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30 TABLETS



In this issue... 8

Why does our appetite increase when the temperature drops?

Regulars

7 In the mood

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

12 Viewpoint

What's caught your eye in Psychologies?

14 Amy Dowden

The *Strictly* star on how she has kept so positive during her cancer battle

18 Life as I know it

Self-confessed poly-hobbyist Harriet Minter asks what it really means to have a hobby...

Mind

22 Are you playing the name game?

We explore the science of naming – and why mispronunciation matters

26 Coaching in action

Coach Kim Morgan remembers that sometimes we're not ready to change



30 Parental supervision required

It's not easy to take care of your inner child while looking after others

36 Banish the butterflies

When dating feels like a job interview with cocktails, how do we manage those first-date nerves?

38 10 ways to boost your psychological immunity

Strengthen your wellbeing to cope better with the ebb and flow of life

Heart

60 Seeking a helping hand

Caro Giles reflects on the courage it takes to ask our loved ones for help

62 Let's talk men's health

Conversation starters to get the ball rolling with the men in your life

64 Your dilemmas addressed

Our agony aunt, Dr Martha Deiros Collado, offers a fresh perspective

66 Preparing the festive finances

Easy ways to start the Christmas confab with your nearest and dearest



74 Mindful wellness

Conscious actions and wellbeing buys to help you live intentionally

80 Combat the cravings

Why does our appetite increase when the temperature drops?

84 Comfort food with a twist

Indulgent treats that do you good, from health expert Tim Spector



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88 Out of the darkness

Rachel Gardner looks below the surface for connection

90 Nature in focus

Tips to help you connect with nature, from the comfort of your front room

94 Sing for your life!

Part three of James Sills' A–Z of reasons to sing

97 The words

This month's round-up of the best non-fiction reads

98 The last word

Broadcaster Carol Vorderman on why she loves getting trolled online

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Make this winter wonderful!

46 Change of pace

Allowing yourself to slow down could be key, writes psychologist Stephanie Fitzgerald

48 Simply seasonal

Time to embrace the tranquillity the colder season brings

50 Nature's retreat

Take a hint from the world around

us and allow yourself time to prepare for the year ahead

52 Direction for reflection

How to adopt a positive outlook as you think back on the last year

54 What's your personal winter wellbeing focus?

Take our test to find the seasonal mindset shift you need

psychologies

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The advice starts RIGHT HERE!



MARILYN DEVONISH

'There are millions of names to choose from, and yours was chosen for a reason because it meant something to someone. There's a sacred process around that,' says success coach Marilyn Devonish. Discover the power and potency hidden in our own names, and find out why pronunciation matters, on page 22.

DR EMMA HEPBURN

'Reparenting yourself is about shifting unhelpful patterns of behaviour and learning new patterns that enable you to meet your own needs,' explains psychologist Dr Emma Hepburn. Find out why looking after your inner child in this way is especially important when caring for others, on page 30.



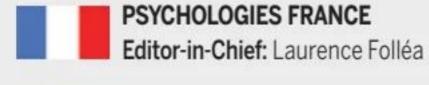


IAN STOCKBRIDGE

The psychological immune system protects and maintains mental wellbeing in the face of emotional and psychological challenges, just as the physical immune system defends the body against disease,' says therapist Ian Stockbridge. Learn how to boost your mind's defences, on page 38.

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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



Baby Boomers are
the age group most
likely to seek
'friends with
benefits', with a
quarter looking for
that relationship
arrangement,
according to a
study by Kinsey
Institute and
dating app Feeld.

Step in the right direction...

Overweight people who work out regularly really can be 'fat but fit', a new study confirms.

Researchers from the University of Michigan found that people in the obese BMI category who exercise regularly have healthier belly fat than those who are inactive.

They took samples from two groups matched for body fat mass, weight and sex.

Half had been exercising at least four times a week or more for at least two years – and an average of 11 years. The others had never exercised.

There were stark differences in the structural and biological characters of fat tissues, as well as exercisers having more blood vessels, lower inflammation levels and more mitochondria, the energy producing cells.

of 'fitspiration' TikTok videos analysed by Flinders University experts contained incorrect or harmful health and exercise information.

A mother's love

Parental love is more powerful than any other bond, science has proved.

Finnish researchers used MRI scans to identify for the first time the regions that are fired up by six different kinds of love – for children, romantic partners, close friends, pets, strangers in need and nature. Feelings for offspring elicited the strongest activity and lit up the largest number of regions, including areas untouched by other loves.





Turning the tide on food waste

Once discarded, seafood bycatch will be being turned into affordable and eco-friendly school dinners thanks to the Plymouth Fish Finger Project.

The scheme utilises lesser known, locally caught species like pouting and dogfish, that might otherwise be thrown back dead.

Ethical fishmongers Sole of Discretion pay fisheries

a fair price for the catch to make the kids' favourite, which they plan to sell through organic delivery outlet Abel & Cole, allowing them to subsidise the price for schools.

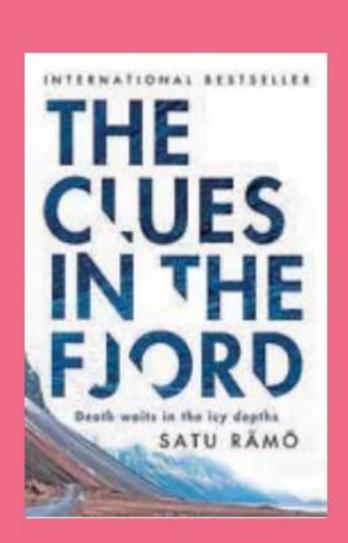
'This is about food security and social justice,' explains founder Caroline Bennett, who hopes production to start next year.





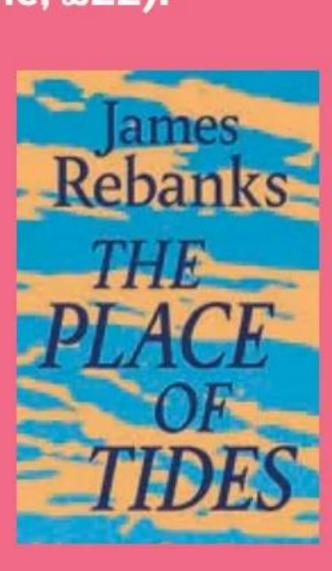
The Clues in the Fjord by Satu Rämö (Zaffre, £9.99).

A female detective and her trainee confront their own complicated pasts as they trail a killer in isolated west Iceland.



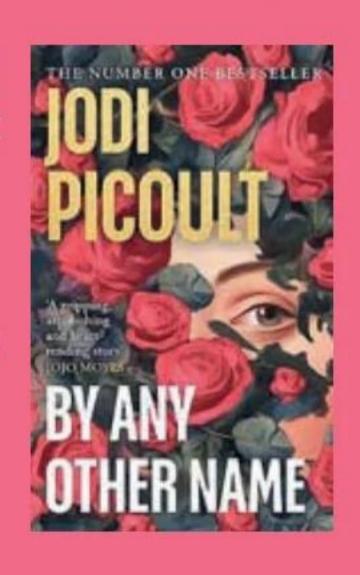
The Place of Tides by James Rebanks (Allen Lane, £22).

Cumbrian
shepherd
James spends
a season
living and
working
alongside an
elderly eider
duck woman
in Norway.



By Any Other Name by Jodi Picoult (Michael Joseph, £22).

Inspired by a real historical figure, Picoult weaves the stories of two women writers forced to live in the shadow of men.







Leaving a legacy are you prepared?

Worryingly, 62% of parents with a child under 18 do not have a will, while one in six haven't reviewed theirs for more than 10 years.

This new research by Austin Lafferty Solicitors found large numbers risk their estate being distributed according to the rules of intestacy, instead of their personal wishes.

But November is the perfect time to rectify this as many solicitors will write them in return for a charity donation. Find out more at willaid.org.uk.



Smaller measures, big benefits

Calling time on the pint could boost the nation's health.

A trial in dozens of English pubs and restaurants reduced the largest draught measure to two-thirds and saw total beer sales - and therefore consumption - drop by 10 per cent.

There was some customer resistance but Professor Dame Theresa Marteau, a University of Cambridge behaviour and health research expert, believes the 'nudge' toward smaller portions could boost population health.

Her team previously trialled banning 250ml wine servings.

Nomen are supposed to be one thing or the other, but I can be ball-breaking and soppy; on it and a total kind-hearted, yes, and a bit of a cow.

Actress and presenter Nadia Sawalha

WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



WATCH The Diplomat. Keri Russell returns as gutsy US ambassador to the UK, Kate Wyler,

in this explosive Netflix thriller, now joined by West Wing legend Allison Janney.



LOOK Barbara Walker: Being Here. The Whitworth, Manchester, showcases

70 influential works spanning the 30-year career of this Black British figurative artist. Until January 25.



LISTEN We Need To Talk. TV matchmaker Paul C Brunson's new podcast has big

conversations with big names about relationships, sex and love – and how to sustain them.



The old remedies are still the best when it comes to winter bugs, it seems. A University of Edinburgh study found cheap and simple homemade saltwater nose drops can cut the duration of a child's cold by two days, down from eight to six, on average. Fewer household members caught the virus too, while sick kids needed less medicines to manage symptoms. Researchers plan to investigate whether the method can reduce cases of wheeze developing, too.

Women should eat
30 plants a week
to help reduce
menopause
symptoms – such
as hot flushes – by
a third, research
by King's
College and the
Zoe app found.



California is close to passing a law that could cut homework to alleviate stress for pupils and parents.

The Healthy Homework Act, which has passed both chambers of the state legislature, but must still be signed off by the governor, asks teachers to consider whether homework assigned requires parental support and access to technology.

Pilar Schiavo, a state assemblywoman, wrote the bill after her nine-year-old daughter asked whether she could 'ban homework'.

Supporters say evidence suggests that homework does not improve learning, but does raise stress levels for pupils and families.

If made law, school districts will need to have clear policies in place by the 2027-28 academic year.





Viewpoint

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



ean feel as though we can't win.

24 paychologus could

Life's too short for 'what ifs'

Your article on Isn't all this ageism getting a bit old, in the August issue, was an interesting read, and very true! Positive self-talk is the key. We all know our worth, but for a lot of people, age is the downside, and with new technologies and changing practices in the workplace, it can be off-putting. I have personally had three career changes and loved every one of them. Having to do some sort of training prior to the job also gave me the confidence to buy a business with a partner, which – apart from the money side of things – was scary. But we both

decided we knew what we were doing and had to be positive about it all.

This was especially the case when, after just a year of having the business, the credit crunch hit. But we asked ourselves, 'what is the worst thing that can happen? Do we fail and owe a lot of money, or do we do what we love and get on with things?' We did the latter and prospered. So, my advice to anyone would be: have faith in your abilities, no matter your age. Life is too short to think about the 'what ifs', we don't know what is around the corner.

Jay Revell

We'd love to know what you think

Read an article in Psychologies that rings true? Get in touch and share your thoughts at letters@psychologies.

co.uk!

A win-win situation

I had a light-bulb moment when Harriet Minter's October article inspired me to rummage through my coat collection. The reason why some of them, although still in good condition, had stayed in the back of the wardrobe was that I didn't actually like myself in them any more. They're going to a charity shop now for someone else to benefit from, and I shall continue to wear only the ones that I feel good in. I see that as a win-win situation. Maggie Cobbett



PHOTO FAVOURIES

Feeling grateful

A quiet stroll whilst watching the sunrise in Ibiza this August felt therapeutic. As I took in all the scenery, the smells of fresh sea air and the heat of the day being born, an urge came over me to stand still and soak it all in. I realised then that I was truly present and allowed myself to feel grateful for all

that I was seeing. This set me up for a fantastic day and this awareness is something that I will continue to practice; noticing a beautiful object, view or surroundings and completely immersing myself within it before moving on to the next thing is priceless. *Hayley, Teesside.*



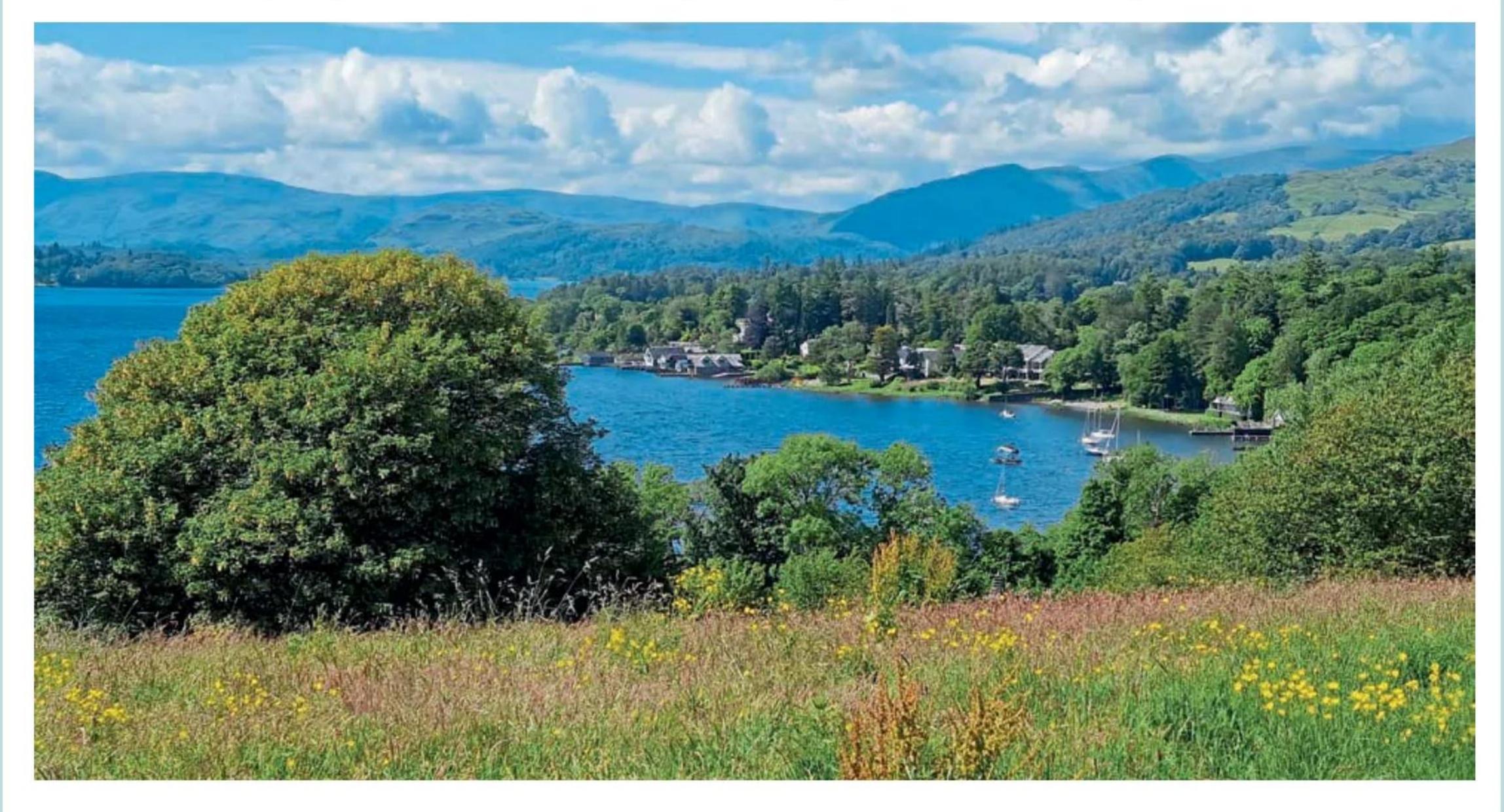
Finding inner peace

I've been enjoying my subscription to your magazine for several months and felt compelled to get in touch after reading the *Building your inner belief* article in the August 2024 issue. During a low point in my life in June this year, I took a short trip to the Lake District, on my own – plucked up the courage to do, due to anxiety and a lack of confidence. It was one of the best things I've ever done. Like the writer of the article, I had a 'remember forever' moment, sitting barefoot in the long grass with the sun on my face looking out at the

awe-inspiring view of Windermere (photo below). No stress, no noise, no people, just pure peace.

