

THE ANXIETY ISSUE

CREATE A LIFE YOU LOVE

UK edition

psychologies

EASY WAYS TO REDUCE ANXIETY

Why time alone
boosts your
resilience

How a walking
holiday can improve
your mental health

17-page DOSSIER

OVERCOME YOUR WORRIES

- Learn to relax – whatever's on your mind
- Use the power of nature to ease your stress
- How to reframe your thoughts

TACKLE ONLINE ANGER

Talking honestly
about miscarriage

Tess Daly

'We women should all cut ourselves some slack and remind ourselves of what we achieve'

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Welcome...

'It feels like I'm on a train track and there's something coming soon,' said a loved one to me recently. It's a great description of anxiety: that sense of fear that the future holds something terrible; the constant worry that we're going to meet something we cannot manage; dread about what will happen next. And anxiety is something ever more of us are struggling with. According to some statistics, there are eight million sufferers in the UK, with 60 per cent of us showing sign of some symptoms. It makes worrying reading, but it's not that surprising. Untreated stress is one of the main causes of anxiety, and what have the past few years been if not stressful? Add to that the world we live in, and our ever-more hectic lives, and you have the perfect recipe for anxiety. It's the theme of the Mental Health Foundation's Mental Health Week this year (15–21 May), and we wanted to make it a thread running through this issue, too.

First, to our dossier, on overcoming your anxiety (page 43). It's an enlightening read, explaining different types of anxiety (financial, familial, existential and more) and looking at specific methods to combat each one of those. Plus, it examines why nature is such a salve to our souls, shares eight easy ways to combat anxiety, and our brilliant test helps you think about ways to reframe anxious thoughts to help you tame them.

But we're sharing more ways to deal with anxiety throughout the rest of the magazine, too. We start with 'Alone again, naturally', on page 22, which examines why taking time out of a busy schedule is such a crucial part of our self-care, and helps us to improve our resilience and so reduce anxiety. In 'Why does the online world make us so angry?!?', on page 30, we look at the digital landscape and discover why it is so stressful for us, and explore ways to reduce our stress reactions and build up less anxiety going forward. In 'On top of the world!', on page 74, I recount how my walking holiday in the Bavarian Alps was a huge stress buster, and, on page 78, we look at the mental health benefits of hiking. And in 'Unleash your creative spirit' (page 90), we explore how living our best, most creative life can set us free from those damaging expectations and stressful 'shoulds' we all live by.

Finally, we also have a beautifully written exploration of the pain and silence around miscarriage, on page 66. It's a powerful piece, focusing on how society still treats women who lose babies, and I'm proud we're running it. But if it will trigger more anxiety for you, then please skip past that page.

We've worked really hard to pack in lots of ways to help you make this an uplifting, stress-busting, anxiety-beating month. I hope you love it, and it helps you make the most of these beautiful spring days. Happy reading!



Sally x

**Sally Saunders,
Editor-in-Chief**

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COVER IMAGE: CHRISTIAN VERMAAK



psychologies

DOSSIER

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in mind*



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Your stress survival kit

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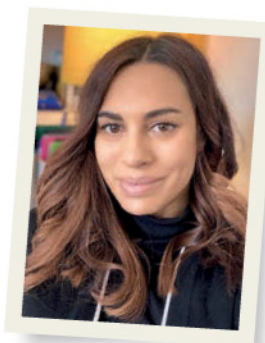


AMY MORIN

Spending time on your own offers a space for calm, says psychotherapist Amy Morin: 'Being alone can help you process who you are and your place in the world. But it can be scary if you're not used to it,' she adds. Learn how to build a little alone time into your daily life, and feel the benefits, on page 22.

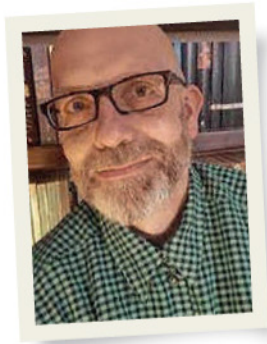
DR SULA WINDGASSEN

We know that practices such as gratitude can create a positive feedback loop into changing our thought processes, which can make us feel inherently 'lucky', says psychologist Dr Sula Windgassen. But is there a level of privilege attached to the idea of attracting good fortune through mindset alone? Discover more on page 38.



JAMES WITHEY

'Every short-term action you take to manage your stress is a long-term action to lessen anxiety,' says author and mental health advocate James Withey, in this month's dossier on tackling anxiety. Explore ways to calm your mind and body, and help you feel in control, on page 43.



Our mission

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

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

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In the mood

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

COMPILED BY ALEX LLOYD

Grin to win!

Flashing a winning smile can help you beat other applicants to the job, psychologists say.

Interviewees who show their pearly whites are seen as more 'hireable' by employers, despite previous research claiming a neutral expression is more professional.

A University of Toronto study used fake LinkedIn profiles with different facial expressions, along with a mock interview process, to assess which persona fared best.

Smilers came across as confident, friendly and co-operative, and were more likely to stick in the memory and appear attractive.

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK





Listen up

Hearing checks should be included in the NHS Health Check, says hearing charity RNID, reporting that picking up on problems early could potentially reduce patients' chances of dementia.

Unaddressed hearing loss in midlife is the largest modifiable risk factor for cognitive decline, responsible for up to 8.2 per cent of cases globally.

More than 40 per cent of over-50s have some level of hearing loss; you can do a free three-minute test at rnid.org.

Dress for less

Brides are increasingly choosing their wedding dress as their 'something old'. The Hitched National Wedding Survey found that 16 per cent of couples chose to wear second-hand or passed down options in 2022, while 14 per cent rented outfits. Other trends included one in ten couples opting for an alcohol-free reception, and a third sending wedding invites through WhatsApp.



3 of the best... READS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS



1 *Between Us* by Mhairi McFarlane (HarperCollins, £8.99). This laugh-out-loud rom com sees Roisin question her relationship, when secrets she shared appear in her man's new TV drama.

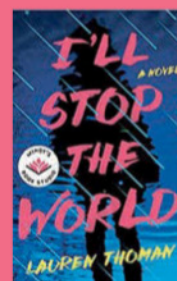


2 *The Forgetting* by Hannah Beckerman (Lake Union, £8.99).

A mysterious, gripping thriller about two women trying to uncover the truth, when they can't remember the past.



3 *I'll Stop The World* by Lauren Thoman (Mindy's Book Studio, £8.99). This whip-smart mystery jumps through time to solve a murder yet to happen.





Shake it all about!

Morris dancing is throwing off its old-fashioned image, with increasing numbers of women taking it up.

The English folk dance, which is associated with May Day, was traditionally performed by men dressed in white, using sticks, bells and handkerchiefs – although there are regional variations.

But a revival has seen female and mixed-sex groups launch, like Boss Morris in Stroud, who performed on stage with Wet Leg at this year's BRIT Awards.

Boss Morris calls its style 'prog morris', with colourful outfits inspired by paganism, the natural world and the courtly origins of the art. Find out more at morrisfed.org.uk and bossmorris.com

SOURCE: BMJ.COM/COMPANY/NEWSROOM/FREQUENT-SOCIALISING-LINKED-TO-LONGER-LIFESPAN-OF-OLDER-PEOPLE/

Forever friends

Seeing friends regularly could be key to a long life. Sichuan University West researchers tracked more than 28,500 over-70s for 12 years, and found that those who socialised at least monthly lived longer. The more frequent the participation in social activity, the more prolonged the overall survival time, too. Death rates for those who never engaged with others was 18.4 per 100 people, compared to 7.3 per 100 for those who did so daily. It adds more evidence to the negative impact of social isolation on health.



Having good sleeping habits can add five years to your life expectancy, an American study finds.

SOURCE: AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CARDIOLOGY



WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



WATCH *The Mother* sees Jennifer Lopez as an assassin who comes out of hiding to protect the daughter she gave up while on the run. On Netflix from 12 May.



LOOK *Luxury and Power: Persia to Greece*, at the British Museum in London, features dazzling ancient artefacts and the stories behind them. Until 13 August.



LISTEN in Boots Presents *Taboo Talk*, podcast host Vogue Williams discusses awkward health and wellbeing questions with celebrity guests who've experienced them.





Spuds for good

A London community has found a warming way to share a meal together and tackle the cost of living.

Neighbours in Walthamstow are signing up to Potato Mondays, taking turns to use their oven to cook jacket spuds for each other and save energy. The group call themselves a Community Ultra Low Emission Zone.

With the Coronation Big Lunch event coming up on 6–8 May, why not club together with your street to share a meal?

● To find out more, visit coronationbiglunch.com

Reducing social media use by 15 minutes a day can improve your immune health, Swansea University researchers say.

"I'm definitely the cliché of saying: I'm miles happier than when I was younger, I don't want to ever go back there. My envelope might be less strictly aesthetically pleasing. But on the inside I'm much more interesting and dynamic, and, I think, attractive"

Actress Helena Bonham Carter





16%

of women wait until the tenth date before sleeping with a new partner, compared to 9 per cent of men, according to a poll by Paddy Power Games.



Fundamentally flawed?

The spring budget was cause for celebration for the childcare sector. But despite supporting mothers to return to work, campaigners at charity Pregnant Then Screwed remain concerned that the money pledged is not enough to reduce costs for parents sustainably, calling for a clearer strategy to attract workers into the sector, retain them, and then offer progression. 'Without a workforce plan, providers will continue to be forced to close, and increasing ratios will be detrimental to staff retention. What they need is better pay,' says Joeli Brearley, founder and CEO. 'Free childcare from nine months is brilliant, but only if there are childcare settings to be able to access this care. Without the correct funding, there won't be.'

Open your mind

The Scandinavians might be famed for their liberal attitudes, but the UK now ranks as one of the most open-minded nations.

The World Values Survey by King's College London has found that attitudes towards divorce, abortion, euthanasia, suicide and casual sex have relaxed significantly in the past five years, overtaking Canada, Germany and Australia.

'What were once pressing moral concerns – things like homosexuality, divorce and casual sex – have become simple facts of life for much of the public,' says Professor Bobby Duffy of KCL's Policy Institute. 'This mostly isn't just driven by younger generations replacing older generations; all generations have changed their views significantly.'



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



booking precious appointments to seek help for what are, for many, devastating symptoms, and trivialise this by implying they have talked themselves into thinking they are 'in it', as though they are complete fantasists? I just hope that by the time our daughters and granddaughters reach this time of life they will have better access to help, and be taken seriously. Celebrities such as Davina McCall and Penny Smith are doing a great job of raising awareness, but there is still such a long way to go.



*Star
letter*

*Round and round in circles go I,
Vicious by nature, ignoring my cry,
Always trying to steal my breath,
Yet I give them life, instead of death.*

*Time ticks by, a waste of life,
In which endless circles cause endless strife,
Nothing ventured, there are no gains,
Yet I let them destroy what life remains.*

*Up and down on a merry-go-round,
Until it breaks down, I hit the ground,
Pick myself up and try again,
Yet still in circles and all in vain.*

*But now I'm dizzy, so enough is enough,
It's time to jump off, the ride's too rough,
Take the leap, reclaim my breath,
And cause the circles a painful death.*

Relax the routine

I loved the article in your February edition about a morning routine, and took a lot from it. I no longer reach straight for my phone in the morning – I used to be terrible for that, and it really does start the day off with cortisol instead of calmness! With two young children, mornings involve getting us all out of the house by 8am, with drop-offs in different locations. Any notion of a mindful walk or even a mindful spoonful of cereal feels beyond reach! But there must be a way. I'd love to see an article about a good start to the day for working parents.

Roxanne Burrows

*Start as
you mean
to go on*

Finding the morning routine that's right for you can transform your day – and your life – writes **Yasmin Ali**

[illegible][illegible]

Expert advice

Ken Cheng is a nutritionist and personal trainer who will help you get the most out of your workout.

[illegible]

PHOTO FAVOURITES

PROMOTION

In the picture

We are delighted to be supporting Landscape Photographer of the Year, which celebrates the wonder of the British landscape and showcases the work of many talented photographers.

Now in its 16th year, the competition aims to inspire profound engagement with the British landscape through photography. With a prize fund worth over £20,000, a full-colour book of best entries, and a touring exhibition, Landscape Photographer of the Year inspires us all to experience the wonderful diversity of the UK.

As part of our partnership, we are offering an exclusive free *Psychologies* Mindful Photography Webinar for readers, led by landscape photographer, tutor and lecturer Charlie Waite, on 18 May. Find out more and sign up at psychologies.co.uk/webinar

For more details about the competition, visit lpoty.co.uk, and discover more about mindful photography with our columnist Anita Chaudhuri, in Picture This, on page 88.

We'd love to know what you think

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



Slow it down

When I can start or finish the day with a run in nature I am less restless, more patient, and happier. The exception to this is when I am marathon training, and I come to dread the long runs, to endure the speed work, and to anticipate the next injury.

This evening, in the midst of marathon training, I enjoyed an easy jog at dusk and stopped to take a photo of my local lighthouse on the Black Isle in the Highlands. As I did,

I realised that taking photos of the scene around me is ordinarily a part of my running, but has been absent during the pressure of time targets and mile counting. Back at home and reading *Psychologies*, I came across 'Beauty in the ordinary' in your March issue. It made clear to me that what I have been missing recently is the gratitude that I usually feel when I'm running. For the last few weeks of my marathon training, I will bring the camera and find time to be grateful.

Kate Comisso



Heading for the hills

I loved this moment up on the South Downs in early January. Curious sheep watched groups of ramblers who had vowed to make the most of the afternoon winter sun on a biting cold day.

The sight of the sheep led to that familiar feeling of 'hiraeth': a longing to be back with my flock of female friends in Wales, after Christmas rail strikes sadly scuppered my plans.

Later, the sky created a beautiful red sunset – a ramblers' delight!

Dionne Widgerey

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





I was exhausted. I came close to burnout

Tess Daly speaks to *Psychologies* about her journey to wellness after being pushed to the brink, how she keeps anxiety at bay, and why she's dreading her daughters flying the nest

WORDS: BETH NEIL

Tess Daly can scarcely believe how quickly the years are whizzing by. It only feels like yesterday that she was cradling her eldest as a newborn, and yet, somehow, that tiny baby will be heading off to university this September.

Blink, says Daly, and you miss it. And for the time being at least, she has only one way of coping with her daughter's impending departure from the Buckinghamshire family home: 'Denial. Complete denial!' she says. 'I can't even imagine it, but I do know that the whole empty nest syndrome is going to be crazy.'

'The centre of my universe has been my kids, so the thought of them ever leaving me feels... wild. I've actually told them that they can't settle more than five miles away from home, and they both just raise their eyebrows at me.'

Having said that, Daly, 53, can see some positives to the changes ahead. The *Strictly Come Dancing* host and mum to Phoebe, 18, and Amber, 13, is looking forward to gaining back some freedom, and, once both girls have gone to uni, no longer being beholden to the school-holiday calendar.

'I guess it leads to pastures new, like weekend breaks away without being held at the mercy of being back in time for school, as we have been for the past 16 years and counting. That'll be a luxury.'

'But I can't even think about empty bedrooms. I just can't go there, it's too strange to contemplate. I know it's the future and it's coming, but I really haven't come to terms with it just yet.'

Daly and husband Vernon Kay, 48, have always been protective over their girls' identities, rarely sharing pictures on social media and never taking them to public events where they might be photographed. However, in March, Phoebe stepped out on to the red carpet for the first time with her dad at the *John Wick: Chapter 4* premiere, and, clearly blessed with her parents' genes, looked every inch the superstar.

It was quite a moment for Daly.

'Yes, she's becoming her own woman and she's thriving,' she says. 'You look back at your photos on your phone and they're blowing out eight candles on the cake and, before you know it, they're looking you in the eye as young adults with opinions! But it's the natural progression of life



“Wellness is not a luxury, and giving ourselves five minutes is not only valuable for ourselves but for everybody else in our lives too”

and I do find that I’m still very much needed. I didn’t want to miss out on any aspect of that parenting journey, because I’m aware of just how quickly it goes. I love being a mum. It’s the most important thing that I do.’

While she’s a mum first and foremost, Daly says she ‘wears several hats’ all at once. There’s the glittering TV career that has made her a fixture on our screens for the past two decades and the face of *Strictly* since the first series in 2004.

She also runs swimwear business NAIA with long-time friend Gayle Lawton, and has her own interiors range, Tess Daly Home. And, last month, she released her book, *4 Steps To A Happier, Healthier You* (Bantam, £18.99), which captures a genuine passion for wellness, focusing on four key areas – eating, breathing, moving and sleeping – and includes expert advice and simple and nutritious recipes. There’s an emphasis throughout – right from the dedication at the front, which reads ‘for anyone who needs a moment to themselves’ – on the importance of carving out windows of ‘me time’ within our busy lifestyles.

Daly says pressing pause on everything else in order to stretch, move and breathe is what helps stave off her own stresses, anxieties and overthinking.

‘I wanted this book to be for all of us women who work our backsides off, whether that’s in the workplace or the home or both. Every woman I know has a long list of responsibilities, and we tend to put ourselves on the backburner. We should all cut ourselves some slack and remind ourselves of what we achieve on a daily basis.

‘All the women in my life are secret superheroes, juggling the balls, keeping them all in the air and trying their very best, and we fight for those windows of time, don’t we? But wellness is not a luxury, and giving ourselves five minutes, whether it’s to stretch before going to bed or to breathe mindfully to stop the racing thoughts about your to-do list, is not only valuable for ourselves but for everybody else in our lives too.

‘If we keep ourselves topped up with the good stuff, then we’re less likely to burn out.’

Daly admits that she came very close to burnout herself after returning to work for the second series of *Strictly*, alongside the late Bruce Forsyth, when Phoebe was just six weeks old. She was still breastfeeding and recovering from a C-section, and looking back now, can see that she was physically and mentally spent, barely holding it together.

‘That was the closest I’ve ever come to burnout,’ she says, candidly. ‘I was lucky that I had a job to go back to, because the industry I work in is incredibly fickle. But breastfeeding and live television are not the easiest things to manage, and on top of that the sleep deprivation was intense and debilitating. Although I managed to do my job and be a mother to my baby, I was exhausted.

‘Everything was difficult and ready to swing me off kilter. I was working at a high energy and giving everything to my baby, and nothing was being replenished.’

She adds: ‘My life’s journey hasn’t always been easy. Although I know everybody else’s life can seem perfect and glossy, especially when you look at them on Instagram,

‘But I’m grateful for the life I’ve lived and for the place I’m at right now, because it’s brought a sense of calm and wisdom, and I don’t take anything for granted.’

That post-natal experience was bruising but it instilled in Daly the importance of self-care, and an acute awareness of the need for rest, which she has drawn on to shape the book.

She’s also fascinated about gut health and the science that shows how the gut microbiome can influence mental health conditions.

‘Bad gut health can be linked to depression and anxiety, so I genuinely feel like I’m nurturing my mental health by looking after myself physically. Whether that’s through the foods I eat or the movement I do during my day to counteract the sedentary parts of my life.



'Even if I spend five minutes doing a few exercises in the house – skipping, lunges or planks – it makes me feel better mentally, and that's how I look after myself.'

Daly insists she doesn't love the gym and dislikes sweating, but she looks like a woman who does more than a few minutes of skipping and planking every day. Tall, slim and effortlessly beautiful, she's just as glamorous dressed down in loungewear with no make-up as she is in the designer gowns she wears for *Strictly*.

She started her career as a model in the late eighties, packing her bags and heading for Tokyo at the age of 18, and has spoken before about being in a world where there was often pressure to lose weight. But, despite that, Daly says she never succumbed and has never dieted – she likes her grub too much for that.

'I like treats. I love chocolate and the occasional cake. Don't we all? And I can't deprive myself because that's just not sustainable in my mind, and it wouldn't make me happy.'

'Moderation is key for me. Have a little bit of what you fancy, just don't overload on it. Don't allow it to become a mental game with yourself about what you can and can't have.'



*"It feels like I'm on
a journey of discovery
that is constantly
evolving, and long may
that continue, because
being creative is a
connection to life"*



There is some self-restraint involved, though. Daly's mum used to call her 'I'll have half' because that's what she'd always do when it came to treats. The fridge at the Daly family home in the Peak District village of Birch Vale would often house her half-eaten chocolate bars. That takes discipline.

'Yes, but I've always eaten that way, little and often,' she says. 'I have one of those metabolisms that requires constant grazing – I can never be far from the fridge! That has always worked for me – I don't want to feel sluggish by having giant portions. Having said that, they're not exactly supermodel portions either!'

This year, Daly and Kay will celebrate 20 years of marriage – no mean feat in the world of showbiz. For their tenth anniversary in 2013, Kay organised a surprise trip to the South of France, where they renewed their vows in front of family and with Phoebe and Amber as flower girls.

'He did very well on our tenth – I had no idea that was going to happen. It was unforgettable, and so that will be quite difficult to top because he really pulled out all the stops.

'I'm not expecting that again, but I would like a weekend break somewhere gorgeous, maybe Venice, just in case you're reading this, Vern! I should start a wish list.

'I've been dropping a few hints about lovely weekends away, so I'm hoping he's been listening!'

Daly and Kay met back in 2000 when they were both starting out as TV presenters. By then, she had lived and worked all over the world, and when she introduced him to the family for the first time, her mum was tickled by the fact she'd spent several years globetrotting but had ended up with a boy from Bolton, just down the road.

'I guess meeting Vern felt like coming home,' she says. 'It was finding that common ground. I'd been travelling around pretty much incessantly for 12 years by that point. And then I did physically come home, moving back from New York month by month, bag by bag, until I closed my life down there and settled here. And that was it. But, yeah, it's funny, isn't it? You travel the world and then meet someone who was never that far away in the first place.'

