to maternal judgment and our 'craving for perfection that doesn't exist'.

Last January, during her coveted interview with Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate, also a mother of three, opened up about 'mum guilt' and, for the first time, feeling terrified

by post-birth photo calls on the steps of the exclusive Lindo Wing at St Mary's Hospital in London.

Fletcher's relaxed, calm manner, whether she's chatting to royalty, high-profile parents, such as Davina McCall, Joe Wicks and Fearne Cotton, or the latest reality star to join the mum club, adds to her appeal and, thanks to her 'in it together' take on motherhood, she has become a virtual friend to millions. Mothers feel safe in her company, understood and supported. Needless to say, downloads of *Happy Mum, Happy Baby* burgeoned during lockdown.

'People needed that normality in their life, and escapism,' explains Fletcher, who has two million followers on Instagram. 'It's incredible to think that those conversations helped at that time. For me, the podcast feels like therapy every time we record an episode.

'We all feel we're not enough, not doing a good job and failing. Knowing that's what the next mum thinks, and the next, is the best thing ever!' She adds: 'While doing the podcast, one of the biggest things



Giovanna Fletcher with friend Emma Willis, who will undertake a 100km hike with her



I've learned is more about maternal mental health and how important it is to stay aware and be on top of how we're feeling.'

A woman who helps Fletcher in that department is close friend, broadcaster Emma Willis. 'Em is very good at asking if you're OK, and then prodding again and going, 'Are you OK?". The number of times I've been with Emma and started crying... I have great friends from childhood, but there's something about Emma that just lets me know, no matter what, she's got my back – and that's a reciprocal thing. It's a "no matter what" friendship and friendship like that is incredible.'

Speaking via video call from her home in Middlesex, where she lives with her husband, McFly singer and bestselling children's author Tom Fletcher, and sons Buzz, seven, Buddy, five, and Max, three, Fletcher is in typically candid form.

She reveals that being isolated from friends and family during lockdown was tough. She felt 'foggy' and anxious, she says, 'overwhelmed and overloaded'. Crucially, however, she didn't panic. 'Being aware of it is the first thing and saying, "Hold on! It's a mental health thing. It's not because you are a bad person or failing," she says, adding that she coped by 'lowering standards' and being kinder to herself - for example, by 'getting real' about productivity. In the midst of homeschooling her older sons, she sensibly pushed back a book deadline and kept moving with regular exercise, either jogging or walking in the fresh air, or squeezing in a workout after the children's bedtime.

For someone who is knowledgeable about maternal mental health, it's surprising to discover that Fletcher only recently grasped the importance of alone time. 'I used to say me time was family time – and I agree with that to a point – but actually being you, on your own, free of everything is important,' she says. 'It's a very different feeling when you are out with the children, risk-assessing the whole time, and when you are out walking or running by yourself.'

Another supportive woman

'I used to say me time was family time but being on your own is important... It's a very different feeling when you are out walking or running by yourself"



The nation, and Ant & Dec, fell in love with Fletcher and crowned her Queen of the Castle in *I'm A Celebrity...*

in her life is psychotherapist Anna Mathur, a 'mentor' who helps Fletcher reframe her thoughts and grow her expectations of the down time she deserves. 'Anna talks about how going to the toilet, having a shower and brushing your teeth aren't luxuries – they're self-respect!' she says.

'Everyone who comes into your life teaches you something and you evolve. I'm constantly trying to learn more, taking on new practices and learning to be kinder to myself.'

In recent years, Fletcher has travelled all over world, including Oman and Nepal, to complete charity challenges in aid of breast cancer awareness charity Coppafeel!, for which she is an ambassador. In September, Fletcher and Willis are leading 100 women on a gruelling 100km hike across the Scottish

Highlands, an endeavour that would intimidate most people – but not Gi, as she's affectionately known. Fletcher describes such expeditions as 'the best for body and soul', and talks wistfully about being free of her phone and responsibilities, as well as the joy of 'deep and meaningful' conversations with other walkers, many of whom have personal experiences of breast cancer. It is a pain that Fletcher understands. She lost her aunt, Marilyn, to the disease, as well as her 'dear friend' Molly, with whom she worked in a florist's when she was 16.

'It's close to my heart. These women made me see how important it is that people are aware of all the symptoms of breast cancer. We all think it's a lump [that we need to look out for], but it's any changes: Dimpling, puckering, inverted nipple, nipple rash, discharge,

pain in your armpit and up to your collar bone, and swelling. The more we arm ourselves with knowledge, the higher our chance of survival.

Unlike charity treks, when Fletcher doesn't switch off, last December, when she was holed up for 20 days in a Welsh castle for the first UK-based I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!, she unexpectedly found space to breathe.

'It was the first time that I stopped properly,' she says. 'For the first week, I kept busy because I'm so used to having energy and getting things done. Then I was voted camp leader and I had to just sit in that red chair! It taught me to be more in the moment,' adding that the experience, from which she emerged victorious as Queen of the Castle, tweaked her mum modus operandi somewhat.

'As parents, we're so often going:



"In a minute. I'm just going to do this." There are certain things that have to be done in the moment, but you can put things aside, such as the washing up, and put actual life first.'

Fletcher and her camp mates, whom she calls 'instant family' have a 'happy place' WhatsApp group that's in regular use. The contestants watched Shane Richie in the musical Everybody's Talking About Jamie and plans are afoot for a reunion at TV presenter Vernon Kay's home. 'Vernon keeps calling it closure and I feel as if we're meeting up to say, "Bye guys!". He's breaking up with us properly!' she laughs.

Many happy memories lie within the walls of Gwrych Castle and Fletcher can't wait to dissect them with the people who truly understand. After coming home, she downloaded the series onto hard drives for each of "As parents, we're so often going: 'In a minute. I'm just going to do this.'
There are certain things that have to be done in the moment, but you can put things aside, such as the washing up, and put actual life first"

her camp mates. 'I said, "Even if you don't watch it now, have it, because in 20 years, you might want to use it as a springboard for your memories."

Ask Fletcher to springboard back to her childhood in Essex, growing up with her Italian father, Mario, mother Kim, elder sister Giorgina and brother Mario Falcone – a star on *The Only Way Is Essex* – and she recalls a girl who was always singing, dancing and being 'very loud'.

In comparison with her happy home life, Fletcher says school was 'difficult'. Between the ages of six and nine, she was bullied so badly she was forced to move schools. But, in classic Fletcher style, she observes the good to come from what was clearly a terrible time. Remembering how she escaped her tormentors by circling the school field alone during break, 'singing >>>

and acting out little scenes', she says it was all practice for what she now does best: storytelling.

'Although it's horrible to think of that little girl, she's part of who I am. She made me who I am,' she says.

Fletcher went on to study at the Sylvia Young Theatre School, where she met Tom when they were both 13, and now has 11 books to her name, including two young adult fiction stories that she co-wrote with Tom.

When the conversation turns to another painful time in her life - years of self-loathing during her teens and 20s when she felt 'curvier' than her 'slim siblings', the positives are trickier to find. 'It's crazy to think how much time I wasted wishing I was something else. I look at photos and think, "What? Where is this curviness?",' says Fletcher, who finally developed a healthy relationship with her body when she fell pregnant with her eldest, Buzz, in 2013, following a miscarriage the year before, shortly after she was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome and hormonal imbalance that sparked excessive hair growth. spots and weight gain.

'Being pregnant changed everything,' she says. 'I felt as if my body needed healing and forgiveness and it was the first time that my body was growing and shame wasn't attached to it.' Her thinking was: 'Look at my body – it grows humans, feeds humans and it keeps them alive!'

Fletcher has created an inspiring space on social media where she motivates women to love the skin they're in and, in 2019, as a beacon of body positivity, she completed a 10km charity run in her underwear. The aim? To encourage women to celebrate their physical selves, instead of habitually resorting to self-criticism.

Are there plans to grow any more humans in that awesome body of hers? 'I think the shop is shut,' she says. 'I think... but never say never. I feel so lucky to have my boys. Right now, I'm looking forward to the next chapter. Leaving the house without a changing bag is transformational – I'm going out with my handbag! Until Max came along. I was saying "we're going to



"Being pregnant changed everything. I felt as if my body needed healing and forgiveness and it was the first time that my body was growing and shame wasn't attached to it... Look at my body – it grows humans, feeds humans and keeps them alive!"

have another one" but I don't have that feeling now. If it happens at some point, what a gift. But, right now, I feel excited about the chapter we're in.'

While Fletcher speaks with pride about her work, home is where her heart is. Her marriage, she says, is stronger since they had children and Tom, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2010, is 'in a good place'. But she refuses to sugar-coat the truth. 'There are moments when there's so much going on and the kids are so demanding, it's a case of: "You can't ask more of me right now, so if you've got any needs, I'm not meeting them. I'm at full capacity. I'm at breaking point!" she says, 'What's important is that we don't take it for granted that the other one is there. For us, it's about communication,'

To support Giovanna Fletcher's Highlands CoppaFeel! trek, go to coppafeel enthuse.com /pf/celeb-team-captains-official-00a12



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

I want to go back to my homeland but my family isn't keen?

I left Wales at the age of 18 and later met my husband, who is not Welsh, and we have lived all over the place. Twenty-five years after leaving, I would like to return to the land of my birth. My husband and two daughters don't like the idea but I want my parents to enjoy their grandchildren before it's too late. Should I put my foot down about it? Alex, 44

I see this happening in my network of New Zealand expats too: as we get older, the pull towards our roots gets stronger, sometimes triggered by seeing our children growing up in a way that is so different from our own.

The person I turn to for advice on relationships is psychologist John Gottman, who can predict divorce with 90 per cent accuracy! There is a small network of Gottman-endorsed couples therapists in the UK, and I spoke to Alison Collis. She made a distinction between core needs and flexible needs. It sounds as if you've been flexible until now, so the urgency of this feeling might be a surprise to your family, and maybe even to you.

The first challenge will be to clearly express what you mean and want – what is so important? Is it your own time with your parents, giving them time with their grandchildren or that whenever you leave Wales, you want to have a plan for the next visit?

It doesn't mean that there is a

perfect solution – the Gottman research says that 69 per cent of relationship problems never get resolved. That in itself doesn't matter. What counts is your ability to hold onto respect and admiration within the couple, so you can approach any challenges as a team.

One way to do this is to revisit happier memories of getting together in the first place. What dreams did you share with your husband then, and what are your dreams now? Again, they don't need to match, but you need to know and honour each other's aspirations.

Collis used the metaphor of a bagel: In the centre are your core needs, but the bigger part is the flexibility around those. Is it possible to find a different way for you to spend quality time with your parents, while working out a longer term plan? The way you discuss this will be an influential role model for your daughters on how to handle their own conflicts in the future.

gottman.com; alisoncollis.com



MARY FENWICK is a writer, speaker and executive coach; she's 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





"My fuse is so short these days and I'm tired of myself"

I have completely lost my patience over the past year. I get angry all the time, whether it's at the state of my teenage son's bedroom, my partner never talking to me or people not wearing their masks properly.

I was calm before but, recently, I get cross constantly. Please help me cheer up, because it's getting me down. Angela, 50

Your letter will get nods of recognition because many of us feel this way and, even if we don't, it only takes one visit to the supermarket or a news story to remind us. It's a good sign that you are feeling something. If you had tipped over into burnout, you would feel more cynical, detached or lacking

in belief that things could get better.

The best advice I can give you is to ignite your curiosity and discover new parts of yourself. Learning will give you a sense of accomplishment and a chance to lose yourself in something that you love. A friend took up welding through a course with Women That Fabricate and says, 'I lose track of time, and it fills me with so much joy that other things stop mattering.'

The website Action for Happiness has other ideas, all evidence-based, ranging from spending time in nature to finding a way of volunteering in your local community.

None of this is to suggest you should fight your feelings. We get ourselves in a real tangle when we feel angry, then shame for feeling it, then impatience with the whole cycle. If that's what's happening, it might be useful to look into acceptance and commitment therapy. Coach Simon Mundie's podcast with psychotherapist Russ Harris is a good place to start. craftcourses.com/providers/wtf-workshops; actionforhappiness.org; play.acast.com/s/dont-tell-me-the-score-with-simon-mundie/managing uncomfortablethoughtsandfeelings-drussharris



"Mum's partner won't let her go to a home but I can't cope"

My mother has been unwell for two years and I think she needs to go into a care facility to be properly looked after. Her partner won't agree to it and wants to keep her at home with him.

The result is that I have to go over regularly and look after both of them. I think he just wants to keep her there so she can also take care of him! I don't want to be selfish, but it's wearing me out because I also work full-time. Can you help me see a way forward? Ellen, 56

It sounds as if you feel alone without siblings or a partner to share the emotional, let alone practical, burden. I wonder whether you have fully acknowledged that the role you are taking on makes you one of the UK's nearly seven million unpaid carers.

The national organisation, Carers UK, has a recent report called 'Breaks or breakdown', which says that the past year has been particularly tough on people in your position, with less support and a feeling that there is nothing else to life but work and care. The point they are making is that if carers don't get time off, they can't fully function in their role.

I know it might seem radical, but if you were to start planning a break for yourself, it would become more obvious to your mother and her partner that this situation can't go on. It might be worth speaking to your GP to have an assessment of the impact on your health. Your surgery should also have information about local support for your mother, but you might even consider paying for short-term residential care.

Carers UK has a helpline and they will help you put your own needs back into the equation. They can also advise about your rights at work as someone with caring responsibilities. *Call 0808 808 7777 or email advice@carersuk.org*

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It's a bountiful life

Frugality and caution have their place, but don't allow a scarcity mindset to consume your hope and steal your dreams, writes **Vee Sey**



Archie, my grandfather, left school at the age of 14 between two world-ravaging wars and worked as a butcher's boy to support his poor family. At the end of a back-breaking

day for pennies, he loaded the basket on the front of his bicycle with discarded bones, which his mother would boil to make broth. Despite being deployed to South Africa, meeting his sweetheart and, through hard work and a sense of duty to his brood, creating a life of plenty in comparison, we would find him unashamedly picking the mould off old bread before spreading it with dripping and eating it with unbridled delight – a wartime snack for a wartime mentality.

While 'waste not, want not' is commendable, Archie seldom spoiled himself, even when his wallet was full. He favoured offal – tripe, lights and tongue, God settle my stomach – because nothing edible should be squandered and those were his childhood staples. He would always be the boy from the slums of Northampton who did not have enough to eat.

He was also a profound thinker, a poetic soul and, despite his lack of education, an erudite man who read prolifically, wept softly to opera and made short work of the cryptic crossword. He had the heart and mind of an artist, but such highfalutin ideas were beyond his station. Archie knew his place and he did not budge.

Archie may have been bemused by my observations and proclaim that he had more than his heart desired but, to my mind, his fear of lack was not only about food. He saved for a rainy day – wise, yes – and worked in the same, safe job all his life rather than take a risk and grab what he deserved with its accompanying pay cheque. He diligently busied himself every second of the day – another admirable quality, until it exhausts you – because time, too, was always running out. He must have been so tired of scratching for slim pickings.

Archie's scarcity mindset served him in practical ways but stifled his potential and shrank his

horizons. He waited until he was old and drove hesitantly before he bought the car of his dreams, a golden Mercedes that he polished lovingly every week until it shone. And he never returned to his beloved England to see his family because that would have been an indulgence. None of this is criticism of my giving patriarch, but I wish he had taken more for himself. He thought that others would suffer in the wake of his joy, fulfilment or rest.

His legacy lives on in positive ways, but I aim to change the pattern in others. I too am a girl who was told to count the sheets of toilet paper I used and got more Marmite than cheese in packed lunches. My long-suffering children know that I will base a meal around a browning bunch of parsley and I proudly repurpose leftovers that everyone wishes I'd binned three days ago. I despise waste and woe betide the child who leaves the tap running or the light on!