My soul felt so nourished afterwards that I've booked another solo trip to the Peak District later this year!

Thanks and best wishes, Maria Floyd



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

Dancing is my therapy

Strictly professional dancer and author Amy Dowden talks about her cancer journey, why dancing is the best medicine and the power of staying positive

BY HOLLY TREACY & ABI JACKSON

warm russet, fireplaces are crackling in to life, and – just like that – *Strictly* is in full swing again. For many of us, this glittering show is the heartbeat of Saturday nights. And this year, as *Strictly* celebrates its 20th anniversary, one familiar face is returning to the ballroom with a sparkle in her eye: Amy Dowden. Teamed up with JLS's JB Gill, they've already danced their way to the top of the leaderboard in week one. But rewind a year, and Dowden was watching from the wings.

Dowden revealed she had stage three breast cancer in May 2023, after finding a lump the day before she went on her honeymoon. 'It was on a busy day, we were up in Blackpool and I tried to push it to one side. Then when I went home, I had a good feel of [the lump] again. I was really worried, but I just wanted to enjoy my honeymoon with Ben [Jones, Amy's husband]. We had a once in a lifetime opportunity to fly to the Maldives, I knew if I told Ben, we wouldn't be going. He would have been taking me to the doctors, and I didn't want to worry him. He's already sacrificed so much in his life; he's looked after me with my Crohn's disease and then supported me with my Strictly career. We don't get a lot of quality time together. We both really needed that.'

Despite her best efforts to stay in the moment, Dowden couldn't shake an unsettling feeling. She found herself googling symptoms in secret, trying to act normal in front of Ben while silently battling her fears. 'In the back of my mind, I was petrified,' she admits.

Opening up

What happened next is well known. She had her last chemo session last November, but the treatment – which also involved a mastectomy and medically induced early menopause as her cancer was hormone-fed – brought with it some 'very dark moments'. Not only was she dealing with a huge blow so soon after getting married and working so hard to reach *Strictly*, she developed serious complications, including blood clots and an infection that caused her to go into septic shock, leaving her fighting for her life.

Along the way, Dowden shared updates with her 680K fans on social media, but it wasn't until writing her *Sunday Times* best-selling book, *Dancing in the Rain* that she truly processed everything. 'It was like therapy,' she says. 'Especially with my Crohn's disease, I didn't ever really process it, I kind of just left it there and tried to get on with my life. I think it was only when I was in a low place with my cancer, I was like – OK, let's go through and take everything out, get it all down, get all my feelings and frustrations out. So, I do think it was a bit like therapy for me.'

Just 11 when she started suffering attacks of excruciating pain, sickness and diarrhoea, she was in and out of hospital throughout her teens. She was finally diagnosed with the lifelong



inflammatory bowel condition Crohn's aged 19, which meant that for years, she and her parents were battling for answers. 'I was used to long hospital stays and missing out on dance competitions,' she says, 'but I always found a way. I think that's helped me build my resilience.' It's a journey that happens over time, not overnight. 'It happens when your heart is broken, you're disappointed, but you have to find your way back. You learn that this too shall pass. There will be dark, awful days, but also the best days.'

Stubborn streak

Dowden started dance lessons aged eight, after being wowed by a disco contest at a caravan park clubhouse while on holiday in Cornwall. She recalls in her book how as soon as *Strictly* burst onto our TV screens in 2004, she was 'entranced', and determined to appear on the show. But while her family has always been supportive, she remembers the resistance she faced when she told other people of her aim. 'I knew what they were thinking: that it was an impossible dream for a small-town girl like me who kept collapsing and having to go to hospital,' she writes.

After rising through the ranks on the ballroom and Latin competition circuit with her dance partner and now husband, Ben Jones, in 2017, that *Strictly* dream became a reality. Where does Dowden think her determination came from? 'I'm stubborn,' she laughs. 'If someone says to me, "Amy, you can't" – I will, I'll find a way. And I just think ultimately, dancing makes me so happy. It's my happy place. It's my escapism, my passion.

'When it started to get to the point where you realise you get to do what you love as a job for the rest of your life, that's what kept me going,' she continues. 'I was lucky enough to find a passion, to find what I love – and I think that's what anybody needs, whether it's a hobby, certain friends or a relationship, you've got to find what fulfils you. And it keeps you going in the toughest times.'

Something else that's kept her going through the tough times is the love and support of family and friends, which shines through in her book. 'We're such a strong unit,' she says of her parents Richard and Gillian, brother Lloyd and twin sister Rebecca. 'As a family, we've really come together through everything last year, it is one of the things I'm truly so grateful for.'

And her husband Ben has been by her side through it all. 'I'm very, very lucky to have Ben. Literally, there's nothing he wouldn't do for me.'

Beyond the dance floor

Dowden is eager for us to get to know her beyond the sequins. 'I want people to feel like



they're sitting down chatting with me,' she says. 'It's conversational, honest and open. I hope it inspires people and gives them hope during their darkest times.' She adds: 'You see me on TV, but it's throughout the *Strictly* years. This book allows you to get to know the real Amy: my family, my husband, my friends, and my journey.'

'I'm in my element when I'm dancing,' reads the opening line. She explains that it is a form of therapy for her, and the dance floor is where she forgets all her worries. 'When the music comes on, I'm lost in that world, and all my worries seem to shift to one side.'

And it would appear that positive words have always had a powerful hold on Dowden, as her mantra through tough times would be: don't get bitter, get better.

'Bitterness doesn't change anything, but getting better improves results. I used this with my Crohn's and cancer diagnoses. At first, I felt as if it was so unfair – why me? Why now? But I realised that thinking that way wouldn't make me feel better.' For Dowden, she believes the brain has a powerful role in recovery. 'Stress can make us feel worse,' she shares, 'and it could delay your recovery time. This mantra gives me the strength I need internally.'

Raising awareness

Whether it's sharing her Crohn's or cancer journey, it's clear that Dowden leans into vulnerability. 'I want to show people they're not alone,' she says. Growing up, she felt isolated because there were no public figures she could relate to who suffered with her condition. 'When I spoke out about my cancer diagnosis, a young woman reached out to me and said, "I'm your age and going through the same thing. Thank you."

Dowden's mission is to normalise conversations around health and raise awareness. She made history when she stepped out onto the *Strictly* dance floor last year without her wig. 'I didn't realise how powerful that moment would be, but it was so freeing. I didn't tell anyone because I wasn't sure I'd do it until the last second, but it felt liberating.'

Living life to the full

When it comes to psychological support, it was the CoppaFeel Trek, where she walked 100k with Giovanna Fletcher that Dowden found most helpful. 'It was the hardest thing my body's been through since chemo,' she says. 'But it gave me so much time to reflect and see how far I've come. You're out walking for hours, with no social media or everyday life to get in the way. As I walked past the finish line, it was as if I was saying goodbye to last year.'

Inspired by the late cancer campaigner Nicky Newman, the *Strictly* star is determined to grab life by the horns. 'She always said, "Go grab life". And she did that. She lived life to the fullest. And I think it teaches you to hold your loved ones close, grab every opportunity and be present. Life can change in an instant.'

Dowden admits she's a completely different person since her diagnosis. 'It's taken me to the darkest place, but it's also made me appreciate everything. I lost my hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, and gained weight from steroids, but I've realised beauty comes from within.'

Through it all, being public with her journey has given her strength. 'Everyone has seen me at my worst, but they've also seen me come out the other side, and that's given me joy. My worries don't matter anymore. I'm alive, I'm here, and I'm grateful.' Dowden is excited to be back on the *Strictly* dance floor. 'I've been beaming in rehearsals – it's made my heart so happy.'

Outside of the show, Dowden is renovating her forever home with husband Ben and expanding their dance academy, Art In Motion. She's also going on tour next year with her *Strictly* co-star Carlos Gu for their new show, *Reborn*. As she looks forward to welcoming a new niece or nephew, her final words to me are simple, yet powerful: 'I'm looking forward to life.' That's a mantra we can all live by.



Passing the time

Self-confessed poly-hobbyist Harriet Minter asks what it really means to have a hobby, and discovers it isn't just about owning all the gear...

Do you have a hobby? This question fills me with fear. I know that as a well-rounded

adult I should indeed have a hobby, maybe even a couple, and yet, when asked to examine what extra activities my life includes, I come up blank.

Does a dog count as a hobby?

Someone asked this question at an event I attended recently and there was a fairly even split between those who could confidently say they had a defining activity in their life and, well, the rest of us. And when I listened to those people describing their hobbies, I was hit with a surge of jealousy. There were paddle-boarders who'd cruised their way across the UK, knitting maestros who turned out blankets for loved ones as easily as I hit the 'buy

now' button on Amazon, and potters who wheeled out pictures of their creations while we all 'oohed' and 'ahhed' at their skill.

Perhaps it's not true to say I have no hobbies. After all, over the years I've dabbled in hundreds of them. I am poly-hobbyist, always open to adding another to my calendar. What I've not been good at, however, is commitment, and to me that is a key factor when it comes to having a hobby. I'm not sure you can really claim something as your pastime when you haven't passed more than a few hours with it, and I am terrible for trying things out, getting over-excited about them, buying all the gear and then... moving

Beyond commitment, the key qualities of a hobby for me are that it brings a level of pleasure and requires

onto the next thing.

a level of mastery (which you may or may not have achieved). Looked at that way, there is one thing in my life that counts: reading. I have dedicated hours, nay years, to reading. But if someone asked me if I counted that as a hobby, I'd feel embarrassed, as though it wasn't quite a good enough answer.

In that workshop, as people shared their hobbies, I realised that there is a key factor in a hobby that I'd been blind to. You have to be proud of it, no matter how small, weird or unimportant it might seem. If you care about it, then it matters.

Denying my reading hobby is denying a part of me and that feels like a sad way to treat something which has brought me so much joy. So I have a hobby, and it's reading. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a book to get back to.

IMAGE: MARK HARRISON, HAIR AND MAKE-UP: CAROL INE PIASECKI STYLIST: KATE ANYA BARBOUR



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



IMAGE SHITTERSTO





Are You Playing the MAME

Greta Solomon explores the science of naming and why mispronunciation matters.

n my first day of high school, I met a girl called Urma. Except that wasn't her name. There was a typo in every class register, so that she had to exclaim, rather persistently, that her name was actually – Urmi – and endure the raised eyebrows, and the unspoken question of, 'Are you sure? That's not what it says here'.

I admired her tenacity. If it was me, I'd likely have accepted it, gone home, and announced to my parents I had a new name. I mean, I'd already done a version of this in primary school. My name was pronounced Gree-ta for the first five years of my life. But when everyone at school called me Greh-ta, I kept schtum – too shy to say anything. When my parents finally caught wind of the fact that everyone now knew me as this new iteration, they changed how they, me, and everyone else thereafter pronounced my name. The question is: why does this matter?

For many people, it doesn't. 'Names in general tend to fall into two camps:

those who are very particular about how they are said and spelt, and those who think "whatever" and choose to let it go,' says success coach Marilyn Devonish. But despite this, what we (and others) call us affects our psyches.

'Our names are a firm part of our identity,' says Devonish. 'They're usually one of the first things we hear growing up, even if we have no conscious comprehension of what the words mean. Plus, on a practical basis, at least one person, perhaps two, or an entire collective of people have sat and thought about your name. There are millions of names to choose from, and yours was chosen for a reason because it meant something to someone.

There's a sacred process around that.'

The courage to belong

Research professor Brené Brown – who studies courage, vulnerability, shame and empathy – describes belonging as the opposite of fitting in. She says that, above all, belonging is about having the courage to stand alone and belong to





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yourself. This attitude is now starting to capture the zeitgeist. There's a wave of people reverting to the full names that denote their cultural heritage. They're finding that they were never hard-to-swallow in the first place, and don't need to blend in, mould, fix, or alter themselves to be more palatable. In the celebrity world, this means that the actress Thandie Newton is now Thandiwe. And the comedian Shappi Khorsandi, is now Shaparak.

But if you're still establishing yourself, this level of self-confidence can be tricky. Devonish recalls a Nigerian friend of hers, Kayo Anosike, who after retraining for a new corporate career, failed to get any traction from her CVs and cover letters. When she changed the name on her CV to Kayla Benjamin, she landed a job within 10 days.

"In times of slavery, one of the first things taken from you was your name"

It's clear that what you're called makes a difference. An academic study of over 12,000 job applications found that more than a quarter of people with English names got positive responses for leadership roles, compared to just 11% of people with non-English names.

'Anglicising your name will get you through the door without that level of judgement. And if you don't like your name, and it doesn't bring you joy, then you could change it to something you love, that will also help you fit in,' says Devonish. But this can come at a cost. 'In times of slavery, for example, one of the first things taken from you, in addition to your rights and freedoms, was your name,' she says. Anglicising your name may unwittingly denote that your value is up for discussion.

But even if you hold onto your name, others can insist on giving you an anglicised nickname – claiming that your full name is too hard to pronounce. 'If someone, when corrected, continues to call you something other than your given name, it can feel like disrespect, or even an attack on your identity. Similarly, it can be damaging if people can't be bothered to learn how to pronounce your name, and continually say it wrong,' says Devonish.

If this irks you, take a pro-active stance and gently teach people how to pronounce it, by breaking it down into vowel sounds. For instance, Anosike, would be An-o-see-key. 'If you have a Celtic name, for instance, such as

The power of choosing your own name

Born Elizabeth Hazell, Beth Wild happily took her husband's surname, Mercer, when she got married. After divorcing in 2014, she kept her new surname for the sake of her two daughters. But once they'd reached their teenage years, she realised it no longer felt right.