There has been another cause for celebration, recently, after former *Family Fortunes* host Kay, who finished third on *I'm a Celebrity...* in 2021 and has had something of a career

revival ever since, landed a huge new job on Radio 2. In May, he'll take over the mid-morning slot, held for the past 30 years by the legendary Ken Bruce, and Daly, while excited for her husband, acknowledges that those are awfully big shoes to fill.

'Ken is the most iconic voice in radio, and we've all grown up listening to him. But I'm delighted for Vern because I know how much he loves radio and the listeners. It's wonderful and he's thrilled to bits. The only problem is I lose him from the school run! That's the downside – I have to do all the school runs now. But, seriously, I wish him all the luck in the world and I'm behind him 100 per cent. I think he'll be great.'

It surely now makes them a BBC power couple – Daly (and co-host Claudia Winkleman) will return for what will be the 21st series of *Strictly* this autumn, and she can't imagine life without it.

'I just love it. It's been a part of my life for 19 years now, almost as long as I can remember! And it feels wonderful to play a role in something that the nation is so fond of. To be at the heart of a collective vibe that is so wonderfully celebratory and joyful and warm is a gift. There's so much goodwill towards it, and whenever I meet people they want to talk about it, and the fact they've invested their time in the show makes you realise you're part of something very special.'

Does she still have ambitions she'd like to achieve?

'Of course! I'm learning new stuff all the time. I'm excited about growing NAIA, which was started by women, for women. It feels like I'm on a journey of discovery that is constantly evolving, and long may that continue, because being creative is a connection to life.'

She adds: 'The book is another dream realised. It's taken a long time to come to fruition, but

it's lovely to be able to share something I'm passionate about. It's been a labour of love and it comes from the heart, and I just hope people enjoy it.

'And I hope it helps people reclaim some of the time that is often snatched away by the busyness of life. Those moments are where the joy is, right? And we deserve that.'

"I have one of those metabolisms that requires constant grazing – I can never be far from the fridge!"

4 Steps To A Happier, Healthier You by Tess Daly (Bantam, £18.99) is out now



The voice of reason

Harriet Minter tunes into a new frequency and taps into her true desires...



Do you ever feel like you're in the wrong place in your life? Do you

spend hours on Google searching alternative careers? Or have a vision board dedicated to what your life would look like if you lived in Bali? Good news, you're not in the throes of a mid-life crisis. In fact, you're doing exactly what you should be at this time in your life. Let me tell you why...

You see, I'm retraining as a sex and relationships therapist, after having my own 'What am I doing with my life?' panic, and this week I learned about something called 'individuation'. Or, as I'm calling it, the mid-life crisis neuropathway. Rather than being someone who doesn't appreciate what you have, if you're questioning your

life, you are just proving how psychologically healthy you are.

Individuation as a concept is largely attributed to Carl Jung, but you can see it popping up across all sorts of philosophies and religions. It argues that, when we're young, we tend to follow the desires our society has for us. We are more likely to be influenced by what our families want, what our friends think is cool, or what is valued in the world around us. However, at some point we become aware of our own desires. We start to question how happy the things we've acquired are actually making us, and whether or not we might be happier if we took a different route.

Traditionally, it was only men who were free to listen to this voice of reinvention, hence the mid-life crisis stereotype of an affair and a motorbike. For women, we might have wanted a different life, but we didn't have the economic or political means to go and get it. However,

nowadays, women do have that power. We have our own money, we are as well-educated and, in theory, the world is safe for us to explore. We're finally at a time when we can fully embrace our own individuation.

Individuation happens to all of us. It isn't based on how happy your marriage is or whether you're in the right job. It's your brain recognising that you need to spend more time listening to yourself, and it's part of the process of us growing as humans. So next time you find yourself wondering whether a six-month road trip across America would be fun, or speculating about what your life might be like if you went back to college, listen to that voice. It deserves to be heard.

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



IMAGE: MARK HARRISON HAIR AND MAKE-UP: CAROLINE PIASECKI
STYLIST: KATE ANYA BARBOUR



Mind

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



***What are you
most focused
on at the
moment, that
feels blocked?***

***If you
reframed it
in a more
positive way,
would it help
you to move
it forward?***



ALONE AGAIN, *naturally*

Solitude is not a synonym for loneliness but an act of self-care, discovers Kate Townshend

What do you think when you see someone arrive to eat alone in a restaurant? Or sitting quietly on a bench, locked in their own thoughts, without any companions?

Some cultural clichés might suggest mild pity is a valid response – being alone, we’re told, is awful and lonely. When we call people ‘loners’ it feels gently pejorative. And it still takes a hefty dose of ‘not caring what other people think’ to take yourself on a solo trip to the theatre or the cinema.

In recent years, however, I’ve started to have a different reaction to seeing people out and about in solitude – one best described as a kind of wistful envy.

Maybe it’s because I am busy – busy for such clichéd reasons, I’m almost embarrassed to list them: a challenging teaching job a few days a week, a self-imposed but punishing freelance schedule, parenting a one-year-old, and all of the triumphs and disasters that come along with it. Plus, running a house and walking a dog and maintaining my adult relationships, too.

So life is sometimes overwhelming and noisy. And while I wouldn’t have it any other way, I’ve come to realise that

certain rituals and coping strategies are necessary in order to also retain my sanity amidst this beautiful mess.

Sometimes that looks like traditional self-care: time with friends, a bubble bath, dinner for just my husband and I. But, crucially for me, what I also need in order to function effectively is time to be alone. Completely, blissfully, gloriously alone – at least for a while. And in this process, I’ve come to realise that loneliness and solitude are two quite different experiences – as much as society sometimes tries to treat them as interchangeable.

‘Time alone offers a space for calm,’ explains professor of psychology Dr Thuy-vy Nguyen, who is co-authoring the book *Solitude: The Science And Power of Going At It Alone*, due out later this year. In her experiments, she has found that a mere 15 minutes alone can be enough to soothe turbulent emotions – negative ones such as frustration and anger, but also ‘rousing’ overwhelming emotional states. ‘These types of emotions drop down when we spend time in solitude. This is the clear and consistent effect we have found,’ she says.

This chance to wind down (life with a one-year-old is full of big emotions!) is

Expert
advice



Amy Morin
is a psychotherapist
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*13 Things Mentally
Strong People Don't
Do* (HarperCollins,
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Dr Thuy-vy Nguyen is
an assistant professor
in psychology at
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She is currently
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*Solitude: The Science
And Power Of Going
At It Alone* with
Netta Weinstein and
Heather Hansen.
solitude-lab.com



"Being alone can help you process who you are and where your place is in the world"

particularly powerful for me. When I'm alone, I get to be the eye of the hurricane, rather than the hurricane itself, and often this quiet also means that I can hear me, rather than the hubbub of everything else. For instance, when I curl myself onto the sofa like a cat to read a book, with only the hum of the central heating for company, it's my own thoughts and reactions that come first.

'When we mellow after solitude, this can manifest into different experiences,' agrees Dr Nguyen. 'For some people, it can provide an opportunity to process thoughts and feelings that they have not had a chance to pay attention to when other people and events are going on around them. People have told us that time alone allows them to reflect on their goals and priorities, or even discover a new hobby.'

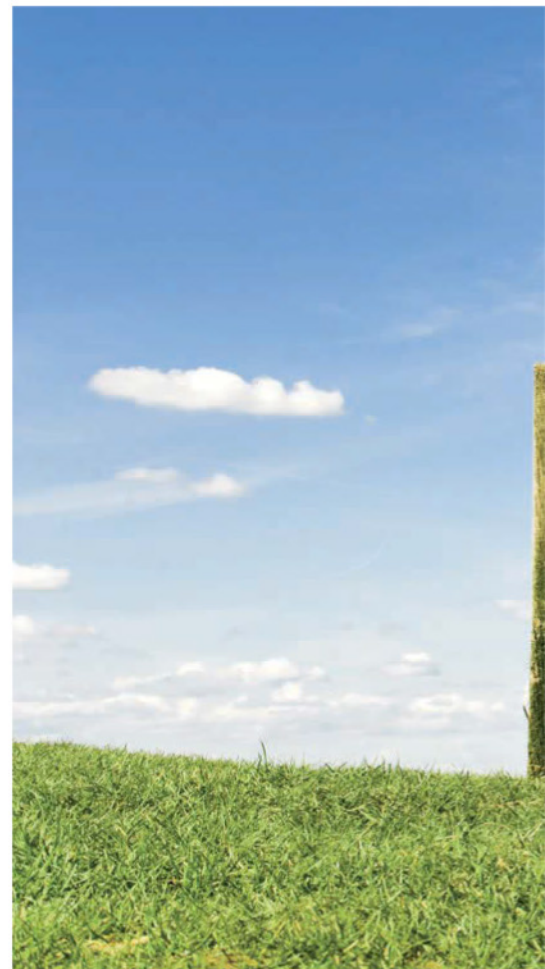
I wonder if this need for time to reflect and listen to my own inner voice also resonates with me particularly strongly

because I am still adjusting to a different identity as a relatively new mum. When I sit alone in a coffee shop, smiling at strangers, I am only myself – not any of my other roles or responsibilities – and this can be a much-needed tonic.

'Solitude is the richness of self,' said the poet May Sarton in one of my favourite quotes, and it's this richness I crave if I am without it for too long.

Psychotherapist Amy Morin offers further insight into this feeling: 'Being alone can really help you process who you are and where your place is in the world. When your identity shifts, it's more important than ever to carve out some alone time. It can give you the chance to ask yourself, "Where do I fit in?" and "Who am I now?"'

But while this urge to spend some time in my own company has felt particularly urgent since I had my little boy, I can also see it's been with me – in some form or other – for most of my life.



As a longtime nature worshipper, for instance, there's something in solitude – oddly, perhaps – that satisfies my need for connection with something bigger. When I walk alone in the woods, I feel a part of the scene rather than a noisy interloper. I swim outdoors for the same reason – and when I think about more traditional religions, too, many of them hold space for solitude when it comes to connecting with higher powers.

I also like to think that I am, ironically, in good company with artists and writers across history when it comes to embracing some alone time.

'Solitude can spark creativity,' says Morin. 'It's why a lot of artists retreat to solitary places when they're creating.'

So if solitude is a natural – and often useful – part of life, I wonder why stigma clings to this idea of being by ourselves sometimes. Why do we assume it will be a negative experience?

'Solitude can be scary if you're not used to it,' suggests Morin, 'and it's no wonder: we tend to use solitude as a punishment. Kids are sent to timeout,





▶▶ NEXT STEPS

Read *The Art Of Solitude: A Meditation On Being Alone With Others In This World* by Stephen Batchelor (Yale University Press, £11.99). An exploration of solitude.

Listen *Alonement with Francesca Specter*, a podcast about celebrating time spent alone.

Watch TED Talk 'Being alone isn't being lonely'; Ankit Shah explores how being alone can actually help us to make deeper connections with others.

and prison inmates who misbehave are placed in solitary confinement.'

But the research seems to suggest that even if you're not very comfortable with the idea of being alone, you might still benefit from learning to embrace it. Both Dr Nguyen and Morin emphasise the importance of solitude as a space to process ideas and feelings, for instance. And while I've always assumed my introverted personality makes me more of a natural solitude fan, it might be that extroverts can also find a way to make solitude work for them. 'Alone time is good for everyone, just like social time is good for everyone,' says Morin.

'It is important not to portray solitude as one-size-fits-all for everyone,' agrees Dr Nguyen, who sees solitude as less about personality and more of a process we can all try out. 'The benefits of solitude only come,' she says, 'once we allow ourselves opportunities to discover what those benefits are.'

This has certainly been the case in my own life – whilst I've always felt an intuitive pull towards some quiet time,

it's only as my life has become busier and busier, and I've had to formally leave room for alone time, that I've started to recognise the real and tangible benefits it brings me. When I plan a little solitude into my days and weeks, I am calmer, more resilient, and more patient. I'm nicer to be around when I am with other people. I'm better at making and maintaining those social connections.

If you are convinced enough to be curious, but nervous about trying it for yourself in practice, Dr Nguyen reminds us that we don't need to disappear off for weeks on end or take a sudden vow of silence to try out solitude: 'The trick of building any habit is to make time for it. Start small and keep it consistent,' she says.

This could be as simple as taking the time to really enjoy a solo coffee. Or making space for some early morning mindfulness in your wake-up routine. Morin also recommends doing a specific task, such as writing in a journal, to help calm any nerves. But there is one caveat if you are trying out the benefits

of solitude yourself for the first time: put down the phone.

'Avoid mindless scrolling when you're by yourself,' recommends Amy. 'Although it's tempting to fill the time, you won't gain anything from it. Turn off the TV or the background noise, and try to be alone with your thoughts.'

You can, of course, be alone with your thoughts in a public place as well as in an empty room, if this feels easier or less intimidating to begin with. I've become a real fan of being alone whilst technically surrounded by people.

As horrified as my younger self might be by the idea of a solo lunch out, there's actually something incredibly affirming about publicly declaring our own company is enough, whilst still feeling a wider part of humanity. I've even found it protective for my mental health to treat myself as worthy of my own time.

As Jean-Paul Sartre famously said: 'If you are lonely when you're alone, you are in bad company'. If this isn't an incentive to embrace the joys of solitude, then I'm not sure what is.

Coaching in action ***All change***

When her client Hazel's* life takes an unexpected turn, the award-winning coach Kim Morgan gives her a safe space in which to find her own solutions...



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK. *NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED

Session one...

Sometimes in a first session, clients just want to tell their story. Hazel was one of those clients. It felt important to let Hazel speak and think for as long as she needed. I decided to stand by one of the core of principles of coaching: that the quality of the coach's attention enhances the client's own thinking. I sat back and listened like my life depended on it.

I learned that Hazel and her wife Sarah* had been together for seven years. They were both retired teachers.

Hazel spoke quickly at first, racing to fill me in on everything: 'We met years ago, when we were younger, and there was an instant spark between us – but we were both in relationships. Then we met again by chance when we were both single, and the spark was still there! We quickly moved in together and then got married. I'd never been happier. We had our whole lives ahead of us – or so we thought. We started making plans. We got Betty, our little Norfolk terrier, and we bought a camper van.'

Hazel laughed, 'Yes, I know, it's a retired couple's cliché, but we were living out our long-held dreams.'

Hazel slumped in her chair. I waited for longer than I usually would until she spoke again.

'Sarah was diagnosed with a degenerative disease just months after she retired, and her condition has progressed rapidly. Our lives have changed, and medical "stuff" now dominates our days. She can no longer drive, so I do all of that, and I look after her in so many ways. I don't even want to use the C-word, "carer". I can't bring myself to say it! But it's what I am. Our relationship has changed, and I want our old relationship back.'

Hazel put her head in her hands and sobbed quietly.

I asked gently, 'What has changed?'

'Everything! Sarah is dependent on me for so much. She is a proud and dignified woman. She feels humiliated and guilty that I am having to look after her. We are both grieving in our different ways – grieving about her illness and how much our relationship has changed, grieving for one another, and for what the future might look like. At the same

time, we know that we only ever have "now", and we should be enjoying it while we are both here.'

I asked, 'What support do you have?'

'Sarah doesn't want our friends to know how ill she is. When they visit, she miraculously becomes a different person. People wonder what I am making such a fuss about. When they have gone, she collapses, and I pick up the pieces, while she takes several days to recover. I get angry that it is all on my shoulders and Sarah won't let me tell people how bad things really are.'

'What do you want?' I asked Hazel.

'To have the best relationship we can under the difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves. To appreciate one another not as "carer" and "patient" but as the two courageous, curious, bright, feisty, and loving women we still are.'

Hazel looked up at me and said, 'So, my coaching question to myself is: What is getting in the way of our doing this?'

'And what is your answer to yourself?' I asked.

'Pride. Assumptions. Fear. Conforming to expectations. Protectiveness. Guilt. And a lack of honesty.'

'What would you say to someone else in your situation?' I asked.

'I would tell them to go home and have a "coaching session" with one another! I would tell them to answer the questions you have asked today and explore what is possible for these two courageous, bright, feisty women to achieve, given the challenging circumstances they are in. I want to give them a wake-up call to remind them that there is still a lot of living they can do!'

Wow! I am always astonished by my clients' abilities to come up with solutions to their own problems if they are given time and a safe space to do so. I'm pretty sure I could never have come up with anything that good!

When the session was over, I wrote:

Note to self!

- **Holding space for my clients to think can seem like I'm doing nothing, but it allows the client to find their own answers.**
- **This doesn't happen if I am busy providing them with my solutions (even if I try to disguise them as questions!)**

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



Work it out

Changes in life and at work are inevitable for all of us, but even positive changes can bring about feelings of loss and grief

We don't only experience grief when we lose a loved one; the definition of grief is often considered to be 'the complex set of emotions we experience with the change in, or end of, a familiar pattern of circumstances in our lives'; something we all have to deal with regularly.

COMMON LIFE TRANSITIONS:

Career change	Promotion	Redundancy	Relocation
Marriage	Having children	Emptynest	Family set-up
Finances	Health	Status	World events

It's easy to minimise the impact on us of changes in our lives, because we make comparisons with how much worse things could be. Keeping perspective is useful up to a point, but it is also important to acknowledge the losses that sometimes come with the gains. Have a look at the different areas of your life listed above to review the changes you have experienced in each of them, and how you navigated them. Think about what or who helped you during times of change.

WORDS OF WISDOM

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you"

Anne Lamott

10 powerful questions to ask yourself

Think of something you would like to move forward in your life. Write your goal in one sentence: 'I would like to...' Then write your answers to each of these questions, one after another:

- What do you want to achieve? What long-term result will you get and by when?
- When you achieve this, what will be the benefit to you?
- What have you done about it before, and what was the reason you did not fully resolve the issue?
- What resources are you going to need (practical and inner resources) and how could you get them?
- If someone else you know was facing this issue, what would you tell them to do?
- List all the things you could dream up to help move this forward to a whole or partial solution.
- Which of your options are you going to take?
- What is the first step you will take and when will you do it?
- What could get in the way and how would you overcome that?
- What support do you need and where will you get it?

What is your commitment to taking this step on a scale of one to 10? If your commitment is lower than eight, you may need to revisit and 'tweak' your goal.

Body of evidence

Journalling can feel like medicine for the mind – but words on the page can also bring the focus back to the body and become a celebration of the self, says Jackee Holder

“Our bodies host a long history of dos and don'ts. Growing up, what were you told you were not allowed to do with your body? Often, those early rules are still playing out the way you live in your body today. 'Thou shall smile, even when your gut is telling you otherwise,' 'Thou shall dress appropriately, even when it's not what you want to wear.' In your journal, draft a list in response to all those body rules you grew up with that have been broken, or that you are now ready to break. Write a new list of body commandments for your body. Body pleasures you can savour. Maybe it's a treat of a massage once a month, or a long-haul trip alone.

When it comes to our own self-care and wellbeing, often the first things to be sacrificed from our to-do lists are those very things that nourish the body. I like to take this journal prompt a step further by writing one or two of my new list of body commandments directly onto my skin.

But I recognise it doesn't take much in our busy lives to slowly disconnect from the body, so here are a couple of additional body journal prompts to work with this month...

One way I slow things down is returning to a journalling practice of writing haikus in my notebook. Haikus, if you're not familiar with them, are Japanese short poems, usually composed of three lines. I love their immediacy.

Haikus can be great when you've fallen out of love with your body. Keeping it simple, think of a feature of your body you appreciate. It might be your laugh, or your eyes, or the way you smile. Now take that body part and bring it to life in a three-line poem. Generally, haikus have a certain number of syllables in each line, but you can break some rules here! Here are a couple from my own journalling:
*Eyes that open/A gift to treasure/Beauty to behold
My feet are ships/Sailing through day and night/
All life returns to water*



Who would I be/Without you?/Fleshy hands shepherding me through all the hours

I soon discovered how the writing of short haiku-like poems amplified my appreciation for the different parts of my body that it can be easy to overlook.

To wrap up this month's column is a variation of a journal prompt known as the alphabet poem, inspired by an essay by Claire Wahmanholm. You'll need a dictionary. Take each letter from the word 'body' starting with the letter 'B'.

Browse through the dictionary under each given letter, choosing the lushest, most interesting words that speak to you. Write your chosen words out in your notebook. When I tried the exercise out, I came up with words such as:

**Balm/Bloom/Bodacious/Bold/Blaze/Bounce/Bless
Obeisance/Onyx/Opal/Overjoyed
Delicate/Delight/Dimple/Discovery/Dulcet
Yew/Yam/Yarrow/Yoruba/Yellow**

Now see how the words connect together. What are the words speaking? Shape your words into a poem about the body. It can be both celebratory and honest. I don't always have the healthiest relationship with my body, but the gathering of these words changed the lens in which I viewed it. I welcomed my dimples, I remembered the dulcet tones in my voice that can go unheard for months at a time by my own ear. The words allowed me to feast on my body in surprising ways; a way of bringing the body home.

Journalling reminds us that we can care for the body both on the page and off the page. As the writer and activist Audre Lorde reminds us, 'Self-care for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.'

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

IMAGE: LAURA RICHARDSON



Why does the online world make us so **ANGRY?!?!?**

Are we really angrier when we communicate digitally? Why do we all lose our inhibitions so easily? And what can we do about it? The Anger Professor, Dr Ryan Martin, explores the evidence...

Anger is omnipresent online. You likely encounter angry people in your online interactions a couple of times a week, up to a couple of times per day. Maybe they are people you know and are interacting with via email, text, or Messenger, or maybe they are strangers you encounter on social media and will never connect with again. What's fascinating, though, is that even though the consequences of an online argument with a stranger may be different than such an argument with a friend, the causes of such anger are very similar.