But, less literally speaking and discounting poverty, I know that blindly assuming there is not a plethora of happiness, love and success for you in life is akin to putting glue on the soles of your shoes and dousing the flame of your creativity and aspirations. When we believe there are plenty of wonderful things for us all to share, and that the universe wants to bestow us with gifts, we develop, nurture ourselves and attract what we desire. This is an abundance mindset and studies show that it even lengthens our lives. We should have respite after a tough week, buy an affordable treat and aim for that star, because it's twinkling just for us.

On the flip side of this story, Archie taught me something else, and I think he knew this part all along: When you are, even while striving, thankful for what you do have, from the thinnest smear of dripping to the gleam on your tawny car, you realise that you already have many joyous things, and this dual mindset – gratitude and faith in abundance – has the power to bring you so much more, if you'll only open your mind. @veelanesev

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Sponsor me!

Are you considering signing up for an event to raise money for a good cause? **Heidi Scrimgeour** finds out why now might be exactly the right time



ROM OUR COVER STAR, Giovanna Fletcher, trekking 100km to raise money for breast cancer awareness charity CoppaFeel! to many of my friends committing to their first sponsored challenge this year, it seems everyone is adjusting to post-lockdown life by turning their attention to causes bigger than themselves. Whether it's climbing a mountain or organising a cake sale, doing something for charity seems to be the thing to do.

It's no wonder that lockdown has unearthed our altruistic side. After a tough year of social isolation, we're itching to get out into the world and the thought of doing good and spreading cheer is a comfort. If we can change things for others, we can experience change ourselves – it's a cliche, but we can "be the change we want to see in the world", 'says psychotherapist and mental health author Sharie Coombes. 'Establishing



that we can make a difference to others, even when we are struggling ourselves, also helps us learn that we are worthwhile, connected and therefore not alone.'

Depending on the type of charity challenge that you do, some of the skills required can also be applied to your own problems. 'Charity events remind us that we are resourceful and resilient,' adds Coombes. 'Physically or emotionally challenging ourselves creates endorphins, which lift mood and sustain effort, adding to our self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence.'

For many, lockdown meant reconsidering disrupted careers and time to ponder what gives us purpose. But, alongside the urge to shake things up and do something meaningful with our lives, many of us felt more distressed than before. 'When we feel anxious, our attention goes inwards,' explains psychotherapist Olivia James. 'We can get self-absorbed and

"You get to see the bigger picture... Helping others can bring balance and perspective, giving us a little holiday from ourselves"

isolated and our minds can go into a spiral of worry. In contrast, getting involved with a charity focuses our attention outwards, encouraging us to dwell on other people's needs.'

If anxious feelings linger after lockdown, a sponsored event could be the perfect antidote. Doing something that benefits someone else can also bring a sense of momentum if you feel stuck. 'It's movement in a different direction – you get to see the bigger picture,' says James. 'Helping others can bring balance and perspective, giving us a little holiday from ourselves. There are definite mental health benefits from volunteering, and the idea of service appears in all the major world religions.'

Connecting meaningfully with

others also activates the vagus nerve, prompting a nervous system response that has a soothing effect, making us feel calm and safe.

But signing up for a sponsored event isn't just about shifting focus away from yourself. My first half-marathon was a pretty selfish act. I had two young sons and a 10-month-old daughter, so the realisation that my training schedule would buy me some serious me time made the idea compelling. An hour soaking in the bath to listen to a podcast? No chance! But don my running shoes and take my post-baby self for a training run and no one argued – in fact, they thought I was a hero.

A physical charitable endeavour can also give you motivation that you might otherwise battle to find. If you want to exercise, but can't seem to commit to a schedule or keep making excuses to put it off, the accountability that comes from doing it for charity can be a driving factor. It's always tough forcing myself out for a run, but it was tougher still to wriggle out of it when my perseverance meant raising money for a children's charity. As my training runs got longer and more gruelling, reflecting on those affected by the charity I was supporting kept me going when I felt like giving up.

If you choose to fundraise for charity, it's common to have a personal connection with the organisation, and the benefits are even more significant. Feeling helpless in the face of a loved one dealing with an illness or health condition is disempowering, but channelling that emotion into doing something to raise money for a related charity feels like making a difference.

Doing something philanthropic can also be a helpful way to deal with grief. This is pertinent if you lost someone during the pandemic, whether through Covid or otherwise, says Coombes: 'Widening your horizons helps with loss. It's good to grieve and acknowledge your loss and not push through the emotions because that can lead to longer term melancholia – however, it's beneficial to maintain a sense of life beyond loss. Your challenge could honour the memory of your loved one as a celebration of everything that they meant to you.'

Charities are already starting to see a surge in interest. 'We've had a spike in bookings as restrictions start to lift and people feel more comfortable about getting back out there and taking part in group events,' says Calum Frampton of Dream Challenges, which hosts charity events.

'We're restarting British events this month, such as the Hadrian's Wall

trek, which is hugely popular, and we're also getting lots of interest in bucket-list events for the end of the year, such as Kilimanjaro or Everest Base Camp. People are keen to travel again, but also to make a difference for those around them.'

Whether you forge a meaningful, long-term connection with a particular charity or simply discover what you're made of in terms of determination and strength, deciding to undertake a challenge or activity for charity can be a life-changing experience. It's been several years since my half-marathon but, every year, I toy with the idea of doing it again. Once you know that you've got it in you to achieve something significant with a purpose that goes beyond yourself, it's difficult to stop there. In fact, I think now might be the moment to get my running shoes out from under the bed.

 $coppa feel. org; drsharie. com; harleystreet coach. com; \\ dream-challenges. com$

"It's tough forcing myself to run, but tougher still to wriggle out of it when my perseverance meant raising money for a children's charity"



Reach out to others

You don't have to take on the world by yourself. People may want to help you, themselves and society – as well as the recipient of your good deed, so you don't have to fly solo.

Be realistic
Even small
challenges take
courage and energy. You
don't have to do something
massive to raise money for
a good cause. Choose an
event or challenge that's
realistic, given your work,
time and family constraints.

Practise self-care
Don't be a martyr
when it comes to
accomplishing your
challenge. Excessive
sacrifice can lead to
resentment and the possible
loss of drive and focus.



"THIS WORKED FOR ME"

Motivated by grief and a desire to make a difference, journalist Lebby Eyres has raised £10,000 for charity over the past decade. 'After my mother died of breast cancer in 2008, I struggled to cope with the loss and the twin pressures of looking after my ageing dad and young children,' she says. 'I decided to tackle those pressures by adding another

- taking part in the 26.2-mile Moonwalk in 2010. I trained by walking to and from work and early on Sunday mornings. I found that the time on my own helped me sort out my head and gave me a focus.'

After her father's death in 2013, Eyres did the Moonwalk again. Since then, fundraising and running marathons has become a habit. 'I remember seeing a woman in front of me at the London Marathon with a picture of her dad on her back,' she says. 'She was raising money for the Stroke Association and it said 'If he can walk, I can run'. It makes me well up even now – that's why we do these bonkers events.' instagram.com/lebbyeyres



"THIS WORKED FOR ME"

Jen Parker, a book publisher, lost her mother to cancer in 2019 and decided to abseil down a bridge in her memory. 'My mother died shortly before my 33rd birthday in 2019. She was my biggest cheerleader and best

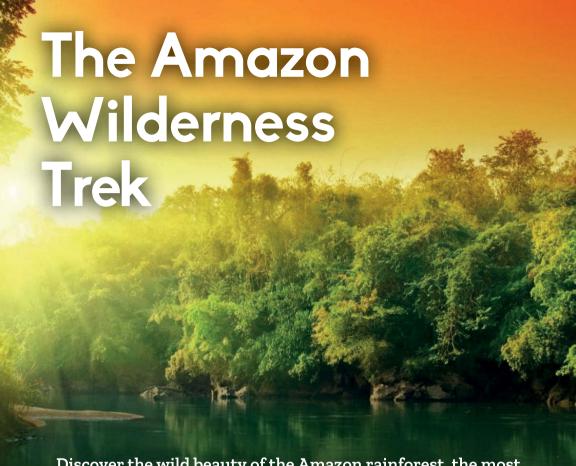
friend,' says Parker, 'We

loved celebrating her

birthday together and I was anxious about how I would feel as it approached. I posted a selfie raising a glass to her with the hashtag #vivelaviv and asked people to join with a selfie and donate money to Leicester Hospice Charity, the incredible hospice that looked after her. I raised more than £100, which felt amazing,' she says.

'The following year, I decided to abseil down a bridge, despite my crippling fear of heights. It was stressful, especially with lockdown making everything uncertain, but I enjoyed it so much that I did it twice, raising £3,000. I even had a moment of peace with the bridge – for which Mum held a quirky fascination – all of which combined to ease my grief.' fuzzyflamingo.co.uk





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Scale back worry

Use the power of numbers in your journal to assess your emotions and move towards calm, says coach and author Jackee Holder

AST WEEK, I STOOD BEHIND A WOMAN IN the supermarket who took several long moments to wipe down most of the surface area of her trolley, compared with the split second I took to sanitise mine. A few days later, I overheard a conversation where the person was explaining how they had to find a builder for a project, despite having a close family member who is experienced in that trade and usually does building work for them. Their relative had not left the house since we first went into lockdown because of their overwhelming fear of Covid. Anxiety can be subtle – or glaringly obvious.

If you are struggling, one way to check in with how you are feeling is to use scaling. Let's take a scale of 1-10, where 1 reflects that you have experienced social anxiety or mild forms of anxiety over the past year, and 10 reflects the opposite – that you are feeling positive and confident. As a starting point, how would you rate your anxiety levels pre- and post-Covid? Then, say you rated yourself as a 3 on the scale, even though it is down the lower end of the scale, what are you doing right now to ensure that you are a 3 and not a 1? Take time to intentionally name and write down the things you are doing that ease your anxiety and help you achieve that healthier 3. Highlight how they contribute to alleviating your worry even in small ways, which could be so easily overlooked and forgotten.

The first important thing is to make a note by writing down what's working and, secondly, to make a conscious plan to do more of what works on a regular basis. We know from research that memory retention is higher when we write using paper and pen compared with typing on a keyboard. Writing down your reasons for feeling better can

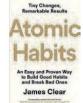


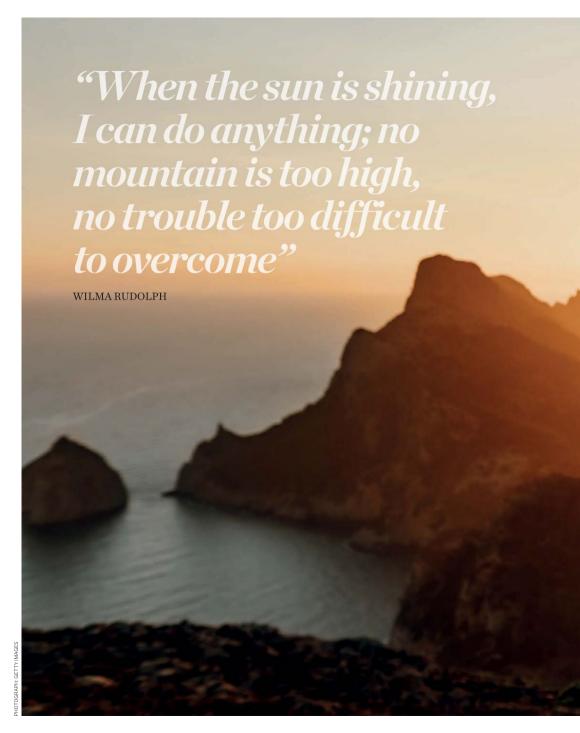
make all the difference to whether you repeat them, while anxiety thrives on vagueness and generalisations.

In a digital world, going analogue slows down the racing thoughts that accompany anxiety. Working with numbers can be a simple way of easing yourself into exploring emotions and feelings, especially during those moments when you feel blank or unsure. Numerous studies continue to emphasise the ways that journalling helps strengthen your immune system, improves the quality of your sleep and lowers blood pressure – all physical ailments and side effects of rising anxiety in our

constantly changing world.

This month, if you want to get to grips with harmful habits and develop new, more helpful ones that calm your anxious thoughts, I recommend Atomic Habits by James Clear (Cornerstone, £16.99). Clear's clarity, brevity and precision is remarkable and insightful. jackeeholder.com.@jackeeholderinspires











April, I never expected more than a distraction from the tedium of lockdown. But, to my surprise, I found I had the chance to invest in someone for the first time in years.

I enjoyed the relaxed nature of our conversation and began to notice how kind and considerate he was. When my laptop died after a home office catastrophe, he called to offer tech advice. When I was stressed about work or worried about the pandemic, he calmed me down.

We met in the summer, four months after we started talking. Because we already had a friendship, we were able to overcome the nerves and awkwardness of a first date without dismissing each other prematurely as a result. It might not have been the connection I was expecting from my childhood glut of fairy tales but, as time goes on, we're getting closer.

Psychologist and broadcaster Honey Langcaster-James says this isn't surprising because slowing down reduces stress and gives you time to reflect and digest, and make stronger connections. This is helpful for those who feel anxious about dating or have been drawn to incompatible partners, as it encourages you to be more mindful of your choices and actions.

Slowing down also reduces the temptation to act on impulse, which can be damaging for couples in the early stages, as well as those who've been together for years. It gives long-term couples the chance to spend more time together and build intimacy, rather than having a functional relationship where you pass each other in the hall and only talk about the school run.

'Studies show that proximity is important in relationships and we're more attracted to people we spend the most time with. It's why we so often end up dating people we work with or live near,' explains Langcaster-James. Spending time together increases opportunities to enjoy shared goals and activities, which also strengthens relationships. 'Many couples did projects or renovations around the house together in lockdown, which

gave them a joint focus,' she adds.

Proximity doesn't just bond new couples, it can also reignite old flames. In February last year, Dennise Smith was running five businesses and hadn't spent time with her husband in years. They'd been married since the mid-1980s, but had drifted apart and barely said two words to each other. 'He was working nights, so we'd spent seven years in separate bedrooms. We couldn't afford to split up, so we were just two people living in the same house,' says Smith.

Rather than work on her relationship, Smith threw herself into work. When that came to an abrupt halt during lockdown, she was forced to spend time with her partner. 'My businesses were struggling, which I found tough. Then my husband's mother died, which was hard for him. We were spending a lot more time together, but I think we also felt sorry for each other,' says Smith, With no distractions from the outside world, the couple were able to focus on how the other person was feeling, which helped them rebuild their marriage. 'Bit by bit, we started talking more every day and things improved. Recently, we bought each other anniversary cards and gifts for the first time in years. We're finally communicating again,' says Smith.

For many people, it's only possible to truly empathise with your partner's feelings when you take time to notice them. According to Peter Saddington,





"THIS WORKED FOR ME"

Rose Stokes, a writer, says: 'Being at home with spare time allowed me to see the relationship mistakes that I had been making in the past more clearly. I was able to work out what I really needed.

'When I met my boyfriend in the first lockdown, I had no expectations. We didn't touch each other for weeks but in a way that was beneficial because it lessened the risk that it would burn out fast. A slow start allowed us to develop a solid core and get to know each other properly. We check in to talk about our relationship regularly and find out how we're both doing, which we will continue to do as our lives get busier.'



a relationship counsellor for Relate, lockdown gave couples the chance to see inside each other's lives – some for the first time. 'People witnessed how hard their partner works, or how difficult it is to stay home with the children,' he says. 'Although they might have heard their partner speak about it, it's not the same as being immersed in the other person's life. It made people appreciate their partner and understand how they feel.'