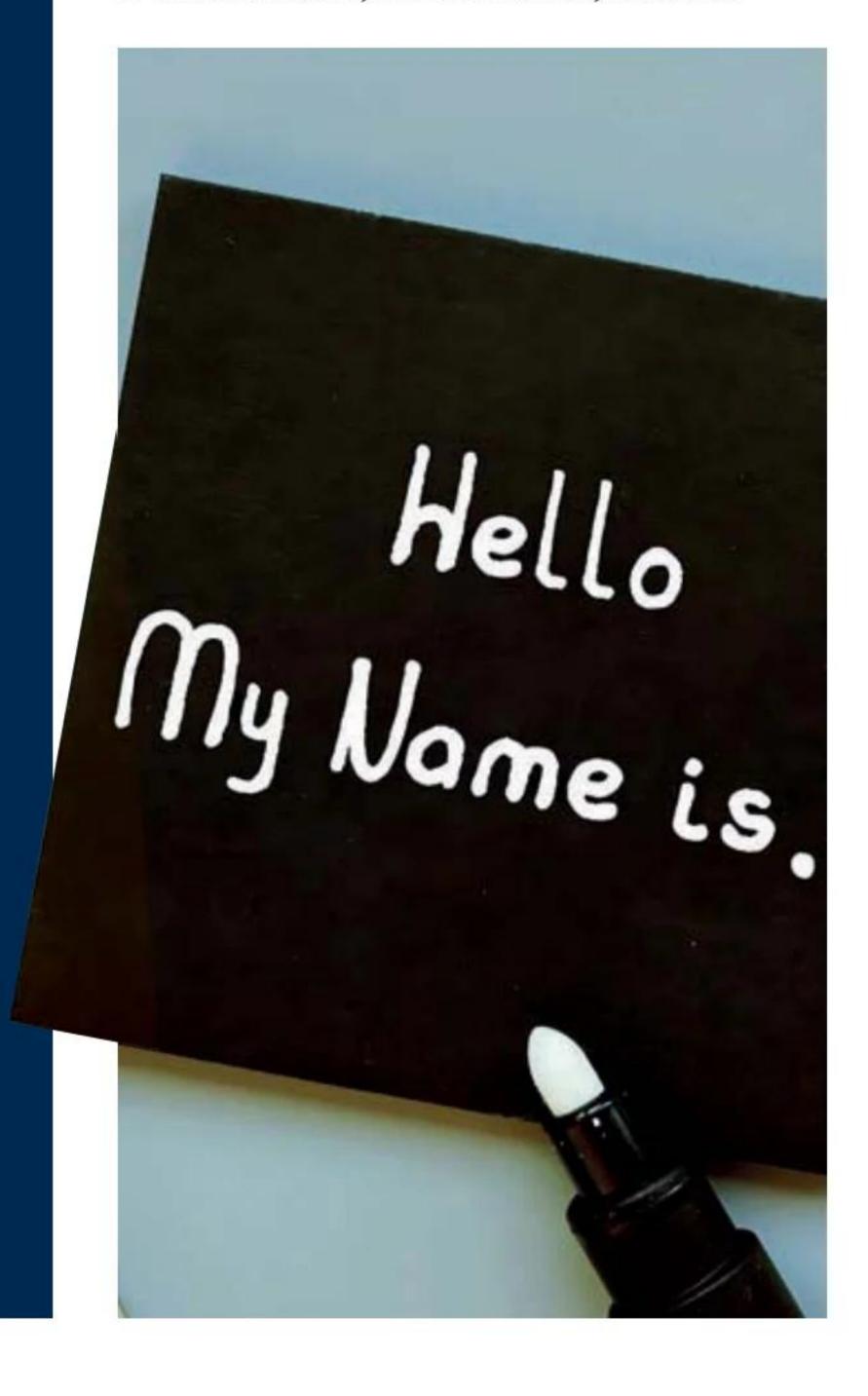
'For a brief period, I changed my name back to Beth Hazell on Facebook, but it didn't feel like me anymore. It felt like a retrogressive step,' says the 50-year-old from Linfield in West Sussex, who works as a documentary and portrait photographer. 'My parents provided a loving and stable upbringing, but they didn't empower me to be bold, or to take risks. I felt I had progressed, grown, and changed.'

'I have a love of India, and yoga, and kirtan – a form of musical meditation based on ancient chants – so I started looking at Sanskrit names, but they felt too contrived. Then the name Wild just landed. And it's not even as though I'm excessively wild, although I do have a love of

nature. It just felt right, and it sounds good. Everything about it just works,' she says.

At first, she hesitated, wondering what people would think, and whether it would affect her business, which was operating under the name Beth Mercer Photography. But when she announced it on social media, she received overwhelming support and recognition for her new name. And she officially changed it by deed poll in 2022.

Beth was runner-up in the 2024 National Geographic Traveller photography competition in the portfolio category, which marked her stepping into a long-held dream of being a documentary photographer. 'I couldn't imagine winning that competition as Beth Mercer; Beth Wild is who I am. I've been through an immense journey over the last few years of coming into alignment with who I am. I feel a sense of sovereignty and independence – I'm no longer defined by anyone else.' bethwildphotography.co.uk





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Siobhan, own it, speak it confidently, and be proud of it. Give people points for trying to say it correctly, and say: "well done, that was so close!" says Devonish. 'It's also a two-way street. Always ask others how to pronounce their names. If they say that everyone calls them by a nickname, ask if that's how they want you to address them.'

Owning who you are

If you adopt a new surname after marriage, it could alter the relationship you have with yourself, and your partner – for better, or for worse. 'Changing to a married name can have a unifying effect on some people, but for other people it can cause a split in their personality. When they change their name, their personality no longer fits,' says Devonish.

Always remember that names have inherent power. 'We are linguistic beings, what we say and how we say it matters. If someone has been verbally abused, they can tell you every word that was said to them. It's an assault to the psyche, and what's said can never be unsaid, or unheard. But when you have a sense of who you are, and your character, you know if something is fundamentally not true to you as a human being,' she says. You get to decide the names that are true for you.

What's interesting is that for most of my life, no-one questioned the new pronunciation of my name, but in the last 18 months, people have repeatedly asked if my name is pronounced Gree-ta. I'm certain that this is telling me something – I just have to figure out what.

What if your name doesn't fit with who you are?

'If you have a middle name, you could choose that, or use a variation of your first name. If you were called Marilyn, like me, you could call yourself Maz, or Mary, or Lynn. You could even use your surname as a first name. Find an element of your name that you love, or if your whole name is a problem, you can change it altogether,' says Devonish. A name change can have surprising results, changing both how you present yourself, and how you're received.

A mountain to climb

In their third session together, award-winning coach Kim Morgan and her client, Betty*, both face some difficult truths, and discuss the reality that sometimes, we're not yet ready for change...



Dession three

was looking forward to seeing Betty again. Our last session together had been energetic and powerful, and Betty had decided that she was going to make some big changes and reclaim her zest for life.

But as soon as she arrived, it was clear Betty wasn't very 'zesty' today. She had her hands stuffed in the pockets of her hoody and the hood pulled as far over her forehead as it would go.

'I don't think I need to ask how you are,' I said, gently.

Betty shook her head, looking at her feet. I waited in silence. So did Betty.

'I am here for you and available to you, Betty. What is the most useful thing I could offer you right now?'

'Don't suppose you have any biscuits? And a cup of tea?'

I was quite relieved to step out of the room to get the refreshments. When I came back, Betty hadn't moved. She nodded a 'thank you' and continued to stare at her feet.

I believed that at some level Betty must want to be here, or she would have cancelled, and I wanted to acknowledge that.

'I appreciate you being here today, Betty. It seems like things may be difficult for you. What

would you like to say to me, if anything? If you prefer to sit in silence, I will sit here with you.'

'I feel a bit of an idiot. I think we got carried away here last time, thinking I could change my life. When I got home and started doing the homework exercises you gave me, I realised what a total "saddo" I am. "Build your Support Network" exercise - I couldn't think of one person I have who supports me! "The Wheel of Life" exercise - I score zero on every aspect of my life. How am I supposed to go from here – lonely, no friends, no family, no hobbies, overweight, no money – to where I want to be? It feels like a mountain to climb.'

Whilst I was listening to Betty, I was trying to quieten my inner voice which was saying 'I didn't spend enough time focusing on the grief Betty is experiencing after losing her nan before I encouraged her to think about what she was

going to do with her life.' I recognised that I had fallen into a familiar pattern of wanting to 'rescue' my client.

I thanked Betty for her honesty and added: 'I'm sorry if we moved too quickly. I know you are still grieving the loss of your nan, and I think you may also be grieving the other things which you have missed out on in life?'

Betty nodded and started to cry, 'I am, and I am angry with myself for having got myself into my life situation – it feels like a deep hole which will take forever to crawl out of. I am wondering whether I should just stay here in the hole for now as the effort of changing seems too much.'

'What do you want, Betty? I am here for you now and will be here for you in the future if now is not the right time.'

Betty squirmed in discomfort. 'I'm not sure I'm ready for this and I'm not a quick fix, am I? I thought you might be able to work miracles, but that was unrealistic. I can't afford to keep paying

"I thought

you might be

able to work

miracles,

but that was

unrealistic"

if it is going to take a long time.'

decided to stop having coaching now and come back when I feel ready to do the work.'

I could see that it had taken a lot for Betty to tell me this. I respected her honesty and her decision, but I couldn't help thinking that I had scared her off by encouraging her to think about making big changes before she was ready. So, Betty and I said our tearful goodbyes.

Betty took a deep breath. 'I've

Postscript: A few months later I decided to offer Betty a free place on a Confidence and Self-Esteem course I was running. Should I have done this, and for whom did I do this, are big questions! However, she accepted my offer and is making great progress and benefiting from being with other people who are looking to build confidence, gradually.

I am still working on my 'rescuer' tendencies with my coaching supervisor.

Changing the habits of a lifetime can be hard for coaches, as well as their clients.

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



Ten questions to ask before making a change

If you are contemplating making a big change to your life, it is important to explore your readiness and motivation to change, first. You may decide to make a change because you have been 'told' to change by a third party. You may want to change, but are not sure that you want it enough or are fearful that you would be 'jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire'. Or, maybe you want to make a change but don't know exactly what that change is.

Here are 10 powerful questions to reflect on as part of your preparation for change.

- How important is this change to you?
- What are you prepared to sacrifice to achieve the change?
- What support do you need to do this, and from whom?

What will be the benefit to you of achieving this change?

What could cause you to give up, and how would you overcome a setback?

Will this change keep the good things about your current situation?

What would move you from thinking that you should do this to thinking that you would love to do this?

What will it cost you to do this? What will it cost you if you don't do it?

What is one compelling reason to stay where you are and one compelling reason to make the change?

What do you need to change in your life to be ready for this change?

Someone you admire

You can do this exercise with a friend, taking it in turns to speak, or on your own, reflecting and making notes.

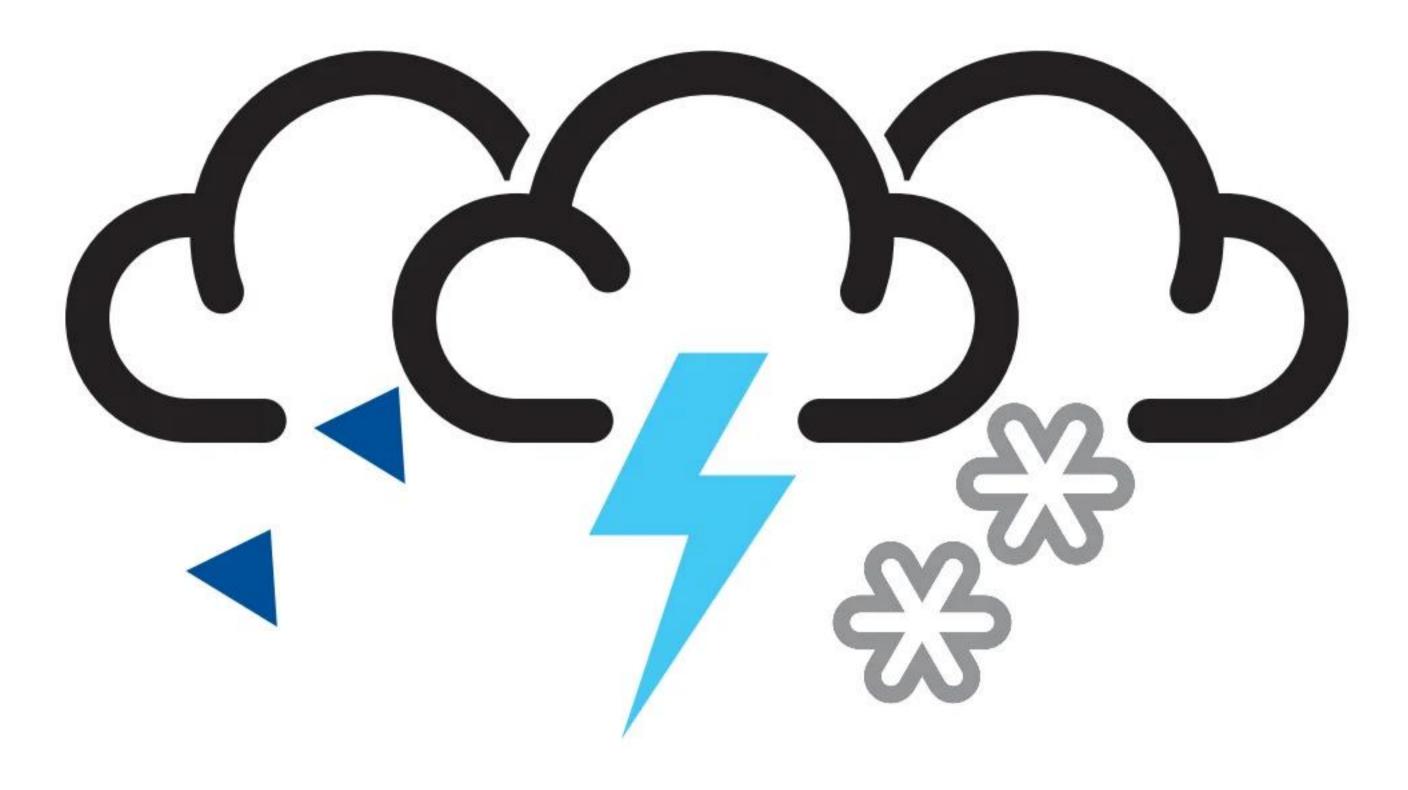
- Take some time to think of someone you really admire. It could be someone you know, a famous person or a character from history or fiction. Think what qualities and values they have which you admire and like. What impresses you about them and the way they show up in the world?
- Now consider what this tells you about which values are important to you? Make a list of all the values you noticed.
- Can you see any similarities between that person and you?

Values are the things which are important to us – our guiding stars. If you find yourself in a situation which does not meet your values, you can feel dissatisfied and frustrated, so it is important to understand your values before embarking on a significant life change.

WORDS OF WISDOM

'A habit cannot be tossed out the window; it must be coaxed down the stairs a step at a time.'