There are relatively simple explanations for why we encounter angry people online as often as we do, and it's because social media and electronic forms of communication – such as email and texting – have changed how we experience and express our emotions in significant ways. It's provided new venues to express our emotions, given us additional stimuli to respond to, and even changed how we interpret those stimuli.

Open to emotion

Every morning I get up and make myself some coffee. While it's brewing, I scroll through Facebook or Twitter or some other social-media platform, catching up on what's happened in the nine or ten hours since I last checked. In doing so, I'm exposed to all sorts of stimuli to respond to emotionally. I may feel joy learning that an old friend is getting married, sadness that someone I care about has become sick, or anger over political news shared by a co-worker. These are opportunities to feel things that I didn't have in the same way 15 years ago. I might never have learned that that old friend was getting married because we had lost contact. I get to feel happy for them now in a way I wouldn't have prior to social media. As a consequence of this, we have all sorts of minor and major emotional experiences throughout our day (depending on how often we scroll through our various social-media feeds).



A new landscape

Electronic forms of communication such as texting, email, and social media have given people another place and even another language to express their feelings. When people are angry at someone, they can communicate that anger in ways that were never possible before. They can fire off an angry email to the person that wronged them, tweet directly at the company they are angry at, or just post on Facebook for their friends to see. This is a fundamentally different way to express anger, which has a significant impact on you and the world around you. When you add that some of these venues are anonymous – or at least feel that way – they quickly become a place for rage to spread.

It's not just the change of venue for angry expressions that is offered by the internet – technology has given us new languages to express anger. What might have started with rudimentary emoticons, such as :-), has evolved into much more complicated but fascinating expressions. Emojis, hashtags, memes, and GIFs are all used to share anger in humorous and non-humorous ways. Meanwhile, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other video or photo-sharing sites are full of videos of people ranting about things that make them mad. The ability to easily make and edit a video to express anger is wildly different from what people used to do when angry. Plus, social media has opened the door to more passive-aggressive expressions of anger; angry people use social media to spread rumours or even to shame and embarrass people publicly.

"When people are angry at someone, they can communicate that anger in ways that were never possible before"



But it's not just social media. We are connected to news outlets now in ways we never were before. A couple of decades ago, most people checked the news just a few times a day, maybe through the newspaper or through a nightly news programme on TV. Now, though, news comes through immediately via app or email alerts. Even if you choose to avoid that sort of technology, the omnipresence of news media means we undoubtedly hear about it more often via those friends, co-workers, and family who are heavily connected. Like social media, this ends up impacting our emotional life, because this added news content is not emotionally neutral. It's yet another opportunity to feel.

A hostile environment

What is it about the internet, whether social media or just electronic communication, that lends itself to such anger and hostility? Why does anger spread so quickly? It's an interesting question and you can actually find some of the

Hiding in plain sight

Even when they aren't anonymous, people often report feeling anonymous when they are online (much like they do when they drive). In 2016, two researchers explored the impact of that anonymity on online interactions. Participants worked with others to unscramble a series of words, believing they would get a prize if they did so successfully. The activity, however, was rigged so they would always lose, and the others they were working with were part of the study and not actually other participants. When they were done, they were asked to write a blog post, assigned to either an anonymous or non-anonymous condition, about their experience in the study. The group that was anonymous was more hostile and aggressive toward their 'partners' than the non-anonymous group.



answers by comparing it to another angering and hostile activity: driving. When you are engaging with someone electronically, similarly to when you are on the road, you are distanced from them. You can't see the impact of what you are saying or doing on the person you are communicating with. This physical distancing makes it easier for people to express their anger in hostile or cruel ways. It is simply easier to say something hurtful when you are not looking the person in the eye when you say it.

Acting on impulse

Much of what we consider to be anger problems might actually be impulsivity problems. Lots of people are angry but are able to control that anger. They don't say or do cruel things, not because they aren't thinking them or don't want to do them, but because they are able to stop themselves from acting on their impulses. Others, though, get mad and express that anger impulsively, doing or saying things they later regret.

The nature of online platforms lend themselves to exacerbated impulsivity. The fear of negative consequences when offline (from police or other people in power, such as teachers or parents) are not as present online, so some hostile, cruel, or aggressive behaviours feel safer.



Dealing with anger online

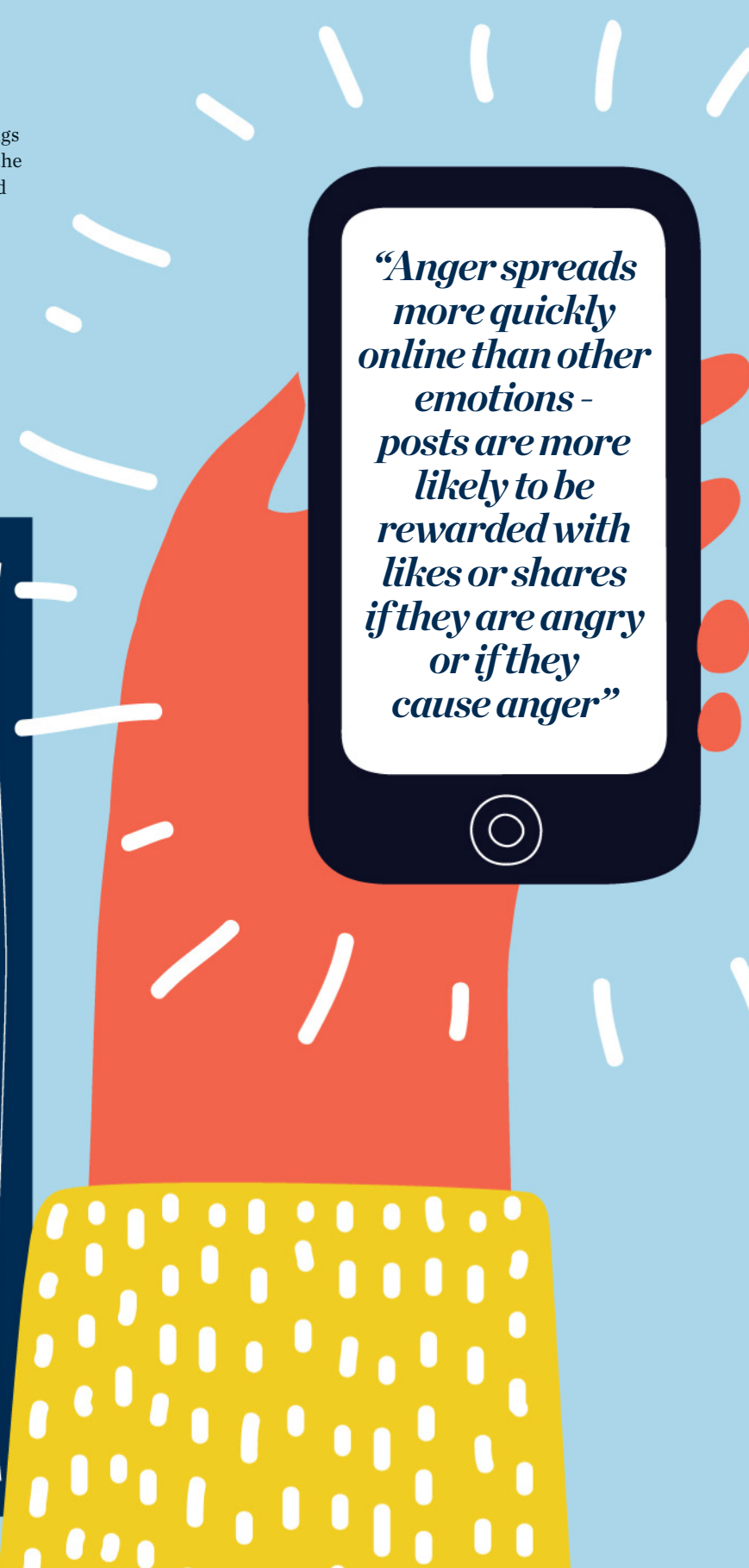
Whether you are dealing with a stranger or someone you know, there are some specific things to consider when dealing with anger online. At the core of each of these, though, is the need to avoid adding additional fuel to the fire by bringing in your own anger. Try these techniques...

Press pause I had a professor in university who never let students ask about a mark within 24 hours of receiving it. She said she wanted the emotional response to the mark to dissipate before they had a conversation about it. There's a good reason to take some time before responding. Remember, another person's anger at you will typically

Rewarding wrong

An unusual but important dynamic that occurs on social media is the way people are rewarded for hostility. Anger spreads more quickly online than other emotions do (so, for instance, angry tweets are more likely to be re-tweeted than non-angry ones). What this means to the person posting, then, is that their posts are most likely to be rewarded with likes and shares if they are angry or if they cause anger. People emote in the ways they are rewarded for, so when they are rewarded for hostility, they keep doing it.

Of course, emotional expressions aren't completely informed by rewards; modelling also plays a role. People do what they see others doing, especially others of similar or higher status. So the already angry nature of social media tends to bring on more anger. The existence, too, of celebrities using social media as a tool for anger, hostility, and cruelty models for people that this is an acceptable way to emote.



“Anger spreads more quickly online than other emotions - posts are more likely to be rewarded with likes or shares if they are angry or if they cause anger”

lead to emotionality from you (such as anger, anxiety, sadness, or guilt). Taking some time before you respond will allow that emotion to dissipate. This is one of the upsides of dealing with online anger rather than in person – there usually isn't a need to respond immediately, so you are free to take some time to think through your response. Emotions are relatively short-lived, so waiting just 20 to 30 minutes might provide you with enough time to look at and think about things differently.

Take it offline If you're on social media for this interaction, the audience of other users will likely make the situation more difficult. Instead, try and connect in other ways (depending on your relationship with them). If the technology allows, direct message or email might be useful, as it will remove the audience. You may also want to give them a call or schedule a time to talk. Given everything described previously regarding how distance can exacerbate hostility, perhaps an in-person conversation is a better option.

Have someone else read your response

Emotionality, especially anger, can often act as a lens by which people interpret the things they read. That means that the person you are responding to might misunderstand the intent of what you wrote because they were angry at the time they read it. It is similarly possible that your own emotionality, in response to their anger,

"Sometimes, maybe even often, choosing not to respond is a viable option"

might influence what you wrote in ways you don't realise. For both of these reasons, it's smart to have someone read what you have written before you send it or post it. Another pair of fresh eyes can offer some much-needed perspective.

Ask yourself why you're responding

Think about your goals for this situation. What is it you are trying to accomplish with this response? Is what you're trying to accomplish a worthwhile or achievable goal? If not, what's a different goal you could have? If it is worthwhile and achievable, what's the best way to accomplish it? These are questions you should ask yourself before responding to online anger, because they should inform how you move forward.

You should also remember that sometimes, maybe even often, choosing not to respond is a viable option. For many people, this is a challenge. They feel so compelled to respond because of that defensiveness or desire for revenge that they don't think clearly about what they really want. Some goals might not be achievable (such as convincing an angry stranger on the internet that they are wrong about their politics). Even when goals are achievable, accomplishing them requires a thoughtful and meaningful approach. It might require an offline conversation, or time spent calming down before connecting again.

Avoid the angry emojis

One of the interesting things about online communication is how often people go out of their way to explicitly communicate their emotions (without just stating them). They feel the need to use ALL CAPS, angry faces, extra exclamation points, bold text, or a variety of other mechanisms to indicate that they are angry. Those approaches are not terribly compelling, though, if you're actually trying to change a person's mind or engage in a healthy conversation about something. They likely come across as superfluous and weaken the broader point you're trying to make. There's nothing wrong with telling someone you're angry in an email, but it's likely better to just say you are angry without the need to express it via a frowny face!



**How To Deal With Angry People:
10 Strategies For Facing Anger
At Home, At Work And In The
Street by Dr Ryan Martin
(Watkins Media, £12.99)
is out on 9 May**

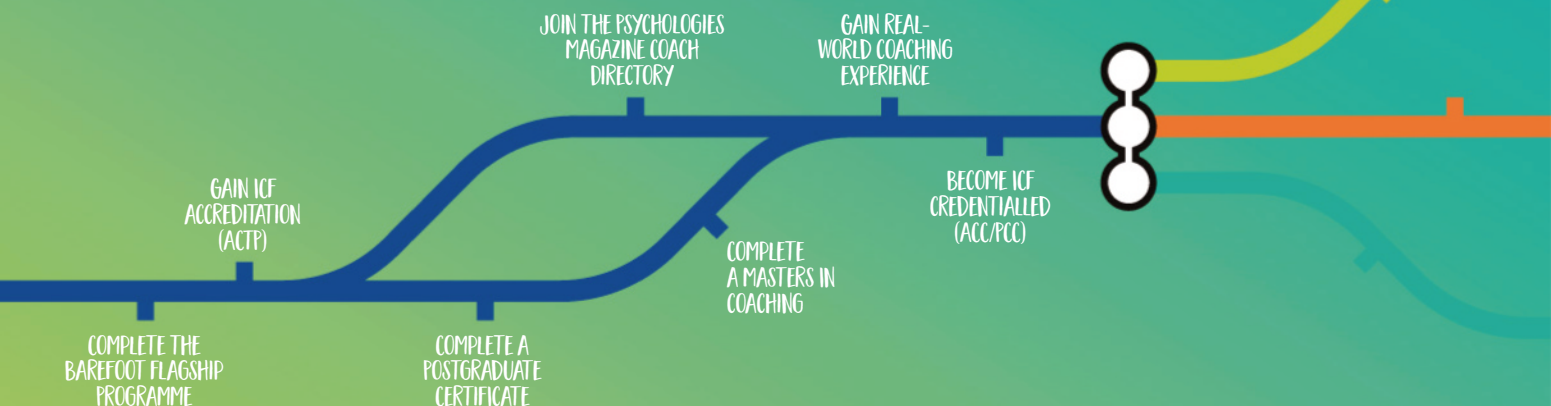
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Expert advice



Dr Maurice Duffy is a mindset coach, a bestselling author, philanthropist, and Government strategist who supports some of the world's biggest business brands. mauriceduffy.com



Dr Sula Windgassen is a health psychologist and psychotherapist. She specialises in working with people using a biopsychosocial approach. Find her on Instagram @the_health_psychologist_



Feeling lucky?

The internet is awash with 'Lucky Girl Syndrome', but is there any science behind the trend, and can you really think yourself lucky, asks Yasmina Floyer

When I worked in the theatre in my early 20s, I attended a talk where the speaker began by posing a question: are you a lucky person?

We were given a moment to consider our response and I decided that, yes, I am a lucky person. The speaker went on to explain that people who consider themselves lucky are in fact lucky, because this belief makes them more likely to take chances and create opportunities that will result in the manifestation of their goals. As I reflected on this, I could see that while there is an element of chance involved in all things, perhaps I had been more of an active participant in my achievements than I had previously given myself credit for.

I recently found myself thinking back to that talk when I stumbled upon the TikTok trend 'Lucky Girl Syndrome'. The idea is that by believing in your own good fortune, you will be able to attract it. So, can you actually think yourself lucky? Well, perhaps. Having an awareness of our luck can make us feel as though we are lucky, because when we believe something to be true, our minds look for ways to confirm this. Health psychologist and therapist Dr Sula Windgassen explains: 'We know from positive psychology practices such as gratitude and cognitive therapy

that targeting thought processes can be powerful for changing mood. We also know that this can create a positive feedback loop into changing our thought processes. If a person identifies something to focus on, that can create a mental filter that allows the brain to prioritise information that is congruent with that.'

When it comes to 'mental filters', I have experience. When I was trying to have a baby, it felt as if my little world became populated almost entirely with pregnant women and newborns. I saw them everywhere, because that is what my mind was stuck on. Likewise, thinking yourself lucky opens a tab in your mind titled 'Lucky Me' that chalks up a tally of seemingly lucky events, and the more you notice them, the more you see them. This way, we prime ourselves to either notice the fortuitous events already present within our lives, or begin to reframe the ordinary as lucky. Suddenly, the most mundane situations become infused with meaning: arriving at the bus stop at the same time as the bus pulls in is elevated from coincidence to the lofty realms of fate.

Growing up in the Nineties, I recall the acronym 'PMA' or 'Positive Mental Attitude', which was a popular trend claiming that in order to be more successful, one had to cultivate a





positive mindset. There is a level of privilege attached to the idea of attracting one's good fortune through a positive mindset alone. To me, thinking yourself lucky has the whiff of toxic positivity about it. The term 'toxic positivity' seems at first an oxymoron; surely positivity is a good thing? Well, for one thing, you can't positively think your way out of systemic oppression or debt. Placing the responsibility for any negativity in someone's life upon the individual indirectly implies that difficult circumstances are their fault.

The reality is that living in difficult circumstances can make it hard to even begin to identify the positives in life. Dr Windgassen says: 'Practices that involve focusing on the good elements of life may be helpful to people who already possess certain internal characteristics and environmental privileges. For example, someone who is already relatively high in positive affect (the ability to experience and stay with pleasure and joy) may find it easy to identify and celebrate good fortune. Someone who has more socioeconomic challenges, however, may feel

"There is a level of privilege attached to the idea of attracting one's good fortune through a positive mindset alone"

disheartened with such practices because good fortune is not in obvious abundance, and so it can quickly have the opposite effect of making someone feel disenfranchised and even less fortunate.'

I count myself as one of life's optimists and am aware that it is easy for me to be so because I have privileges that enable me to have a relatively fulfilling and comfortable life. When presented with a negative situation, my default is to look for the positive, but sometimes I find this exhausting. How can I tell if I am inadvertently falling into a toxic positivity mindset? Internationally renowned mindset coach Dr Maurice Duffy helps me by first defining toxic positivity as, 'the excessive exuberant and excessive over-generalisation of a happy, optimistic state across all situations. When positivity is used in excess to cover up or silence the human experience, it becomes toxic. By refusing to accept certain feelings, we fall into a state of denial and repressed emotions.'

Dr Duffy explains that while there are certain situations when faking positivity can be a good thing – for example, when it contributes towards enhancing confidence and building self-esteem

REALISTIC OPTIMISM

Dr Duffy shares his tips on how to cultivate a positive mindset without falling into toxic positivity...

IT'S OKAY NOT TO BE OKAY

Positivity isn't about pretending things are okay during difficult times. It's about taking a realistic look at what you can do to make the best of the situation and get through it well.

UNDERSTAND YOUR EMOTIONS

Mindsets, emotions, and behaviours are interconnected, creating positive or negative outcomes. Check in with yourself regularly to understand how you are feeling.

AVOID LABELLING

We are not our emotions. Today you might feel happy; tomorrow sad. Labelling gets people stuck into one single emotion forever. Rather than labelling people for what they feel, help them confront their emotions.

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Perception is not reality, but most of the time, we act as if it were. Our mind operates in deceptive ways; we let narratives take over. This affects not only our perceptions, but also our choices.

– we must be careful not to allow it to mask or hide our true feelings. Dismissing negative emotions such as guilt, or brushing off things that are bothering you with an ‘it is what it is’ can do more harm than good. ‘Saying things such as, “Focus on the positives,” “When one door closes, another one opens,” “Cheer up. It may never happen,” are some of the signs of toxic positivity mindset,’ Dr Duffy explains. ‘If you constantly suppress your feelings, they will not go away, and will continue to build until at some stage they find release.’

This isn't to say that we ought to avoid the joy that can come from feeling that we have a sense of agency over our lives. I am a huge fan of vision boards, and see them as a meditative practice that allows me to solidify my goals. Having a board with images and words that connect to the things that make me feel joyful can act as an anchor, a reminder that I am allowed to be hopeful for good things.

Dr Windgassen agrees that there are important practices that can help people dealing with misfortune: ‘Rather than putting the emphasis on being lucky, practices of

savouring small pleasures have been shown to have a beneficial effect on mood and physiological markers of health,’ she says. ‘The emphasis is on the embodied experience of being with something that feels good or satisfying, even if just for a short moment. And rather than thinking about it or appraising it, just staying with the experience.’

The irony is that, while I do consider myself to be lucky, I am not even sure that I believe in luck as a force that exists outside of ourselves. I believe that some of us have more privilege than others. I believe in chance, in probability, that we can increase our chances of a particular outcome by taking certain actions. I continue to make vision boards, but I don't believe that we can manifest our desires through intention alone; manifestation is most likely when our intentions are coupled with meaningful actions.

Yet when I set intentions, and take action, it's always with the knowledge that things may not go my way – when that happens, it's an opportunity to learn and grow. And what could be luckier than that?

Learn & Grow

*Develop self-esteem, feel true satisfaction,
and thrive through the power of learning*

Feel at ease with trapeze

WHERE: Circus Glory, London

WHEN: Various dates throughout the year

PRICE: Prices start at £25

for a taster class

VISIT: circusglory.com

Inject some play into your life and discover how hanging upside down from the ceiling can unleash a whole host of unexpected brain and body benefits! Described as a perfect blend of fitness and art, trapeze has escaped the confines of the circus so everyone can experience it. Circus Glory in London holds a whole range of adult classes and courses, from simple taster sessions to one-to-one tuition designed to help you take to the air like a pro. It's dubbed by regulars as a great stress reliever and energy booster, and a wonderful reminder of the importance of play and creation.



Fantastic fermentation

WHERE: Various locations in London

WHEN: Throughout the year

PRICE: From £70

VISIT: thefermentarium.org.uk

The connection between our brain health and gut microbiome has become a hot topic in recent years, with fermented foods hailed the key to gut-brain harmony. The Fermentarium is determined to help people get ahead of the curve and learn how to perfect the fermentation process for themselves; think of it as a culinary course with a difference!