Smith admits she was too busy to work on her relationship before the pandemic. 'My husband had blended into the background behind our four children, grandchild, work and our dogs,' she says. 'The effort we've made

to talk and do things together has made a huge difference – even if it's just taking the dogs for a walk or eating an egg sandwich and having a chat. It's easy to take people for granted, and slowing down has helped me appreciate what I have.'

Saddington says that by reducing external pressures, people begin to see their relationships more clearly. When small things, such as enjoying a coffee with your partner, are possible, it builds connection,' he says.

'When we share simple moments,' adds Langcaster-James, 'we're relearning to connect with both ourselves and our partner.'

honeylangcaster-james.com; relate.org.uk

With different guests every week, Honey Langeaster-James's new podeast, Life And How To Love It, explores the ways we can learn to appreciate things across all areas of our lives. honey langeaster-james.com/blog

If you're still having trouble releasing yourself from the hamster wheel of working life, Eleanor Ross's book Good Enough, The Myth Of Success And How To Celebrate The Joy In Average (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99), is an empowering read.



"My online shopping habit is out of control"

Award-winning coach Kim Morgan guides a woman who has backed herself into a corner financially during the loneliness and monotony of lockdown



"Spending gives me a quick fix for isolation and anxiety"

It took time and courage for Shanie to tell me why she wanted coaching. However, sometimes, there are clues from the outset.

Shanie shut down the conversation that I initiated about my fees: 'It's no problem. I will pay up front,' she said hurriedly. Her doorbell rang with deliveries several times during our session. I wondered whether Shanie's relationship with money had anything to do with her asking for help.

Towards the end of the session, Shanie finally told me why she had sought my guidance. 'I live on my own and have been on furlough since the beginning of lockdown. I am lonely, bored and anxious about what is going to happen to me.'

I asked Shanie what was causing her the most anguish. My question released a torrent of words and emotions: 'I'm worried about money. I'm overdrawn and in debt. I probably have a shopping addiction. It's so easy to just click and buy. I purchase things I don't need. When the doorbell

rang today, I couldn't even remember what I had ordered,' she said in despair.

Shanie was clearly distressed and, as we were close to the end of the session, I wanted her to leave feeling that she had made some progress. I thanked her for her honesty and I said I appreciated the courage that it had taken for her to talk about her spending. 'Often, the first step in making a change is acknowledging your situation and taking a long, hard look at the reality,' I told Shanie. 'Congratulations on having done that today. Once you have acknowledged where you are, you can start to think about where you want to be, and what will help you get there.'

It was also important for me to be clear at this stage about the limits of my expertise – that I was not a specialist in debt or addiction counselling and that, as our sessions progressed, I may feel it more appropriate to refer Shanie to more specialised support.

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What's the pay-off?

Shanie had been thinking about her spending. 'I shop online to make myself feel better,' she said. 'I justify it by telling myself that I'm not paying for travel, lunches, nights out or hair appointments.'

I asked Shanie how she feels when she buys something. and when it arrives. 'I get a buzz,' she said. 'I even like it when the delivery person takes a photo of me! How sad is that?"

'What do you think your habit is giving you that you don't have otherwise?' I asked.

'Attention, feeling important, excitement, choice and control,' she replied with surprising insight.

'How do you feel after the initial rush?' I pressed.

'Remorse, shame and worried about debt,' she admitted.

I asked Shanie to imagine herself in five years' time if she didn't stop, and to tell me what she saw. Shanie was upset as she described herself as penniless and jobless. This was a worst-case scenario but to increase motivation to change, it is important to link our behaviour with potential long-term consequences. We continued to work on Shanie's potential future by imagining the best version of herself in five years' time and what would get her there. Shanie scribbled copious notes and was deep in thought by the end of our session.



Who do you aspire to be?

Shanie had drawn the two versions of her future self. 'I keep them by my desk - the one I want to become and the one I never want to become,' she announced, 'If I feel the urge

to buy something I do not need, I look at the drawing of the Shanie I never want to be and it stops me from spending!'

'Who is the person you want to be?' I asked, 'What role does she play in her own life?'

Shanie replied: 'She has choice and control over her life and she is loved and happy. She gives and gets attention - and not just from the person taking her photograph at the door to prove delivery! The two potential Shanies keep me focused on where I want to go and where I could end up if I don't change my behaviour.'

'Just like that?' I asked in astonishment.

'Pretty much - yes! Thank you - that exercise shocked me into seeing the reality of my circumstances. The only thing I have bought since then is a book about managing money!' For more, see barefootcoaching.co.uk or follow @BarefootCoaches on Twitter

KIM ADDS... Sometimes, a client presents an issue that is close to a coach's own experience, which is like having a mirror held up to ourselves. Meeting Shanie made me confront the fact that I had also been comfort shopping during lockdown. Shanie never knew this, but her determination and courage inspired me to make changes too.

Coaching exercises

Manage emotional spending

Do you shop online for items that you don't want or need - things you sometimes don't even get around to unpacking, wearing or using? Do you forget what you have ordered? Does spending give you an instant high and temporarily alleviate uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness or loneliness? We can all fall into this trap, but if this feels like a problem for you and you would like to manage your comfort spending, try the following approaches:

- Ask yourself if you need it or want it. There is a difference! Before you buy, have a look around the house to see if you already have similar items.
- Spend a day organising your possessions and clothes so you can easily see what you already have.
- Wait for a day or two before clicking 'buy'. Give yourself a cooling-off period.
- Get your head out of the sand and look at your bank statements regularly.
- Set yourself a monthly budget for spending.
- Make a list of other things you could do that will give you the same feelings you get from shopping.
- Tell your friends what you are doing and ask for their support.
- Think about where your spending could take you
- if you don't make changes.
- Get professional, specialist support if you cannot get your spending in check.

TREASURE MAP OF YOUR LIFE

Divide a sheet of paper into three sections, Imagine it is a treasure map. The left side of the map represents the land you are living in now. The right side of the map represents the land you would like to live in. Between the two lands is a river that you have to cross. Without thinking too hard, draw the land you are living in now. Use symbols, drawings or words to describe your current landscape.

Move over to your ideal landscape - the place you would like to be in. Fill this space with words, symbols and images that represent everything you would like to have in your life.

Look at the gap between the two lands. What is it made of? What is stopping you from getting from where you are to where you want to be? Use words, pictures and symbols to represent the obstacles you have to overcome. Now, draw a bridge that will get you across the gap. What is it made of? Who will help you cross from one land to the other?

When you have finished your map, write down what your first three steps are going to be and when you will take them.



Meet the woman at the heart and helm of UKCP

In this frank interview, Professor Sarah Niblock, CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, shares her thoughts, feelings and experiences of therapy – both in a professional capacity and as someone who found healing and growth in the psychotherapeutic process



For many people, seeking psychotherapy is the hardest part. Those who reach out and

set themselves on this journey often find the transformative nature of psychotherapy an awakening process in their lives, which is why so many UK Council for Psychotherapy members start off as clients.

In this special Q&A with Sarah Niblock, the chief executive of UKCP, we find out about her experience of psychotherapy and what advice she would give those wanting to take the potentially life-changing step of accessing psychotherapeutic support.

Q Do you think the perception of therapy is changing?

There is still a stigma, which we know from surveys with the public we have conducted during lockdown. There are numerous reasons for this, including the medicalisation of emotions, the lack of parity between mental and physical health in health funding and provision, along with the dread that having depression or anxiety on your health record could have a negative impact on your employability or credit score.

The word 'counselling' seems to have garnered some acceptability but 'psychotherapy' seems to conjure up images of severe mental illness – which isn't true, as our articles and podcasts have sought to challenge.

What would you say to someone who is thinking about having psychotherapy for the first time?

I would say congratulations! Making the decision to have psychotherapy is a wonderful investment in your health and future, as well as that of your loved ones. Psychotherapy works where short-term treatments may not. A brief blast of, say, cognitive behavioural therapy or medication may help alleviate immediate symptoms and provide relief, but the underlying issue causing the symptoms needs to be identified and addressed.

That can take time, and psychotherapy tends to be a medium to longer term commitment. Its power is transformative and lasting, and the effects radiate to those around you. Forget the myths of psychotherapists as people in power, or that you have to be seriously unwell to warrant their services. You are in the driving seat in a trusted and unique relationship with another person who happens to be highly trained and capable of helping you access deep psychological issues and find the inner resources for living a more positive life. You wouldn't trust an underqualified legal adviser with important affairs, so why would you choose an untrained therapist?

How should we go about finding a therapist who is right for us?

Psychotherapist is not a protected title in the UK, so it is vital to ensure you only work with practitioners who are on a professional register such as UKCP, which is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority. It will ensure that your therapist is bound by our code of practice, is highly trained, supervised and insured. Our UKCP 'Find a therapist' search engine allows you to search by postcode, as well as a range of other

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 members, who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups. We also have more than 70 training and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become psychotherapists.

• To find the right therapist for you or learn how to become a therapist, visit psychotherapy.org.uk



filters, so you can find someone who suits your needs.

Many of our practitioners also offer remote therapy, so geography doesn't have to be a limiting factor. Speak to a few and see who you feel most drawn towards. There are countless different types of psychotherapy, but it is the unique trust and rapport between you and the therapist that is the most powerful remedial tool. It's fine to take your time. Therapists not only work with individuals, but couples, families and groups, covering children as well as adults.

What's your personal experience of having psychotherapy?

I had therapy for two years when my son and daughter were babies. Having grown up in less than ideal circumstances, I was anxious to ensure that I could parent my children positively and not transmit the trauma I had experienced or repeat mistakes. That ended up being a side issue. The sessions delved into many emotional experiences from my youth that none

of us has the emotional awareness or articulacy to process at a young age. It offered me the opportunity to properly process them with an adult's perspective. Through this, I gained a sense of inner confidence and the acknowledgement that I did have the emotional resources to raise my children to be happy and healthy. What's fascinating is that 20 years later, I still feel the positive effects.

Q You've been the chief executive of UKCP since 2017. What attracted you to this field, and what have been your and UKCP's biggest achievements during your tenure?

I came from the university sector, where mental health issues are at crisis levels among staff and students. UKCP was looking for a particular blend of skills and experience spanning media, research and leadership, and I also have a lot of experience in delivering accredited training and managing regulations in universities.

We are now working collaboratively, not only with the counselling profession but also psychology and increasingly psychiatry to raise the profile of mental health with policymakers. Additionally, the legacy of the murder of George Floyd in the US and the protests against racial injustice have caused us to reflect deeply and make major changes towards ensuring psychotherapy is welcoming and accessible to all, regardless of background.

Q You see a great number of people complete their training to become UKCPaccredited therapists – what's the greatest beneficial change you see in them during that journey?

We've grown our membership by a third in the time I have been with UKCP. Training as a psychotherapist is a brilliant foundation for life and a host of other careers. Imagine a world in which every sector took a human-centred approach?

For more on training, go to psychotherapy.org.uk For podcasts, go to psychotherapy.org.uk/podcasts





HOCOLATE FUDGE OR raspberry ripple? Some choices are easy to make! But, as the number of decisions we've been presented with has narrowed, along with our social circles and places to roam, we've rather fallen out of the habit. In some ways, this simpler life has felt like a blessing, allowing those of us who feel exhausted by the pressure of decision-making to take our foot off the pedal. But now that life is opening up again, there's a deluge of decisions requiring our attention. So, how do we readjust to getting back into the driving seat and reclaiming control?

'We've been thrown back into the "old normal" when it comes to decision-making, and it's a shock to the system,' says neuroscientist Tara Swart. The average

person makes thousands of decisions every day. Most of these are tiny, such as how to word an email, whether to click on an Instagram post or what to put on our toast. However, she says: 'What most people don't realise is that each of these decisions has an associated cognitive cost.' In other words, every choice depletes our mental energy and, the more we make, the emptier our bucket of cognitive resources' becomes. Which is why, by the end of the day, we can barely decide what to eat, which series to watch and even when to go to bed.

So, what is it that makes some people confident decision makers, while others can't order a meal in a restaurant without deliberating for half an hour, then changing their mind at the last minute?

Some of it comes down to personality: if you struggle with low self-esteem, you are likely to mistrust your instincts. Accepting that it's inevitable you'll make the wrong decision some of the time helps because, once you stop putting pressure on yourself to get everything right at every turn, decisions will be easier to make.

Your brain is your friend

"We've all heard

about tech CEOs

living in a uniform

of identical shirts

and jeans, so they

don't have to

waste brainpower

dithering over

picking a tie

every morning"

Swart says that if you do face a big decision and struggle, then taking your time can help - but not necessarily in the way that you think.

> 'With decision-making, in order to access the "default network" of the brain that supports lateral thinking and creativity, it's important to let a decision germinate. It's like planting a seed in your brain and leaving it there to develop. When I have a major decision to make. I plant the seed, then try not to ruminate on it. I often find that the decision comes to me after a day or two, often at a moment when my mind is at its most relaxed - on a walk or in the shower.'

The experts agree that the best decisions are based on a combination of gut feeling and logic. 'Our brains spot parallels between the current decision and past choices and helps us work out which information is relevant now,' says Swart. 'There's something called emotional "value tagging", which acts like a fluorescent highlighter and gives you that intuitive, emotional feeling about a decision, at the same time as you are appraising the facts.'

But she points out that it's helpful to be aware of the impact of your emotions on your decision-making, particularly if you tend to be led more by feelings than facts. 'Once you become conscious of this, you can train yourself to think critically, rather than always going with your gut reaction,' she adds. If you've got an important decision to make, Swart recommends writing down your >>>

Dance around the issue

This is the reason why 'choice reduction' has become a hot topic in recent years. We've all heard about technology CEOs living in a uniform of identical T-shirts and jeans, so they don't have to waste brainpower dithering over picking a tie every morning. For the rest of us, that may be the equivalent of having a weekly grocery order on repeat, meal planning at the weekend and only checking our email twice a day - and we may already be doing these things to streamline our lives.

Limiting the number of choices you are forced to make is great up to a point, but if you have a demanding job, a busy social life or are responsible for taking care of other people - children, parents and partners - there are only so many decisions you can sidestep.

thoughts because it helps separate your feelings from the facts and spot where you might be biased in one direction or another.

Fools rush in...

Rash, impulsive decisions are rarely the best, particularly if they're made when we're in an anxious or agitated state. When it comes to a weighty decision, John Paul Minda, a professor of psychology at the University of Western Ontario, says that running a final check, where you try to envisage unusual explanations and outcomes relating to your decision, is crucial. 'It's an idea that has been widely adopted in medicine, based around data that shows that even expert decision makers make mistakes when they don't build in what we call "checks and balances".'

Curiosity is key here: the ability to ask yourself why you're feeling a particular way about something. Why don't you want to apply for that job? Why are you convinced you won't find love by dating online? Or that your new colleague won't want to go for lunch with you? Asking yourself challenging questions might help you get to the bottom of what's swaying you one way or another.

Prefer to defer?

Putting off the inevitable when it comes to decision-making is tempting. However, this can be paralysing, particularly if you're the kind of person who puts pressure on yourself to get things right the first time. People don't realise that pressure leads to procrastination. Try to remember the phrase 'done is better than perfect' and take the heat off yourself.

And set your alarm early: 'When it comes to decision-making, the most energy-intensive part of the process for your brain is the decision itself. I recommend people make big decisions first thing in the morning when their cognitive resources are at their greatest, before attention has been scattered by the demands of the day,' says Swart.

And, despite the lure of just getting it done, never make decisions in the middle of the night after hours of lying awake worrying.