Mark Twain



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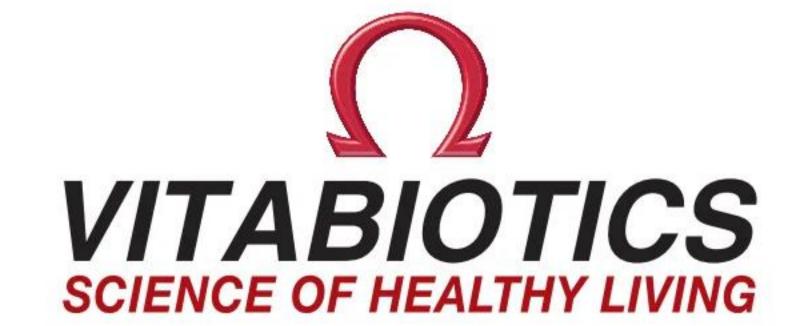
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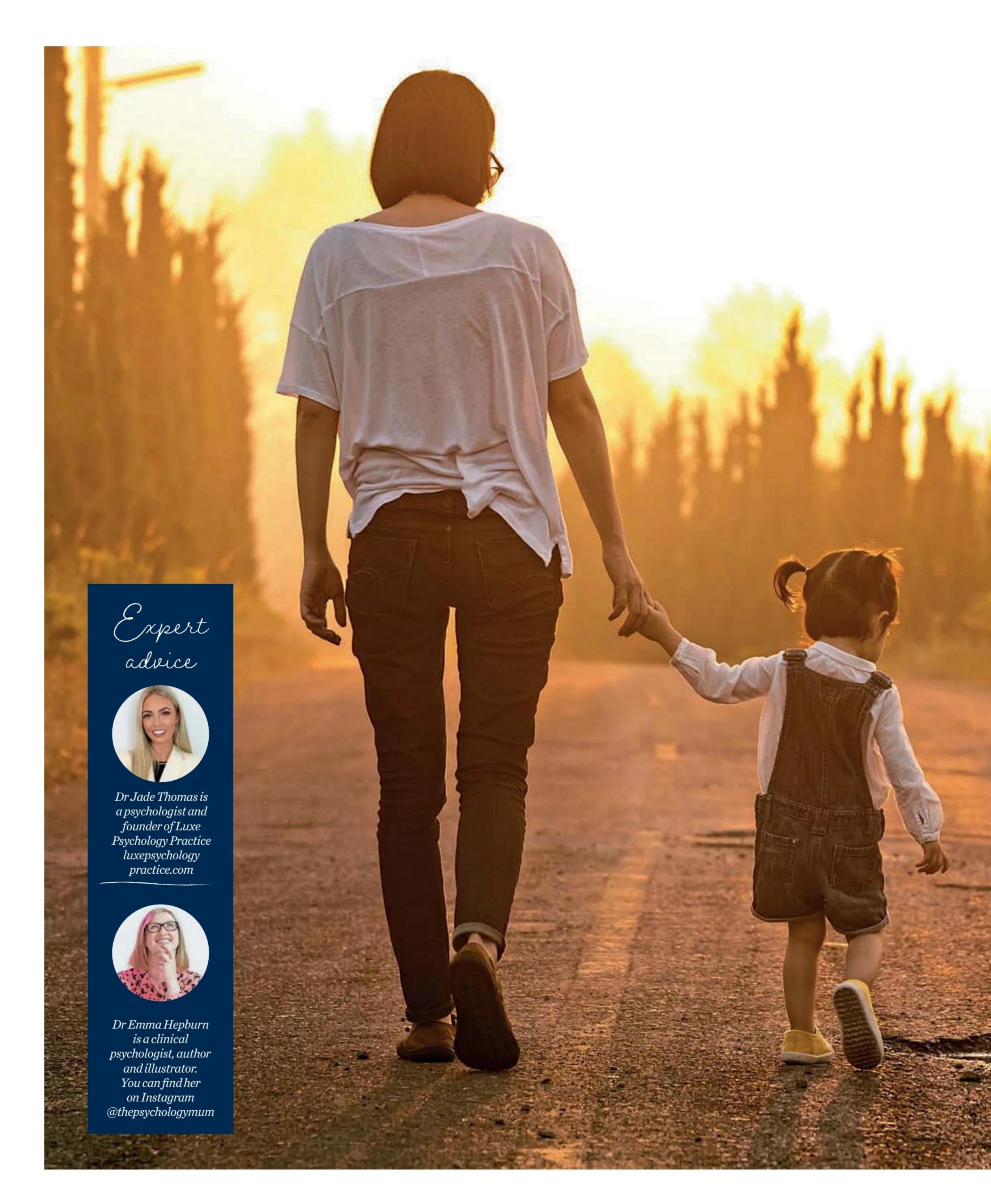
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It's not always easy to take care of your inner child while looking after a toddler, discovers Holly Treacy

o away, Mummy,'
is what my two-yearold says to me every
time I've set a slight
boundary. As I hold that boundary
his words become louder, more
frantic and laced with tears, but
the phrase remains the same.

However, I've come to learn that he doesn't want me to go away at all, but to sit quietly, holding space for his emotions until he is ready to melt into my arms for comfort. So that is exactly what I do.

Fellow parents will probably know how tricky it can be to

navigate toddler tantrums amidst the backdrop of juggling work, a cost-of-living crisis and a plethora of other daily stresses. And somehow, in the midst of the emotional chaos you have to manage your own emotions as well as someone else's. It's a lot. So how can we support our own wellbeing as well as our child's?

Enter the idea of reparenting.
'Reparenting is a technique or
approach used in therapy when
an adult works to meet their own
emotional or physical needs that
went unmet in their childhood,'
Dr Jade Thomas explains. 'These

needs might include: affection, security, emotional regulation, boundaries or compassion.'

In other words, they're all the core needs required when you're in the throes of a physical and emotional meltdown with your child.

According to Thomas, the process of reparenting is important for managing wellbeing as it allows individuals to improve the relationship they have with themselves, which subsequently can help them improve their relationships with others.

'Reparenting might be helpful



to process or overcome wounds or traumas from childhood,' she adds.

We all suffer from low-ebb days, but if our nerves are constantly frazzled, we may need to tend to our inner child.

'The concept of reparenting has become popularised in recent years on social media and tends to be used to describe reparenting yourself, which is about shifting unhelpful patterns of behaviour and learning new patterns that enable you to meet your own needs,' explains Dr Emma Hepburn.

So how can we begin to care for and nurture our inner child? What does that even look like? Thomas believes that parenting your own children might allow for reflections of how you were parented, and how you wish you could have been parented.

'Begin by reflecting on your own behaviour, for example: when you get upset, frustrated or feel emotional pain, ask yourself reflective questions such as: What is happening around you that is making you feel this way? Why are you responding in such a way? What are you hoping might happen as a result of this response? Asking yourself questions like this allows you to understand how past trauma is affecting your present behaviour, which in turn, might affect how you parent your own children. After you have begun reflecting on your own behaviour try to practise emotional regulation and talk to yourself in a compassionate way, perhaps how you wanted to be spoken to as a child.'

As I listen to Thomas's advice, I'm reminded of a tool that Zoe Blaskey, author of *Motherkind* shared with me: compassionate letter writing. As soon as Blaskey began to give me the example of where to start with the sentence, 'My darling, Holly', I was already welling up and knew my inner child needed support.

Hepburn reminds us that looking after children often leads to forgetting or neglecting our own needs, so it's about looking after yourself and noticing and responding to your needs – which is not always easy! I think about how lately I've often felt lightheaded, fatigued and managing a shorter fuse than usual, which

coincides with the sugar-laden first-time mum life I've been living. But Hepburn recommends ensuring we look after our physical needs, too.

'Hydrating and eating regularly alongside noticing and responding to how you are feeling can be helpful,' Hepburn explains. Even stopping to notice how we are feeling can give us clues as to what we need: 'Feeling lonely might mean you need a phone call with someone you trust; feeling overwhelmed might mean you need to cut back on some things to give yourself more time or space. We can often feel as parents that looking after our needs comes last, when in fact it's a priority as it enables us to have more capacity and helps us to parent in the way we want to.'

Thomas agrees and adds that we need to begin by identifying our needs and priorities. 'Practise assertive communication (i.e. learn to say no when necessary),' she says. 'Not only is assertive communication essential when it comes to maintaining healthy boundaries, but it is also an important lesson that you can be modelling to your own family and children.'

This idea of modelling better behaviours is a notion echoed by Hepburn, who believes we can build our days around our needs, and not just our children's. 'There are a lot of things we believe we should be doing as parents, but we can step back from these shoulds and think about responding in line with our own values instead,' she explains. 'This might involve deciding to do things in a different way that is beneficial to you or actively planning activities to nurture yourself. It can also be about asking people to support and help rather than trying to do it all ourselves.'

Prioritise play

It's not easy to choose rest. There's always something that needs doing and we're a society that praises productivity. Brené Brown has famously said that: 'It takes courage to say yes to rest and play in a culture that sees busy as a status symbol.'

It's something I've tried to actively lean into since my son was born.

Pre-motherhood I was all work and



no play, and chronically numbing out the pain of shutting out the fun in my life. So, when I became a mother, I vowed to embrace a life of play. But how important is it when nurturing our inner child?

According to Hepburn, play, or having fun and enjoyment, is an important factor in our wellbeing.
'Not only does it increase feel-good emotions and help us relax, it also helps us deal with stress, boosts our health



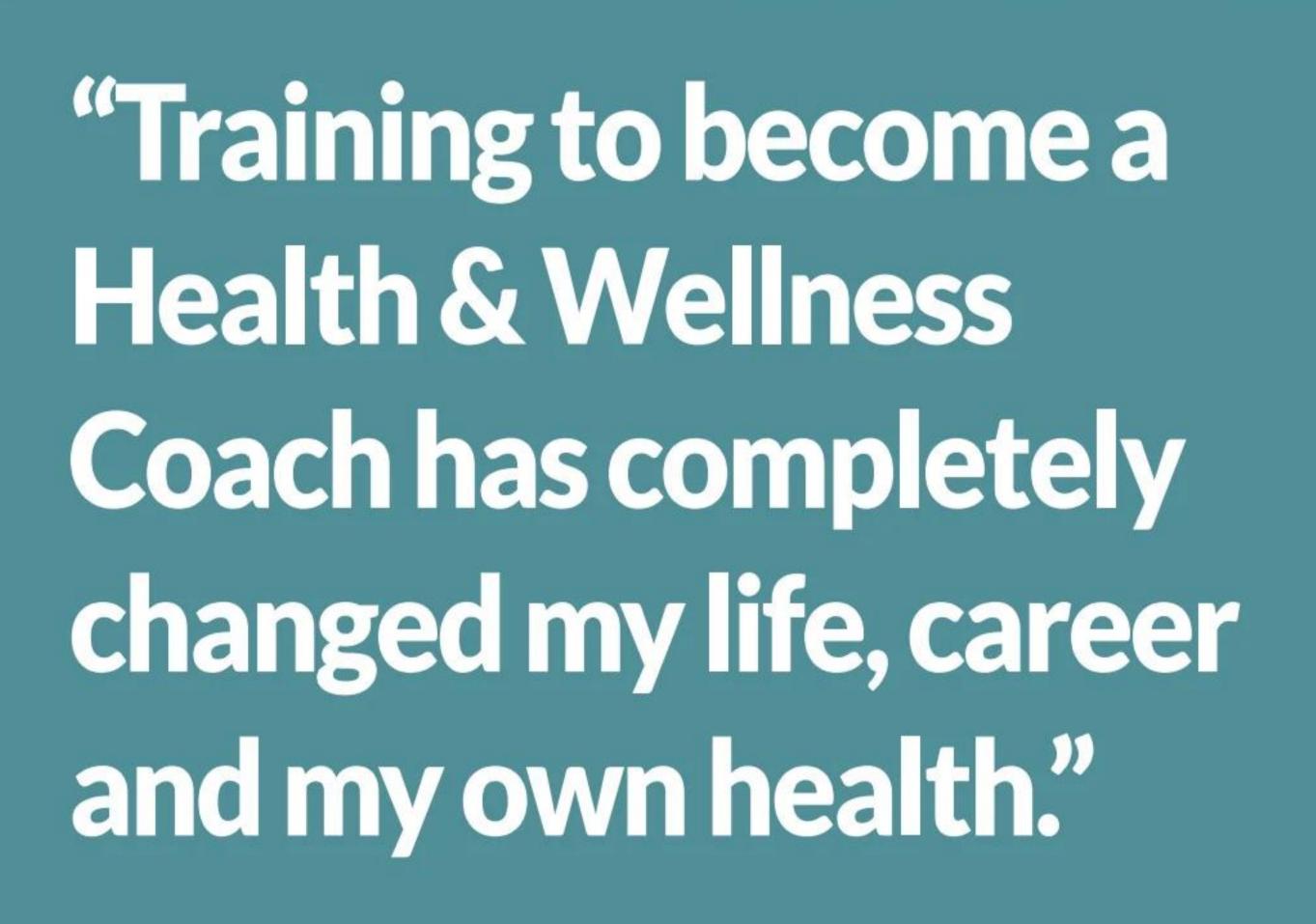
and improves overall life satisfaction,' she tells me. 'While play itself brings enjoyment, the anticipation of activities we enjoy can also have a positive impact and improve our mood – so planning enjoyable activities is also good for us.'

'While we acknowledge how important play is for a child's development, as we develop into adults and lives become so heavily focused on work and commitments, we stop playing,' adds Thomas.

'However, just like children, play is essential for our emotional wellbeing, as it can help relieve stress, improve brain function, boost creativity, improve relationships and connection and improve social skills.'

For Thomas, some opportunities for adult play might include playing with your own children, setting up some board games with family and friends, activities such as bowling, mini golf, karaoke, playing with animals, making jokes and laughing or creating something.

I've also found that using a phrase my own mum would often say to me: 'this too shall pass' – has really helped me and my son during the depths of navigating big feelings. At the end of each day, I remind him that he is kind, safe, important and loved. Sometimes I think I'm saying it more for myself than him, but I'm trying to be the parent I need as well as the one my son needs.



After spending 15 years in a high-pressure corporate marketing role with heavy responsibilities, Amanda suffered with high levels of stress and anxiety, rushing through life at 110mph with heart palpitations becoming the norm. Realising that her career no longer aligned with her values and seeing other women facing similar challenges, she set out on a mission to find and become a part of a solution.

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this year and am now in my dream job working for a company specialising in workplace wellbeing. I spend most days designing and delivering group coaching programmes for amazing companies like Nando's, universities and businesses in the US! Not only that, I've turned my own health around using learnings from the course, and after years feeling stressed and anxious, I've never felt better."