Speak the lingo

WHERE: Online

WHEN: At a time to suit you

PRICE: From £5.99 a month

VISIT: babel.com

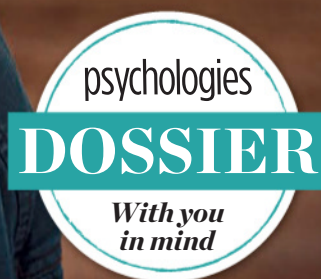
Put memories of stuffy school French classes behind you, and learn a new language at your leisure from the comfort of your own home with Babbel. Studies show learning a new language improves our attention and mental alertness, as well as broadening our mindset and boosting mental wellbeing. With 15 different languages to choose from, Babbel's online courses, games, podcasts and live classes are open to all – and it's never too late to learn!



OVERCOME YOUR *anxiety*



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



Spot the triggers that send your anxious thoughts spiralling, and take back control with stay-calm techniques. Rebecca Frank explores...



Wherever you look, it seems like

there's something new to worry about. Between the refugee crisis, the war in Ukraine and the climate emergency, even without the pandemic, the news is a constant source of stress – and that's forgetting what we all have going on in our own lives! The reality is that these are anxious times and, as such, it's more important than ever to stay on top of stress and lean on the things that help bring us quiet strength. Whether you have experienced anxiety before, or are experiencing it for the first time and it's hit you like a bolt out of the blue, recognising the things that spark your anxious thinking, and exploring ways to calm your mind and body, will help you feel in control rather than overwhelmed and alone. Read on to discover how to manage differing types of anxiety, and how to understand and tackle your stress before it spirals into something more.

Expert advice



James Withey is the author of several books on mental health. His latest How To Smash Stress: 40 Ways To Get Your Life Back (Little, Brown, £14.99) is out 27 April. jameswithey.com; @jameswwithey



Dr Wendy Molefi is an award-winning menopause specialist and founder of the Vital Wellness Clinic, a private menopause clinic. With her background in wellness coaching and mindfulness teaching, she brings a holistic and preventative approach. vitalwellnessclinic.com

What's on your mind?

*"If we don't
manage stress
properly, it can
spiral into
anxiety"*

Family anxiety

There's a point in mid-life when many of us are faced with juggling ageing parents with teenage children (all with our hormones on their own wild trajectory!), and it can feel like we're being stretched like an elastic band ready to snap. When our family relationships are strained, it wobbles our whole foundation, and it's always worth making the effort to get things back on track. Relationship therapist Nedra Glover Tawwab, author of *Drama Free* (Little, Brown, £14.99), says that one of the first things to acknowledge in any relationship is that you can't change or control other

people. 'Even when you love someone and believe you know what's best for them, you can't control them. Ultimately, it's up to you to choose how you handle what you can't change about others.' When you accept you can't control someone and concentrate on you – how you respond, what you say, and what you do – it releases a pressure valve.

All relationships need boundaries, says Glover Tawwab, which are the 'expectations and needs that help us feel comfortable and safe'. We set these boundaries verbally and through our behaviours. She points out that every family has problems, but the difference between healthy and unhealthy

dynamics is how they are handled. Put time aside to be present and really listen to what others are saying, without trying to contribute or offer advice. Then honestly share how you feel and allow yourself to be heard. It's important to recognise unhealthy or harmful relationships, and ask yourself what you really want for your life. 'Sometimes, deciding to change means you might need to distance yourself from people who haven't changed or who continue to behave in a way that impacts you,' says Glover Tawwab, 'but changing your own perspective, behaviours and expectations will change how a relationship functions.'



Peri-menopausal anxiety

Anxiety is one of the most common side effects of the hormonal changes that happen in the years approaching the menopause. Menopause expert Dr Wendy Molefi says it's more common if you've experienced some element of anxiety before, especially if it was linked to hormonal changes, such as the menstrual cycle or post-natal. However, sometimes it can come out of nowhere. While everybody is individual, she says lifestyle changes make a big difference to how we manage anxiety. 'There are certain things, such as exercise and getting enough quality sleep, that we know really help, and when you have these in the realm, you're halfway there,' she says. It might be that HRT will help you, and that's something to discuss with your GP or a menopause specialist if anxiety is affecting how you live your life. However, HRT is only part of the package, says Dr Molefi. 'Exercise is key because it triggers the release of good hormones, and if you can exercise outdoors that's even better, as nature will help you to decompress.' Keeping hydrated and eating a healthy diet with little or no alcohol will help you feel less anxious and improve sleep. Dr Molefi uses mindfulness techniques with her patients to help them download the day and have a more restful sleep. 'A lot of healing happens in our sleep, from the destruction of harmful free radicals in the body to allowing the mind to process events and get a clear perspective,' she says. Mindfulness will also help you to be more present, so you're less worried about what you did or said yesterday, or what tomorrow might bring. Like exercise, it helps to dampen down the stress response and also gives you a sense of awareness, so you know when it's creeping up again.

Existential anxiety

Whether you're worrying about climate change, the refugee crisis, the war in Ukraine or any other global issue, these are big issues that are out of our control and leave us feeling powerless and anxious. It's a complex, volatile and changing world, and the deluge of media that we're exposed to at all hours of the





'Counting the things that you do have control over makes you realise you're not just a ship being bounced around in the sea,' says Withey.

Productivity anxiety

Do you constantly feel like you're not doing enough, that other people seem to be achieving more and coping better than you? This need to keep on going and doing is a modern epidemic, and a great cause of stress and anxiety, because of course you never get as much done or do it as well as you think you could have, so there's no resolution or sense of satisfaction to be gained.

Withey knows from personal experience that the trick here is to just be 'good enough'. 'I have this recurring nag in my head that says, "People are achieving more, they've won Nobel prizes and you haven't even started painting the garden wall yet,"' he says. 'But I remind myself that I just need to be good enough – for me, for my family and friends, and things that are important in my world. You don't need to rush around proving that you're busy and worthwhile; you just need to stay in your own sphere and do the best you can within that.' Withey is a big fan of small achievements, which he says are as important as the big ones because of the sense of accomplishment each one brings and the impact this has on your stress levels. 'It's about learning that things like de-fleaing the cat and ticking it off your to-do list will bring about a sense of pride (and save a bigger

job and source of stress further down the line). These small wins will stop you spiralling into the "I'm not good enough because I haven't achieved world peace yet" train of thought.'

Financial anxiety

The steep rise in the cost of living has affected everybody, and even though we're all experiencing it to some degree, there's still a certain shame and stigma attached to financial stress. This often leads to people isolating themselves or burying their heads in the sand rather than getting support. In a recent survey by the Mental Health Foundation, 23 per cent of people admitted to seeing friends less often than normal due to financial concerns, and 30 per cent were sleeping badly because of money worries. 'It's really crucial to connect – humans need each other and need to share our common struggles,' says Withey. If you're trying to cut down your spending, he advises suggesting to friends that you do things in a less expensive way rather than not seeing them at all. 'Go for a walk with a flask of tea, meet at each other's houses instead of going out for lunch. Real friends and family won't mind when you explain you need to keep things cheap.' It can also help to remember tough times you've had before and how you've managed them and come out of the other side. 'The learning you get from turning detective and examining which coping mechanisms worked for you in the past is huge,' says Withey.

day certainly doesn't help. However, nobody wants to feel that they're ignoring the problem and, when faced with this kind of anxiety, James Withey, who has written several books about how to manage mental health, says the best thing you can do is make a list of the things you can control, or exert some influence over with small actions. For example, you can get behind a charity or political party that supports the issues that you are concerned about. Making changes to your lifestyle that are in line with your beliefs will help you feel that you're contributing, however small – it might be changing where you shop, arranging lift shares for school or sports activities, supporting your local decision makers, and listening to and reading up on other's views so you're well informed. All these things will help you feel calmer, because you're helping to support what you believe in and are being supported by people who share the same values.



How nature calms the mind

including reduced anxiety. It seems that it's not just being in nature but engaging with it that brings the greatest benefits. Dr Peter Coventry, lead author of the study, commented, 'One of the key ideas that might explain why nature-based activities are good for us is that they help us to connect with nature in meaningful ways that go beyond passively viewing nature.' This could involve a physical activity such as tree-planting, or a mindful exercise like shirin yoku, the Japanese practice of forest-bathing, where consciously engaging the senses for a period of time has been shown to positively impact physical and mental health.

Zoë Laureen Palmer is a writer and human ecologist with personal experience of how nature can help heal a troubled mind. 'For as long as I can remember, I have turned to the natural world as a source of comfort, calm and healing,' she says. 'Being in nature increases our sense of wellbeing, concentration, and has a restorative effect on our nervous system.' Getting a regular dose of nature is far easier for some than others, and it's often those living in cities with more limited access to nature who need it most. 'There was a time in my mid-twenties when I hadn't left London for several years and I became anxious and depressed,' says Palmer. 'Part of my nature-based recovery involved spending time on the Scottish Isle of Eigg where, in that wild rugged landscape, the simple ritual of digging potatoes and watching the chickens peck up the worms, gave my mind and body the space to breathe and reset.' Finding ways to regularly connect with nature when you're living in an urban environment is important for both mental health and for encouraging a sense of responsibility for the natural world. 'Cultivating our individual connection to nature while living in urban areas keeps us connected as part of the wider, wilder ecosystems beyond,' says Palmer. 'In

Expert advice



Zoë Laureen Palmer is a writer, presenter and human ecologist working at the intersection of arts, health and ecology. She consulted on the development of Wild Cards, a set of intention cards produced by Canopy & Stars. zoelaureenpalmer.com; @zoelpalmer

If you've ever felt clearer-headed after a walk in the park, energised by a dip in the sea, or calmed by a mountain view, you've experienced the mind-healing powers of the natural world. At this time of year, when the days are becoming longer and warmer, and our plants and wildlife are reawakening, it's easier than ever to get outdoors and let nature work its magic on your mind.

The effects of nature on mental health are well documented, with study

after study confirming that spending time outdoors helps to improve mood. While any time spent in nature is better than none, it seems that doing some kind of regular outdoor activity for at least 20 minutes provides the most positive outcome. This was highlighted in a large study led by the University of York, which showed that taking part in nature-based activities for 20–90 minutes over a course of eight to 12 weeks was associated with the largest gains in mental health,

“Spending time in nature improves life satisfaction”

these times of increased uncertainty – and for some people climate anxiety – this connection can help calm our minds and reduce levels of stress.’

With anxiety disorders increasing and waiting lists for talking therapies getting longer, there’s a move towards more holistic treatment packages. Green social prescribing is already available in certain areas of the country, enabling specially assigned link workers to connect people with local nature-based activities, such as community garden projects. Gardening has been shown to be particularly beneficial to both physical and mental health and, according to University of York research, taking part in activities with other people brings even greater mental health benefits. The combination of spending time in nature while making a social connection with the community improves life satisfaction and happiness, while reducing levels of stress.

Of course, it’s not only those with mental health problems who will benefit from spending time in nature. As journalist Isabel Hardman writes in her book *The Natural Health Service* (Atlantic Books, £9.99), ‘We don’t all have mental health problems, but we all have mental health.’ Giving our minds and bodies what they need in the way of fresh air, daylight exposure, exercise, and connection to nature will help improve sleep, relationships, creativity, productivity, brain fog, self-esteem, happiness – the list goes on and on.

So why not celebrate spring by adding some nature-based rituals, activities, and adventures into your day. Engage in some physical activity, switch on your senses, connect with your fellow humans and creatures, and enjoy the benefits of our very own natural health service.



NATURE'S MEDICINE

Try these short rituals and intentions to help calm your mind through nature

- 'Your breath is air exhaled from plants and plankton. Fill your body with it. Now, very slowly, release air back into the biosphere.'
- 'Root through your feet. Visualise your toes branching. Sense the interconnected, underground networks.'
- 'Observe the full moon as a time to let go. When does the next lunar month peak? Get into your body and see what you can release.'
- 'Lift through your crown. Soften your shoulders. Ground through your feet. Breathe.'
- 'The stillness of dawn is unknown at any other time. Wander through it. Watch the sunrise. Give thanks to this moment of tranquillity.'
- 'Hold your arms in front at eye level. Slowly open them wide. Notice the fringes of your gaze. You have tuned into your wild vision.'
- 'Observe the new moon as a time to sow seeds. When does the next lunar month begin? Plant something and see what grows.'

Wild Cards
are available to
buy from
canopyandstars.
co.uk, priced £15



Keep anxiety in check

'Every short-term action you take to control your stress is a long-term action to lessen anxiety,' says James Withey. Here are some of his tried and tested techniques for stress management...

1 Slow everything down Your thoughts, your actions, your movements, your conversations. When we're stressed, everything speeds up, and when we slow it down it allows room for stress to be seen more clearly and tackled more effectively.

2 Have some phone-free time Going for a walk without your phone will help you stay present, see wonderful things you wouldn't normally and limit your intake of world events you have no control over. Try it slowly and build up to an hour or two.

3 Do something you're good at Stress pushes us down and makes us feel useless, and that thought will fester if you let it. So, counteract it with stuff you can do. Whether it's gardening, crochet, cooking or computer programming, use your skills and talents to make you feel better about yourself.

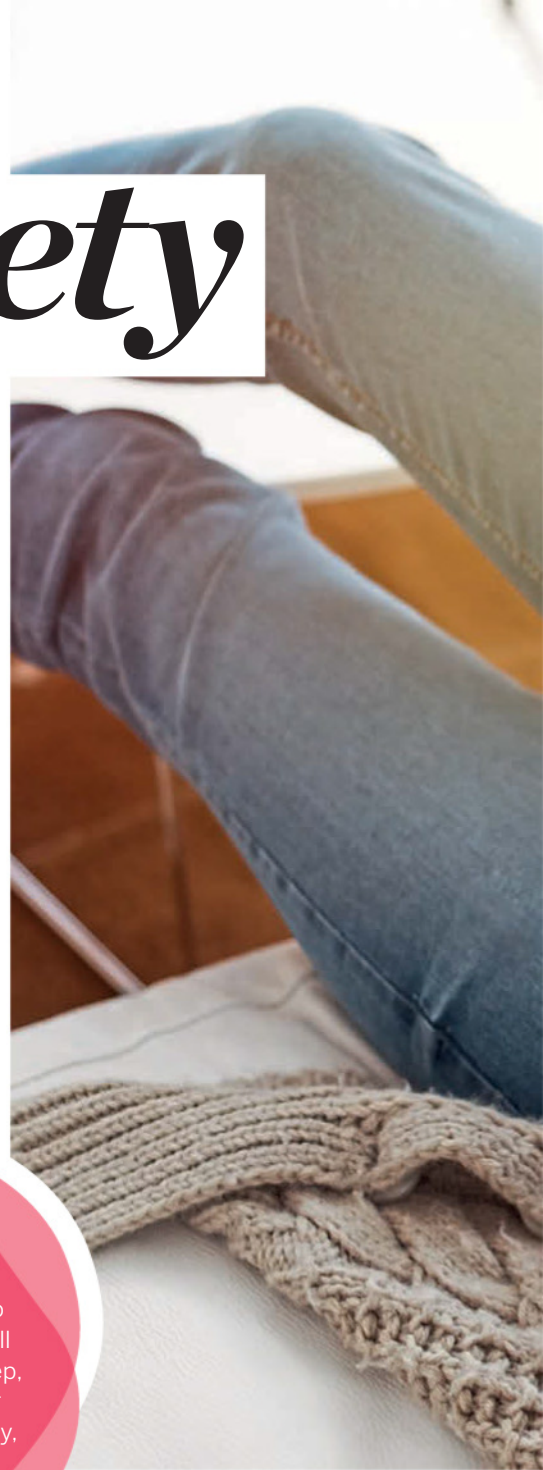
4

Look after your body

When you're experiencing stress it's even more important to look after your body, because it will help you to manage the stress. Sleep, diet, exercise – all the things your mum said were important. Basically, you have to parent yourself to manage your stress.

5 Use the three Cs to challenge your unproductive worries and thoughts

Can you change it? Can someone else help you change it? Can you change the way you think about it? Really examine each of the questions, as we have a tendency to dismiss possible solutions when we're stressed. It can really help to go through this with someone else, as they bring their own unique take on your situation and a more objective view.





*Read more in How
To Smash Stress:
40 Ways To Get
Your Life Back
by James Withey
(Little, Brown, £14.99)*

6

Experience some

joy Look back at old photos and remember times when you had a piercing, overwhelming feeling of joy. These memories counteract stress – they're proof that things can change, that you will laugh again, you will be amazed by a sunset or a dog grinning at you. They remind you that you are not your anxiety.

7 Don't feed the stress monster Instead of ruminating for hours, have a think about a time when the worry about something was worse than the actual thing. How much did the stress you felt beforehand actually help? Most likely not much. Worry doesn't help. Taking the right action does. Planning helps, preparation helps, practice helps, self-compassion helps, getting support helps. Starve the monster.

8 Do something awesome When we experience big, awe-inspiring things, stress gets smaller by comparison. Head to a park and look up at an enormous tree. Go to the sea and watch each wave, or a lake or river and gaze out. Visit a butterfly farm. Anything that makes you go 'wow'. It won't remove the cause of the stress, but will help put it in perspective – and you get to see all the lovely things, so it's a winner all round!

WHAT WILL HELP TO TAME YOUR ANXIETY?

Sometimes the key to taming anxiety lies in a change of mindset. Take our test to find out what you need to reframe to feel more at ease

Tick the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section, or sections, you ticked most, to find out what's stopping you feeling calm

1 Your anxiety can be triggered by anything that involves making

- Choices.....☐
- Changes.....☐
- ◆ Connections.....☐
- ♥ Commitments.....☐

2 Sometimes, you wish you cared less about

- ♥ How much you've achieved.....☐
- ◆ Doing the right thing.....☐
- What will happen.....☐
- Doing everything well.....☐

3 You could most benefit from more trust that you

- Are enough.....☐
- ♥ Do enough.....☐
- ◆ Are loved enough.....☐
- Are brave enough.....☐

4 In the grip of anxiety, you can lose perspective on what

- ♥ Really needs doing now.....☐

- ◆ You really need right now.....☐
- Is really happening right now.....☐
- Really matters right now.....☐

5 You most value reassurance that you are

- Okay just as you are.....☐
- ♥ Making a difference.....☐
- ◆ Worthy of love and respect.....☐
- Stronger than you think.....☐

6 Anxiety can make you feel like you're less

- ♥ Relaxed than others.....☐
- ◆ Liked than others.....☐
- Brave than others.....☐
- Successful than others.....☐

7 Deep down, you know you'd feel better if you could

- ♥ Live in the here and now.....☐
- ◆ Be your own best friend.....☐
- Take life in your stride.....☐
- Believe in yourself.....☐

8 You get frustrated when people seem to

- Not care what others think.....☐
- ◆ Never doubt themselves.....☐
- ♥ Leave responsibility to others.....☐
- Never worry.....☐

9 A red flag for you that all is not well is

- ♥ Over-promising, under delivering.....☐
- ◆ Over-planning the future.....☐
- Over-analysing the past.....☐
- Over-anticipating the worst.....☐

10 Feeling calm gives you a break from

- ♥ Doing.....☐
- Planning.....☐
- ◆ Ruminating.....☐
- Striving.....☐

Turn the page to find out what mindset change will help you manage anxiety





What needs reframing to help you feel less anxious?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

Time

Although sources of anxiety are often complex and multiple, your relationship with time plays a big part in creating uncertainty. Is it any surprise that you feel unsettled if your default mental narrative is that you don't have enough time to do everything you want or need to do, or to meet all your responsibilities, or do things well? Left unchecked, time anxiety can also feed into existential anxiety, creating a sense that life is passing by too quickly, before you've had a chance to do something meaningful with it.

At times, time anxiety can be a side-effect of opening yourself to new opportunities and possibilities – becoming aware of everything you may want to do, see, create or achieve can be overwhelming, especially if 'could' tends to turn into 'should'. Trying to do as much as you can is a natural response to fear of missing out on opportunities that come your way. But by over-committing, you can end up feeling both too busy and stuck at the same time. It may feel counter-intuitive, but prioritising time to stop, pause and do nothing is the key to true productiveness. By allowing time to breathe and reflect every day, you're more likely to apply your energy, focus and productivity to what really matters to you, your loved ones and the wider world.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♦

Self-image

Conflict and communication difficulties are classic causes of anxiety, but for you, anxiety is mainly fuelled by your relationship with yourself. Living with a critical narrative can be as anxiety-inducing as living with a bully 24 hours a day. And an ingrained tendency to be hard on yourself can create a uniquely vicious circle, creating feelings of anxiety that are then compounded by an inner narrative that berates you for feeling anxious. A voracious inner critic will use anything to attack you, including a natural response to situations that anyone would find challenging. As well as telling yourself you should be able to cope, you may also feel convinced that you should have planned better, made better decisions, or anticipated a situation in advance.

Anxiety can leave you feeling vulnerable, and even if you're normally self-sufficient, you may find yourself needing reassurance from others. Another key sign of anxiety for you is becoming more sensitive to criticism than usual, or seeing criticism where none was intended. You need self-compassion not self-criticism when you're dealing with uncertainty, so treat yourself with kindness. Start the day by taking some time to check in with yourself, and ask, 'What's the weather pattern like inside today? What is my mind up to? How am I feeling?' Then think about what small steps you can take to be kinder to yourself.



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ●

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is unavoidable in life, so your relationship with it can have a significant influence on your state of mind. When that relationship is out of balance, anxiety levels can skyrocket. Uncertainty can trigger a fear response that can lower your tolerance for any challenging situation, like speaking up at work, or walking into a crowded party. It may be that the first sign your anxiety level is up is retreating into your comfort zone. It's not surprising that uncertainty send us back into our 'caves' – it's an instinct that kept our evolutionary ancestors alive. But by trying to protect yourself from uncertainty, you can also inadvertently fuel anxiety, as you never get to prove to yourself that you can cope.