"Ask yourself challenging questions to get to the bottom of what is swaying you one way or another"





Dos and don'ts of decision-making

X Don't decide hungry

Hanger is real: 'Our brains use 25 to 30 per cent of what we eat and can't store fuel for later – and decision-making relies on fuel,' explains neuroscientist Tara Swart. A study of more than 1,000 decisions by judges found that the first three cases seen after a meal were far more likely to result in release than the last three cases of a session.

Practise choice reduction

What can you do to minimise unnecessary choices? Could you keep your desk clear, set up a weekly grocery order or build more routine into your day, so you know you always go for a walk at the same time, without having to think about it? Everything you do to simplify minor decisions helps conserve energy for the big ones.

X Don't just do what you always do

When experienced decision makers start making mistakes, it is often because they are stuck in the same old mindset. Psychologist John Paul Minda says it's important to stay open-minded and receptive to new information and thinking.

Become OK with not knowing

'Humans have a preference for certainty, or pseudo certainty,' says Minda. In other words, we don't like being unsure about things. An accurate understanding of what you don't know is essential to good decision-making, whether you have moved into a new area at work, are weighing up different medical options or advising a friend on an experience that you haven't had.

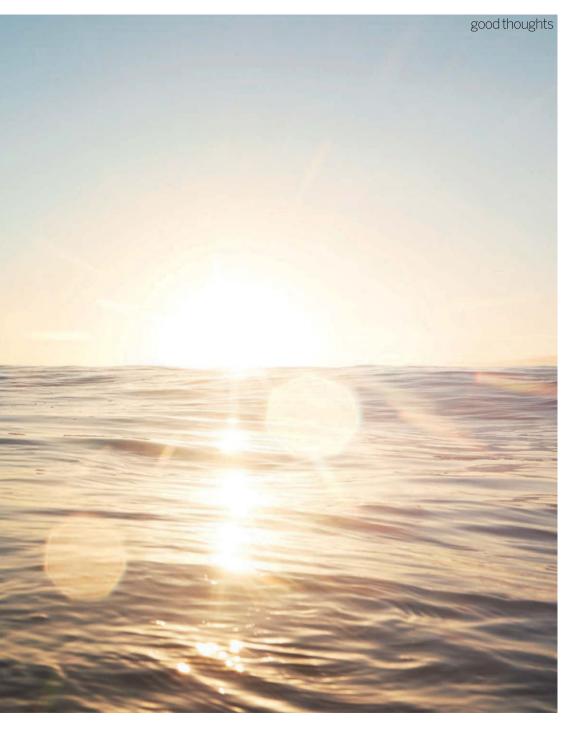
Next steps

Read this: In his in-depth article in The New Yorker, 'The art of decision-making', Joshua Rothman explores the tendency of big decisions to make themselves. newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/21/the-art-ofdecision-making

Listen to this: Hidden Brain: The Choices Before Us, a podcast with psychologist Sheena lyengar, focuses on making better decisions and the relationship between choice and control.

Watch this: It's an oldie but a goodie: Psychologist Barry Schwartz's 2005 Ted talk, 'The paradox of choice', on YouTube, unpacks the way the explosion of choice in the West can be immobilising. He suggests creating a metaphorical fishbowl of choice reduction to improve happiness and make decision-making easier.





Lucy Mangan's...

Moneytalks

Don't short-change yourself or your children by avoiding frank and enlightening discussions about the 'root of all evil' – because knowing how to make, manage and spend money wisely is one of life's most important skills

HEN I WAS GROWING
up, 'no' and 'because' were
complete sentences: 'Can I...?'
'No.' 'Why can't I...?' 'Because.'
I can see now, as the mother of a nine-yearold, how labour-saving this was for grown-ups
and parents and, in many ways, I mourn that
loss. Or I would – if I had the energy.

But, in other ways, I can see that the modern way – explaining your reasoning and contextualising the decisions that have led the pair of you to this moment of – usually – denial, is a better way of doing things. Ignorance is never bliss for the one shrouded in it.

And we did grow up ignorant, didn't we? The misapprehensions we laboured under about anything that would cause the slightest discomfort in our adults... Sex, of course, is the most obvious. I thought for years that you had to do it in a hospital, so clinical were the few scraps of information that I was given, along with subjects such as drugs, divorce and mental health problems. But money – having honest conversations about money, its uses, presence and absence – was a taboo just as strong, and yet somehow far stealthier.

We are more at ease talking about almost anything other than money. I know far more about my friends' mental health issues and relationships than I do about what they earn and how they spend it.

How do we break this absurd cycle? We begin by talking to our children. We literally change the conversation. When they ask awkward questions about money, we can



"If you can't afford more pocket money, say that. Don't feel guilty or ashamed – these are feelings we want to uncouple from money"

learn not to shy away – even if we initially grit our teeth and wish they would get back to asking where babies come from. Here are some of the common questions about money from the innocent fruit of our loins that we could answer in a more empowering way:

Q

Can I have more pocket money? This can lead you anywhere.

If the answer is no, you can't afford it, say that. Don't feel ashamed or guilty – these are feelings we want to uncouple from money so our children will learn to approach it as the neutral tool that it is.

If you can afford more pocket money and are willing to shell out, take the chance to extract some labour from your offspring in return. Not just because it's useful and pleasing – the sunlit uplands that will start to shimmer before your eyes the day your child first makes you a cup of tea without disaster are quite something – but because it introduces the vital concept of earning money, rather than it being handed to you.

Is £100 a lot?

This is an opportunity to talk about all sorts of things: how much items cost, from sweets to houses, what you would use £100 for, what it would mean for families in different positions – anything to give your child the idea that money is never one, fixed thing. It exists in relation to lots of other things and they should all affect your decisions about it.





Why don't you just get more money out the cashpoint?

We forget how much children don't know. So tell them. You work, you get paid. The money goes into the bank. You save some. You withdraw the rest when you need it. You buy food, pay for gas and electricity and the mortgage or rent – and then you can buy treats, if there's anything left over.

The rules and priorities of life and budgeting should not be more opaque to children than the rules for behaving at school.



Again, your personal circumstances will shape your approach. Most things can be obtained – if you save for them. Get children involved in this process. Are they prepared to save long and hard? Most children are prepared to try. Then you just sit back and let a beautiful lesson be learned without needing to do anything more. If they really want The Thing, they will persist; they'll accumulate the money and swap it for something that they



"An appreciation of the potential of savings begins to awaken... This is a happy day"

value equally. Or – and this is the wonderful part – they will decide it's not worth it. The lustre of The Thing wears off, or they feel reluctant to convert their hard-saved cash into a mere single object. An appreciation of the plethora of potentialities represented by savings begins to awaken. This is a happy day.



Why don't we have a nicer car or house and go on fancy holidays?

Don't be afraid to explain your priorities – whether they're imposed by a lack of funds or actively decided. Tell your children what is possible, what you think is important and why and how you allocate spending to your family's circumstances and nobody else's.

Why are some people poor?

Meet the spirit of naive enquiry as neutrally as you can. It's another chance to destigmatise the subject. It can always be emphasised that however much or little money you have, being careful and conscious of where and how you spend it is always the way to get the most out of it.

Are we poor?

Talk about what it means to be poor.

Note what you have – hopefully
that's a home, warm clothes and food. Set
yourself in a wider world than your child's
daily one. Explain the process of working for
money, how you try not to waste it and
anything else that feels pertinent. They
should know that this is an active process,
and there are skills to learn.

Why don't you just borrow lots of money? Because one day, my sweet child.

you have to pay it back. And, get this, with extra – to pay for the privilege of borrowing it! The concept of interest, or 'expensive money' as a friend's perceptive 11-year-old put it, will blow a child's mind, as it should. Let it stay blown. Only real money counts. Paid down, paid ahead, whatever – but real.

What will happen if you lose your job? The pandemic has made this

question more real to us all and it is a chance to impress upon your child the importance of planning ahead and using the sunny days to repair the roof. Saved money is the tool that allows you to do that. Sensible allocation, living within your means and managing your money as well as you can is the way you spread the good bits of life over the difficult bits.

Can I have my own account?

Yes, yes, a thousand times yes! The sooner they learn about what it feels like to look after and manage their money – to save it, plan it and, yes, even spend it – the better.

Can I spend my savings? No. Probably.

Why not?
This is your chance to talk about the different reasons for saving. Let's assume that you let them keep some of their pocket money for small things and that it's the tucked-away remainder that sits somewhere, and perhaps provide ways of letting children manage their money thoughtfully. Adults divide their money into essentials and longer term goals, and you can give your child the equivalent: an account for future needs (a car or university), coveted items (video games and





monogrammed football boots), and immediate needs (sweets). It makes saving seem more fun and flexible, as it should be.



Can you lend me the money for X and I'll pay you back later?

If you're amenable, make sure you fix a timetable for repayment – and stick to it. Just as we teach children what foods are bad for them, we need to teach them that debt needs to be repaid. If you're really mean, and by that I mean strong, charge them interest. But, ideally, say no. Getting into debt for anything smaller than a house is almost never worth it.



Why are you so strict about spending and saving?

Here's how I bill saving to my kid – it gives me power. Children love the idea of power. I tell him I think of myself as a general in charge of money troops. I send some to pay this bill and others to pay that bill. A battalion holes itself up in the bank. I'm not sure I'm using the right military terms, but he gets the idea. It makes budgeting fun and conveys the sense of control it gives you over life. I want him to have this.



Why do YouTubers earn so much and can I start my own channel?

It's good for children, and us all, to remember that what we see are the success stories – in any field. For every high-flying singer, actor, YouTuber and start-up billionaire, there are thousands of people who have not made it or are just chugging along. Try to give a sense of perspective without disheartening them. Ambition is good. Realistic ambition is better.

Q

If spending is bad, how come you do it?

This is what happens when, as I did, you go too far emphasising the importance of saving. Now, whenever my child sees another scented candle or lipstick in the house, I am hauled over the coals. So, don't forget to include the fact that money is also there to enable you to buy the stuff you want, as well as the stuff you need. We work hard for our money and make it work hard for us so we are safe, fed and so the house can smell nice and we have a lip colour to match every outfit and mood.

Author Lucy Mangan spoke to HyperJar, the 100 per cent free money management app for adults and kids that helps you see, plan and set goals for everyday spending Help your hair

Mia is 31 years old and works within the beauty industry. She knows everything about beauty and health both inside and out – "I've tried a little of each, but I have to say that I'm really impressed with what Hair Gro™ has done for my hair."



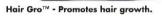
- Around half a year ago I went to the hairdressers and unfortunately my hair got cut too short. My hair in general grows very slowly and I just wanted a 'tidy up' trim, but she cut too much off, I didn't look like me, I was really upset.

I want long hair back!

 I really wanted long hair again, and I started to think that was never going to happen! But then I saw Hair GroTM so I thought I would give it a try, I certainly haven't regretted it.

See my amazing results

- I have now used Hair Gro™ for only 2 months and I'm super impressed and can really see a difference from the first pictures till now. My hair has never grown so much in such a short amount of time, so I recommend it to everyone. I just bought one more box and I hope it continues to grow at the same pace.



Hair Gro

Advertisement

Hair Growth Hair Gro™ is a tablet of apple extract and palm fruit oil extract, standardized to contain 30%

extract and palm fruit oil extract, standardized to contain 30% tocotrienols. Tocotrienols are related to vitamin E. The tablet contains additional extract of millet, mushrooms, amino acid, biotin and zinc. The tablet supplies nutrients to the scalp and hair follicles (the "root of the hair") where the hair is formed. The content of biotin and zinc contributes to normal hair growth.



Where can you buy Hair Gro™? Hair Gro™ can be purchased from selected Holland and Barrett Stores. Purchase online at www.newnordic.co.uk If you have any questions, call New Nordic on 0800 389 1255.



ADVICE & QUESTIONS

You are always welcome to contact our New Nordic helpline at 0800 389 1255

HOLLAND & BARRETT





hit of gratification or slow down and truly build your self-esteem? Psychotherapist and bestselling author Anna Mathur considers the question...

FEEL THE HUNGER PANG RISING in my stomach after a morning of work. I have two options! My first option is to grab the bag of sweets sitting temptingly beside me. Not only will they silence the growl in my belly, but they'll provide a glorious, short, sharp sugar boost. Option two is to leave my desk to make a plate of roast chicken leftovers and a baked potato. It requires more effort, but would fill me up for a few hours. Slow and steady.

We face these types of decisions all the time. Do we do something we know will be good for us, but requires more energy and input, or do we find a way to quickly meet or silence the need momentarily? My clients spend a lot of time with me exploring where they go to get a feeling of good

EXPERT ADVICE



Anna Mathur is a psychotherapist and a mother of three. She wrote the bestselling Mind Over Mother' (Little, Brown, £12,99) and shares her mental health story on Instagram @annamathur

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self-esteem. Where you go looking for validation has a huge impact on whether you find it or not, and how long it lasts before you need a top-up.

Short and sharp self-esteem boosters

Short and sharp self-esteem boosters are like that bag of sweets or a hastily grabbed, salty takeaway burger. They promise a quick and easy way to meet a need, but often they end up being temporary fixes instead. For me, they are those impulse buys that make me feel good – and then guilty. They are the text message I send in place of having a chat. They are the slapdash job I do to save time and then have to redo later. They are the words of

flattery Loffer to make someone feel good, in the hope they'll like me. They are the times I give resources I don't have in order to please others, which I later resent. They are the moments of digital escapism that may distract me from finding the good in the challenges of the present moment. They are the chaotic working hours that

sabotage my sleep. These short, sharp self-esteem boosters often conflict with our personal values. For example, I know that it's the feedback from those who know me well that matters the most, yet part of me still seeks affirmation from strangers on social media. The issue is, we need endless short and sharp self-esteem boosters if we are hooked on their immediacy; yet their short, sharp sweetness will never truly satisfy us.

Slow and steady self-esteem boosters

These are the nourishing self-esteem boosters. If they were food they'd be the lovingly prepared food eaten in good company. They are the things that ground and anchor you, and bring you joy and meaning. They are the

creative pursuits, the acts that bring you back to yourself and make you feel grateful and present. They are the things that, when you are grey and old, you'll wish with all your heart you spent time doing more often.

For me they are being with my kids without the background ping of a phone. They are walking through pine forests, the tall trees stretching towards moody skies. They are laughter that makes my sides ache. They are the hot bath that warms cold bones. They are the dinners shared around a table where the food is good but the company is better. They are the times I apologise and feel forgiveness. I could go on... Once you begin writing down the things that

"Slowboosters

help us connect

with who we

are... They don't

necessarily

offer quick

spikes of energy,

but a warm.

steady burn"

make your life feel worthwhile, you'll also start to get into the flow!

These slow and steady boosters help us connect with who we are and what we are worth. They don't necessarily offer us quick spikes of energy, but a warm, slow burn. They sometimes require more planning, but are worth it as they bring feelings of joy,

identity, gratitude and fulfilment. Many of these slow and steady self-esteem boosters have no goals other than to offer us connection and wellbeing.

We all seek the things that make us feel better about ourselves. But life today is an ongoing struggle between knowing what we need and being told what we want! I know I need to feel properly connected to my support network, yet my phone tells me I can achieve this via a quick text message. Sometimes a quick text message exchange does the trick, but ultimately it will never be able to offer me the quality of a connection offered by a proper catch-up over coffee. It's all about trying to seek balance between getting what we need and what we can get now.





Balance is one of those things that we rarely find (and if we do it's not for very long, hey?) but which is very good to seek. In seeking balance, we are more likely to move away from destructive or consuming behaviours that do not satisfy us. Here's a quick example: imagine you're juggling home and work life...

You want to please your boss = short and sharp self-esteem boost.

You want to invest in some drifting friendships = slow and steady self-esteem boost.