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e've all seen the movie version of a first date, where sparks fly the second a couple meet, but if you've ever been set up by a friend or tried online dating, you probably know that the reality is often rather different to the movie-fantasy version. It's so easy to fall into the trap of putting far too much expectation on these meetings, questioning if it could be the start of something, piling a huge amount of pressure on it, and yourself, to come across as the best, most fabulous version of you. And all that pressure can make dating no fun at all, as well as leaving you a complete bundle of nerves!

But Dr Lalitaa Suglani, psychologist and relationship expert, says it's 'completely normal' to struggle to be your true self in these situations.

'First dates can come with a lot of pressure, as you want to make a good impression while also navigating the uncertainties of whether there will be a romantic spark. Nervousness can also come from the fear of being rejected, or not meeting your date's expectations.

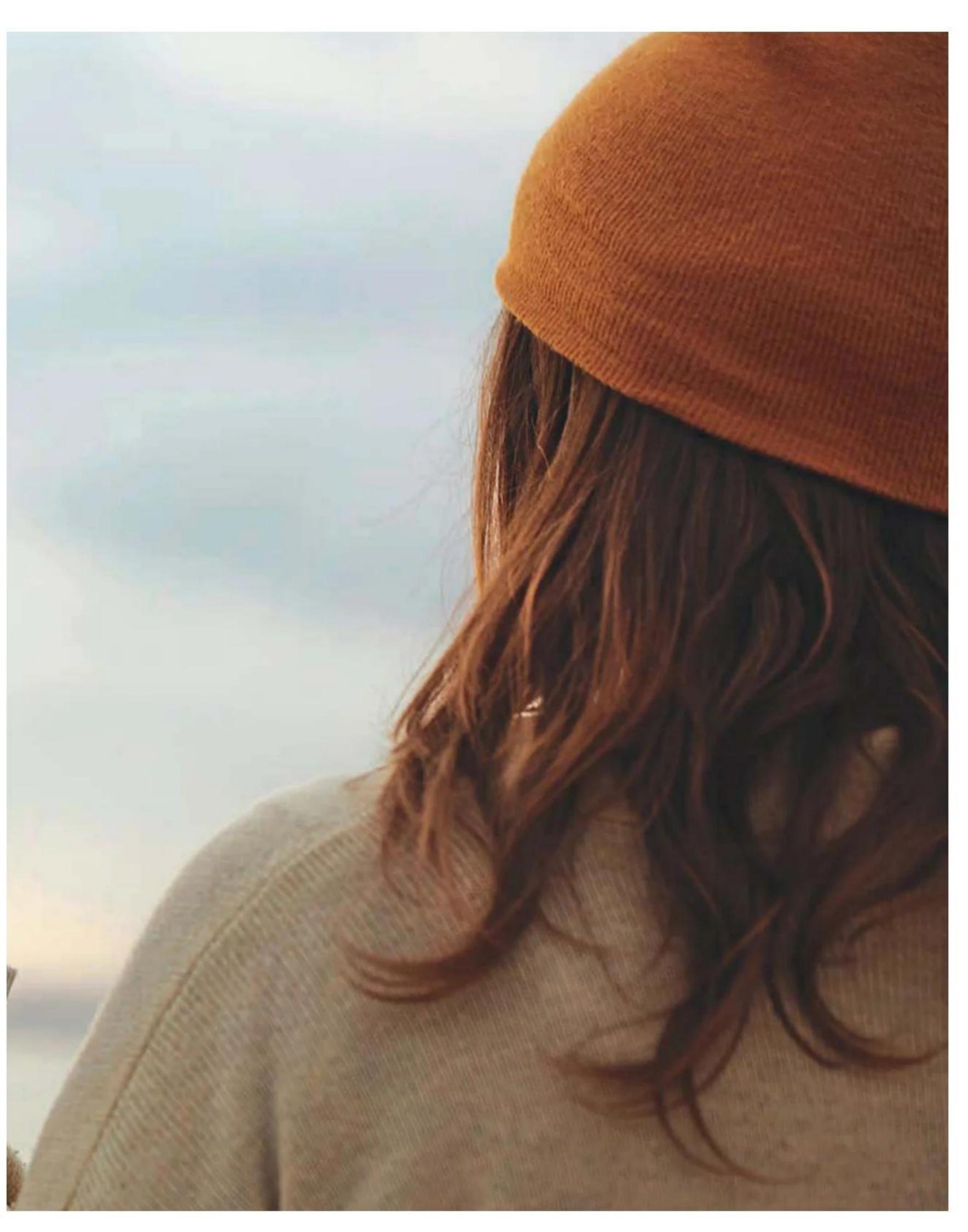
'Modern dating can be influenced by mixed messages and societal pressures, especially around masculinity. Many men, for example, feel they need to project strength and confidence, even when they might be feeling anxious or unsure. This pressure to conform to stereotypes or perceived ideals can make it difficult for anyone, not just men, to relax and be authentic on a first date.'

However, being able to show your true self is essential for forming meaningful connections, she says.

Embrace the nerves

'It can help to remind yourself that the person you're meeting is likely nervous, too! The best way to ease those nerves is by focusing on open communication, staying present in the moment, and trying to enjoy the experience rather than aiming for perfection.

'It's important to give yourself permission to feel nervous, and accept that nervousness is part of the process,' Suglani advises.



'When navigating a new relationship, these nerves often stem from a mix of excitement, fear of judgment, or uncertainty about how things will unfold. But it's important to remember that trust and comfort take time to build, especially with someone we don't know yet.

'Instead of ignoring the nervousness, it's helpful to see it as a natural part of the dating process. Embrace it as a sign that you care about making a genuine connection – and remind yourself that the other person may be feeling the same way as you. Patience, openness, and self-compassion are key in letting your true self shine over time.'

Change your mindset

In the lead-up to a date, it's important to focus on being authentic and true to yourself, Suglani says. 'While first impressions matter, trying too hard to fit a particular image or expectation can lead to unnecessary pressure.

Instead, remember that a date is about getting to know someone and allowing them to get to know you.'

Allow yourself to be open without worrying about 'ticking all the boxes' for the other person, she suggests.

When you can approach a date without the weight of these expectations, it's easier to form genuine connections.

'It's natural to want to show your best side, but the key to forming real, lasting connections is being authentic,' she says. 'By relaxing and embracing who you genuinely are, you'll not only feel more comfortable, but you'll also attract people who appreciate you for all the right reasons.

'Focus on your values, interests and what really matters to you rather than worrying about what the other person might want to see. Trying to shape yourself into someone else's ideal rarely works in the long term – instead, celebrate what makes you unique.'

In addition, try shifting your mindset from impressing the other person to simply having a good time. 'It can be helpful to keep in mind that dating is a two-way street and it's not just about whether they like you, but also whether you feel a connection with them,' Suglani says.

'Also, it is important to keep your expectations realistic. Not every date will lead to a long-term relationship, and that's OK! The goal should be to enjoy yourself, stay open, and see where the connection goes."

Lower the stakes

While it's completely understandable to put a lot of pressure on an early date, it's important to see the bigger picture.

'Often, we view these initial encounters as make-or-break moments, leading to high expectations about everything from how we look to how the conversation flows. This pressure can stem from a desire to impress or make a connection quickly, and sometimes from fear of rejection,' says Suglani.

'We tend to place extreme pressure on first dates as many of us have been conditioned to see dating as a high-stakes situation, where we're expected to make an instant connection or find "the one".

'But this mindset only increases stress, making it difficult to enjoy the process. To ease this pressure, it's important to reframe what early dates are really about. Instead of viewing them as a test or an audition, see them as an opportunity to meet someone new and enjoy the experience.'

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Kellie Gillespie-Wright looks at how improving our mental wellbeing can help us to cope with the ebb and flow of life

ass the tissues! It's the usual refrain at this time of year, as the cold, flu and whatever else germs seem to be gearing up for the winter. To try to head off the worst of them, we instinctively focus on bolstering our physical immunity. So we stock up on vitamins, get our flu jabs, and bundle up in warm clothing to protect ourselves from the cold. It's a good idea to take care, and these actions are essential for staying physically healthy during the colder months,

but there's another type of wellness that all too often goes overlooked: our psychological immunity. Keeping this in tip-top condition is key to how well we cope with life's ups and downs.

Because the reality is that we are constantly encountering challenges, setbacks and disappointments that affect our mood and can even jeopardise our wellbeing. These experiences can leave us feeling deflated, or worse. But more often than not, we find ways





to restore our mood and our ego – so how do we manage to bounce back and keep our self-esteem intact?

Luckily, our minds are more resilient than we realise, and our brains are equipped with built-in processes that help us cope with stress, maintain emotional stability, and pick ourselves up after a shock, injury, or disappointment. And that's the psychological immune system (PIS).

'The psychological immune system protects and maintains mental wellbeing in the face of emotional and psychological challenges just as the physical immune system defends the body against disease,' says Ian Stockbridge, founder and lead therapist at Hope Therapy & Counselling Services.

When this system is functioning well it enables us to reframe negative experiences, find meaning in adversity, and maintain a positive outlook even when faced with challenges. 'It helps us adapt to negative events by triggering a variety of psychological responses,' says Stockbridge, 'and these responses, in turn, help us reframe or attach meaning to our situation so that we can facilitate psychological change and, ultimately, recovery.' On the other hand, a weak psychological immune system can make coping with life's challenges difficult, leading to overwhelming feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression if not managed properly. This can result in a reliance on maladaptive coping behaviours, such as smoking, alcohol abuse, eating disorders, or drug use.

A physiological link

Some physiological problems also have psychological roots, and a growing body of evidence suggests that many illnesses that affect the body, from acne to arthritis, headaches to heart disease, and cold sores to cancer, are influenced, for better or worse, by our emotions. 'The body and the nervous system are inherently intertwined with



our psychological immune system,' says clinical psychologist Dr Claire Tobin, 'and physical and psychosocial healing will often occur in tandem.' So it makes a lot of sense to strengthen our psychological immune system, regardless of the time of year.

Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert first coined the term 'Psychological Immune System' in the noughties.
This system beavers away in the background, subconsciously developing 'psychological antibodies' that help to increase our capacity for resilience and adaptation, training and rewiring our brain to learn from adversity, and protecting us against the

psychological damage caused by failure, trauma and stress.

'Life will inevitably throw us curveballs,' says Dr Tobin. 'The psychological immune system is the resilience to weather these storms.

It is our ability to stay psychologically buoyant amid grief, traumatic experiences, stress, and transitions.

It is the mind's ability to maintain a sense of hope and meaning in the midst of hardship, distress, and loss.'

So, what's actually going on with our psychological immune system, and how can we keep it running smoothly? Think of it as having three main strands working together to help manage our mental and emotional wellbeing.

First up, we have 'Approach Beliefs'.

This is all about how we see the world –
do we view it as a place full of opportunity
or a chaotic mess? To strengthen this
part, it helps to focus on positive
thinking, set realistic goals, and find
meaning in what we do. It's all about
personal growth, seeing challenges not as
threats but as chances to learn and grow.

Then, there's the 'Monitoring-Creating-Executing Beliefs' part. This one helps us stay prepared for whatever life throws at us. It's about being open to change, welcoming new perspectives, cultivating

creativity, building confidence in your abilities, and setting clear, achievable goals.

Finally, we have 'Self-Regulating Beliefs'. This part keeps us balanced by managing our

PROBLEM SOLVING

Being able to identify, analyse, and solve problems effectively can reduce the impact of stress and make you feel more in control and competent. This can help you to navigate challenges more smoothly and lessen the emotional strain of stress.

NEXT STEPS

Watch Daniel Gilbert, The surprising science of happiness (Ted Talks)

Listen OneMinding Podcast

– 'Do we have a Psychological Immune System?'

Read The Psychological Immune System: A New Look at Protection and Survival by Herman Kagan

FLEXIBILITY

Being able to switch up your thinking and behaviour when things change is incredibly important because it helps you to avoid getting stuck in negative thought patterns and encourages you to find fresh solutions to problems.



GROWTH

A growth mindset, or the belief that you can improve your abilities through effort and learning, is another great way to fortify your mental defences, making you more likely to bounce back from setbacks and keep pushing forward.

emotions and impulses. You can strengthen it by learning techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, or guided meditations to keep your emotions in check.

Building impulse control also helps – try counting to 10, take a moment to consider the consequences of your actions and explore other options.

Together these work away in the background to help us make sense of tough situations, find the silver lining,

ACCEPTANCE

'Acceptance of difficult emotions can ultimately strengthen the psychological immune system by helping us to process them rather than being in a constant battle with them,' says Stockbridge. 'This acceptance can then build emotional resilience.'

and move forward. But there are also plenty of ways we can support them!

Remember, your psychological immune system, much like your physical one, is vital to your overall health and wellbeing, so as you prepare for winter, don't just focus on your physical health; take the time to nurture your mental resilience as well because by boosting your psychological immunity, you ensure that you not only survive but thrive, no matter what the season brings.

PRESENT

Focusing on the here and now helps stop negative thoughts that can lead to anxiety and depression. Mindfulness helps us notice when our thoughts are escalating and enables us to adopt strategies to better ground ourselves,' says Stockbridge. 'Cultivating a mindful practice can help us to accept our thoughts and feelings without judgment.'

PURPOSE

Having a clear purpose can also come in useful here. 'When we can find a clearly defined sense of purpose, we are often more able to see the challenges we face as opportunities rather than as obstacles that can not be overcome,' says Stockbridge.

MANAGE

Managing your emotions in a healthy,
balanced way is crucial because it helps
keep emotions from becoming overwhelming
or destructive. Research shows people who are
good at regulating their emotions tend to
experience less anxiety and are better at
handling stress. Deep breathing,
cognitive reappraisal, and
mindfulness can really help
sharpen this skill.

GRATITUDE

Practising gratitude is powerful.
By regularly acknowledging and appreciating the good things in life, you can boost your psychological resilience, reduce stress, and increase your overall sense of wellbeing.

POSITIVE

Optimistic people are more likely to push through challenges, recover quickly from setbacks, and maintain a positive outlook on life. Optimism has also been linked to lower stress levels and greater overall wellbeing.

SLEEP

A consistent sleep pattern of seven to nine hours each night can restore cognitive function and reset the PIS, making it easier to handle challenges. 'Chronic sleep loss can weaken the psychological immune system, making individuals more susceptible to anxiety, mood fluctuations, and other psychological and emotional issues,' says Stockbridge.



Hello!

If the changing of the seasons has left you feeling newly motivated to make

some changes in your own life, what better way to put the focus back onto you than with a subscription to your favourite magazine? It's the ideal tool to help you prioritise looking after yourself, packed full of inspiring yet simple ways to bring about small improvements in your life that make a big difference to how you feel. Featuring leading authors, experts and therapists, it's sure to help you 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!

Editor-in-Chief
Psychologies

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Embracing our darkness

When journaling, exploring our negative, repressed feelings can help us to become more enlightened, writes Jackee Holder

As winter sets in with shorter days and longer nights, nature nudges us to turn inwards. This season of stillness invites us to slow down, reflect, and dive deeper into self exploration through practices such as shadow-work journaling, an

empowering tool for self awareness and transformation.