Another key characteristic of uncertainty-related anxiety is becoming more sensitive to criticism than usual, and looking to others for validation. Reacting with self-compassion to that needy part of yourself is key. And watch your over-thinking; trying to anticipate everything that might go wrong will only fuel anxiety so, instead, try remembering times when you have overcome uncertainty. Uncertainty may never feel good, but changing the narrative in your head about your ability to cope is the first step to defusing the natural anxiety response that kicks in.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

Standards

Setting unrealistic standards for yourself provides unlimited fuel for anxiety – will you make the grade? If you do, will that be enough? What will others think of your efforts and achievements? The irony is that you may find yourself especially drawn to goal-setting or self-improvement during times of uncertainty, to help you feel grounded and stay on track. But there can often be a fine line between 'reaching your potential' and 'setting unrealistic standards', and crossing that line provides unlimited fuel for anxiety. There is nothing wrong with setting the bar high, but expecting far more of yourself than you would ever expect of other people generates an uneasy sense of never quite being or doing enough.

Seeking reassurance by comparing yourself to others can often have the opposite effect, making you feel even more anxious about what you're doing well. Self-criticism often goes hand-in-hand with perfectionism and a sense that you have to keep trying harder to 'be better'. It may even feel like it drives you out of your comfort zone to keep pushing yourself but, over time, this kind of anxiety undermines self-esteem, and the treadmill effect of setting yourself one goal after another will quickly kill any sense of joy in life. It's time to let go of seeing yourself as a work in progress – self-acceptance is a powerful antidote for both perfection and anxiety.

Anti-anxiety wish list

When your worries threaten to overwhelm you, take positive steps with this toolkit of stress-busting buys

**B.fresh Relax
juice shot, £2.80,
b-fresh.co.uk**

Offering a blend of mood-boosting ashwagandha, L-theanine and kiwi, these little drinks offer a sense of calm, wellbeing and relaxation without drowsiness, all in a tasty hit of juice.



**Ishga Warming Body Oil,
£39, uk.ishga.com**

This seaweed-based organic oil can be added to your bath, or used on the skin for massage. It contains sandalwood, bergamot and patchouli, to calm, soothe and de-stress the mind.



**FEWE Take A Deep Breath
oral spray, £16, fewe.co.uk**

A minty spray with anxiety-reducing ashwagandha, anti-inflammatory turmeric, and energy-boosting ginseng, to fight stress, tiredness and mood swings. Fewe products are designed to help you manage your mood during your menstrual cycle, using natural ingredients to boost your mood and energy.

**Ancient + Brave
Cacao + Collagen, £24,
ancientandbrave.earth**

Combining the relaxing power of a cup of cocoa with botanicals including adaptogenic ashwagandha, this is a cup to help you relax and build stress resilience. We love that it's available in packaging made from renewable resources, including leaves, which you can add to your food waste or compost.



**Subtle Energies
Aura Protection
Inhalation Patches,
£50 for 10, subtle
energies.com.au**

Increase your focus, grounding and clarity, and enjoy spiritual and emotional benefits, with these patches containing oils of saffron, rhu khus and tulasi – all delivered in an easy-to-use format.





Trend Tonic Cork Lightning Earrings, £15, trendtonic.co.uk

These striking cork earrings are absorbent, which means they make perfect essential-oil diffusers. With their position close to the face, they're a simple and unobtrusive way to enjoy the relaxing properties of your favourite aromatherapy scent.



Soul Emporium Sodalite Worry Stone Heart, £14, soulemporium.com

This carved heart is made from sodalite, which has been loved for its calming properties since Ancient Greek times. It's the perfect size to fit in a pocket, and has been shaped with a thumb-sized indentation to be held between the first two fingers and thumb, where you can gently rub it to calm and clear the mind.



psychologies
DOSSIER

*With you
in mind*

**Lovendu
Anxiety Journal,
£20, lovendu.co.uk**

Perfect for times when your thoughts become overwhelming, this includes some key strategies to ease you through the tough times, challenges your unhelpful thoughts, and offers helpful distraction techniques and self-care support.

**Adaptogenic Apothecary
Harmony menstrual
supplement, £80,
adaptogenicapothecary.com**

This collection features four 'elixirs' (powders to be dissolved in water), tailored to suit you at different times in your menstrual cycle. Each one gives hormonal support at just the right time, and the ingredients have been clinically shown to be effective in reducing anxiety, helping you maintain a state of relaxation and mental and physical wellbeing. The pouches are fully recyclable and the powders are vegan.



**Hush & Hush MindYourMind,
£46.20, hushandhush.co.uk**

This blend of natural soothing agents, such as tryptophan, valerian root, holy basil leaf and magnesium, work together to calm the mind and help you get the rest you need.



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- Exclusive exercises to help you find a new perspective on life
- Regular check-ins to help you evaluate what's working and where you might want to focus
- Useful prompts to help you set achievable goals



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Hello!

With spring well and truly sprung, it's the perfect time to think about what you want next, and put the focus back onto yourself. And what better way to do this than taking out a subscription to your favourite magazine? It's the perfect tool to help you prioritise looking after yourself, packed full of inspiring yet simple ways to bring about small changes in your life that make a big difference to how you feel each and every day. Featuring cutting-edge authors, experts and therapists, as well as real-life readers like you, it's sure to become your new best friend and help you learn how to feel calmer, happier and more relaxed. A subscription takes all the hassle out of tracking it down, meaning that you can spend more of your time relaxing and enjoying the uplifting features and exciting new ideas. Happy reading!

Sally x

Editor-in-Chief,
Psychologies

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

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

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

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

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

Licence to help

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



Get in touch

To train to become an Ollie coach, find a coach in your area or book an event, visit ollieandhissuperpowers.com, or email info@ollieandhissuperpowers.com. The Ollie School is waiting to hear from you!



Heart

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



If one person from the past could come back into your life, who would you like it to be? Why?



Coming up for air

Push and pull

A yearning to become someone and no one in the city casts a shadow over the wide skies and open spaces of Caro Giles' Northumbrian home



I have been thinking about my ongoing desire to connect more with others.

I reflect often upon the different needs for human contact within my own family, most obviously highlighted during the lockdowns, when I craved more than ever being physically in the same space as other people. Meanwhile, most of my children were living their best lives, content to socialise only with each other in the familiarity of their home and its immediate surroundings.

Earlier today, I stood in a field above

the town where I live. The sea was a blue ribbon in the distance and gulls were pecking at seeds in the soil as I wandered along the hedgerow. The sun shone hard on my face as I turned it up to the sky and closed my eyes. I wanted to talk to another human so badly I almost started talking to myself. It's not that I don't have friends here, just that my life looks so different a lot of the time that I'm out of practice in the art of socialising.

I keep returning to dreams of moving back to a city, wonder if I would find it easier to meet more people, fulfil those extrovert needs. No doubt the grass wouldn't be greener and I would pine

for the waves and the wind in my hair, but my feet are always itchy, and surely a girl can dream.

Earlier in the year, I booked a few nights away in a youth hostel we'd stayed in before – a city getaway to break up the routine of life. This was a bit of a gamble – only one of my children is a city slicker, the rest prefer home and quiet (another reason to stay in the little town between the hills and the sea). I hoped they would be seduced by the bright lights in the same way I have been, but sensed that their desire for what they already know would win; I also enjoy the safety that familiarity brings, the security of what I know so

"I keep returning to dreams of moving back to a city, wonder if I would find it easier to meet more people, fulfil those extrovert needs"

“I breathed out so deeply that the tension I didn’t know I was holding inside my body disappeared”



well. But after we’d checked in at the hostel and stepped out onto the pavement, I breathed out so deeply that the tension I didn’t know I was holding inside my body disappeared, and this rare sensation was a revelation.

We walked away from the city centre over a huge covered bridge, with bicycles and scooters flying past us. The first thing I noticed was how young everyone looked. At home, even as I career into middle age, I am sometimes the youngest person in the supermarket. I am frightened I will look in a mirror one day and see myself hunched over the trolley, oblivious to the years that have run away from me. (As I type this, I wonder what it is about ageing that scares me.) Across the bridge, streets were lined with ex-council houses, low-rise flats and trees covered in blossom. I settled into a comfortable sense of nostalgia and breathed in the scented air. We arrived at a park, pale sun trying to pierce thick grey cloud, the air warm

and close, waiting for the sky to rip open and hurl a week’s worth of rain onto the pavements.

The kids stripped off their coats and handed them to me in a big bundle, clambered onto a saucer swing, and I pushed them as they gazed up at pine cones hanging above the frame. I glanced up too, and the outline of the needles on the tree against the sky reminded me of summer. There were children playing football and, as mine ran off to a climbing frame, I sat down on a bench and began to write. I didn’t feel out of place with my singleness and my many daughters and my notebook. No one really noticed me, but not in the way no one notices me at home – it felt like they didn’t notice me because I fitted in. And as I sat and wrote under

the sky that was full of rain still to fall, I wondered what that would be like, fitting in, whether I would still keep running to the edge if I didn’t feel like an anomaly, if I would still be searching for something else.

Back at home, I noticed flowers beginning to bloom that had been buds a few days earlier. My cat eyed me carefully from the window. My neighbour called to me from her doorstep and I was pleased to see her, grateful for her steady presence in our world. As I stepped inside my house, I wondered if moments like this in our lives – the ones that ground us – are the ones that makes us feel that we could fly. Perhaps we can only dare to dream when our feet are safely on the ground.

'I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME'

Far from a stalled start on the journey to motherhood, miscarriage can be a deeply traumatic experience, and one that's still greatly misunderstood, writes Jennie Agg

Like countless women before and after me, I only learnt about the realities of miscarriage once I was in the middle of one, as I bled into a chair in an A&E waiting room, my body violently unmaking what it had previously made.

There are an estimated 650 miscarriages every day in the UK. And yet it remains a profoundly misunderstood experience. Even if people are sympathetic, it's still treated as little more than a blip – a bump in

the road on the way to parenthood – something you'll get over quickly once another baby comes along.

But such assumptions brush aside all kinds of complicated emotions, leaving people with little space to process what they actually feel. Before I had a miscarriage myself, I could never have imagined just how deeply it would affect me – and change me.

To be honest, I never imagined it would happen at all. Contentedly pregnant for the first time, back in 2017, I'd assumed miscarriage was

a remote possibility. It was something that happened to other people – and, even then, only rarely.

I'd naively believed that because I'd done all the 'right' things, following the rules about what you should and shouldn't eat, drink, and do while pregnant, I was safe. Given that there was so much advice to follow, I think I also thought that meant we knew how to prevent miscarriage these days.

My husband, Dan, and I had stuck to tradition, too, waiting to reach the end of the first trimester before announcing



anything. We'd tacitly agreed we wouldn't tell people I was pregnant 'in case anything happened', without ever truly believing that anything would.

Somehow, I never let myself think about what was going unsaid. Nor did I question the strong impression I had that it would be 'bad luck' to talk about the pregnancy openly.

I never considered that, when it comes to miscarriage and pregnancy announcements, we might have muddled up causation and correlation. For while it's true that the majority of

"We went out for dinner, in a vague attempt to distract ourselves from the empty year that now lay before us"

miscarriages do happen in the first trimester, this has nothing to do with whether we talk about the pregnancy or not. Until it happened to me, I never stopped to think about what this social pressure to keep the early weeks of pregnancy private actually means for people who do miscarry – or what we might be forcing them to cope with alone.

And, so, in a dimly lit room in our local hospital, I learnt the hard way. I learnt that, far from being unlikely to happen, miscarriage actually affects an estimated one in five of all pregnancies, with one in four women experiencing one at some point in her life. And, far from being something we know how to prevent, I learnt that miscarriage is seen as 'just' something that happens sometimes; 'just one of those things'.

'It's really common,' I was told after mine, by a sympathetic midwife who'd patted my hand. It was meant to be comforting, but it felt as though she'd just pulled open a trapdoor and I'd fallen through it. Until she'd said that, I'd at least felt entitled to my grief. Now I didn't know what to feel. Did other people have miscarriages like this – and just bounce back as though it were nothing? Was I, in fact, not meant to feel as heartbroken as I did?

I was completely unprepared for the depth of grief that can follow losing a pregnancy. The weekend of that first miscarriage, Dan and I went out for dinner, in a vague attempt to distract ourselves from the empty year that now lay before us, when just days before we'd assumed it would be filled up by new parenthood. But as I took my first sip of the wine I'd ordered, I knew it had been a mistake to go out. I fought back tears, thinking about how I was 'allowed' to drink alcohol again. I wanted to scream at the people at the next table: 'I shouldn't be doing this – I should still be pregnant!'

In the weeks after, I felt alternately numb and furious. Sometimes I would feel determined to get on with things, focused only on getting pregnant again. Sometimes I would wake up and have forgotten what had happened, believing that I was, in fact, still pregnant. Often, it was as if all of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's



famous five stages of grief were all clamouring for my attention at once.

I also had nightmares. I'd wake, soaked in sweat, after dreaming I'd found a doll or a baby under my bed or tucked away inside a drawer. Sometimes, in my sleep, I'd be walking down the street only to remember I'd given birth to a baby – a baby I'd left at home, alone. I didn't tell anyone about this, not even my husband at first. It felt too dramatic. Too weird. Though I now know it's not so unusual – and, in some cases, can be a response to trauma.

In 2020, the largest ever study into the psychological impact of first-trimester pregnancy loss found one in five women who'd had a miscarriage or an ectopic pregnancy met the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Women in the study experienced enduring intrusive thoughts about their miscarriage, as well as nightmares or flashbacks. Moderate to severe anxiety and depression were also commonplace.

'For many women,' says Professor Tom Bourne, lead author of the research from Tommy's National Centre for Miscarriage Research at Imperial College London, miscarriage 'will be the most traumatic event in their life.' And yet, even now, most people who go through it are left to process their emotions alone.

Something else I could never have known was just how much miscarriage alters the internal landscape of subsequent pregnancies, too. After our first miscarriage, I went on to lose three more pregnancies, in the space of two years. With each loss, I feared a little more and hoped a little less. By the time I became pregnant for a fifth time, I realised that, despite the two pink lines, I no longer expected a baby – just another miscarriage.

Even as the weeks slowly ticked by without incident, taking me beyond the first trimester for the first time, I still found it hard to relax. To acknowledge the pregnancy any more than was strictly necessary

"I realised that, despite the two pink lines, I no longer expected a baby – just another miscarriage"

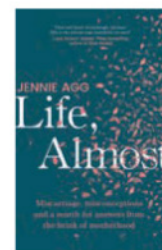
felt like a jinx. I didn't tell anyone other than my very close family until I was nearly 20 weeks pregnant. We didn't buy anything for the baby until 24 weeks. Once I was visibly pregnant, I got used to smiling politely and answering 'not yet' when people asked if I'd booked NCT classes or chosen a pram.

Something I'm still learning is that the pain of miscarriage is not erased by the arrival of another baby. True, I no longer live with the uncertainty of whether I will ever carry a pregnancy to term or get to mother a child. That

immense weight has been lifted with the arrival of my son, who brings us so much joy. I cannot imagine wanting any other version of my life but this one with him in it. And yet, sometimes, when I see a child the age we might have had now had that first pregnancy continued, I feel a kind of longing: almost like homesickness, but for a place I have never really been.

Often, when something wonderful follows something dark and difficult, people like to tell you that this is proof that 'everything happens for a reason'. But I don't like this any more than when they'd try to comfort me after a miscarriage by saying 'it wasn't meant to be'. It's too neat. Miscarriage is a profound and complicated experience – more than most people know. It's time we recognised this.

Life, Almost: Miscarriage, Misconceptions And A Search For Answers From The Brink Of Motherhood by Jennie Agg (Torva, £16.99) is out now



Body



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



***What obstacles are you facing in
improving your physical health?
How can you overcome them?***

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK



MINDFUL WELLNESS



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

Eat well

FEAST YOUR WAY TO HEALTHY SKIN

Dr Thivi Maruthappu, the UK's first and only dual-qualified dermatologist and nutritionist, shares her top five tips:

1 Nutrition is the first step in your skincare routine. A balanced diet is where it all starts, because your skin needs a variety of vitamins and minerals for health, as well as the macronutrients carbohydrates, protein and healthy fats.

2 Focus on eating the rainbow. It may sound like a cliché, but there's science behind it. Colourful fruits and vegetables are full of anthocyanin antioxidants that help counteract the free-radical damage that can lead to premature skin ageing.

3 Nourish your gut. That means trying to include fibre-rich foods to feed those all-important gut bacteria, but also probiotic foods such as kefir, kimchi and sauerkraut, for example. Try and include these in your diet at least once a day.

4 Don't forget healthy fats such as omega-3 fatty acids. Our skin needs good fats to remain supple and smooth. When we don't eat enough of these, our skin and hair can become dry and lacklustre. The best sources of bioavailable omega-3 fatty acids are oily fish, such as salmon and mackerel. If you are vegan or vegetarian, you can obtain some types of omega-3 from walnuts and flaxseed, but it's worth considering a supplement in addition.

5 Enjoy your food. I truly believe that food is one of life's pleasures – I love to cook! You don't need to follow restrictive diets for healthy skin (unless you have a confirmed allergy or intolerance, of course). You can (and should!) have the foods you love, too.
instagram.com/drthivimaru



Vitamin D for dementia

Spring may finally have sprung, but we still don't get enough vitamin D from sunshine here in the UK at this time of year.

Vitamin D is important for a whole host of health reasons, but new research indicates how it can help ward off dementia, too. In the study, published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: Diagnosis, Assessment & Disease Monitoring*, the team found that taking vitamin D was associated with living dementia-free for longer.

Wild Nutrition Food-Grown® Vitamin D, from £12.40 a month, wildnutrition.com



Hake and soft tomatoes

Serves 1

For the tomatoes:

- Olive oil, for frying
- 290g plum tomatoes, quartered
- ½ tsp flaky salt, plus extra to season and finish
- 1 garlic clove, finely sliced
- A splash of red wine vinegar

For the fish:

- A chunky hake steak, skin on
- 35g butter
- 1 garlic clove, finely sliced
- ½ small red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
- A pinch of smoked paprika
- Thick slices of good-quality bread
- Flaky salt, to season
- A few sprigs of flat-leaf parsley, roughly torn
- A few big basil leaves
- A lemon wedge, to serve (optional)

1 Heat a good glug of olive oil in a small frying pan or casserole pan with

a lid over a very low heat. If you can, pick a pan that is going to be able to fit the tomato wedges in a single, snug layer over the bottom. Arrange the tomato quarters in concentric circles. Sprinkle over the salt and garlic. Put the lid on and leave the tomatoes to cook for 30 minutes – don't move the pan too much, just leave the tomatoes to cook slowly, until they release lots of sweet juices and slump a little. Shake over a little vinegar (don't stir the tomatoes when you do), smush the tomatoes a little with the back of a spoon, put the lid back on and cook for another 5 minutes, so the tomatoes return to a simmer. **2** Meanwhile, sprinkle the hake with salt. Set a small frying pan over a medium heat. Add a splash of olive oil and, when hot, fry the fish, skin side down for 3 minutes so the skin crisps up and the flesh starts to cook. Then, remove the pan from the heat and transfer the fish to the tomatoes, lowering it into the pan so the skin stays above the liquid and the flesh

can continue cooking in the simmering juices. Cook for 3 minutes, until the fish is cooked through.

3 Meanwhile, melt the butter in a small saucepan with the sliced garlic, the chopped chilli and the paprika, plus a pinch of salt. Let it foam up and cook for a minute, swirling the pan as it does. Set the flavoured butter aside in the pan.

4 Toast the bread (either in a toaster or in a griddle pan if you want more of a char), then drizzle it with oil and sprinkle it with flaky salt.

5 Finish the tomatoes and fish with the chilli butter and herbs. Serve with a wedge of lemon, if you wish.



Extracted from
**The Art Of Friday
Night Dinner by
Eleanor Steafel**
(Bloomsbury, £26)

Sleep well



Cold comfort

New research indicates that getting the right amount of sleep each night isn't just key for feeling your finest the following day, but could also help fight off colds. New research published in the journal *Frontiers In Psychiatry* found that both too much and too little sleep can increase the chance of infection and the need for antibiotics. The ideal amount? You've guessed it: somewhere between seven and eight hours.



BRIGHT IDEA

This essential oil candle uses a carefully selected blend of geranium, cedar wood, eucalyptus and lavender to help you feel calm and prepped for sleep.

Sleep and the menstrual cycle

Women's health expert **Thalia Pellegrini** talks us through each stage...



Levels of oestrogen and progesterone are at their lowest in menstruation and the follicular phases – and so is your energy. Sleep may be worse as body temperature increases and symptoms such as cramps disturb slumber. Post-bleed, oestrogen will rise sharply until ovulation. Progesterone levels stay low and start to rise gently as ovulation approaches – this is when women may feel most energised.

Oestrogen peaks and then drops dramatically during the ovulation phase. Energy levels around this time, before the oestrogen drop, tend to be better than in the luteal phase. From pre-ovulation (follicular phase) to post-ovulatory (luteal phase), when progesterone is higher, our core temperature goes up. This may impact sleep, as can menstrual headaches, which often hit around ovulation or mid-cycle.

In the luteal phase, progesterone rises and peaks before dropping in the approach to menstruation. Progesterone stimulates your brain

to produce a neurotransmitter called gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), which can help you sleep better. As menstruation approaches, however (three to six days before the bleed), sleep disturbances can occur due to changes in the body's temperature. PMS sufferers are also more likely to notice sleep worsening at this time.