Herein lies the challenge: if you prioritise your drifting friendships, and ignore the pressure to please your boss by taking on more responsibility and overtime, your boss may be displeased. Yet if you accept every single hour of overtime, spending longer at your desk to show willing and please your boss, you lose out on investing in those relationships that give you something important. Sometimes the pull in one direction is stronger than the other, and sometimes we successfully navigate a tightrope dance between the two.

There is nothing wrong with getting your hits from the short and sharp self-esteem boosters sometimes, but if they are the main ways you seek feelings of worth, your self-esteem will rise and fall as the hit wears off. Just like if you fill your body with a diet of sweets, you'd be riding the peaks and troughs of sugar hits. You wouldn't be respectfully providing your body with the nutrition it needs to sustain you for work and rest – just superficial, temporary highs.

Next steps

Take a moment to note down some of your go-to 'slow and steady' self-esteem boosters and see how you feel as you do. Now jot down where in life you have been sacrificing the nourishing for the right now.

Write down some statements about the things that are important to you and the way you live. How might you bring some of your decisions more in line with them?







Train to be a coach, find purpose and create change

Do you dream of becoming a coach? If you have reached a turning point professionally, need a new career or hope to reinvigorate your life, coach training could be the key to opening exciting doors for yourself and others. But where do you start, and what does it entail?



After 25 years at the forefront of coaching and coach training in the UK, I remain

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

Kim

Kim Morgan MCC, CEO Barefoot Coaching Ltd

HOW COACHING CHANGED MY LIFE

Julian Maurice, an entrepreneur, hired Barefoot-trained coach Karen Chambers when his business became labour-intensive and frustrating. I was working so hard but never seemed to get anywhere,' he says. I could not see the wood for the trees and needed clarity and a sense of direction.'

Coaching has given me the courage to face challenges head-on and make the really tough decisions, even if it means taking a fresh direction. Karen is like a mirror – she helps you look to yourself for answers. I have learned to reflect and nurture myself, so that each business – and personal – transformation is solid.

2 I am more self-aware, which has enabled me to find and follow my true path in life. I have exceeded all expectations and gained a level of self-respect that I never thought was possible. It all started with a meeting with Karen where she asked me the right questions to get me thinking about the right answers.

Through coaching, I have become a person who is willing to accept responsibility for their mistakes and learn from them. If you are looking for a coach who is likely to deliver challenges that will help you grow your business and overhaul your life, I cannot recommend Karen highly enough. With her help, I have transformed my life and business. kcoaching.co.uk



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

Train as a coach:

The Barefoot Coaching (ICF) ACTPaccredited PG Certificate in Business and Personal Coaching is one of the most well-established coach training courses in the UK. Barefoot runs regular, free introductions to coach training throughout the year.



BAREFOOT COACHING

Barefootcoaching.co.uk/

How I became a Barefoot coach

Three top coaches share why they decided to train:



Karen Chambers In 2002. I met Kim

Morgan, the founder of Barefoot Coaching, at

her seminar 'How to Change Your Life Over Lunch' - and it literally did! It was my first experience of coaching, which led me to achieving an unfulfilled dream of taking my young nephew and niece to Disney World in Orlando. I wanted to understand how coaching worked, took Kim's postgraduate course and discovered that I loved coaching others as well as being coached. I've been coaching ever since.



Melanie Allen

For the past 20 years. I've run a learning and development business.

I was asked to provide coaching for senior leaders, but didn't feel I could do it without qualifications. So began my search for a coaching programme that was recognised by a coaching body, but also had a small and friendly family feel. Barefoot Coaching provided all that and more. Now, as a Barefoot associate and a PCC-level ICF coach, I know that choosing Barefoot was one of the best decisions I have ever made.



Angharad Boyson

I was working with leaders as a consultant

and we were all feeling disillusioned because it was clear that necessary changes being identified weren't going to happen. Those who could change. didn't want it: those who wanted it. couldn't change it. I wanted to work with people who could create change. Becoming a coach was the best way to do that and I now work with people to make sustainable. positive changes in their lives.



provides you with the strongest daily dose available. HRI Good Mood is a traditional herbal medicinal product used to relieve the symptoms of slightly low mood and mild anxiety. Based on traditional use only.









30 TABLETS



Dossier Say goodbye to social anxiety

Has your social butterfly given way to a hermit crab? Overcome fear and re-emerge wiser and empowered



T WAS A GLORIOUS SUNDAY WHEN a message buzzed on my phone. 'We're going for a picnic in the park. BYOB. Wanna come?' My heart leapt. A picnic in the sunshine with a group of my oldest friends – I could think of nothing more delightful. But my euphoria was short-lived, soon replaced by a rising sense of dread.

The venue for said picnic was a park in the far west of the city, miles from home. The journey would involve a train, then a bus. As an extrovert, such details never normally trouble me, the desire to socialise eclipsing the most challenging of logistics. But not that day. The more I contemplated it, the more anxious I felt. It wasn't only the journey. I felt – and this is probably a first – that I had nothing much to say for myself.

'The thing about socialising as we come out of lockdown restrictions is that we're simply not used to it, no matter how many years we spent doing it before,' says Sophie Mort, psychologist and author of *A Manual For Being Human* (Simon & Schuster, £14.99). 'All that time not chatting to others and navigating the social world has made some of us feel rusty and unsure of the normal way of responding to people. Add to that the fact that there is still a pandemic going on, and it's no surprise that many of us are apprehensive about leaving the house. We feel anxiety, excitement and uncertainty about a world we don't really know how to be part of any more.'

It's not just people who live alone or have been shielding who are experiencing these worries. 'We've been hearing from families who have struggled without the framework of frantically busy weekend schedules for the children,' says Amy Perrin, founder of the loneliness charity Marmalade Trust. Family units, siloed during lockdown, are having to learn to reintegrate with the world again too.

And, while we may be eager to get back to some semblance of normality, it's worth considering that our collective psyches may not have caught up with that desire. 'Whether we are aware of it or not, the pandemic has activated a part of our emotional system that is alert to, and responds to, threat,' explains Nelisha Wickremasinghe, psychologist and author of Being With Others (Triarchy Press, £14.99). 'During lockdown, we've been exposed to threats in the form of job insecurity, physical ill health, relationship loss and social isolation. Our "threat brain" deals with this by activating a fight, flee or freeze response.'

The impact of this on our ability to resume





our old social lives will vary among individuals. 'Some people will react to this sense of social threat with the fight response and may feel unusually aggressive and irritable around others,' says Wickremasinghe. 'Some will feel they don't want to mix with others because they still represent a threat (flight), and some will be desperate to reconnect and find relief through being with others by, for example, excessively organising social events for others – and this is the freeze response – where we put our own needs on ice by people pleasing.'

Let's just be together

A pressing issue right now is recalibrating our sense of self. For many of us, social confidence is derived from the stories and anecdotes we share with others. But, with so many routines and rituals off limits, no wonder many of us feel unmoored. Recently, I called a dear friend to arrange a night out. To my surprise, my gregarious friend sounded reticent: 'Look, the thing is..' she said, 'I haven't been anywhere, I haven't done anything and I'm not working at the moment. I don't have much to offer.'

How did we get to the point where we believe that worthwhile conversations are based on describing a list of activities? 'I'm



seeing this a lot in my clinic and my life,' says Mort. 'It's the reason that on lockdown video calls, we ran out of things to say so quickly – none of us had been doing anything!'

There is a solution to this though – to plan more 'side-by-side' activities, suggests Mort. 'If you are worried about having nothing to say when you go out, arrange a walk or a visit to a gallery, rather than meeting in a pub or for coffee. And, if you can't face going out, arrange a communal activity, such as watching a film or doing a workout together. Doing so takes the pressure off and minimises the energy we burn because we don't have to pay direct attention to other people for an extended period. It gives us a shared experience to talk about.'

The other bonus of such activities is that they usually have a natural end point. The movie finishes, the gallery closes and it's time to go home, as opposed to being marooned on a video call that keeps getting extended.

There are sound psychological reasons why some of us sometimes feel we have nothing to contribute to a conversation, 'There are three modes of communication - power mode (doing), affect mode (feelings) and meaning mode (inquiring and sense-making),' says Wickremasinghe, 'Our cultures are heavily weighted towards the language of power, which is about the doing, action-orientated aspect of life. We have not been taught well enough how to talk about feelings and how to simply philosophise together - there is always so much to talk about so, if we are finding that hard, it is probably because we have come to believe that we are only interesting if we have accomplished something.'

At the root of this lies self-confidence issues. 'There is often an unconscious fear that we are not good enough and that this will lead to social rejection,' says Wickremasinghe. 'And "good enough" in our culture means doing, having and accumulating.' However, by paying more attention to how we feel in the moment, we can start learning how to soothe these perfectly natural reactions.

Another strategy might be to deploy humour. It can help to acknowledge that many of us feel the same way,' says Perrin. 'With my closest friends, I find that being honest and laughing about life helps. On occasion, I have joked: "I've got no news, but I did put the bins out. How about you?" Conversations don't have to be led by what we've done.'

marmaladetrust.org





Exercise your communication muscles

A vital skill that many of us take for granted is employed during those seemingly inconsequential interactions with people in our community as we go about daily life – the banter with the man in the corner shop or the local barista, or the brief 'hello' to the dog walker you pass on your morning run.

'Those quick conversations are like a mini workout. A little "how are you?" hones social skills and boosts confidence,' says psychologist Sophie Mort.

These 'weak ties' provide valuable interim conversations between the big conversations we have with people closest to us. 'It can feel like a big leap to go from speaking to no one to speaking up in a large group. Communication is a skill and some of us need to relearn it,' she says. 'Think back to when you were a teenager... I recall the first time I went into a shop alone, feeling self-conscious about speaking to

strangers. It takes a while to learn that back-and-forth social dance.'

As well as giving our conversational skills a workout, casual exchanges within our communities boosts wellbeing. 'Hearing your neighbour putting out their recycling and going out with yours to chat builds a sense of belonging,' says loneliness expert Amy Perrin. 'As social beings, we are tribal. We have to be among others for our sense of safety.'

Be kind to yourself to feel sociable again

by Nelisha Wickremasinghe

It's easy to attack yourself for the changes you may be experiencing, but not very helpful. Research shows that practising self-compassion instead and looking after yourself releases calming hormones that interrupt the fight, flight or freeze response that's been activated by the pandemic [see page 62]. Develop self-compassion by noticing and managing your inner critic.

Validate your feelings by writing a compassionate letter to yourself that understands and accepts a problem or unwanted situation. Describe why you feel disappointed, hurt or angry and show sensitivity and awareness of where those feelings may be coming from. Try to avoid offering solutions, as often this is where your inner critic, acting as a driver, reactivates itself.

Research also suggests – and this too is linked to self-compassion – that developing an appreciative mindset can rewire a brain in threat. At the end of every day, tell yourself two things that you appreciated or valued about yourself, and one or two things that you appreciated or valued about the day or other people. Do this every day and you will notice a change in your outlook.

"Validate your feelings by writing a compassionate letter to yourself that understands and accepts a problem"



Make a fresh start at work

If you break out in a cold sweat at the idea of relentless workplace mingling, take your chance to reinvent the way you do things

OR MANY OF US, THE LONG STRETCH where we were required to 'work from home where you can' is being replaced by at least a partial return to the workplace. But, if you are feeling socially awkward and anxious, or if the return to normality feels too abrupt, this can create stress.

'First and foremost, don't be too hard on yourself. Now is a good time to be honest with your

boss – they have a responsibility for your health and wellbeing, advises Amy Perrin, founder of the charity Marmalade Trust. She suggests that you take a proactive stance and brainstorm ideas about how to make things easier. Are there shifts you could work that might mean fewer people, for example? Could you arrange to work alongside colleagues with whom you get along best?

'Don't feel ashamed about having these conversations. Explain that the return to work has made you feel nervous and they should give you some leeway to make positive changes,' says Perrin.

For most people, the apprehension about going back into the workplace is due to our brain fearing the unknown. 'You might be telling yourself "I'm not ready!" but, in reality, the moment you're there chatting to your co-workers with a coffee, the anxiety will simply evaporate,' says psychologist Sophie Mort. 'Address your initial anxiety by telling yourself that it will be OK.'

However, if you are feeling truly overwhelmed, it's time to make some tough choices. 'If you are suddenly faced with a jam-packed calendar of face-to-face meetings, lunches and get-togethers at work, it is sensible to prioritise,' says Mort. 'There are some things we probably can't avoid, such as

lunch with the boss, but not all things are going to be as important. If you've got five events, do the lunch, but reschedule the meetings to different weeks if you can, and cancel the birthday drinks. In short, move the negotiable things and attend to the non-negotiables.'

It's important to be realistic and not expect everything to be solved at once. 'When you feel a sense of social threat, chances are that you will be

hypersensitive to others and their reactions to you,' says Nelisha Wickremasinghe, author of *Being With Others*. Now is the time to practise self-compassion. 'We are still in the midst of uncertainty. Caution, pacing ourselves and saying no when required is the right response. Trust your intuition.'

But what if we are desperate to get back into the swing of things and can't wait for awaydays and celebrations that enliven our workplace connections? For many, particularly those living alone, work is a vital source of interaction. While those people will be keen to resume normal play, they should ease back into it and not fall into the trap

of people pleasing and forgetting their own needs. However, says Wickremasinghe: 'The "swing of things" may not have been that healthy for some people in the first place.' She believes that a reluctance to go back to previous levels of socialising is a sign that people yearn to do things differently. 'That's a positive and healthy thing! Reviewing the meaning and purpose of our life and changing direction is a sign of maturity.'

Now is the perfect time to review how and why we socialise and apply some of the new habits and insights from lockdown, be that taking more time to be with yourself or getting comfortable with JOMO – the joy of missing out.

response"



How to beat social anxiety by Sophie Mort

1. UNDERSTAND THE SYMPTOMS

If your social anxiety is so severe that it's having a negative impact on your relationships and wellbeing - for example, you keep cancelling social arrangements at the last minute and then feel awful - it's important that you learn to understand what anxiety is and how it affects your thinking. Wanting to avoid the situation is normal, but you are not in danger. Anxiety is like a wave - it rises but, if you allow it, it will fall again.

2. TRY NOT TO CANCEL

People with social anxiety typically cancel at the moment their anxiety is at its peak, just before they are due to leave the house! You would think cancelling is the safe thing to do, but the more you avoid that which you fear, the more you teach your brain that it's dangerous. You cancel, you feel relieved and anxiety abates... Unfortunately, relief only lasts while you're not thinking about socialising. The next time you make a social arrangement, anxiety will return with a vengeance. Face your fear and see that everything was



Test What's undermining your social confidence?

If you're resisting getting back out there, take our test to find out the mindset tweak you need to reconnect with the joy of socialising

After a social event, L you tend to:

- ♥ Post a happy picture on social media
- Wonder why you dreaded it so much
- Realise others are more sociable than you
- Follow up to make sure everyone's happy

Right now, you feel better after

seeing people who:

- Made an effort to get in touch
- Seem to appreciate your efforts
- Don't feel they have to impress
- Make you laugh and take life less seriously

♦ You'd socialise more if it didn't leave you feeling so:

- Inadequate
- Drained
- Exhausted
- Resentful

Generally, your biggest barrier

to self-belief is:

- Overthinking everything
- Comparing yourself to others
- Feeling as if you can't cope
- Feeling like an outsider

Your ideal social O event involves:

- Organising a treat for someone else
- Catching up with an old friend.
- ◆ A last-minute and low-key get-together
- ♥ Well organised and planned in advance

You admire people who seem to:

- Attract people effortlessly
- ♥ Not care what others think
- Know how to say no
- Have an established social circle

Too much time on your own makes vou feel:

- Aimless
- Bored
- Forgotten
- Anxious

) Before a big social O event, you worry that vou'll:

- Have left someone out
- Wear the wrong thing
- Have time to go to it
- Be welcome

In a group, you tend to be the:

- Organiser
- Leader
- Doer
- Outsider

What others think of you...