Winter mirrors the shadow work Carl Jung described as the process of exploring unconscious parts of ourselves such as repressed thoughts, feelings and impulses. Though it's tempting to avoid this, especially when inspirational quotes give the illusion of progress without requiring us to confront our discomfort or fear, suppressing these parts doesn't stop them from having an impact. As Jung said: 'One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.' Journaling can help to integrate these hidden aspects of ourselves, providing a way of making the darkness conscious.

When we journal, it's easy to be seduced by insights, without probing the deeper emotions we might be grappling with. During a recent workshop with health professionals, I introduced myself by breezing through my career highlights, and avoiding the struggles I'd faced and still face. A participant called me out in a good way: 'You've shared the good stuff, but what barriers and obstacles have you overcome?' Beneath my polished narrative was a more vulnerable story – one that included personal struggles and the weight of a recent family trauma. This personal experience reminded me of how essential honesty and vulnerability is in shadow work.

Shadow work requires bravery. It's more than just venting your emotions. Just like physical fitness, emotional growth doesn't happen by accident. It requires deliberate effort. Try reflecting on these prompts:

- What's truly behind this emotion or feeling?
- What am I avoiding or not expressing?
- Nepression doesn't make these parts disappear. They continue to influence our behaviours, thoughts and emotions. For example, overworking might mask a deep sense of loneliness, or a health challenge could originate from a hidden addiction whose source lies in a past painful event or experience. The beauty of shadow work is that it's not just about uncovering the uncomfortable. It also helps



us rediscover strengths, talents, and creativity buried beneath fear or self-doubt.

A personal example of recovering strengths in shadow work was reclaiming my love for dance. As a child I loved dancing, but body-shaming experiences caused me to feel self-conscious. Through shadow work I confronted my shame and negative self image and slowly reclaimed this creative part of myself. Now when I dance I feel whole, confident and joyous. I have recovered a lost part of myself.

Once you've begun reflecting on your emotions you can deepen the work by trying this next exercise inspired by the poem *A View Of Things* by Scottish poet Edwin Morgan. Morgan reflects on objects and themes in life that he loves and things he dislikes in a poetic way. It provides a way of holding duality, a theme central to shadow work.

Start by making two lists: 'Things I love' and 'things I dislike', (or 'things that irritate me' if that feels more accurate). This exercise may seem straightforward, but it helps uncover deeper, often contradictory emotions. Love and dislike often coexist, revealing the complex duality of our inner lives.

Shadow work isn't easy and can feel like venturing into uncharted territory. If it becomes overwhelming, take a break. Dr James Pennebaker, a psychologist and leading researcher on trauma and journaling, offers the Flip Out Rule – when the writing feels too intense, pause. Ground yourself by taking a walk, calling a friend, or simply breathing before returning to your journal. This is probably some of the hardest work you will do in your journaling, but it can also be the most rewarding. Please be gentle with yourselves. I look forward to guiding you further next month.

jackeeholder.com; @jackeeholderinspires



hate winter!' are words I have increasingly heard over the last few years, and not just in casual conversation when there's been a sudden downpour, or icy mornings mean that wonderful, finger-numbing job, defrosting the car. No, from September onwards, even when we're often still enjoying golden late-summer days, our socials are full of posts and reels offering us top tips on how best to grit our teeth through the seemingly eternal battle with winter. No wonder we may offer a lukewarm welcome to the chilliest season.

At face value, it is easy to see why the prospect poses some challenges. After all, winter arrives on the blustery, dark coat-tails of autumn, bringing with it worse weather, colder temperatures and the chaos of Christmas.

Because, whether we celebrate it or not, winter is often synonymous with the festive season and, having already been marketed Christmas for months (I spotted mince pies being loaded onto the shelves on August 27 this year!), it can feel as though the season is almost endless. We are completely sick of it by the time we see in the new year, forgetting that actually winter has only officially been with us for a few days (winter officially begins on December 21!).

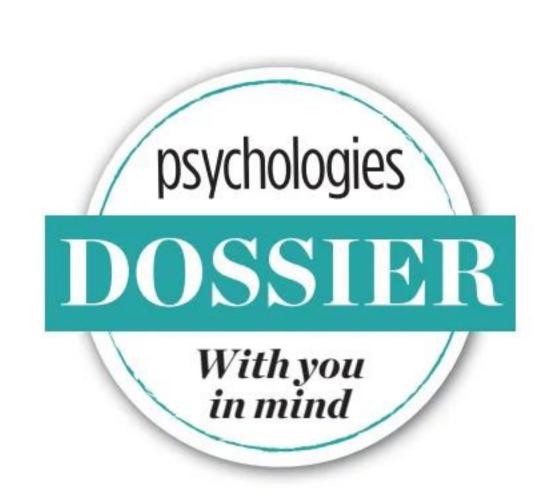
Now, there's no denying that winter is tougher for those who are not a fan of a drop in temperature, but there are aspects that we make hard for ourselves. We make no room for winter. We don't give it any space. We make zero adjustments. We stick to the same routines: we set the same alarm, eat the same breakfast, work the same hours and then complain that we find winter challenging. Of course we do! But that's not winter's fault. Much as we wouldn't try to climb a mountain in flip-flops, winter should see us adjusting to align with and live in the season.











As well as reviewing how we feel, there are some practical adjustments we can make in winter to give us a better seasonal experience. Beth Kempton, best-selling author of *Calm Christmas*, tells me 'Simplicity is the key to a calm winter. Simplifying the external, embodied by your spaces and schedules, can usher in order and quietude. Meanwhile, simplifying the internal, through presence and mindfulness, can foster deep tranquillity.'

It's also a good time to review workload, especially in those early stages when winter is inviting us to slow down. Berry reminds me that, in December, we try to deliver a full month's work in just two weeks, as businesses around us close or adjust their hours. Add that to increased social obligations and we can start winter feeling very overwhelmed.

Kempton agrees: 'If possible, try bending and shaping your workload so you are not buried under a mound of tasks. If you work shifts, or in an industry like retail or hospitality that ramps up as Christmas approaches, take extra care to schedule downtime and nourish yourself with good food, plenty of hydration and lots of sleep.'

It's never too early to align with the energy of the season. Berry tells me 'From autumn onwards, I'll be really aware of how many social plans I am making and what I am over-committing to. I make different suggestions of things to do with friends, things that will help our wellbeing rather than over-indulging and I cut back on visiting lots of people to make sure I don't feel exhausted by the end of December.'

From an evolutionary perspective, winter was a time for small gatherings. The weather was too poor to travel and so we would gather with our immediate clans, sharing stories and food.

Our brain still craves those cosy connections. At a time when society is telling us to have loud, noisy gatherings, our brains are hoping for deeper conversations and gentle connection.

Kempton echoes the importance of managing your social calendar. 'It's healthy for all of us to guard against overcommitment at this time of year. If you have children, consider reducing their after-school activities and use the time to do more things together at home. Think ahead. November and December weekends and evenings are the perfect times to prepare for the season in a way that feels joyful and enriching, not stressful and draining.'

In a season where it is so easy to get swept away by the social and business demands of others, Kempton issues a timely reminder: 'Be sure to include yourself in the list of people who need attention at this time of year.'

We have a tendency to block winter out. When the temperature lowers and the light dims, we flick a light switch and crank up the heating. This can mean we lose touch with winter and the adjustments we need to make, including being more intentional about rest. Berry tells me: 'We don't need to hibernate, but adjusting behaviours to suit less daylight hours is really important.' We may not be able to start work any later, or push back the school run, but we can get into bed earlier, put down glaring screens and read by gentle lamplight. We can stop the frenetic absorption of external information and tune into our own desires and ambitions. We can slowly exhale as winter wraps us in cosy softness and offers us a period of rest and recovery after a high-energy year.

Winter doesn't have to be so difficult. There are many gifts and opportunities that it can afford us, but we need to budge up a bit and make space for it in our year. When we spend our time wishing we could avoid winter and head straight to spring, or even summer, we are missing out. Winter doesn't need to be hard; we just need to make it a bit easier.





Nature's retreat

t is easy to think of winter as a season of nothingness. The rhetoric we are sold is of hibernation. A fallow time of year, where nothing much happens. Yet there is a definitive energy to winter which leaves us feeling reenergised, restored and rejuvenated. Unlike other seasons, winter energy is gentle, presenting not with a loud 'ta daa!', but quietly pulsing through the season. With a little care, we can plug into this gentle energy and feel the benefits of winter.

When we celebrate the flowers blossoming in spring, we forget that all the essential growth of those buds and leaves happened over winter. Far from being a 'dead' season, it is a season of preparation and (literal) growth. Winter prepares us for the year ahead. It allows us to gently unfurl and plan whilst having productive and meaningful rest. It is a period of 'active recovery'; not the high-energy workout of summer, but the beautiful ooeygooey yoga stretch of winter. We don't

stop, but we do slow down and it is in the slowing down that we discover magical winter energy.

This idea can feel somewhat jarring. We reward being busy so much that we can struggle to see rest as productive, all the while becoming exhausted and burnt out. It's important to see winter as a gently energetic season, offering us all the benefits of embracing a different approach. Winter balances out the continual activity of summer, with more mindful growth and development.



Winter
gives us that
signal to rest,
be quiet and
use that time
to reflect"

'I work with people who dread winter but I really like to reframe it,' says psychologist Victoria Baverstock. 'Winter gives us the gift of a retreat every year. People spend thousands to go on retreats whereas nature gives us that gift, we don't have to pay anything for it! Winter gives us that signal to rest, be quiet and use that time to reflect. Winter gives us that opportunity to review and plan and look at where we are, look at what we've achieved so far that year. We don't have to get on a plane, we don't have to spend money, this natural retreat is nature's gift.'

It is in rest that the magic of winter's energy lies. Not simply stopping, but

restoring ourselves, ready for our next burst of activity. Far from being a waste of time, winter engages us in a different type of activity, leaving us calm, restored and refocused.

Author Beth Kempton fuels her creativity with winter energy. 'I adore writing at this time of year. It's so cosy! There is something very special about the quiet of early winter mornings. At 5am it's still dark outside and the light of a candle seems like an invitation to listen and write. Candlelight, firelight, fairy lights – there is something very magical about winter glow. Everything slows at this time of year and I can sink deeper into my ideas.'

I have always seen winter as a recharging period. Baverstock concurs that it is 'a time to gather and recoup what has been lost or spent throughout the year'. I relish the opportunity to recharge my batteries and experience a renewed energy. Pushing through all seasons with a summer vibe, diet and expectation, doesn't serve me well. It leaves me feeling as though I am fighting against winter, rather than being deeply emerged in it and benefitting from its beautiful restorative energy.

When we are caught up in the busy, the noise and the chaos, it is easy for us to shout over the quiet voice of winter, inviting us to tune in, rest and restore. Once we see winter as a time to find softer energy then we can stop battling with the season. Life becomes easier and more doable and we stop gritting our teeth whilst wishing fervently for spring. The gentle energy of winter is beautiful, restorative, calm and comforting.

Plugging into this softer energy really allows us to do more than we imagined, but it's a different kind of busy. This isn't about burning out. It's about leaning into and embracing the slow-down so that we can build ourselves up for a successful year ahead. It is the difference between

winter's soft candlelight and the glaring floodlight of summer.

Whilst we blame winter for dark nights, we need to remember that winter solstice actually signals the start of lighter days. Winter is a season that brings more light, gradually waking us earlier and stretching out our days. But it does this slowly. We can also move through winter at a slower pace, taking time to really lean into the natural retreat that we are being offered.

Every expert I speak to agrees that new year's resolutions can be jarring if they require dramatic and high-energy changes at a time of year when nature is encouraging us to consider and contemplate before we leap into action. However, this doesn't mean we can't achieve. Baverstock encourages clients to have a framework for winter, which doesn't need to be rigid or serious. 'It could be as simple as having a grey-day plan, where you have simple low-energy tasks that absolutely make life simpler and more joyful, such as auditing your wardrobe. Getting these tasks done makes you feel so light and there's no pressure involved. There is a playful element that we can weave through, which is so important. Life can be serious, and the more joy and light-heartedness we can introduce at every moment the better. Instead of white-knuckling it through winter trying to keep up with manic resolutions we can ask "what books do I want to read, what podcasts do I want to listen to?" This is an opportunity to put an arm around yourself and take that time to nurture yourself. It is a real time of replenishing.'

Seeing winter not as a barren battleground, but as a playful space, with gentle energy, that encourages us to explore and restore makes me excited for the months ahead. I make my grey-day plan and dig out my cosiest fluffy socks. Bring it on winter, I am ready for my retreat!



Direction for reflection

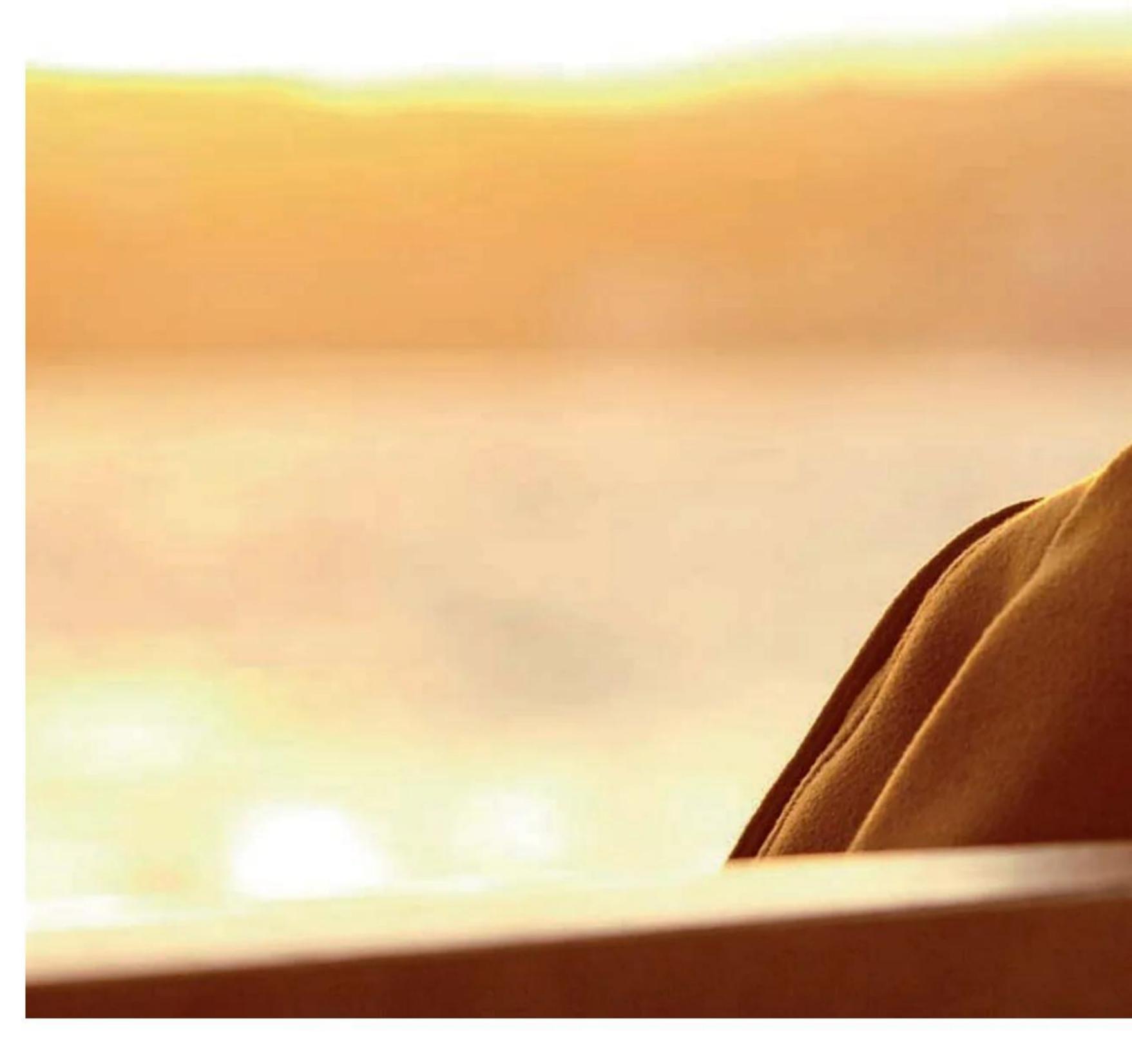
inter is my favourite season for reflection.
Whilst I absolutely love a goal, a list and a plan, my deeper-thinking happens when the temperature cools and distractions are minimised. For this reason, I launch my 'new year' resolutions in April, gifting myself an indulgent extra three months to think and plot and plan.