While sleep disturbance can be a part of each stage of the menstrual cycle, the good news is there's plenty that can help: try increasing your intake of magnesium, nature's chill-out mineral. Opt for dark green leafy veg such as spinach and kale, dark chocolate, pumpkin and chia seeds, and nuts such as almonds.

Sugar cravings can be worse before a period, but balancing blood sugar can help support sleep (and mood!), so enjoy a nourishing evening meal. Combine protein with some complex carbohydrate and a little healthy fat. In combination, these macronutrients will support steady blood sugar levels to aid sleep.

thaliapellegrini.com

Bit of a stretch

PERFECTLY IMPERFECT

Hollywood child actress Rachel Hurd-Wood swapped the red carpet for a yoga mat in her new life as a Pilates teacher and mum of two



One of the best lessons I've ever learned is this: perfectionism is overrated. As someone who used not to try

anything unless I could ace it, I've missed out on many experiences and denied myself the pleasure of developing new skills. Like pottery, or bread-making, or larceny.

Finding out you're actually useless at something (or, worse, mediocre) can be uncomfortable. It can uncomfortably challenge our view of ourselves. But in recent years, I've found a perverse pleasure in exactly that. It's freeing, and builds resilience.

For example, since quitting alcohol, I dread occasions that call for dancing. Whether it's a glitzy wedding reception or yet another five-year-old's *Frozen*-themed do, it gives me fear-induced rigor mortis. This is semi-logical – I have the grace and rhythm of a wet scarecrow – but also wildly egoic. It's running with the assumption that anyone actually cares, when most people are busy enjoying themselves or consumed with their own inner world.

To try and overcome this, I recently attended an adult beginners' ballet class. Just me and a bunch of old dears staggering around a village hall, no one to impress. The warm-up exercises were no bother, but when it

was time to leap and twirl with any kind of co-ordination, I was bottom of the class. But it didn't matter; there were zero stakes. Unlike years ago, during an audition where my agent had convinced the casting director I was suitable for a role that required *Step Up*-level choreo: I was asked to 'show off some of my moves' and the result was bleak. I didn't get the job.

Anyway, sometimes it's great to be at the very beginning. I often work with newbie Pilates clients who fear exercise on the basis that they'll be judged for 'not being good enough'. I remind them that I'm just happy they're ready to move their body, and that everyone has to start somewhere.

I AM A

RECOVERING

PERFECTIONIST

ON TOP OF THE WORLD!

Sally Saunders enjoys a trip to the Bavarian Alps, where she strays from the beaten path for once – and finds herself up a mountain with a pushchair!





Mountains have always entranced me – *in pictures*. I love an inspiring photo of a gorgeous scene as much as the next woman but, to me, they've always been something you admire from a distance – and are best kept that way. Never in a million years did I think I could actually make it to the top of one.

I have always taken a similar attitude to walking holidays: nice for other people, but definitely not for me. Give me a beach and a book and you have one happy camper!

This is perhaps influenced by my family. I have two adventurous boys, aged 11 and 13, but also a daughter, aged just two, for whom pottering about on a beach is the ideal holiday and anything more than a toddle can be a stretch. So we have a tendency to stick to the beaten path.

But if the past few years have taught me anything, it's to seize the day and make the most of opportunities that arise, so when my family and I were invited to explore the Bavarian Alps, we decided, why not?

The area is perhaps best known as a winter skiing destination, but the rest of the year it is a walker's paradise. Our destination was the historic but little-known town of Schliersee, nestled in the foothills of the mountains, on the banks of a lake of the same name ('see' is the German word for lake). It's the kind of place that is described in the brochures as a 'chocolate-box' town, but 'cuckoo clock' would be more appropriate – with a few modern exceptions, most of the buildings are either historic, decorative timber-framed affairs, or, even more perfect, beautiful Alpine chalets. Our hotel, Karma Bavaria, was built in this style, like a huge ski lodge, clad in timber, with large windows that flood the rooms with light, and gently sloping roofs, fitting beautifully into the surroundings. It was the perfect base for our break.

This area of the Alps is crisscrossed with paths for walkers, that allow you to be as adventurous or as relaxed as you wish. Our first expedition, on a bright, clear, morning, took us through the historic centre of town to the banks of the lake. As the sun glistened

on the waters and the mountains surrounded us on all sides, holding the small town safely, I felt my shoulders begin to unhunch and my breathing begin to slow. It was the same reaction I have on the beach; that calming sensation of being in the right place, at the right time. But here there was also an added dimension – the mountains, the trees, all gave my busy mind more to look at and focus on, which seemed to engage and relax it even further. My crowded thoughts drifted away as I gazed across at the light dancing on the lake, and studied the reflections of the towering mountains in the water.

There is a great park within yards of the lake that kept the boys occupied, while my daughter played with Daddy on the swings and slide. I managed a little time alone, just breathing, and gazing up at the incredible surroundings. We spent hours there, relaxing in the sun, soaking up the atmosphere, filling our tummies with sweet biscuits and pastries. It was a beautiful day, and set us up perfectly for our next – seeking a little more adventure.

As a family, we're not natural hikers, but we have a country park near our home, with a lake we often walk around, so circumnavigating Schliersee lake seemed a reasonable place to start. Depending on who you ask, it's generally considered to be about a six-mile walk, so with our daughter in the pushchair, we set off through the town. Soon, we broke free of the buildings and could walk with the water's edge a few yards to our right and the mountains rearing up on our left. I loved the fact that so many of the stereotypes of this area rang true – the prettily decorated wooden chalets, the cattle wearing cowbells round their necks that roamed the lower slopes of the hills. It was like something out of the *The Sound of Music*. And the mountains. Oh, the mountains. I at once wanted to run down them, like Maria, but also just to sit and look at them. I still wasn't ready to go up one, but in just a few short days we felt our strides lengthen and our breathing deepen. I was beginning to feel more joy with every step.





Soon, it was time to look a little further afield. Part of the attraction of this destination is that there is so much to do easily on foot or by public transport, but there was one thing that made us get the car out. One of the most photographed buildings in the world, Neuschwanstein Castle, also known as ‘King Ludwig’s fairytale castle’, is less than two hours away. We used our new walking abilities to hike up to the castle, which is perched on a cliff edge, and simply absorbed the glorious sights. One of the best viewpoints is from a small footbridge across a gorge, from which you can see the castle with a backdrop of yet more beautiful scenery. It truly is a sight to behold, and I felt my pride grow. I’m not a natural adventurer and the sightseeing I’ve done in my life has been very limited, so to make it to this spectacular destination, which so

many people ogle on Instagram, felt like an achievement.

We took further walks to the nearby waterfall, and I tried a little naked sunbathing (popular with the locals) on the top of the nearby wellness centre (conclusion: not for me).

Our confidence was growing every day, but time was starting to run out. We’d come to the mountains, were we actually going to get up one? And how on earth can you climb mountains with a toddler in tow? We were having an amazing time as a family, but having kids can restrict what you do, wherever and whenever you are. It was time for a bit of lateral thinking if I really wanted to scale the heights.

Fortunately, this area boasts multiple cable cars to give you a bit of a leg up, and we decided that the ends justified the means. Nearby Taubenstein was the perfect destination. It’s no Everest,

but at 1692 metres tall is a proper mountain (Ben Nevis, the tallest mountain in the UK, is 1345m, for comparison), and has a useful cable car station at Spitzingsee, just four miles by bus from Schliersee. We went for it.

Getting cosy, the five of us crammed into one of the tiny, rickety cars, while the buggy came up alone in the next one. Swaying in the wind, high above the stony ground below, there were times it felt a bit hairy, but 15 minutes later we arrived at Taubensteinhaus, the mountain station set about 1600 metres up. The views from this height are incredible. Instead of looking up from being nestled between them, we were suddenly able to see the mountains as a range, stretching off in all directions. Here the real work began.

The ascent was well signed, so, perhaps a little ambitiously, we set out with boys, toddler and the pushchair



EXPERIENCE IT FOR YOURSELF

Sally Saunders and family stayed at Karma Bavaria in Schliersee, a four-star hotel and health resort that features a spa, sauna and swimming pool, an excellent restaurant and bar, and beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. Highlights include the spectacular buffet breakfast and family-friendly facilities, including indoor bowling. It is within easy reach of both Munich and Salzburg. Prices from €195 per night for a classic double room, including breakfast. karmagroup.com



up the zigzag path through the trees. We made it halfway before the pushchair was abandoned, to be recovered on the way back (1650 metres isn't a bad height for a buggy!). We continued, pushing onwards through the pines, until again our breath was taken away as we came out into the sun. We could see mountains for miles upon miles, but were in a grassy, heathery patch between two peaks, still about 25 metres below our destination, which could only be reached by some real hiking. Our little girl enjoyed playing in the grass with Daddy while the boys

and I set off for the peak. It was a scramble. I was breathless, dirty, a little scared at points, and it took much longer than I expected. But, eventually, we made it. I'd never seen such a view. The sense of exhilaration was huge. It didn't matter how we got there, what mattered was that we did. We might not have taken the traditional route, but we were definitely well off the beaten path. My self-confidence was as high as I was.

I'd never considered myself a walker, or a mountain person before. But I do now. And next time I want to go up one, I might even skip the cable car!

"It didn't matter how we got there, what mattered was that we did"

Mountain mood boost

Discover how heading for the great outdoors for a hike can improve how you feel in your mind as well as your body

When you engage in high-intensity walking, as you might with hiking, your body releases endorphins and serotonin – feelgood hormones – which give you a natural energy boost and trigger positive feelings in the body,’ says Dr Elena Touroni, a consultant psychologist and co-founder of The Chelsea Psychology Clinic. ‘Your body also becomes better at managing cortisol levels, helping reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety.

‘Hiking increases your exposure to sunlight and so raises your levels of vitamin D – reducing your likelihood of suffering from seasonal depression,’ adds Carla Khouri, a qualified mountain leader, outdoor instructor, and UK community lead at Merrell Hiking Club, a community that was set up to empower, inform and inspire female hikers.

‘When your body is mentally and physically tired, you are more likely to get a better night’s sleep,’ says Khouri. ‘Anxiety can hit you at any time during the day, but is often more prevalent

at night, so if you are feeling more relaxed and happier due to having been outside, you are more likely to be able to drift off and stay there.

‘Hiking is a great way to meet new people, too,’ adds Khouri. ‘There are plenty of communities on different social media platforms; for example, find Merrell Hiking Club on Facebook. This is especially great if you work from home and don’t have as much social interaction on a daily basis as you might like. It’s also a great way to spend quality time with people, as you may find that you have deeper and more meaningful conversations as you walk.

‘And it’s great for confidence, making you feel more accomplished and grounded as you discover more about yourself,’ adds Khouri.

‘Research shows that just one short, daily exposure to nature provides a natural boost to our mental wellbeing for up to seven hours,’ says Dr Touroni. ‘So exercising outside really is one of the very best ways of nourishing both mind *and* body.’



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SIX OF THE BEST

Our favourite springtime women's walking gear

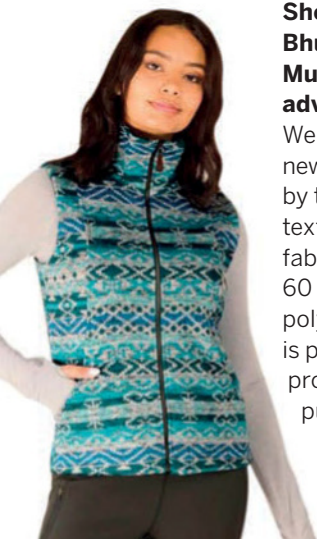
Culthread Penzance Long Sleeveless Puffer Jacket, £259, culthread.com

A fantastic piece for when the weather is changeable (or you're destined for higher altitudes, where temperatures can dip). A combination of a puffer jacket and gilet, the outer, lining and insulation are all 100 per cent recycled. It's 100 per cent vegan, too.



Sherpa Adventure Gear Bhutan Vest Verdigris Multi, £90, sherpaadventuregear.com

We love this mix of old and new – the pattern is inspired by the traditional woven textiles of Nepal, but the fabric is created from 60 per cent recycled polyester. This company is passionate about ethical production, and with every purchase a donation is made to fund a child in Nepal to spend a day in school.



ACAI Outdoorwear The Aventurite Stretch Skinny Outdoor Trousers, £89, acaioutdoorwear.com

Just because you're outdoors doesn't mean you have to give up looking stylish. If you enjoy a skinny jean, you'll be a fan of these snug-fitting but comfortable – and highly durable – pair. They're made from recycled fabric and vegan leather, and have an eco-friendly waterproof coating you can rely on.



KEEN Terradora Flex Waterproof Boot, £139.99, keenfootwear.de

'These were the boots I wore on holiday. They kept my feet warm and dry during the occasional downpour, and I didn't get a single sore spot or blister. They're designed with sustainability in mind, created without using toxic glues or chemicals, so they're better for you and the planet. Plus, they are designed for women, with a slimmer profile and softer colours, so I looked good at the same time. Love them!'

*Sally Saunders,
Editor-in-Chief*

Fjällräven Abisko Trekking Tights Pro W, £150, fjallraven.com

Unlike so much walking gear, these tights were created for and by women. They're the brainchild of an all-women R&D team, and tested by female trekkers to ensure great fit and performance. They are made from 100 per cent recycled polyester, in a durable yet stretchy fabric that flatters your shape. They feature a zipped pocket, plus reinforced patches on the knees and bum for extra protection.



BAM Bamboo Clothing Summit Kelso Quarter-Zip Knit, £85, bambooclothing.co.uk

We love walking gear that doesn't look like walking gear! This is made from a bamboo Merino wool blend that's warm but breathable. The bamboo is odour-resistant and moisture-absorbing, plus it has a lower carbon footprint than conventional fabrics.

WORDS: SALLY SAUNDERS

BRAIN-BODY BOOST

Iron

Discover the mineral you can't live without, and why it's hailed a cognitive hero

Spring out of bed, tackle complex tasks with ease, and keep brain fog at bay, with the energising and clarifying effects of iron.

Iron is essential in so many bodily processes, most notably haemoglobin and myoglobin production, which are crucial in the transportation of oxygen to our muscles and organs. With so much to gain from iron physically *and* mentally, we spoke with Dr Carrie Ruxton from the Health & Food Supplements Information Service (hsis.org) to find out more about this miracle mineral...

Secret support

'Perhaps one of iron's lesser-known talents is its ability to support our cognitive function,' says Dr Ruxton. 'Studies show that, as well as giving us a physical boost, optimum iron levels improve our attention span, keep our emotions stable, and can even dictate how impulsive we are – with low levels linked to more erratic behaviours.'

'It's believed this is due to the role iron plays in nurturing our hippocampus – the part of the brain responsible for learning, memory and emotions.'

'One particular study, which looked at iron levels in women, found that those with sufficient iron levels performed better in cognitive tasks than women with iron deficiency anaemia. They also discovered that, after four months of supplementation with iron, cognitive

performance in the group improved significantly, proving the power of iron.'

Max out motivation

'Iron is also thought to play a vital role in our memory function and motivation,' says Dr Ruxton. 'This is because iron helps in the production of the neurotransmitter dopamine. Dopamine is vital for a variety of things, including memory function, pleasure and reward, and also motivation.' So, the next time you're feeling lacklustre, consider whether your iron levels could be off kilter.

Your natural source

'Women and girls are most at risk of iron deficiency,' explains Dr Ruxton. 'This is due to a variety of factors, including menstruation and diet. But, luckily, there are a number of ways we can stay on top.' There are two types of iron in the diet – haem iron, which comes from animal-based foods, and non-haem iron, which comes from plants.

Examples of iron-rich foods include:

- Spinach
 - Lentils
 - Red meat
 - Eggs
 - Nuts and seeds
 - Fortified cereals, bread and pasta
- 'It's a good idea to make sure you're getting a wide variety of iron-rich foods – both types if you can,' says Dr Ruxton.

Did you know?

Iron is best absorbed when eaten with vitamin C-rich foods, so opt for berries, oranges or fruit juices alongside your iron intake, to boost its bioavailability.

'Taking a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement is one of the simplest ways to top up the iron in your diet,' explains Dr Ruxton. 'Yet, only six in ten women take a supplement, according to a recent survey from HSI.' From tablets and capsules to liquids, there are plenty of ways to supplement your iron levels this spring...

BlueIron Liquid Iron Supplement (£16,

boots.com) is easy to take and gentle on the stomach.

Boots Multivitamins + Iron (£3.50 for 90 tablets, boots.com) help to tackle tiredness and fatigue.

Spatone Daily Iron Shots (£13.49, hollandandbarrett.com) contain 100 per cent natural iron-rich water – perfect mixed with your favourite fruit juice.

PLANT AND PROSPER!

Whether you're making the switch to a vegan diet for ethical, environmental or health reasons, full time or just a few days a week, tantalise the tastebuds and keep things fresh with interesting, appetising dishes from Annie Rigg's *Eat More Vegan*

Teriyaki aubergine and king oyster mushrooms with sesame rice

For this recipe you will need to make teriyaki sauce, which takes a matter of moments – you can use shop-bought, but homemade is best and probably less sugared than most commercially produced sauces. 'Teriyaki' refers to the cooking method and roughly translates as 'glazed and grilled'. The side of pickled ginger is entirely optional and the kimchi is far from in keeping with the Japanese theme – but either works well to cut through the salty, slightly sweet teriyaki sauce.

Serves: 2

- 1 large aubergine
- 2 king oyster mushrooms
- 180g sushi rice
- 150g purple sprouting or tenderstem broccoli
- 2 tsp toasted sesame seeds, plus extra to serve
- 2 tsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 spring onion, finely sliced
- 1 tbsp pickled ginger or kimchi (optional)

For the teriyaki sauce:

- 5 tbsp soy sauce
- 4 tbsp mirin
- 2 tbsp sake
- 1 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp soft brown or golden caster sugar
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tsp grated fresh ginger

1 Start by making the teriyaki sauce. Combine all the ingredients in a small pan and bring to the boil over a low–medium heat. Simmer for 1 minute and then remove from the heat and leave to cool slightly.

2 Cut the aubergine and king oyster mushrooms into 1cm-thick slices and arrange in a single layer on a tray. Spoon over half the teriyaki sauce, turn to coat the veggies in the sauce and set aside to marinate for 30 minutes, turning the veggies again halfway through.

3 Meanwhile, wash the sushi rice and soak in cold water for 30 minutes. Drain the rice, tip

into a small saucepan and cover with about 300ml cold water and add a pinch of salt. Bring to the boil, half-cover the pan with a lid and simmer for about 10 minutes or until almost all the water has evaporated. Remove from the heat, cover the pan and set aside to steam the rice while you cook the veggies.

4 Heat a griddle pan over a medium–high heat. Add the marinated aubergine and mushroom slices, brush with the remaining teriyaki sauce and cook, turning frequently, until tender and nicely browned.

5 In a separate pan steam the broccoli until tender. Stir the toasted sesame seeds and sesame oil into the rice and divide between two bowls. Top with the teriyaki aubergine and mushrooms, scatter with more sesame seeds and sliced spring onions, and serve with the steamed broccoli and a side of pickled ginger or kimchi, if you like.





Jackfruit bao buns

Who doesn't love soft, slightly chewy, pillowy bao buns? Filled with sticky, soy-glazed jackfruit and crisp vegetables, these are real crowd-pleasers. Canned jackfruit is now readily available in most large supermarkets and, like tofu, it is particularly delicious stir-fried.

Makes 8

For the bao buns:

- 250g plain flour
- 2 tsp caster sugar
- 1 tsp easy-blend dried yeast
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 50ml plant milk
- 75ml water
- 1 tbsp rice vinegar
- 2 tsp sesame oil, plus extra for brushing
- 2 tsp black sesame seeds

For the filling:

- 2 x 400g cans of jackfruit
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 4cm piece fresh ginger, finely chopped
- 1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

- 6 spring onions (4 thinly sliced)
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tbsp hoisin sauce
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1½ tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp Chinese five-spice
- 1 carrot
- ¼ cucumber
- ½ red pepper
- Leaves from a small bunch of coriander, to serve

1 Combine the flour, sugar, yeast, salt and baking powder in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Heat the milk and water to lukewarm, add the rice vinegar and sesame oil and tip into the dry ingredients. Mix on low speed until incorporated and then continue kneading for about 4 minutes until the dough is silky smooth. Shape the dough into a ball, return to the bowl, cover and leave at room temperature for about 1 hour or until doubled in size.

2 Cut two circles of baking parchment the same diameter as the inside of your steamer baskets. Fold each paper disc in half, and then in half again to make a triangle, then fold this triangle in half again. Snip small

sections out of each folded edge so that when you open the paper it is dotted with small holes. Lay a disc in the bottom of each steamer basket. **3** Weigh the bao dough and divide it into 8 even portions. Shape each portion into a neat ball with the seam on the underside. Working one at a time, roll each dough ball into an oval shape – roughly the size of your hand and 5mm thick. Brush with sesame oil and fold in half. Brush the top with sesame oil and sprinkle with black sesame seeds. Place the buns in the steamer to prove, leaving space between each bun and the edge of the steamer. Stack the steamer baskets together, cover with the lid and leave for about 1 hour at room temperature until the buns have nearly doubled in size.

4 Meanwhile, prepare the filling. Drain the jackfruit and squeeze out any excess water. Heat the sunflower oil in a large frying pan or wok, add the jackfruit and fry over a medium heat for about 10 minutes until golden brown, breaking up the pieces slightly with a wooden spoon.