- Keeps your standards high
- Motivates you to do more
- Is hard to work out
- Is usually better than you expect

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 what could be fuelling your social anxiety.



Why are you avoiding company?

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

Perfectionism

If perfectionism is your default mode, you may have always given more thought than most to how you come across to others, perhaps ruminating after social events about whether you said or did the right thing. In the age of social media, those with perfectionist tendencies also have a way to 'compare and despair' at their fingertips, fuelling social anxiety. Part of you may know that scrolling through aspirational images is undermining your confidence about your life – but it's addictive and an easy way to numb yourself if you're not feeling great. You may also put effort into posting carefully curated images, only to worry that the real you will disappoint.

Comparing yourself with others is a natural instinct that helps give us perspective on where we're at and how we're doing – but comparing yourself with people you wouldn't normally come across in real life is rarely helpful, and it can instil the message that you're not good enough or that you need to change how you live your life. Changing your relationship with yourself is the key to making socialising easier. Start by asking how different your life would be if you decided to accept and love yourself for who you are.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ◆

Overwhelm

It may not be an obvious connection, but sometimes social anxiety is a side effect of overwhelm, which reduces your tolerance for the uncertainty that comes with social interactions. Situations you normally take in your stride may be daunting when you're mentally and emotionally stretched to capacity. It can feel self-compassionate to give yourself a break and avoid social interactions if they seem to add to your pressure but, over time, withdrawal can worsen overwhelm by depriving you of social support and an outlet for stress.

It can be a vicious cycle because overwhelm can fuel self-doubt ("Why can't I cope? What's wrong with me?") and self-doubt can make even low-key socialising feel overwhelming, even with people you enjoy spending time with. If people see you as outgoing or socially confident, you may feel they won't take your social anxiety seriously, but dealing with this on your own is not the solution. Start by taking a step back to assess your commitments and what you can let go of to create space. Step off the overwhelm treadmill and your capacity for social interaction will have a chance to flourish naturally.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY

Isolation

Quality, not quantity, in relationships is important to most of us and you may prefer thought-provoking discussion to small talk. But those who are more introverted can feel drained by too much social contact. It's a fine balance because reducing social contact too much can leave you isolated! Periods of loneliness are normal but they can undermine confidence in initiating social contact, and you can rely on other people to get in touch. You may then get trapped in a loneliness loop, questioning whether reaching out is welcome. There's still a stigma attached to talking about loneliness, and it can feel as if you've failed at something everyone else does easily. You may also think it's your fault that you're isolated, which further undermines your confidence.

Opening up to someone you trust can make a difference and may help you gain perspective on your feelings. Isolation, like any emotional challenge, can put a negative filter on thoughts. As a counterbalance, reflect on the successful and rewarding relationships in your life – past or present – before social interactions to boost confidence and reduce anxiety. Mentally savour daily pleasures and achievements, however small, to improve your mood and provide a source of conversation.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

Self-criticism

You care about others, which gives the impression that you're a natural socialiser – but your compassion extends to everyone but yourself. People may be surprised to learn how much you overthink your relationships and question whether people genuinely want to see you. When you're hard on yourself, it's difficult to believe that other people aren't also tuned into your perceived faults and failings. It's no wonder you feel socially anxious, unless it's with people you think accept you without judgment. It's good to question yourself and ask how you could have done things differently, but overthinking every interaction is not helpful, and setting unrealistic expectations of yourself sends a constant message that you're not good enough.

You feel on safe ground when you know you're needed or the focus is on someone else, so you may be the one who organises birthday gatherings for others. You can feel frustrated when no one does the same for you, even when you insist that you don't want a fuss. Self-compassion is the key to adding ease to your interactions. Turn your inner critic into your personal coach and venturing out of your social comfort zone – and asking for what you need – will feel possible.





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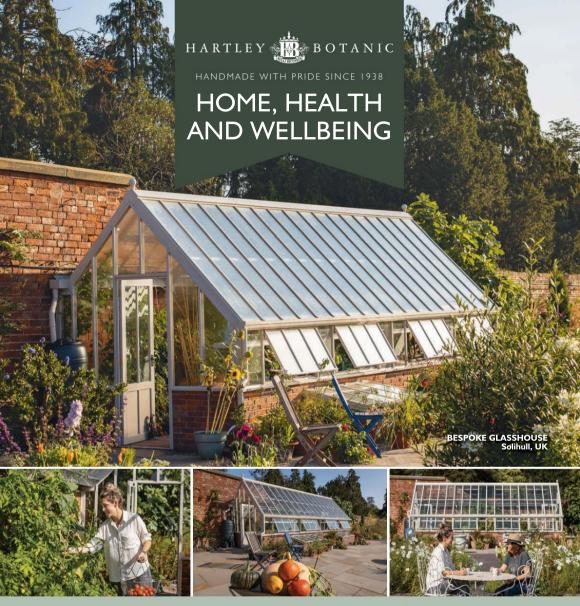
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EDITED BY ALI ROFF FARRAR

Reach for the sky

It's the advice our mothers parroted so many times when we were growing up: stand up straight!

But it seems they were right – and it's not just when we're motionless that we should remember good posture. Scientists have found that keeping an upright position is also the way to be more efficient when running, and reduce the risk of injury.' Researchers say that if you lean forward while you jog, you are more likely to overstride, intensifying the impact on your joints and increasing the chance of knee and back pain. So, keep that back straight and run like the wind!



HOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES. "THE UNIVERSITY OF

Mindful wellness

Embrace the wonder of the season and the benefits of contemplation this month. Ali Roff Farrar brings us soul-nourishing rituals, plus feelgood products and meaningful science for greater wellbeing

WAKE UP TO POSSIBILITY

Sunshine-filled mornings and balmy nights; there's something magical about August that's akin to Christmas! It's a month to slow down and check out of work into a state of relaxation – if only for a short while.

Mornings feel extra magical: bright and full of promise. I take a walk before settling down to work for the day. I pop in my headphones and press play on a podcast... but often I don't take in the information and settle into a peaceful state of reflection instead! On these pages, I offer a little structure for awakening slowly and mindfully.



Psychologies Wellness Director, mindfulness expert and yoga teacher

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#mindfulhealth@aliroff @psychologiesmagazine, psychologies.co.uk

Beautiful foundations

We know to look after the microbiome in our gut with pre- and probiotics, but we also need to look after the microbiome of our skin. By using skincare products that incorporate pre- and probiotics, we can ease sensitivity such as eczema, slow the rate of ageing and protect our skin from pathogens. I love this silky Esse probiotic foundation, £57, with bacteria that 'docks' onto skin cells and brings balance to the skin's surface by strengthening skin barrier function and stimulating the secretion of antimicrobial peptides. esseskincare.com





Parsley has anti-inflammatory properties and is rich in collagen-making vitamin C, firming vitamin K and chlorophyll, which reduces puffiness and dark circles, says Christine Iverson in The Garden Apothecary: Recipes, Remedies And Rituals (Summersdale £14.99). Lemon juice brightens and raw honey is a soothing antibacterial. This mask keeps in the fridge for two days.

PARSLEY UNDER-EYE MASK (2-3 applications)

8 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped 1 tsp lemon juice 1 tbsp raw honey

Grind the ingredients together using a pestle and mortar. Apply the paste under the eyes and relax for 20 minutes. Splash off with cold water.



PRANAYAMA BREATH PRACTICE FOR SUMMER

Sithali is one of my favourite yogic life hacks – a simple breath technique you can practise anywhere to cool your body using your breath and tongue. To start, breathe out through your nose then, at the bottom of the breath, roll your tongue. Take a deep, slow inhalation through your rolled tongue.

Exhale through your nose and repeat the inhalation through the tongue, focusing on the cooling sensation. Repeat for one to three minutes.

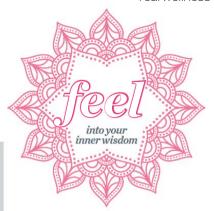
Dewy relief

Hot weather plus blasts of air conditioning can make skin dry and irritated. A facial mist provides hydration coupled with a refreshingly cool spritz. I like this Extra Sensitive Floral Mist Cooling & Refreshing Spray, £55, from Trio Therapeutic Skincare, which also delivers anti-inflammatory bitter orange extract. efskin.com





Why do we seek to change our lives and become better versions of ourselves? Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips explores this question in his book *On Wanting To Change* (Penguin, £7.99). He addresses the concept of inevitable change over time, and how our feelings towards change will evolve with experience.



Mindful Health Club

One of the all-time memorable interviews of my career was with a wise doctor and mindfulness expert from India. You you may have heard of him – Deepak Chopra! This is a short morning ritual for awakening inspired by his work. Best repeated every day, these questions can be asked within a meditation, allowing a pause for each answer to be revealed, or during a journalling session. I like to meditate over my questions while walking. The idea is that the auestions unlock

YOU RELAX

with your Psychologies'

subscription, from programmes such as 'Change your life from your sun lounger' to 'The burnout antidote'.

See page 76

answers buried in your subconscious and, over time, lead to a state of awakening. It's a glorious thing to do of a morning while your mind is quiet and the day hasn't interfered with your mental state.

Ask yourself: Who am I? Allow your thoughts or written words to flow and don't censor them or try to give a right answer – there isn't one. Allow whatever comes up to come up.

Next ask: What do I want? Again, let your thoughts or words flow before moving onto the following questions...

Ask: When will I be content? What is my purpose? What am I grateful for? Allow yourself to explore each answer fully and honestly every day, and feel and see the magic unfold.



CHIA AND BERRIES OVERNIGHT BOWL

Boost your health dramatically with '2 Weeks To Feeling Great', the new book by nutritionist Gabriela Peacock. It has an abundance of advice on what and how to eat for ultimate nourishment and satisfaction. She recommends two two-week plans incorporating intermittent fasting and mindful eating, alongside recipes and guidance on immunity, liver support, digestion, sleep, hormones and energy. I enjoy this easy summer breakfast recipe with chia seeds, which are rich in protein and omega-3. 'Chia seeds have many health benefits,' says Peacock, 'from reducing inflammation to improving skin health and hormone balance. Soaking them overnight makes them easier to digest, allowing their nutrients to be more easily absorbed.'

SERVES 2 85g raspberries 100g natural live or nut yoghurt 200ml almond milk 4 tbsp chia seeds 1 tbsp agave syrup Squeeze of lemon juice

TO SERVE Handful mixed berries Pinch of lemon zest

- **1.** Place the raspberries in a jar or container with a lid and break them up using a fork.
- **2.** Add the yoghurt, milk, chia seeds, agave syrup and lemon juice and mix well.
- **3.** Cover with the lid and refrigerate overnight or for a minimum of 6 hours.
- **4.** Serve in a bowl with a handful of berries and finish with the lemon zest. Swirl through the raspberries for

a vivid boost of antioxidants. This recipe is gluten-free and can be made vegan, if using nut or sova-based voghurt.

• '2 Weeks To Feeling Great' by Gabriela Peacock (Kyle Books, £20)







QUOTES TO LIVE BY

66 The strawberries
glistening in the hot sunlight, we dipped

them in sugar, looking at each other, not hurrying the feast 99

EDWIN MORGAN

GIN AND TONIC

Cheers to mindful drinking! To cut down on the amount of alcohol you

drink without having less volume of your favourite refreshing tipple in the heat, these flavoured gins from Luxlo are just the ticket. They have an ABV of 20 per cent, compared with 40 per cent for gin or vodka - and there's no compromise on taste. Try the classic gin flavour or blood orange, passion fruit and pomegranate and raspberry.

SOUNDS

special Dossier feature – read to you each month on the 'Psychologies' podcast channel. Plus, access exclusive magazine audio interviews and our partnership podcasts with UKCP therapists



CLEAN MOUTH Country: India

I discovered tongue scraping while training

to be a yoga teacher. It removes the build-up of bacteria that leads to poor oral health, including bad

breath, improves your sense of taste and enhances gut health. Simply scrape gently down the length of your tongue several times after brushing.

Tongue scraper, £3.99. hrushd co uk



385

This is the average number of extra calories we eat daily when we are sleep-deprived, compared with when we've had a good night's rest.* Sleep tight, eat right...

More than all white!

I admit that dairy-free chocolate isn't always the bee's knees - but Happi chocolatiers have been working hard to create that creamy taste we love so much... White chocolate lovers will rejoice at their new 100 per cent natural, gluten-free, oat milk bars, from £1.75, made with rice syrup. My favourite is the white chocolate and raspberry flavour with dried fruit for extra deliciousness. It's berry, berry good! happifreefrom.com

Gardening every day can increase your wellbeing by 6.6 per cent and lower stress levels by 4.2 per cent, a study shows.* No garden? No time? These hydroponic herb kits from The Stem are designed to grow your herbs tidily without the need for soil – plus they are made using organic and recycled materials. They're available as singles or a set of three, including basil, coriander, mint, rocket and thyme.

Hydroponic herb kits, from £20, thestem.co.uk





Perfect for August, this free course helps you slow down, step back from the busyness of life and notice the everyday wonder that surrounds you. Give yourself the opportunity to reconnect with yourself and the natural world and sign up to the Little piece of wonder everyday'e-course at little piece of wonder.

""" Little piece of wonder.

""" Coult/course

On the money

Does wealth really make us happy? It's previously been thought that economic growth in low-income populations increases wellbeing, but in a study of people who live in poorer societies where money plays a minimal role (fishing communities in Bangladesh and the Soloman Islands), the majority reported a level of happiness comparable with Scandinavian countries, which rate highest in the world. "This suggests that

happiness is unrelated to material wealth – researchers believe that in less monetised communities, people spend more time with family and in nature, boosting their contentment.

6 days

This is the length of time it takes us to get over an embarrassing moment, such as ending a work phone call by saying 'I love you', which has given 30 per cent of us red faces!

Sage advice

'The reason scents and essential oils are so powerful is because they stimulate the olfactory nerve, which runs between your nose and brain, signalling the limbic system; the part of your brain that controls emotional stimuli,' says Emilie De Block, co-founder of Bio Scents. Clary sage essential oil has a soft, sweet and subtle floral aroma. A real all-rounder, it's used for its antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties for skin infections and those summer acne breakouts, but also for premenstrual symptom support via aromatherapy massage, and menopausal symptoms through inhalation.



"SMIÑARRO ET AL, HAPPY WITHOUT MONEY: MINIMALLY MONETIZED SOCIETIES CAN EXHIBIT HIGH SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: PLOS ONE; 2

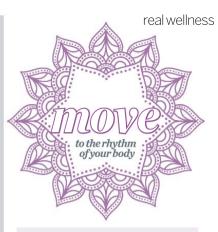


Blue is the colour

We know being in nature is good for us, but research shows that spending time near bodies of water, so-called blue spaces, has a positive impact on mental health, as well as inspiring physical activity, which further increases wellbeing. Sea for yourself!