Prior to this practice, I started
January with a list of resolutions for
the year ahead that just didn't resonate
with me. Goals that I felt I should do
rather than what I really wanted to
achieve and so, inevitably, they were
discarded before the month was out.
I need my time to meaningfully reflect
and the natural conditions of winter are
perfect to do so. That said, it took me
a while to get comfortable with it.

Much as the trees shed their leaves in autumn, I too am left feeling bare and exposed come winter. All the distractions and plans that I busy myself with throughout the year fall away and I am left alone with my thoughts. Whilst this period of reflection allows me to explore my ideas and ambitions in a deeper and more thoughtful way, it also means that some of the thoughts or experiences I have been trying to avoid can come to light.

I am not alone in this discomfort.

Psychologist Victoria Baverstock tells me that she works with many clients who find winter reflection exposing and a little scary. Her advice is that your mindset is key. 'There is that sense that



all of the noise has quietened down and we are just left with ourselves, and so the way that we frame that is important. Instead of thinking 'I am left here with my thoughts' and having an image of a scary dark empty room, think of winter reflection as a nurturing space.'

The attitude with which we start journaling will change the experience for us. If we think 'I'm going to journal

about how I didn't achieve a single goal or intention this year', then that may not be very therapeutic or helpful. It's important not to confuse a reflective mood with a negative or self-critical one and we need to pay attention to the tone of our inner voice and thoughts. There is nothing to be served from berating ourselves, but an honest examination





of our year and how we feel about it is incredibly helpful. Kempton reiterates a kinder approach to reflection, saying: 'Be gentle on yourself. Constructive reflecting begins with looking at your year through a lens of grace. Imagine helping a cherished friend with this exercise; you would be kind, thoughtful and gentle. Show yourself the same consideration.'

Even with some prompts and guidance, there's no doubt that sometimes uncomfortable thoughts or memories can arise when we reflect. Baverstock offers me the reassurance she offers her clients: 'In today's world we are so used to being comfortable. Comfortable is great, who doesn't like to be comfortable? But there is also real growth to be had in uncomfortable

spaces. I am not saying we never grow when comfortable, but the most profound growth and personal insights come from those in-between times. That's where that real inspiration, the "aha" moments, those personal realisations come.'

When I question what would be useful to do in those moments, Baverstock reminds me 'It's ok if it's uncomfortable, it's not going to be prolonged, just short bursts. Just start for 10 minutes. It doesn't need to be extreme. Feel your way into it and try it on as a jacket and see how it feels, get used to it and remember it's different for everyone. There is never a one size fits all. Play with that time, play with that space, find out how it feels for you. That inner wisdom will come through when it is given the opportunity to speak.'

All my conversations around winter have led me remember what I love about it. The opportunity to go deeper, to connect, to re-root myself in nature and embrace the gentle glow and warmth that winter offers. We can think of winter as a heavy and dark season, but actually there is a lightness and playfulness that we can intentionally bring to our reflection which allows us to transition into the next season with gratitude and grace.

Now is the perfect time to curl up with your notebook, sit back and soulfully reflect with direction. Have some direction in your reflection and let your inner wisdom find its voice.



psychologies.co.uk test

WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL WINTER WELLBEING FOCUS?

The right mindset can help you flourish all winter – take our test to find out what key seasonal shift will bring you the most benefits

Circle the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section, or sections, you circled most, to find out how to protect your winter wellbeing

1 You feel most nourished by ▼ Learning and growing	Doing your bestOnly human	
Being your best	5 The hardest challenge for	9 When spring comes round,
Feeling connected	you in winter is feeling	you'd like to feel
	♥ Isolated	♥ Calmer and less busy
2 As winter approaches,	♦ Tired	 Connected to your
you can struggle to	● Lost	life's meaning
Keep up the habits that	■ Bored	Excited for the year ahead
support you		■ Strong, healthy and balanced□
 Find something positive to 	6 You'd thrive more if you could	
focus on	♥ Set boundaries	10 If you could, you'd dedicate
Hold onto the bigger picture	♦ Have more time	next year to
Stay connected to a sense	Believe in yourself	▼ Learning something new□
of purpose	■ Trust it'll work out	◆ Looking after yourself
		Being more present
3 You're at your best when you feel	7 To give yourself a lift,	■ Developing your self-belief
♥ Confident	you look for	
♦ Balanced	♥ Validation	
Useful	♦ Distraction	
■ Relaxed	Communication	
	■ Stimulation	
4 You have to remind yourself		
that you're	8 Your best winters involve	Turn the page to
♥ Good enough	♥ Organised weekends	find your winter
♦ Doing OK	♦ Purposeful weekends	wellbeing focus



What will make your winter wonderful?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

Reset

If you know you feel your best in the summer, you may be wary of the dip in mood that can come as the days get shorter. Your default response may be to put extra effort into organising social connections, but there is much to be gained by being more conscious about what you say yes to, and leaning into the naturally slower pace of the season. Instead of thinking of winter as the end of the year, try reframing it as a time to reset in preparation for the next one.

In the run up to Christmas, self-care can fall off the agenda, but rather than waiting until the new year for an upgrade, taking time to put the right habits in place now will help to create a protective foundation of resilience.

An audit of your daily habits and how you use your time may be a good place to start. Ask yourself what you could let go of, or make space for in your daily life so you can feel more joyful.

Think small – if there's a lifestyle change you're thinking about trying in the new year, can you take a tiny step towards it right now?

A reset is essentially an investment in yourself and when you're in a good place, all your relationships benefit.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY •

Restore

The early days of winter can offer an opportunity to pause, consolidate and top up your inner resources before the festive season. You might normally view this period as your chance to get ahead, but if you typically end up exhausted by Christmas, then this could be the year to do something different.

Could you reframe this time as your window for some strategic restoration before life gets hectic? It might be a challenge but if you can, try to resist ruminating on the tasks ahead for now and instead commit to regular short periods when you consciously switch from doing to being, allowing yourself to simply rest in the here and now.

Periods of conscious restoration are especially important for naturally giving types, who tend to stretch themselves thin by feeling responsible for other people's happiness. Start by simply taking a few moments to check in with what is going on for you on a regular basis, paying attention to what you might need.

Relaxation is key, but there's more to restoration than just resting – ask yourself, what would you like to restore in your life that you have let go of? For some, that might be key connections with people who really matter, for others, it might be laughter and moments of joy.



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY

Recognise

Recognising the good in yourself will boost your confidence at any time of year, but it's particularly key during times of transition which can leave you feeling out of kilter. You may be aware that shorter, darker days lower your mood and energy levels, but still feel frustrated when it impacts you every year. It's more than a physical effect – low mood can mean you reframe your life through a negative lens, shaking your confidence, self-image and self-belief.

If left unchecked, it can leave you questioning whether you can cope or what's the purpose of your life. Recognising this is the key to managing its impact on you this year. It's also about taking time to consciously recognise your strengths and achievements, as an antidote to your mind's negativity bias. That might mean mentally noting something that went well at the end of every day and what part you played in making it happen.

Tempting as it may be to hibernate until spring, this is a time when you will thrive on connection, support and validation. It's also a time to turn up the self-compassion – not only will being kinder to yourself protect your self-belief, it will help create the emotional space you need to tune into winter's tiny moments of joy, and to be more open and understanding of others.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY

Reflect

We may associate winter with hunkering down and hibernating, but with the right mindset, it can also be a time of growth and new possibilities. Your key for a wonderful winter is to lean into the seasonal shift that invites us to slow down, and find more time to reflect and relax.

If you have a tendency to overthink, it can be a challenge not to get caught up in planning for the busy weeks ahead. At times, it might even feel like the best way to get through winter is to emotionally detach or tread water until spring. But by staying present, responsive and reflective, you may notice abundant moments of joy.

A focus on reflection is about embracing what the season has to offer by staying present, so it might help to spend regular time outdoors in green spaces.

As someone who likes to live life to the full, your instinct might be to resist the naturally slower pace of this time of year. But reflection can also help you make space, practically and emotionally, for new people and opportunities that come your way. With this in mind, can you let go of any self-imposed pressure to live your life a certain way? You might be surprised to find that frees up emotional energy and reveals the abundance of possibilities around you.

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



IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK



I am very bad at asking for help.
I am not proud of this, but it's true.
This weekend, the one I love observed that

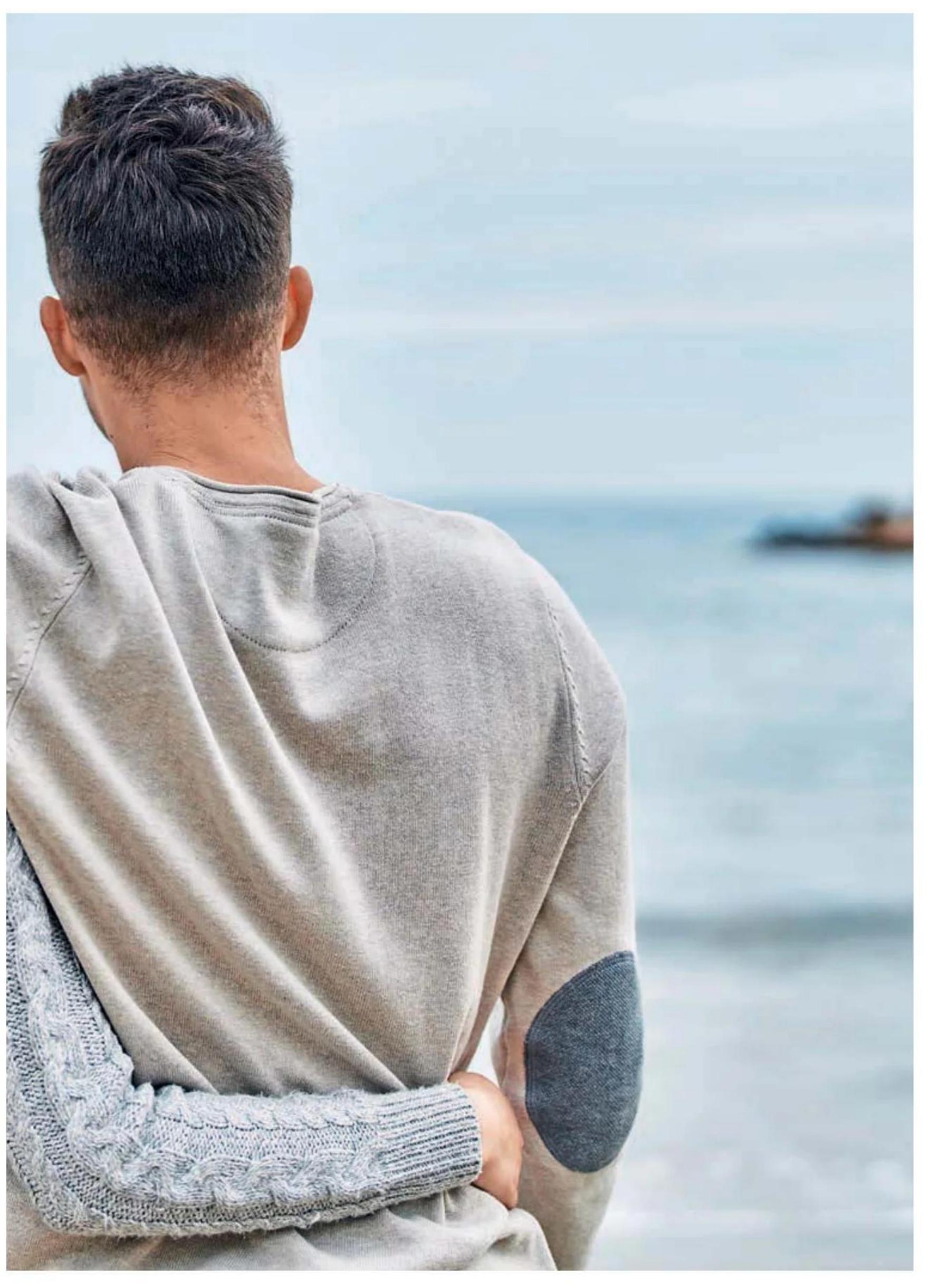
I hold things very tightly, that I am reluctant to let go in case everything tumbles to the ground. Earlier, we'd been walking along the coastline near a city during a brief weekend away from the everyday. It's the same sea as the one I spin in like a whirling witch, but instead of treading barefoot across bladderwrack and barnacled rocks,

the beach is edged with a pavement, so I was walking in my trainers with the black and white satin laces. I love those trainers, they make me feel a bit glamorous when the rest of me is tired and sagging. I was also wearing my tiny jeans that are a bit big at the moment because I am thin from not asking for help when I need it.

A fake fur jacket I bought recently in a vintage shop was hugging my body because autumn was floating in on the breeze and when I'm tired I feel the cold. I'd painted my lashes black and pencilled a line along my eyelids because my eyes are one

of my best features and I was trying to stare real life down into submission.