5 Add the garlic, ginger, chilli and 4 sliced spring onions to the pan and continue frying for another minute. In a small bowl combine the soy and hoisin sauces, maple syrup, rice vinegar and Chinese five-spice with 4 tbsp water. Pour into the pan, mix to combine, reduce the heat slightly and continue to cook for a further 3 minutes or so until the jackfruit is caramelised and coated in sticky sauce. Remove from the heat while you prepare the remaining filling ingredients.

6 Using a julienne grater, cut the carrot and cucumber into fine strips. Finely slice the red pepper and remaining 2 spring onions. Cover and chill until ready to assemble the bao buns.

7 Fill a large frying pan or wok with water to a depth of about 5cm and bring to the boil over a medium heat. Place the stacked steamer over the water and cook the bao buns for 10–12 minutes until the surface of the buns is firm, the middles puffy and they have doubled in size.

8 Divide the jackfruit filling and shredded veg between the buns, scatter with coriander and serve.





Rice, lentils and root veg with chermoula dressing

Don't be put off by the long list of ingredients here: many of them are storecupboard items. Pomegranate seeds are used to lend a note of tart sweetness to the rice but replace them with a tablespoon of sour barberries or dried cranberries, if you prefer.

Serves: 6

- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 4–5 tbsp olive oil
- A good pinch of saffron stamens
- 100g Puy lentils
- 5 medium parsnips, peeled and quartered lengthways
- 5 carrots, peeled and quartered lengthways
- 5 medium beetroots, trimmed and quartered (no need to peel)
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp Aleppo chilli flakes
- ½ tsp garlic granules
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 300g brown basmati rice, rinsed
- 200g cooked chickpeas, rinsed
- 500ml vegetable stock

- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 tbsp tahini
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- Seeds of ½ pomegranate
- Small bunch of coriander, leaves only
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the chermoula dressing:

- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- ½ tsp coriander seeds
- 1 fat garlic clove, roughly chopped
- 1 mild green chilli, sliced
- 2 spring onions, trimmed and sliced
- 25g flat-leaf parsley, leaves and stalks, very roughly chopped
- 25g coriander, leaves and stalks, very roughly chopped
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ½ tsp ground sumac
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- 6 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

1 Start by cooking the rice. Tip the onions into a heavy, lidded saucepan, add 2 tbsp olive oil and cook slowly over a low–medium heat for about 30 minutes, stirring frequently, until very soft and starting to caramelize at the

edges. Soak the saffron in 2 tbsp freshly boiled water in a small bowl. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C/gas mark 6 and line one large or two small baking trays with baking paper. **2** Meanwhile, rinse the lentils and cook in a pan of boiling water for about 20 minutes until just tender but still with a little 'bite'. Drain and set aside. **3** Combine the prepared root veg in a large bowl. Lightly crush the cumin seeds, coriander seeds and Aleppo chilli flakes using a pestle and mortar. Add to the veggies with the garlic granules and 2–3 tbsp olive oil. Season well with salt and freshly ground black pepper and mix well to thoroughly coat the vegetables in spices.

4 Arrange in a single layer on the lined baking tray(s) and roast for about 45 minutes, turning halfway through, until tender and browning at the edges.

5 Meanwhile, add the crushed garlic to the onions and cook for a further minute. Add the rice to the pan, along with the drained lentils and chickpeas. Pour the veg stock and saffron, with its soaking water, into the pan, add the bay leaf and cinnamon stick and season well with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Bring to the boil, cover with a lid and reduce the heat to its lowest setting. Cook for about 30 minutes until the rice is tender and the stock has been absorbed. Remove from the heat and leave covered until ready to serve.

6 To prepare the chermoula dressing, toast the cumin and coriander seeds in a dry frying pan over a medium heat for 1 minute until starting to brown and smell aromatic. Tip into a small food processor, along with all the remaining ingredients. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper and whizz until nearly smooth.

7 In a small bowl mix together the tahini and maple syrup, spoon over the roasted veggies, mix to coat and return to the oven for a further 5 minutes until golden and sticky.

8 Spoon the rice onto a platter, remove the bay leaf and cinnamon stick, and arrange the roasted veggies on top. Scatter with pomegranate seeds and coriander leaves and serve with the chermoula dressing for drizzling.

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***When did
you last plan
something
wonderful for
yourself?
Can you plan
something to
look forward
to right now?***



Picture this

Go with the flow

Learn to stop chasing perfection and let the unpredictability of the present reveal its unexpected beauty, writes Anita Chaudhuri

“Recently, one of my favourite creativity gurus, Keith Johnstone,

passed away. I first encountered his work as a young drama student, when his pioneering guide to improvisation, *Impro* (Bloomsbury, £18.99), was a set text. I loved his philosophy that the key to making anything new was to respond positively to whatever presented itself to you in the moment.

As he put it: ‘There are people who prefer to say “yes” and there are people who prefer to say “no”. Those who say “yes” are rewarded by the adventures they have. Those who say “no” are rewarded by the safety they attain.’ I have always appreciated this wisdom because it’s not saying one approach is right and the other is wrong, but rather that each has its upside, and we can choose a different approach at any time.

If you are someone who likes to plan, embracing the unknown can feel daunting. Photography offers a gateway to practise responding to life in the moment. An ability to go with the flow is an essential skill for taking interesting photos. You will know this only too well if you’ve ever hiked up a hill to capture that Instagram-worthy sunset only to be met with dense cloud cover!

It is this unpredictability that makes photography (and life) so exciting. You’re never entirely sure what (or who) you might encounter. Nowadays, we are lucky to be able to see the images we’ve taken immediately, unlike the high-risk days of film where you didn’t know what on earth you’d captured until the Snappy Snaps envelope popped through the letterbox weeks later (mine usually had an error sticker on half of them).

I’m certainly not the first person to have noticed the link between image making and improvisation. Jazz photographer William James Clayton wrote that: ‘Jazz and photography have always come together for me. They are alike in their improvisation and their spontaneity.’

So how does this work in practice? One day, I was unsuccessfully trying to photograph a colourful umbrella installation at a shopping centre. More

“Photography offers a gateway to practise responding to life in the moment”

than 100 frames shot from afar, all of them dull. Frustrated, I took a few random close-ups where the whole frame was filled with umbrellas, with no context. These were surprisingly successful.

Another example: while on holiday in Paris, I had it in mind to create the ‘perfect’ Parisian photo. Not surprisingly, such pressure only created clichéd results. I was stomping round a park and suddenly a woman in a beautiful lilac coat walked by. Not really knowing why, I followed her until she sat down surrounded by dappled light. It ended up being one of my favourite photos.

So dare to experiment. It costs nothing, and from my own experience, it is likely to lead to you saying ‘yes’ in other areas of your life as well.



TRY THIS:

1 In her wonderful book *The Mindful Photographer* (Thames & Hudson, £14.99), Sophie Howarth suggests the following exercise: go for a 20-minute walk and every minute, on the minute, photograph exactly what is in front of you.

2 If your smartphone or camera allows it, I like to amplify this experiment by changing the setting to black and white, vivid colour or sepia at regular intervals. Or you can play around during the editing process at home. As you get more confident, don't be afraid to try other experiments, for example, you could make images that are intentionally out of focus, or move the camera to create blur.

3 Journal about the experience. How resistant were you to making less-than-perfect pictures? Did your inner critic come out to play? What did you learn, if anything? Were you surprised by the results? Choose one favourite image to print, and display it prominently as your reminder to improvise.

Share your favourite images with us on Instagram with the hashtag #psychologiesgratitude and your post may get featured on @PsychologiesMagazine!

UNLEASH YOUR *creative spirit*

The first step to living creatively is getting to know yourself, writes Shereen Sun

Most of us are born into a world with lots of expectations for us. We are told how we are supposed to dress and what kind of careers to pursue. We are encouraged to follow the rules and do as we are told. I grew up being told that the only acceptable path is the one that is 'safe' and reliable: be heterosexual, pursue higher education, get married, pop out some kids, retire at 65, and then die. Yikes! While we all grew up in households with varying degrees of appreciation for the arts, the medicine

of honouring your creative spirit is one that will benefit you no matter where you are on your journey.

The first step to living your Creative Mission is giving yourself permission to break the rules. I've always considered myself a bit of a rebel. It was something I was shamed for when growing up, getting in lots of trouble for speaking out of turn and doing what I wanted, when I wanted. Eventually, I channelled that rebellious energy into a positive force in my life – a source of strength when I knew I needed to follow my heart, despite what everyone else was doing.





Intuitive creativity

Every single person on this earth who has realised their purpose, and fearlessly embodied it, has one thing in common: the willingness to go on an adventure. And not the kind that requires a plane ticket or a backpack full of *Lonely Planet* guides. This journey is a wild one, full of unexpected twists and not without risk. But it's also so worthwhile. Because when you choose a life of listening to your creative spirit and aligning with your true values, a life of purpose can't help but manifest.

Listen to your intuition and be guided by the voice of your higher self and spirit team. Your spirit team consists of healed ancestors, guardian angels, plant allies, animal spirits, ascended masters, and anyone else that's been walking with you on your journey. Your spirit team's role in your life is to help you live your Creative Mission, the reason why you came onto this planet. But, because you have free will, they can't help you unless you ask for it.

Practise listening to your intuition and taking action based on what you feel. What this means is that you might not know where you are headed or why your intuition is guiding you towards something. That's 100 per cent okay. What's important is that you get started; that you're willing to put your foot on the path and trust that you'll find your way. Keep saying yes to your truth, and your next steps will emerge and become clear to you. ➤

*"When you can own
the parts of
yourself that
are unique, you
will be unstoppable"*

We all have this Sacred Rebel energy inside of us. It's the part of you that's a trailblazer. A bridge from the old world into the new. You are the artist who is alchemising a new way of teaching, being, creating art, doing business, and building relationships. You tap into your Sacred Rebel energy when you are not afraid to trust your intuition and lead with your values to protect our planet and the people in it.

The old, outdated way of living was focused on money, capitalism, and endless exponential growth. All the power and resources were in the hands of a few people who weren't willing to reach down and help others up. Not anymore. We are shifting into a new paradigm where we are working collaboratively and generously to uplift each other. And there's absolutely no time to waste. But it's not always easy to carve your own path, and that's why we're here doing this together.

We find ourselves at a pressing juncture. Our planet is on the verge of breaking, our economic and political systems are decaying, and we are coming to terms with the history of violence that is Western civilisation. But I know it's us soul-driven dreamers who are going to help turn it around. However, we can't do that until we're able to stay true to ourselves no matter the circumstance.

When you can own the parts of yourself that are unique and different, you will be unstoppable. Your uniqueness and all of your quirks become your superpower. To find

your superpower, you first need to seek out or create environments in which you feel supported. And, then, you can start to have a heap of fun, unapologetically sharing your gifts with the world.

Try the journalling exercise (right) to help you understand where you are now. Once you can locate yourself presently, you will have a better sense of where you want to go, and grow moving forward. Your wildest, most abundant creative life is calling you. But before you can set your GPS towards it, you need to figure out what your starting point is...

HOW TO LIVE MORE CREATIVELY

- Ask questions
- Try new things
- Think outside of the box (and even outside the outside of the box!)
- Follow your desires
- Be brave
- Get curious



Radiant Wildheart:
A Guide To Awaken
Your Inner Artist
And Live Your
Creative Mission
by Shereen Sun
(Hay House, £13.99)

Journaling prompts

Describe how your life looks in each of the following areas. This exercise is meant to be neutral and objective. If there are things you want to transform in your life, that's completely normal, and that's why we are here. Be sure not to shame yourself. Just objectively describe the facts about your reality right now as you perceive it:

1 FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Are you as close as you'd like to be? Do you want to express more boundaries with any family members? Do you feel like you are 'out of the closet' with your family? Can you be your true self around them? Is there anything you want to express that you haven't yet?

2 **CAREER** Do you feel satisfied in your career? Is there anything in your career that you're longing to change? Do you make as much money as you want? Do you feel fulfilled by your life, whether it's through your work or outside of it? Do you find meaning in your work? Do you work in a healthy environment? What is your relationship to work, and does it feel supportive to you?

3 LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

What makes you feel loved? What do you love about yourself? Do you feel expressed in your relationship? Do you feel like you have a community with shared values? Describe your ideal partnership, if any.

Describe your ideal friendships. Describe your sexual orientation. Do you align with monogamy, polyamory, or both? Perhaps something else?

4 CREATIVITY

What creative mediums are you interested in trying? Do you think of yourself as creative? Why or why not? When and where do you feel the most inspired? What are you most passionate about? Which artists do you admire and why? What fears do you have around being seen expressing your creativity or artistry?

5 WELLNESS

When do you feel the most nourished? Do you have any personal practices that you aspire to do more regularly? Do you feel that you move your body enough? Do you stretch? What foods make your body feel alive? What foods bring you comfort? How do you tend to your mental health? Do you see a therapist, or do you want to? Do you engage in any other healing modalities, or do you want to? Do you have any spiritual practices that are important to you?



Retreat into May

This month, take a break from the digital world, relax with a mountain getaway, and enjoy the Japanese tradition of hanami



Bloom with a view

In Japan, taking in the tree blossom and admiring the floral clouds of pink and white is a well-established tradition, known as hanami. And we have plenty of blossoms to admire here in the UK, too. The National Trust is running its annual celebration by encouraging people to share their images online with the #BlossomWatch hashtag.

There are some beautiful National Trust properties where you can see cherry blossom, such as Dunham Massey in Cheshire, Hinton Ampner in Hampshire, and Mount Stewart in County Down. For more suggestions, visit nationaltrust.org.uk

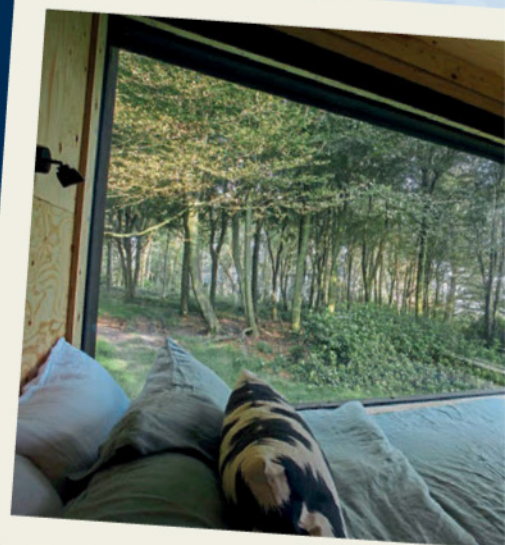


AIM HIGH

Enjoy some mountain mindfulness in beautiful Snowdonia. Llanberis Retreats is running its Mountain Rest Retreat from 19–21 May at a traditional cottage in Llanberis, Gwynedd, North Wales. The weekend includes yoga, meditation, forest bathing and sound baths, with the aim of helping guests restore and replenish. If you want to source your own place to stay, the retreat price is £245, including all sessions, evening meals, lunches and light refreshments, but there are also options to stay on site, with accommodation ranging from a bell tent to a double room. The bell tent option costs £295, based on four sharing. llanberisretreats.com

Check out

While in theory you can put your phone away at any time, now there's a more indulgent way to have a 'digital detox': Unplugged's off-grid cabins in countryside locations around London and Manchester help you to step off the scrolling treadmill. On arrival, you're asked to lock your digital devices in a lockbox for three days (you'll get an 'old school' mobile for emergency contact). Imagine waking up and looking out at a forest instead of reaching for your phone. Sounds nice, doesn't it? Prices start from £390 per cabin for three nights. **unplugged.rest**



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your energies into one area of your life can lead to things feeling off kilter.

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Sally x

Sally Saunders, Editor-in-Chief

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Improve your
relationships



Look after
your body
and mind



Make your
soul sing!

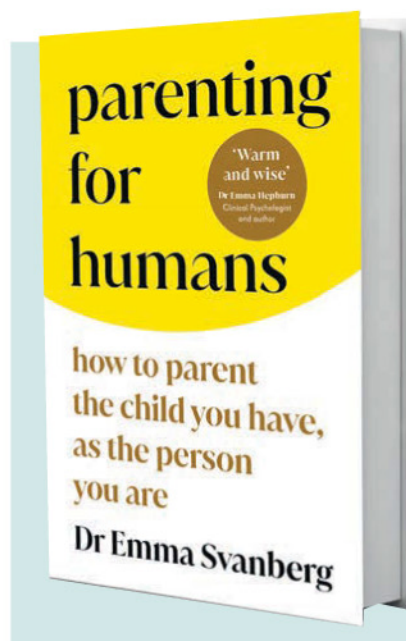


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The words

We're with CS Lewis, who said, 'You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me.' Alex Lloyd provides the inspiration...



**Book
of the
month**

Parenting For Humans by Dr Emma Svanberg

(Ebury, £16.99)

When it comes to raising children, expectations and reality are often poles apart. But as Dr Emma Svanberg – aka the Mumologist – sets out to highlight, this doesn't mean you are failing.

The clinical psychologist has created a therapy session in a book, rather than a parenting manual, which unpacks the life experiences that have shaped you and the way you interact with your offspring.

Each chapter includes questions to ponder, to help you get to know yourself better, before exploring how to tune into your child's unique personality. This is an empowering read that demonstrates there is no one 'right' way to raise a family.

Positively Green by Sarah LaBrecque (HarperCollins, £9.99)

Feeling hopeless about the environmental crisis? Take back control with the help of this practical guide, which embraces the concept of everyone making small changes to have a big impact cumulatively.

Eco-journalist Sarah LaBrecque covers everything from ethical banking and mobile phones to homemade cleaning products, with advice that feels doable even if you have a hectic home life. And every topic is backed by expert research, too.

Whether you adopt one or 20 tips, you'll be taking positive action – the best way to quell your anxiety about the future.

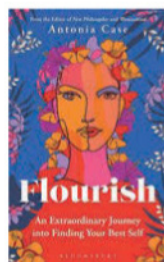


Flourish by Antonia Case (Bloomsbury, £16.99)

Racing along on the treadmill of life, Antonia Case found herself pondering: is this it? But instead of forcing the question to the back of her mind, she quit her corporate job and set off on a quest across continents to find the answer, along with her partner, Zan.

But this is no ordinary travel log. Case – the co-founder of magazine *New Philosopher* – weaves anecdotes of their time in Argentina, Ireland and Spain with exploration of the ideas of ancient thinkers and modern psychologists on how to find fulfilment.

At times intense, but always wise, the key message is that meaning comes from love, not riches.

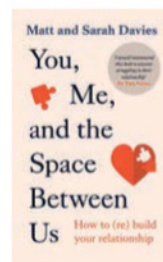


You, Me And The Space Between Us by Matt and Sarah Davies (Bonnie Books, £16.99)

Whether you're in the first throes of passion, or 30 years into your marriage, your communication and understanding of one another can always be improved.

Therapist couple Matt and Sarah Davies combine their professional and personal experiences in this enlightening guide, with case studies and useful exercises to get couples interacting more honestly and with true intimacy.

Best of all, the writers show that every relationship has its challenges, which can be overcome if you put the effort in.



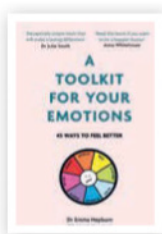
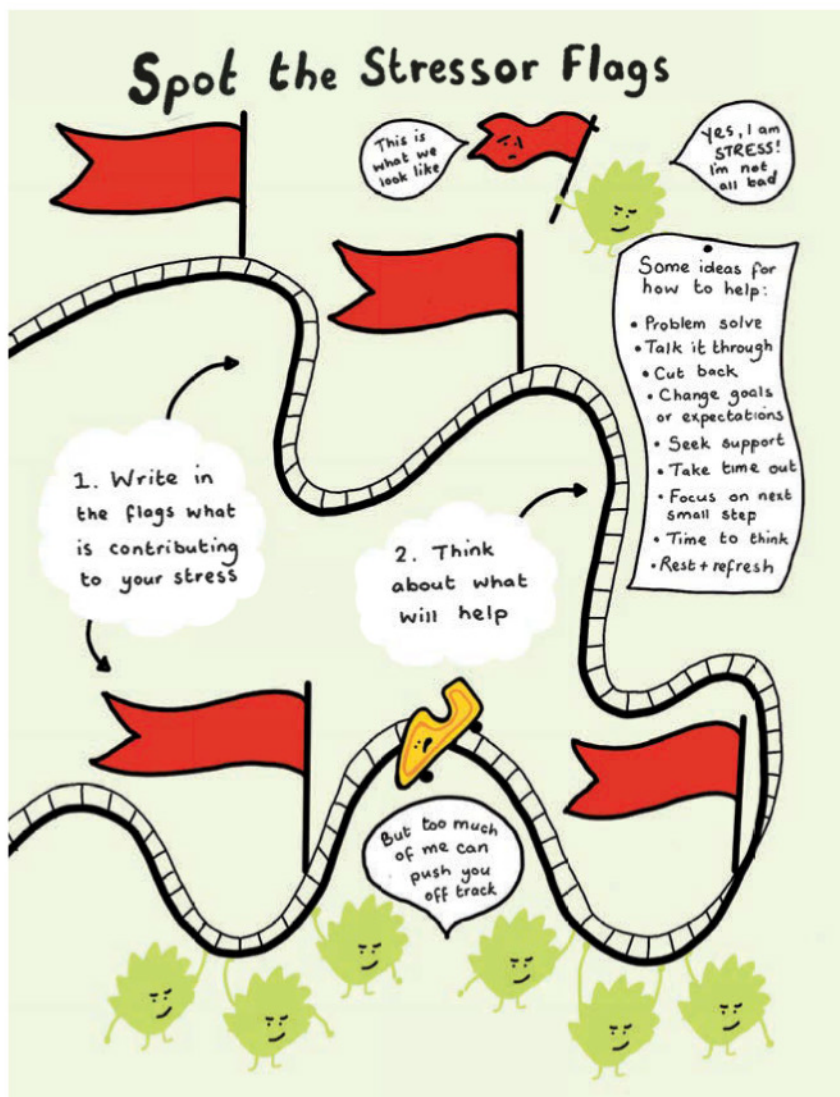
How to be happier

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

We are all navigating an unpredictable world on our emotional rollercoaster. Humans like predictability, and our brain is designed to find meaning and patterns in the data coming our way. Greater predictability helps conserve our resources and helps us survive. However, no matter how organised we are, uncertainty will come our way. This impacts our brain and body budget – it's demanding for our brain to deal with situations that are difficult to predict. If the data coming at our brain does not align with its predictions, it needs to regroup, try to understand and correct its prediction. Uncertainty over what is happening next means our brain is likely to predict that it needs to get revved up to respond to whatever is coming its way, and that uses energy. It requires a lot of cognitive resources to respond to uncertainty, which is also metabolically demanding and creates withdrawals from our body budget. If this goes on for too long we can become depleted, suffering from an overdrawn body budget that leads to burnout and all manner of health difficulties.