150

This is the maximum age a human could live without disease, accidents and with a stress-free life.** Supercentenarian Jeanne Calment, who died in France at the age of 122 in 1997, is the oldest documented person





WE LOVE YOGA

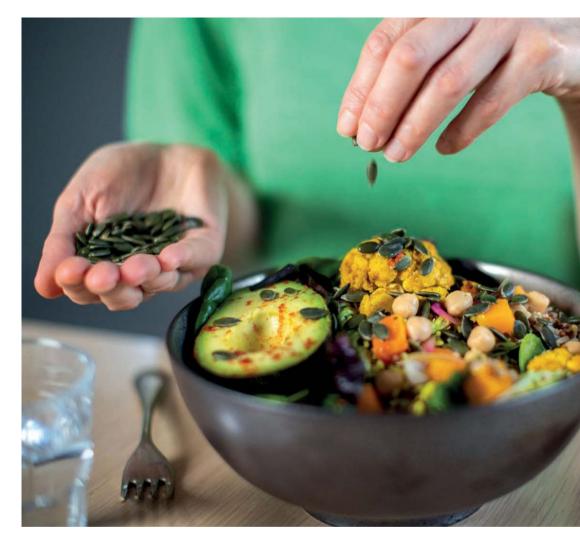
Discover the unique holistic health benefits of each asana



HEAD-TO-KNEE FORWARD BEND Janu sirsasana

This calming pose helps relieve mild depression and anxiety, while stretching the spine, shoulders, hamstrings and groin. It stimulates the liver and kidneys, improves digestion and relieves fatigue, headaches and insomnia.

- Start in a seated, cross-legged position. Stretch your left leg out straight in front of you at a slight angle.
- Draw the sole of your right foot in towards your left inner thigh, as close to your groin as possible.
- Reach your arms up above your head and look up, before reaching forward towards your left shin, ankle or foot.
- As you reach, keep your spine straight and chin lifted for as long as possible, without rounding your spine. Allow your hands to rest wherever they land on your left leg or foot and bow your head.
- Relax here and feel the benefits.



Maximise your meals, boost your brain

Make the most of simple and tasty ingredients that also pack a powerful punch for mental wellbeing – and you've probably got most of them in your store cupboard, just waiting to nourish your health and happiness



OULD YOU LIKE TO CLEAR YOUR MIND, BOOST YOUR mood and increase your brainpower while having a snack? It could be as easy as a chop, slice and sprinkle – with a dash of kitchen know-how and scientifically sound additions. You don't have to be a nutritionist to create wholesome meals with added benefits for your emotional wellness. Our experts have done the prep for you by putting together a list of readily available ingredients that won't only add flavour to your meals, but come with a plethora of health benefits for brain and body.

Give your wellbeing some TLC with a few easy tweaks to your recipes.

Pep up with black pepper

There's now even more reason to crack a healthy helping of fiery black pepper over your favourite dish. Studies show that piperine – the main compound in black pepper – can improve brain function and reduce symptoms of depression. Researchers found that piperine possesses antidepressant-like properties and has a cognitive enhancing effect on the brain. Who would have thought the humble peppercorn could have such mood-boosting potential?

TRY THIS You may be a dab hand at grinding pepper on your pizza and pasta but, for extra kick with accompanying advantages, add black pepper to fruit dishes. It pairs perfectly with strawberries or watermelon – and you'll seem quite the foodie!

Improve circulation with turmeric

This vivid, golden spice is a godsend for circulation, which means more oxygen to your brain, helping it function better. When eaten with your old friend black pepper, it is even easier to absorb, which means it goes straight to where it's needed.

TRY THIS Turmeric is a staple in Asian cuisines, which also contain plenty of oils, and there's a good reason for that – turmeric is more easily absorbed through fat. Stir into mayo or add to an olive oil and balsamic dip for best effect.

Add antioxidants with pomegranate

Pomegranate seeds are bursting with polyphenol antioxidants, which are superb for the cardiovascular system. They support healthy blood pressure and help protect the body's cells from free radicals. A three-year study of daily pomegranate juice consumption showed definitive benefits in artery health and blood pressure stability.

TRY THIS

As juice, or seeds with couscous, or sprinkled onto desserts... there's almost nowhere pomegranate doesn't belong!



EXPERT ADVICE



Alison Cullen is a nutritional therapist. She combines running her Ayrshire clinic with the role of education manager for supplements brand A. Vogel. avogel.co.uk



Ayesha Shahid is a nutrition and lifestyle coach and founder of the For the Love of Lemons' wellness site. She believes in the power of eating well for good health. @justlovelemons

Be happy with cloves

The abundance of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties in cloves help keep your whole body healthy, but particularly your mind. A study published this year in the *American Journal Of Psychiatry* found that the more inflammation present in your body, the more likely you are to suffer from low mood and develop emotional imbalances, so soothing inflammation is key, and cloves offer an easy way to start.

TRY THIS Cloves are deliciously comforting when added to a good-quality hot chocolate, and go well with ground cacao. If chocolate isn't your thing, they make a simple and warming tea or can be added to both sweet and savoury dishes, such as crumbles and curries



Boost brainpower with walnuts

Have you noticed that a walnut looks like a brain? It is a happy coincidence because this gnarly nut works wonders for your grey cells. Walnuts are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids which, combined with plant sterols and a host of vitamins, give your brain a radical boost. Plant sterols also naturally bolster good cholesterol (high-density lipoproteins, or HDL) and lower bad cholesterol (LDL), improving your

heart health and reducing the chance that you'll need statins, which can block essential fatty acids from reaching your brain and hinder its performance.

TRY THIS Walnuts are excellent in tarts, crumbles and chutneys but, for quick and easy intake, add a handful as a crunchy topping on a crisp, summer salad, or crumble onto coleslaw for even more bite.

Balance blood sugar with cinnamon

This delicious and fragrant spice is proven to help balance blood sugar levels, which is vital for keeping your emotions on an even keel. When your blood sugar spikes and crashes, it unbalances your entire system and can alter your mood drastically, causing you to feel tired and irritable. Studies have shown that cinnamon improves glucose control in patients with hyperglycaemia and lowers glucose and cholesterol in those with elevated levels

TRY THIS For a harmonious start to your day, try crunchy cinnamon toast, or a dusting of the sweet stuff on your porridge. Adding a sprinkle to your morning coffee can counteract the effects of a dreaded caffeine crash later, and ensure you're ready to face whatever the day has in store.

Clear your head with ginger

Aromatic ginger is a sure-fire way to wake your whole body, including your mind. It's packed with antioxidant compounds, which help protect your DNA from damage and fight high blood pressure. It's also a perfect tonic for treating nausea, clearing congestion and banishing brain fog.

TRY THIS Grate ginger into water with a spoon of honey for a spicy drink, or add to a salad.



Feed your second brain with star anise

Star anise contains mighty antiviral compounds and is ideal for soothing digestive issues and looking after your enteric nervous system (aka your gut), which is often referred to as the second brain.

The enteric nervous system is a critical part of the gut-brain axis, through which your gut and brain communicate. This gut-brain axis performs several important functions, which can have a sizeable impact on your mood. For example, the majority of serotonin in your body, a neurotransmitter associated with mood, is found in the gut, so keeping your gut in good order is vital for emotional wellbeing.

TRY THIS In Chinese medicine, people take star anise in tea form, and its liquorice flavour enhances Chinese dishes. It's one of the big five in Chinese five-spice too.

Sleep tight with nutmeg

When eaten in moderation (don't have too much as it can trigger a natural high), nutmeg, the seed of a tropical tree, is wonderful for promoting sleep, which is essential for keeping your emotional wellbeing in balance. Studies have found that poor sleep is linked with the development of degenerative ageing processes, such as Alzheimer's, so getting enough shut-eye is crucial.

TRY THIS Nutmeg can be grated onto just about anything, from soup to ice cream. You can even add nutmeg to your bath to nourish your skin – bonus!

Protect brain cells with smoked garlic

The potent garlic bulb is packed with zinc, which is essential for protecting the integrity of your brain cell membranes and improving blood flow to this area, which helps maximise function. It's also an effective tonic for your immune system and metabolism, leaving them happy and balanced.

TRY THIS Smoked garlic has a milder flavour than unsmoked and the process doesn't lessen any of its nutritional powers. We know garlic has a strong taste and smell, but it's best consumed raw on an empty stomach for maximum health benefits. However, if that raises

your eyebrows, smoked garlic can be added to soups and salads or crushed to make garlic butter.



Regulate your microbiome with dandelion

This might seem like a strange one, but dandelion root contains inulin, a polysaccharide based on fructose, found in many traditional herbal remedies. Similar to the compounds present in star anise, inulin helps balance your gut microbiome (the delicate balance of bacteria) and also promotes a healthy gut-brain axis, which is in charge of neurological and cognitive functions between your gut and your brain.

TRY THIS Don't worry, we're not going to ask you to pluck a dandelion from the garden and munch it!

There are a number of dandelion products on the market, including dandelion root tea and coffee to help you get your fill.

Alternatively, add a few dandelion drops (£10.85 from A. Vogel) to your food or water.

For the love of food

When it comes to having a happy and healthy gut, *Psychologies* Nutrition Editor Eve Kalinik is often asked whether we need to eliminate and restrict certain foods to achieve nirvana. However, it is a broad and varied diet that will provide us with the most support, she explains



With such a cacophony of voices in the area of nutrition and gut health, it is no wonder that we might be confused over what we should or should not be eating. However, shunning certain foods can, at best, leave

us with fewer options on the menu and, at worst, lead to nutritional deficiencies that can have a bigger impact on our health and wellbeing. Limiting entire food groups, such as carbohydrates, can reduce both our physical and mental energy. It can even lead to a gut microbiota that is 'starving', as our gut microbes feed predominantly on the fibre found in carbohydrates.

Relish the smorgasbord

No one should be judged over what they do or do not want to eat. However, unless you have a bona fide, diagnosed allergy, I would encourage you to enjoy as inclusive and diverse a diet as possible. Aim to include a wide variety of wholefoods, and make sure you have foods that you truly enjoy. It is vital that we get pleasure from our food, at the same time as including those that support our health.

And, once we embrace all foods and enjoy the foods that we may once have deemed 'bad', we can enjoy a sense of balance rather than guilt, and feel much happier about our relationship with food. Words such as 'elimination' and 'restriction' lead to heightened anxiety and fear around eating. By removing those words, we also reduce stress around food, another boost for optimum gut health.

Having a healthy, happy and meaningful connection with our food is all about balance, love and respect – if we think of it in that way, it will bring us joy from the deepest part of us. @evekalinik



66 Try not to get hung up on trying to achieve the 'perfect diet' or even the perfect gut or body for that matter — it simply doesn't exist 99

Chocbuster Nothing

sparks food joy like chocolate, and Cocoa Runners know a thing or two about top-notch and ethically sourced bars. Try the Naive kefir milk bar, £6.45, cocoarunners.com





It's the berries
Nourish your gut and
give your taste buds a
zingy treat with super
thick organic yoghurt
from Yeo Valley. New,
summery flavours
include blueberry,
blackcurrant and
raspberry, £1.10 for
150g, yeovalley.co.uk



Bubble up Charge your glass with this superlative Blanc de Blancs English sparkling wine, £59, from champion producer Gusbourne. Even more special with oysters! gusbourne.com

The Retreat

Travel • Food • Wisdom



HOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES, "NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, VERTICAL STEENERY BEFERA GAMENS IS TETERS AND DRESEL UNIVERSITY. URBAN PARK STEENERY BEED UNIVERSITY. URBAN PARK ST. 2021.

How will you be aestivating this summer?

Nature has a way for us to rest, regroup and redirect our lives, says Caroline Sylger Jones

AVE YOUR FOUR WALLS been a welcome sanctuary these past months? Perhaps, far from being desperate to return to your old way of living, you're more comfortable and content with your new, home-centric normal. You are not alone. You can, however, be creative about how to make the most of your summer and recharge your batteries. Let's face it, we've been all been through the mill.

Even if you could travel freely, and the world and her husband hadn't booked every last campsite, B&B, hotel and self-catering cottage as far as the eye can see, chances are that you don't want to chase 'the ultimate British staycation' – because it doesn't feel right and you are not ready to switch back to how things were... yet.

If so, there's a simple and natural way of making staying at home a joyful, retreat-like experience, while avoiding the 'same old, same old' feeling that threatens when you do not leave your home and physically go on holiday. Aestivation is the scientific

name for the practice of summer hibernation, and we can take our lead from the natural world.

What is aestivation?

Yes, we're more used to the idea of hibernation in winter - 'hiber' is the Latin root word for winter - when many animals sleep for a few months to get out of the cold and conserve their energy when food is scarce. But some creatures, particularly in hot, dusty countries, will enter a similar state in summer during extreme heat and drought. Desert tortoises, Nile crocodiles, four-toed hedgehogs, cactus mice, ladybirds, snails, salamanders and red-legged frogs can all have a summer sleep, during which they lower their heart rate and metabolism as a survival strategy.

We can harness this idea as a beautiful metaphor if we choose to stay in one place this summer to be calm, rally and grow personally. Getting the process right involves some planning. Firstly, make a pledge to yourself to retreat for





whatever period works for you. It could be an hour a day, a day a week, a weekend a month, a week, a fortnight or even a month. You will know what feels right and what you can achieve.

Next, create a beautiful space for your retreat. Identify and clean an area for your activities, and make it comfortable and inviting. It could be a room in your house, an area of your garden or even a tent on the lawn. The key is to make the space yours – somewhere you can be still.

Thirdly, set an intention around what you want from your retreat. Is there something in particular that you wish to learn or explore? If you have the budget and time, draw in help for a focused experience, such as a bespoke virtual retreat with an expert.

Lastly, fill in the detail by carving out a light daily schedule that is manageable for your retreat. Allow it to give you the space and time to achieve your goals.

One key rule is that even if you are at home with family, you are in retreat mode and do so fully. Coach Jessica McGregor Johnson explains: 'Set it up in advance and let people know you are not available. Turn off your phone, computer and TV. Plan ahead so you can nurture yourself with healthy meals, baths, relaxing music, uplifting books and inspiring podcasts.'

Devising a gentle rhythm of morning, afternoon and evening activities is a good place to start for some, but don't be too prescriptive. Lean in and listen to yourself and your needs, and the right path will unfold.

You may want to start your day with journalling or meditation, body brushing or gentle movement. Your mornings could be spent writing, drawing or painting, making and reconnecting with your dreams and ambitions. Afternoons might be spent dancing, running, walking or swimming and, in the evenings, you could try yoga nidra, massage or simply watching the fading light.

Rest is vital. Relaxation is crucial. Try to finish every day with a list of a things that felt meaningful or inspired awe, no matter how small.

jessicamcgregorjohnson.com



"THIS WORKED FOR ME"

Louise Chester, founder of Mindfulness at Work and Witherdens Hall spa retreat in Kent, says: 'My working life takes me away to the busy business world, so I always designate August as my time to retreat within – at home with

my family.

'This is my chance to remind myself of the beauty of simple things – to pay attention to the soothing cadence of the natural light-led day, the pleasure of a slow meal, the awe induced by a weed piercing through hard-baked earth, the icy tingle of the sea or a conversation taken deeper with my daughter.

'I invite rituals to develop, rather than impose them

as structure on my day. I notice that my body prefers to stretch and swim before I settle down to meditate; that

meditate; that breakfast gets postponed until brunch, and lunch becomes an early evening mezze.

'I spend time after meals in the garden picking courgettes and finding freshly laid eggs. I attend to the present and note what I find as I capture both beauty and any sorrow that may emerge. From this place of equanimity, I decide – what is mine to do?'

mindfulnessatwork.com; witherdenshall.co.uk

Breakthrough tasks to try

MIND

Get unstuck

'The feeling of being stuck is usually because one of your inner voices is too loud and not letting any of the others speak, or every one is speaking at once!' says Tania Carriere, coach and founder of Advivum Journeys, which runs real and virtual retreats. 'This exercise allows you to create calm and intention by engaging each one individually.

'First, make a list of all the "yous" you want involved in your decision. In my case, there is fun-loving me, responsible me, weary me and optimistic me. Sometimes, there are even a few borrowed mes that sound like my mum, my wise aunt or boss.

'Write each "you" on a piece of paper and place them on different chairs. Next, articulate your question – the matter on which you want their opinion – such as, "How should I be balancing my time differently?"