Unpredictable threats come in different forms. That bullying boss, the undermining family member, the child who has no sense of danger of passing traffic, the pavement not designed for wheelchair users – all require vigilance from your brain. Any situation where you feel unsafe means your brain is predicting threat and needs to be pumped up, placing demands on your body budget.

While feeling unsafe can create deficits in your body budget, feeling safe can help create deposits. Having safe social relationships creates deposits, which helps regulate the body and reduce the negative impact of stress. We are social



A Toolkit For Your Emotions: 45 Ways To Feel Better by Dr Emma Hepburn (Greenfinch, £14.99) is out now

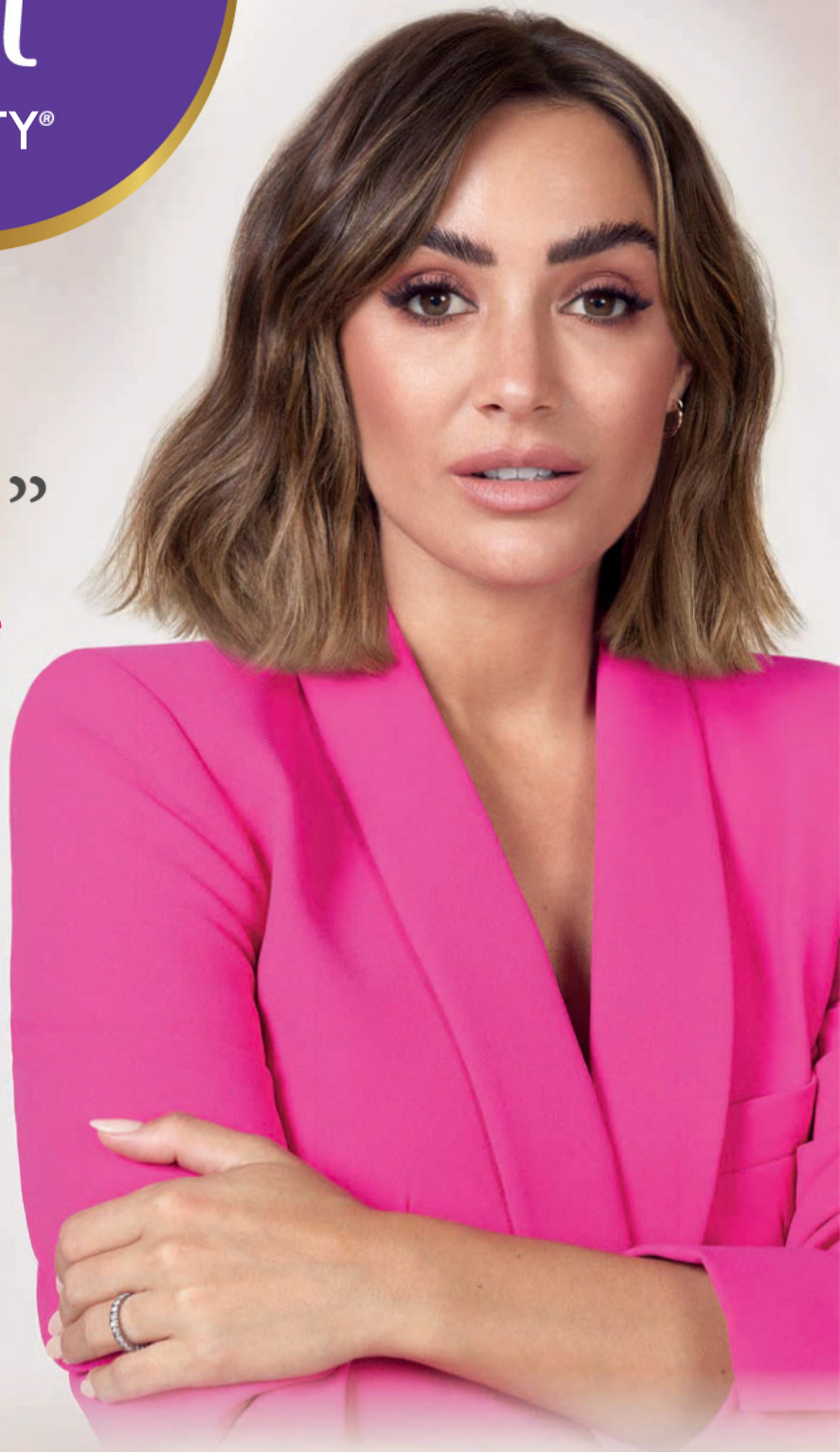
creatures, we perceive other people's emotions and they can also create emotions in us, as our bodies and brains respond to them and their emotions. There are many examples of this. Sitting quietly with someone can help slow their heartbeat; holding hands can make you feel safe; cuddling a crying child helps calm them. The words we use also create body sensations: saying 'I love you' impacts on our physiology. Through our actions and words, we can co-regulate and help manage our body budget.

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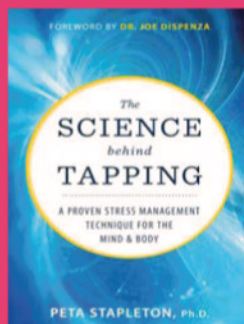
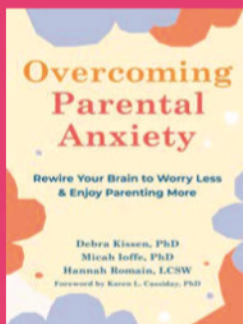
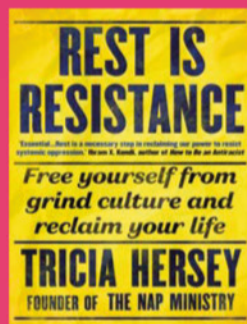
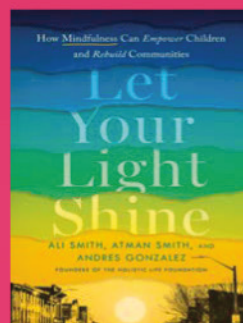
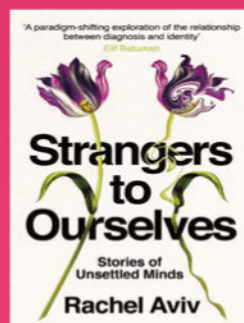
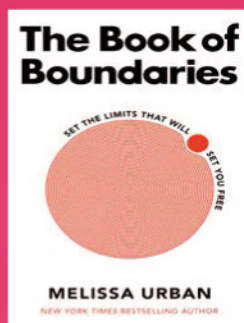
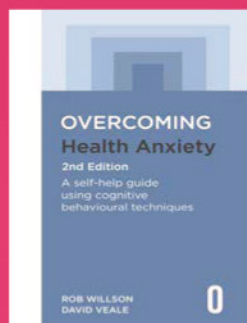
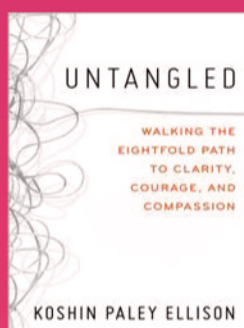
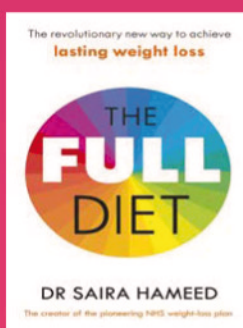
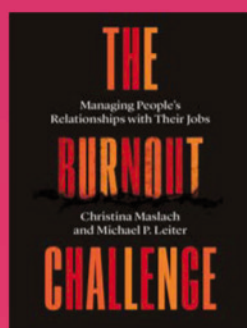
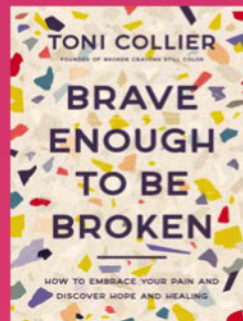
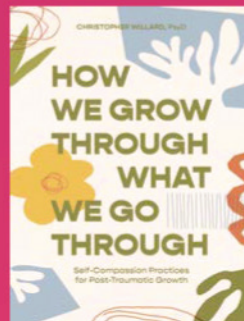
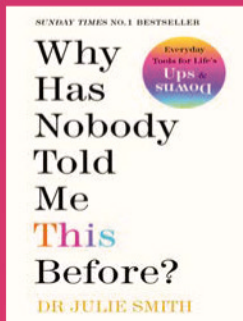
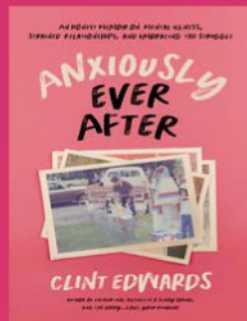
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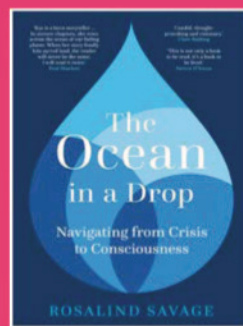
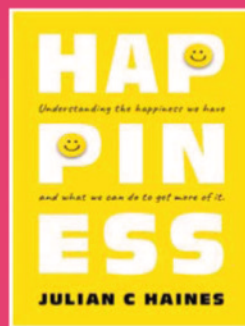
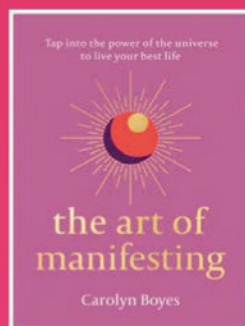
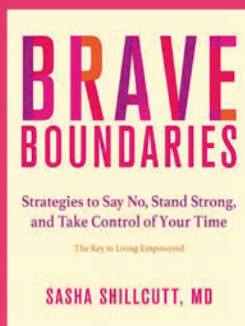
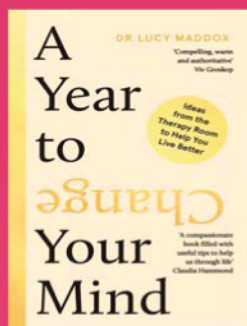
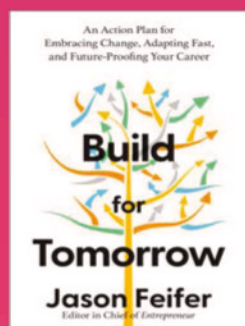
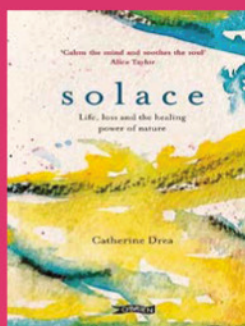
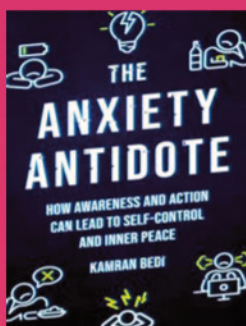
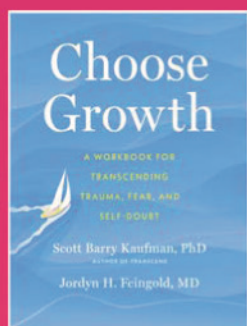
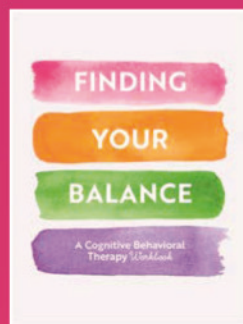
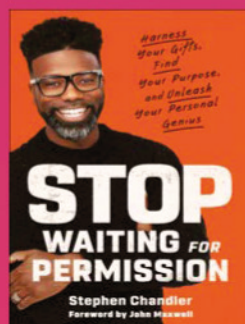
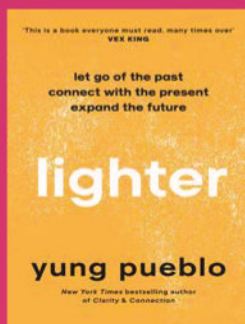
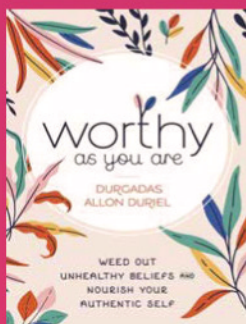
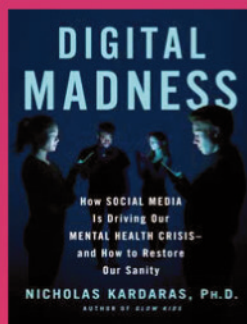
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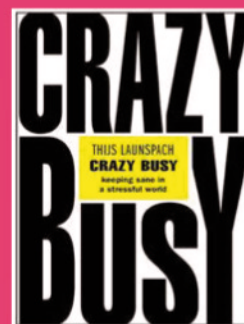
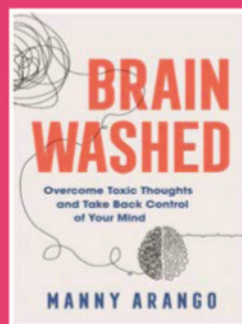
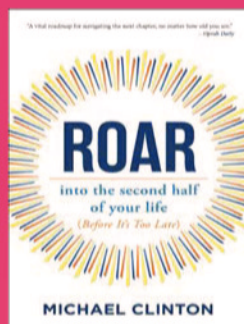
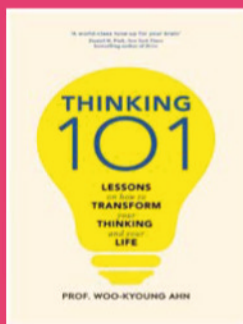
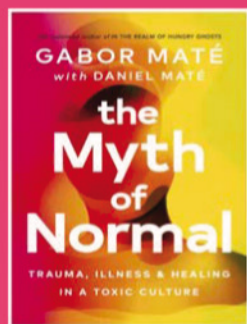
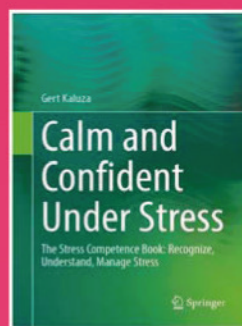
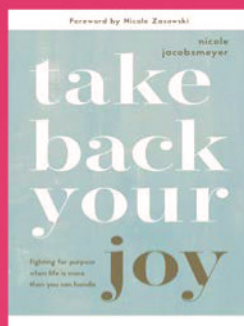
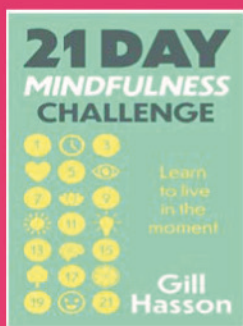
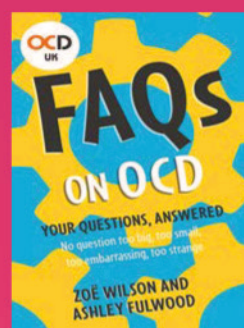
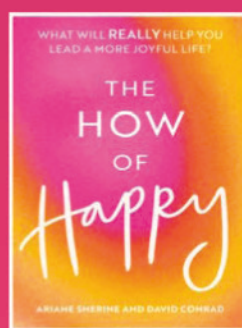
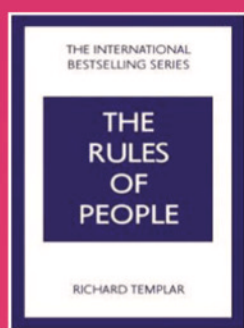
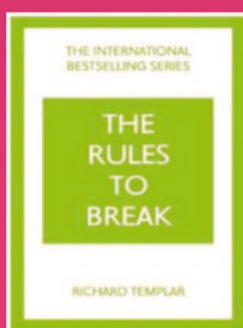
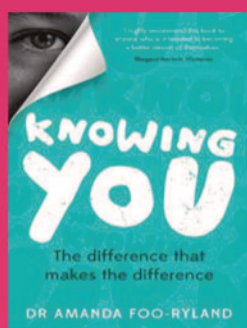
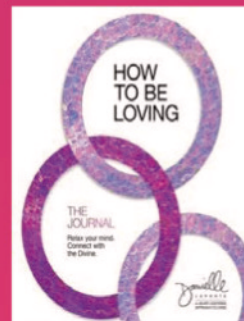
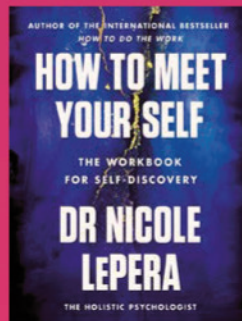
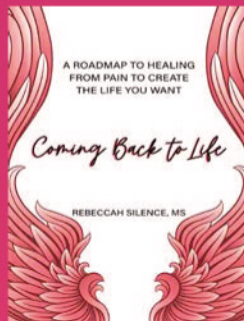
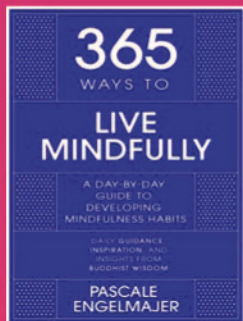
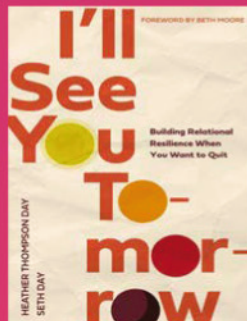


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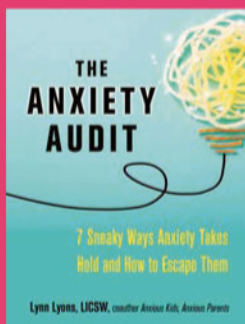
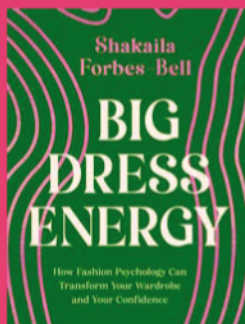
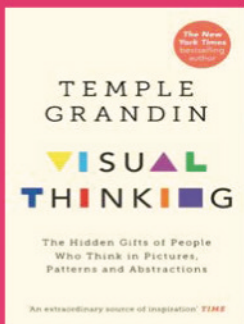
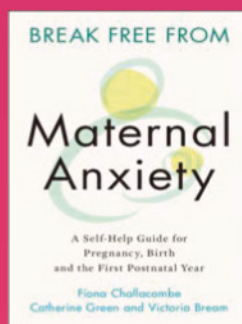
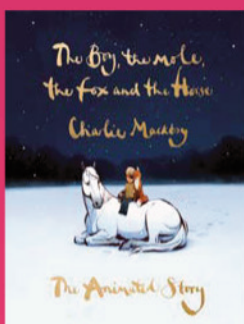
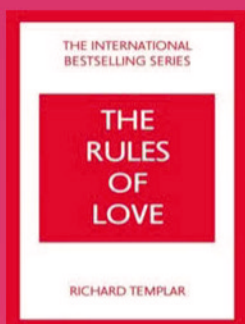
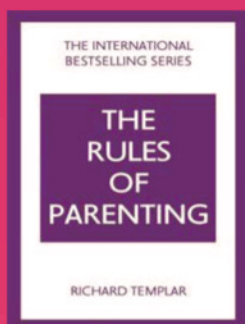
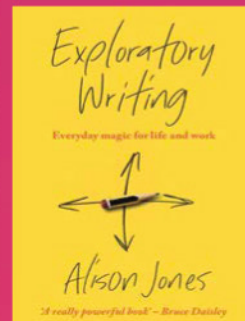
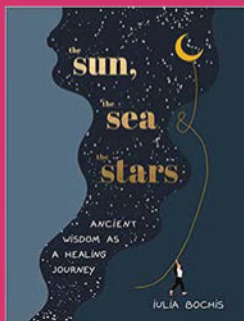
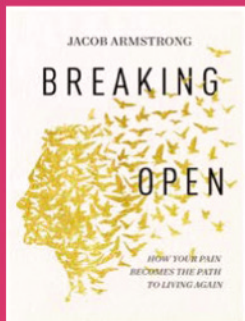
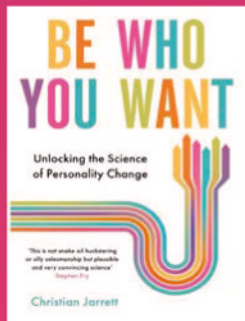
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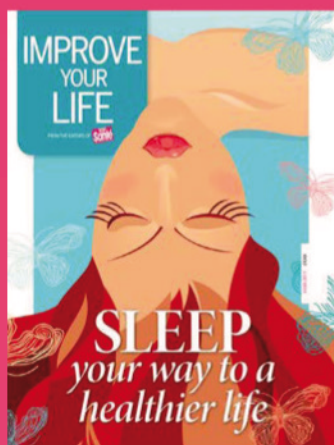
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