'Your challenge is to spend 15 minutes in each chair, giving yourself advice from only the perspective of the persona on that particular chair. Journal around the answer or say it out loud. By the end, you will have sat in all the chairs, opened your perspective and heard from the whole advisory board of you. Inevitably, you will find momentum too, as you will clearly hear the advice you had to offer yourself all along.'

advivumjourneys.ca

"By the end, you will have sat in all the chairs, opened your perspective and heard from the whole advisory board of you"



BODY

Internal massage with spinal waves

'Spinal waves are a brilliant way to work on the suppleness of your spine, eliminate aches and pains and give yourself what I call an "internal massage",' explains Hannah Beadle, CEO and head coach of Wildfitness retreats.

'Start by facing a wall, approximately half a foot away. Touch one part of your body to the wall at a time, starting at the nose, then chin, chest, breastbone, belly button, pelvis and, lastly, the knees, before starting again at the

nose. Make sure that only the cue point is touching the wall at any one time. At first it will feel odd, and you may have to pause between each point, which is absolutely fine.

'Once you are used to this motion, start to make it more fluid. Putting on some music can help you zone out and find a rhythm. Do this for five to 10 minutes at least once a day, first thing in the morning before your day starts.'

wildfitness.com



LIFE Create a new direction

'This exercise is about establishing a direction for your emergence after your aestivation,' explains Julie Hosler, narrative strategist at Strategic Space Retreats.

'Take a pen and paper, and give yourself uninterrupted time so you can write freely. Project your life five years from now. Imagine that you are in your ideal situation, and you have succeeded at everything you tried and aimed for in your life.

'Dream big. Really go there in your mind as if it is already happening for you. Don't hold back and don't edit yourself. Describe a specific day in this imagined future. Go into as much detail as you like. Write in full sentences and paragraphs. Keep writing until you have nothing else to write.

'These prompts will get your creative juices flowing: Where are you living – city, country, flat or house? What type of work are you doing? Is it in an office, in a vast field or on a conference stage? What excites you? What are you reading, wearing, making, creating and learning? Who are you spending time with? Who is sharing your space? What is the next thing on the horizon? Over the course of your aestivation, take purposeful steps in the direction of this future that you seek.

'Lastly, name three people who can support your future vision. List three qualities or skills you will need most to achieve this future. What is one deliberate action you can take to create forward momentum? Put your vision document somewhere safe and revisit it annually. You'll be surprised how it will begin unfolding.'

thestrategicspace.com

"THIS WORKED FOR ME"

Desri Goodwin, nutritionist and life coach at Haven on Earth

I have withdrawn into my home or another space many times to heal or find acceptance of situations. One of my most memorable was



when I stayed in a teepee in Wales for three weeks with my husband. It was early summer, so mornings and evenings were cool, and there was a wood burner inside that I watched as I snuggled down to sleep. I felt the pull of my Welsh roots and a definite homing instinct. I heard no news, used no social media, interacted very little with people and found an incredible, profound and blissful peace.

'On the way there, I had been drawn to a craft shop and was tempted by piles of coloured fleece, which inspired me to work on a tapestry. When I started, my stitching was chaotic – different directions and tensions. After five days of picking it up and putting it down as I wished, it became uniform, calm and smooth – just like my mind. That, for me, is aestivation, It is healing and nurturing. I find it essential in times of need, and as indulgent as a holiday.'

haven-on-earth.com

Virtual retreats to explore

WRITE with Arvon at Home

Whether you sign up to a writing week or masterclass, or tune in every Wednesday night for a live guest reading, this could be the summer that you find inspiration, kick-start your creativity and make your writing dreams a reality. arvon.org/arvon-at-home

ENERGISE with Haven on Earth

Discover how to work with your life energy and unleash the power of the universe to heal your traumas and improve your life. haven-on-earth.com/online-virtual-wellness-retreats

CREATE with Artful at Home

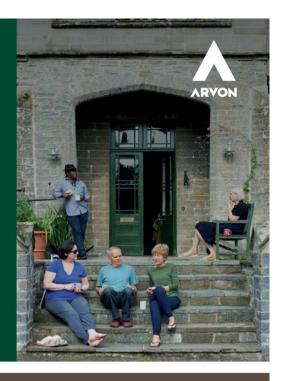
You won't learn to draw or paint on this retreat, but you will learn to use clever art therapy techniques to help you check in with where you are in life, and where you want to go. artfulretreats.com/art-therapy-online For more virtual retreat ideas, go to queenofretreats.com/virtual

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Linda's culinary legacy

Linda McCartney blazed a trail as a meat-free cooking pioneer. Her music legend husband, Paul, and daughters, Stella and Mary, share some of her favourite summertime recipes, reimagined for today's conscious cook

BLACK BEAN TACOS

Animal rights activist Linda
McCartney's cooking was influenced
by her love of Mexican food and these
tacos make a great informal feast.
Eating plant-based meals is a
compassionate step that helps prevent
cruelty and suffering in animals, so
choose pulses, such as black beans,
to meet your protein needs.

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes COOKING TIME: 30 minutes SERVES 4

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- ●1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped

- 5 medium garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- ●1 tbsp sweet smoked paprika
- 2 x 400g tins black beans, drained
- 200g ripe tomatoes, chopped
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

TO SERVE

- 8 tortillas
- 150g shop-bought or homemade guacamole
- 150g shop-bought or homemade salsa
- Large handful coriander leaves
- 1 tsp dried chilli flakes
- Lime wedges, to serve

- 1 Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook gently for 8 minutes until softened, taking care not to burn them.
- 2 Add the spices and cook for another 3 minutes until aromatic, then add the black beans, tomatoes and 250ml water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes or until almost all the water has evaporated. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3 Heat the tortillas. Place the black bean mixture on the tortillas with the salsa and guacamole, then sprinkle on the coriander leaves and chilli flakes. Serve with the lime wedges.





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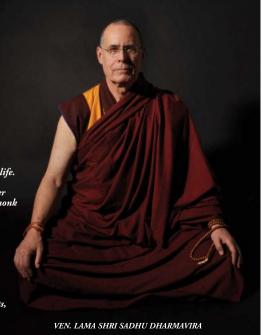
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SWEET POTATO ROSTI WITH AVO, CORIANDER AND CHILLI

Packed with comforting, rich flavour, sweet potatoes are a great source of minerals and vitamins, particularly C and E. They are high in fibre, which is beneficial for the digestive system. Sweet potatoes, considered a superfood by nutritionists, count towards your five a day.

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes COOKING TIME: 20 minutes SERVES 4

- 600g sweet potato, peeled
- 1 medium red onion, peeled and very finely chopped
- 2 medium garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 1 tsp cumin seeds or ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 5 tbsp gram (chickpea) flour or plain white flour
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for frying
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

TO SERVE

- 2 ripe avocados
- Chopped coriander leaves
- 1 red chilli, deseeded and
- thinly sliced
- Lime wedges (optional)
- 1 Coarsely grate the sweet potato. Place it in the centre of a clean tea towel, roll up the towel and squeeze out as much liquid as possible over a sink, twisting the towel as you go.

 2 Tip the sweet potato into a bowl and
- mix with the red onion, garlic, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, flour and
- 4 tablespoons of olive oil. Season with 2 teaspoons salt and half a teaspoon black pepper, then use your hands to bring everything together.
- **3** Add a tablespoon of oil to a large, non-stick pan and place it over a



medium-low heat. Take 2 tablespoons of the sweet potato mixture in your hand and tightly compact it into a ball, then gently flatten it into a disc and place it in the hot pan. Repeat with more of the mixture, taking care not to overcrowd the pan.

4 Fry the rosti for 4-5 minutes until golden on one side, then gently flip and fry for another 4-5 minutes, until

golden and cooked through. Transfer to a plate and continue until you've used all the mixture, adding oil as needed. 5 Halve the avocados, remove the stones and slice the flesh. Plate up the rosti and avocado, season and scatter over the coriander leaves and chilli. Drizzle with a little more olive oil and serve immediately with the lime wedges, if desired.



BRIGHT MOROCCAN CARROT SALAD

The humble carrot is a brilliant source of vitamins C and E, as well as beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A, and may help protect against heart disease and cancer, as well as eye conditions, such as cataracts. The orange in this salad makes it sweet and zingy – a flavour sensation with a sunny disposition!

PREPARATION TIME: 15 minutes SERVES 4-6

- 1 orange
- 6 medium carrots (about 450g),

peeled and coarsely grated

- 2 spring onions, finely sliced
- 30g walnuts, finely chopped
- 1/2-1 tsp dried chilli flakes, to taste
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- Small handful flatleaf parsley, leaves only, roughly chopped
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Start by segmenting the orange with a serrated knife. First, cut off the top and bottom ends of the orange so you can set it flat on your chopping board. Working from top to bottom, slice away the peel and white pith, following the curve of the fruit. Insert the knife between one of the segments and its connective membrane and gently slice into the middle of the fruit. Then slice into the other side of the segment to release it from the membrane and lift it out. Repeat with the remaining segments.

2 Put the segments in a bowl with all

the remaining ingredients and gently toss together. Season generously to taste. Cover and refrigerate the salad for about 30 minutes before serving.

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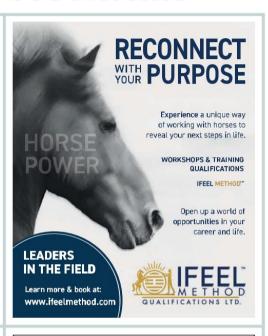
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...but you might want to think twice before snuggling up in a synthetic or feather duvet again!

AM NOT A FAN OF HORROR but, at the risk of a terrifying my readers, I must refer you to what I, personally, think is the scariest book on this planet. Stephen King eat your heart out!

Penguin Books published Matthew Walker's Why We Sleep in 2017 and, when I first read it, I really sat up and took note. In answering the question of why we sleep, Walker reveals the long-term, irreversible physical and mental damage done to our bodies as a result of sleep deprivation, which goes far beyond the usual things we are told about not getting a decent night's sleep.

So I vowed to reread this book regularly as a reminder, lest I lose sight of the consequences of insufficient or rubbish sleep.

The opening paragraph of chapter eight is worth quoting. Walker says: 'I was once fond of saying "sleep is the third pillar of good health, alongside diet and exercise". I have changed my tune. Sleep is more than a pillar; it is the foundation on which the two other health bastions sit.'

Poor sleep can damage our cardiovascular systems, upset our metabolisms, affect our reproduction and compromise our immune systems - oh, and it can also addle our brains.

The book's appendix lists a dozen tips for healthy sleep. Much is common sense, but I suggest that Walker omits an important thirteenth tip. He fails to acknowledge the importance of the quality of bedding in the creation of the optimal sleep environment.



causing the sleeper to wake in a state of uncomfortable clamminess.

Feathers and down duvets aggravate breathing difficulties, causing the sleeper to wake with a stuffy, blocked nose, watery, itchy eyes and perhaps a dull headache. None of this is conducive to achieving and enjoying the essential quality and quantity of good sleep. In this regard, the solution is simple. In short, let wool wow you, and don't just look to your duvet. Make sure you go the full monty, complementing your duvet with wool pillows and a mattress cover.

Our Southdown Duvet customers who go from synthetic and feathers to wool say it's literally an overnight revelation in increased comfort and undisturbed restorative rest; sleep that would make Matthew Walker smile and Stephen King run for the hills.

Jessica Cross, owner, Southdown Duvets (also known as the Duvet Lady!)

Counting sheep...

'These duvets are top of the line but you also get an eco-friendly product. It's good to know that I'm sleeping under the wool from contented sheep', savs satisfied customer Mark, 'Southdown Duvets also provides attention to detail in the preparation of the wool and final product. great customer service and a generous returns policy – but you won't want to return it!'

Owner Jessica says: 'All credit goes to the Southdown sheep who provide this miracle fibre in the first place. I just do right by them and my customers.'



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PSYCHOLOGIES

Your Questions in Mind... to help and inspire

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

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

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



I've tried everything but my hay fever is driving me mad. How can I stop it?

A) Lots of people try one thing or two together and when those don't work they give up or try something else. Try putting together a Hay fever First Aid Kit. Use (only) one anti-histamine, (only) one Steroid nasal spray and one or more drug-free remedies, like, HayMax allergen barrier balms, Qu-Chi Acupressure band, black seed oil and BEE Prepared immune booster.

If this still doesn't work, try swapping the anti-histamine for one with a different active ingredient; cetirizine instead of loratadine. If that doesn't work, try swapping the nasal spray active ingredient, e.g. beclometasone for fluticasone. But DON'T use two antihistamines or 2 steroid nasal sprays at the same time, though. If this still doesn't work see your GP who can prescribe you stronger drugs or even immunotherapy which works well for some people.

haymax.biz info@haymax.biz



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www.potterandmooch.co.uk 01903 331744

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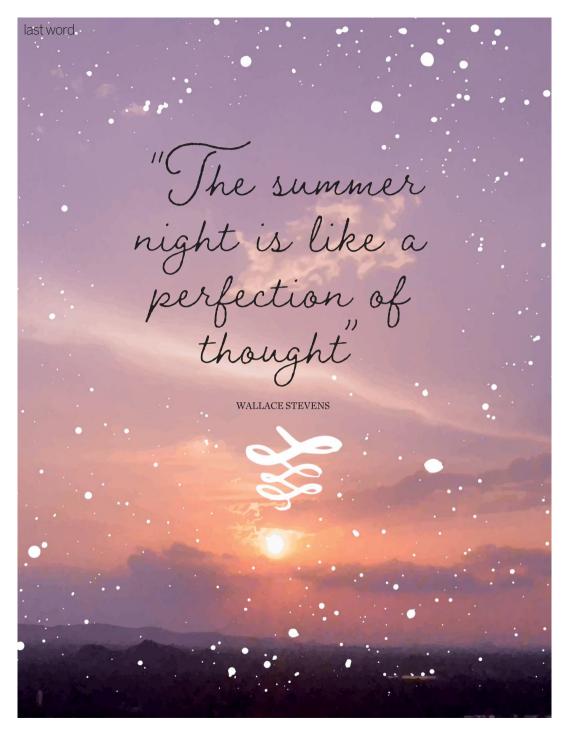
Featured product is Sterling Silver with Stars ear climbers on 925 Sterling Silver at £22

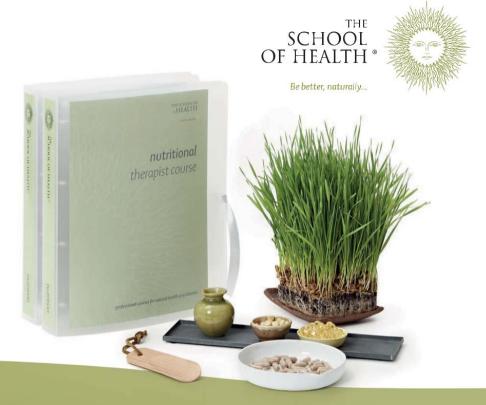


l've suffered with stress, anxiety and terrible mood swings this year, but I don't want to take anti-depressants or drugs. Is there a natural alternative you recommend? A) Have you tried natural 'adaptogens'? These are substances that help your mind and body adapt better to the effects of stress. Deja Mind Balance (£35, www.deja.life) combines 11 Ayurvedic herbs specifically chosen to help balance stressed-out minds. It includes the mood-boosting 'king of the herbs' Ashwaganda,

which studies have shown can help reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol, **Tulsi** which has been used traditionally for thousands of years to sharpen the senses and reduce brain fog, and **Brahmi** which is prized for its cognitive-enhancing and brain-boosting properties. Rooted in Ayurveda, the world's oldest healing system, Deja blends these along with 8 other powerful herbs into one handy, natural supplement, so you don't have to track them all down yourself.







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