I've written before about being an all or nothing person – vibrant and bursting with energy or subdued and vulnerable. The annoying thing about the one I love is that he can instinctively tell when I am nothing: he says it's like the clouds passing over the sun, a fleeting shadow. We stopped above the beach to read a sign about a well-known artist who used to paint the same sky a hundred years ago. Maybe as he painted, he breathed the same recycled air that drifted up from the waves towards us. There was a bench that I sat on and



stared at the smudged sky through railings. Gazed at slime-skimmed rocks tapering towards the shoreline. Felt like nothing because I had stopped for a small moment and acknowledged that I usually hold everything. He sat down next to me and I know he noticed the clouds passing over my sun. I stood up and sat down again on his knees, curled myself into him and tried to breathe the nothing away.

My struggle to reach out for help is the result of years of parenting alone and mistrust in systems that have failed me. But if I really reflect upon why I am fiercely independent to the point

of making life harder than it needs to be, there are a couple of other reasons, too.

Firstly, I'm an empath: I like this aspect of my personality, but there's a flip side to my emotional superpower. I feel everything so keenly that I fret too much about the impact my life can have

on others. I worry that I will be offloading too much and having an adverse effect on their own lives. I forget that feeling able to ask for help, making myself vulnerable, is an act of trust. I reframe it as neediness rather than the healthy human connection it can be.

I also feel that I should be able to hold everything that life has thrown at me, that I have made my own choices and mistakes in life and I should be responsible for them. I know that this is harsh and that I should be kinder to myself, speak to myself as I would speak to a friend, but instead I retreat and try to make myself as small as possible, although the feelings inside me feel huge and uncontainable.

As I perched on the lap of the man who could hear my ragged breathing and wanted to understand me, I tried to whisper the nothing to him, the huge and uncontainable nothing. He listened as I explained that when I step away from my everyday life it looks too big for one person. As it turned out, there was very little practically that could be done to remedy that – the changes I would like to make are not currently possible beyond what I'm already doing – but it was enough to be heard and reassured that I am doing the best that I can. It was enough to be held.

Brené Brown said 'courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen'. I wonder if there is a kind of misplaced arrogance in trying to be an island. We are all of us fallible, breakable even. If Brené is correct (and she usually is), asking for help is an act of bravery. Another wise person, Barack Obama, said that 'asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength'. I want to learn how to be braver.

"Feeling able to ask for help, making myself vulnerable, is an act of trust"



his summer, debate has been raging on our letters pages over whether we at Psychologies should do more to cater for men. The consensus seems to be that we want to keep Psychologies focused on women, but with some helpful insights as to how to help the men in our lives to deal with their mental health, too. So this month we're kicking that off with some ideas about how to start conversations with men around how they're feeling. Because the reality is that society has come a long way when it comes to

discussing our mental health, but it can still be difficult for men in particular to open up when they're struggling – or for us to know how to broach the topic with them.

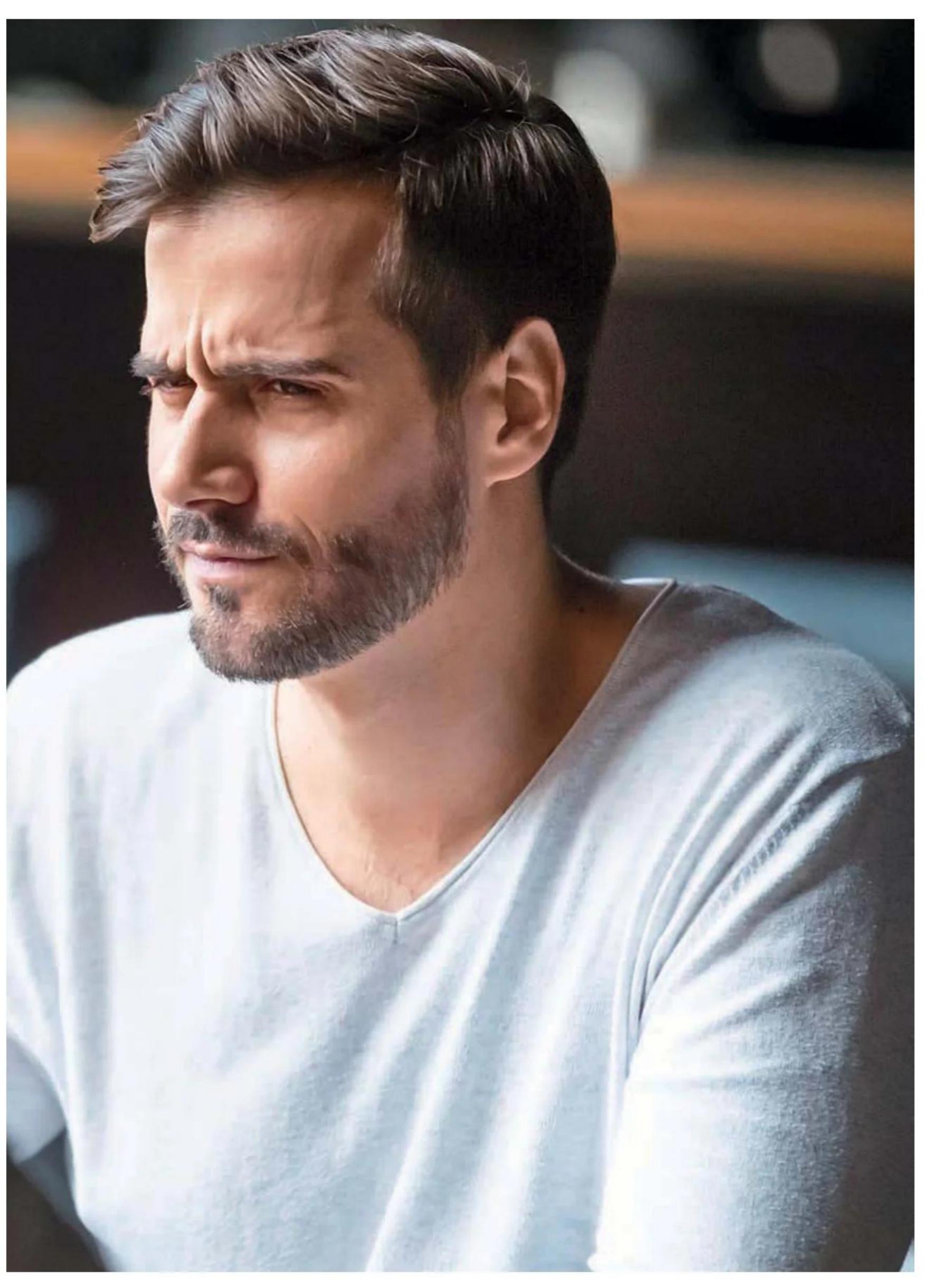
'We know that men in particular still struggle to speak openly about their emotions,' says Sarah McIntosh, chief executive of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England.

'Traditional male stereotypes and the idea that showing emotion is a sign of weakness are fuelling stigma and preventing lifesaving conversations from happening,' McIntosh adds. 'We all need to be more proactive if we think a friend, regardless of gender, is struggling with their mental health or demonstrating suicidal behaviours.'

Tom Ellis, director of the Young Men's Health Literacy initiative at men's health charity Movember, explained how to have an open and honest conversation with male family and friends about their mental health...

Start gently

Don't ambush your friend with a big heart-to-heart conversation when they may not yet be ready.



'Try to avoid being too serious or direct right out the gate,' suggests Ellis. 'Rather than starting with a question like, "Hey I've been worried about you", instead try to casually mention something that made you think about them to segue onto more tricky topics.'

2 Ask open-ended questions

'Ask open-ended questions to give the person a chance to share more info,' adds Ellis. 'For example: "I've noticed you've seemed pretty flat lately... anything on your mind?" Versus

a closed question like, "Are you OK?", which can be answered with a one-word reply.'

Need some ideas? Ellis suggests the following introductory lines:

- How have you been feeling lately?
- What's been on your mind?
- How has work been going for you?
- What have you been up to lately?
 Tone can also be important during these conversations.

'It's not just what you ask, but how you ask it,' says Ellis. 'Aim to be gentle, patient, and kind. It'll help put them at ease and encourage them to open up.' Opening up about your own struggles, if you feel comfortable, can also help get the ball rolling.

3 Be a good listener If they start to speak, try to resist

If they start to speak, try to resist the urge to jump in with advice and solutions. The important thing is to give them space to open up and let them know you're really hearing them.

'A tip to ensure that you're listening is to periodically repeat back what they've shared, and ask if you've understood them correctly,' recommends Ellis. 'But simply asking questions lets them know you're engaged and listening.'

4 Be mindful of your body language

Body language can sometimes be more powerful than words, so make sure you are giving the conversation your full attention.

'Put your phone down for a bit and make sure you are prepared to give your full attention,' advises Ellis. 'Body language can make all the difference in helping someone feel open to talking.'

In addition, it might be beneficial to talk shoulder-to-shoulder or while doing an easy activity like walking.

'Removing the need for direct eye contact can take the pressure off and make the conversation feel less intense, which is a great way to create a comfortable space for more open and vulnerable conversation,' Ellis explains.

5 Respect their boundaries

Respecting boundaries and 'reading the room' can make a big difference, too.

'Don't try to force the conversation, rather remind them that you're always here to listen if they need anything,' says Ellis. 'There are always other opportunities to catch up.'

For free, confidential support anyone can call Samaritans helpline 24/7 on 116 123.

Our agony aunt, Dr Martha,

offers a different perspective

on your problems

Is my child hearing imaginary voices?

I have a seven-year-old who says she can hear people 'whispering to her', but doesn't know what they are saying. Is this playful imagination, or should we be concerned?

Many children hear, see, smell, and feel things that others don't. This can be scary, but the fact your child has started to talk about this is a reassuring sign and credit to the relationship you have.

Unusual sensory experiences can be due to a merging of fantasy and reality in young brains, and can be a symptom of mental health and/or hearing issues.

Young children can sometimes experience hallucinations, such as hearing or seeing things others don't, and this is often linked to a stressful situation, not getting enough sleep, or being bullied, hurt or abused by someone. Generally, these symptoms pass once they have adequate support for the struggle they are experiencing.

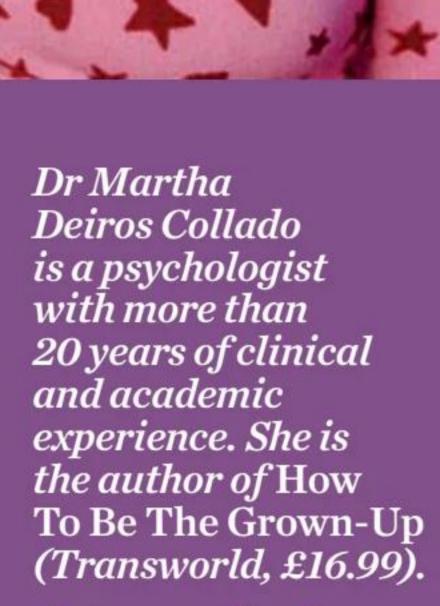
Tinnitus (the sensation of hearing a sound when there is no external source for it) may also be a possibility. It can be a symptom of glue ear or an ear infection. One in 30 children experience

tinnitus in childhood and although it is rarely troubling, some children do report swooshing and whispering sounds in their ears that cause distress.

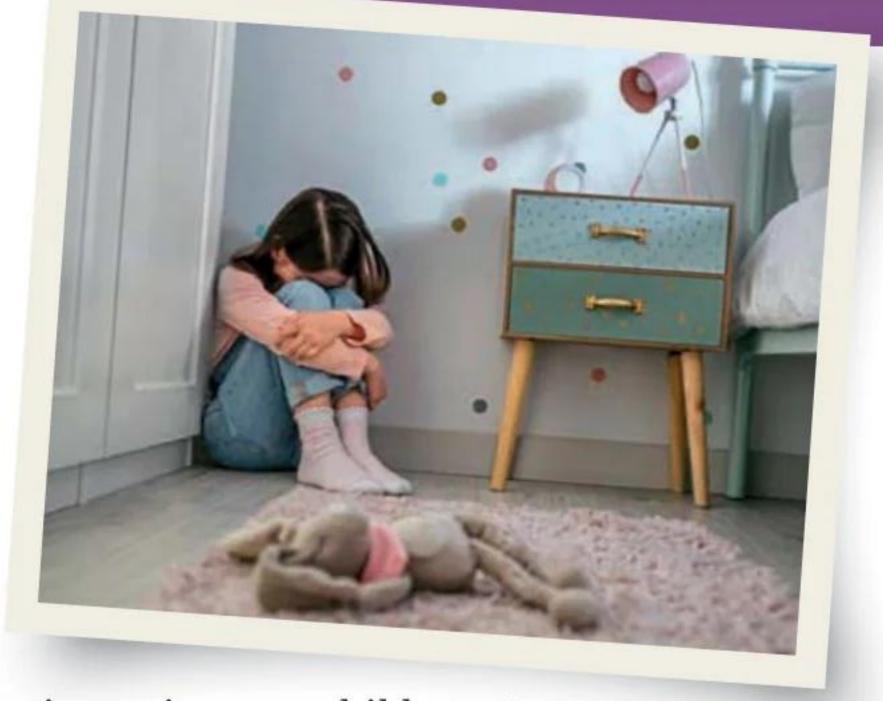
To help consider the next steps,
I suggest you get curious about your
child's experience, while holding
back any worries you have. See if your
child can notice when the 'whispering'
happens, and whether you can both
think together about the impact it has.
Some things to ask and look for include:

- How long has your child noticed the 'whispering' for? (Days, weeks, months?)
- Does it only happen in certain places or at certain times of day? (E.g. only at home after school, is it louder at night?).
- Does the 'whispering' distract or make it harder for your child to concentrate? (E.g. if it happens at school, does it interfere with lessons?)
- How does 'whispering' make your child feel? (E.g. scared, upset, comforted)
- Are there any other things you have noticed your child start to do or stop doing? (E.g. put music or TV on louder, started refusing to go to school or seeing friends).

If the 'whispering' has been ongoing for longer than a couple of weeks and it



Got a question for Dr Martha? Email letters@psychologies. co.uk, with 'Martha life' in the subject line.



is causing your child upset, impacting on her daily activities and behaviours, and/or concerning you (always listen to your parenting instinct) take her to the GP and share some of the answers you have to the above and get her assessed.

Even if you just get reassurance it's always worth showing a child that when they come to you with something that worries them then you take it seriously enough to seek support. I hope this passes soon and it all goes well.



My ex has moved on but I haven't, is there something wrong with me?

My boyfriend and I broke up two months ago. We were together for six years. I have seen photos of him going out with friends and having fun. He looks happy and back to his 'old life' without me. Our breakup was the right decision, we weren't happy together anymore, but I am still crying a lot and definitely not going out as much as him. What is wrong with me?

Breakups are hard. There is nothing wrong with you, you are just responding differently to the breakup and neither of you are doing it 'right' or 'wrong'. What is happening here is twofold:

1. When a relationship ends, grief shows up. But the grief experience is different for each person. For some people this might mean getting really busy and looking for distractions, wanting to spend time with friends and doing activities that will erase the grief, even if it is just temporary. For others, grief can mean allowing sadness to

exist, feeling a lack of energy or motivation to do things with others, and a need to cocoon away for a while.

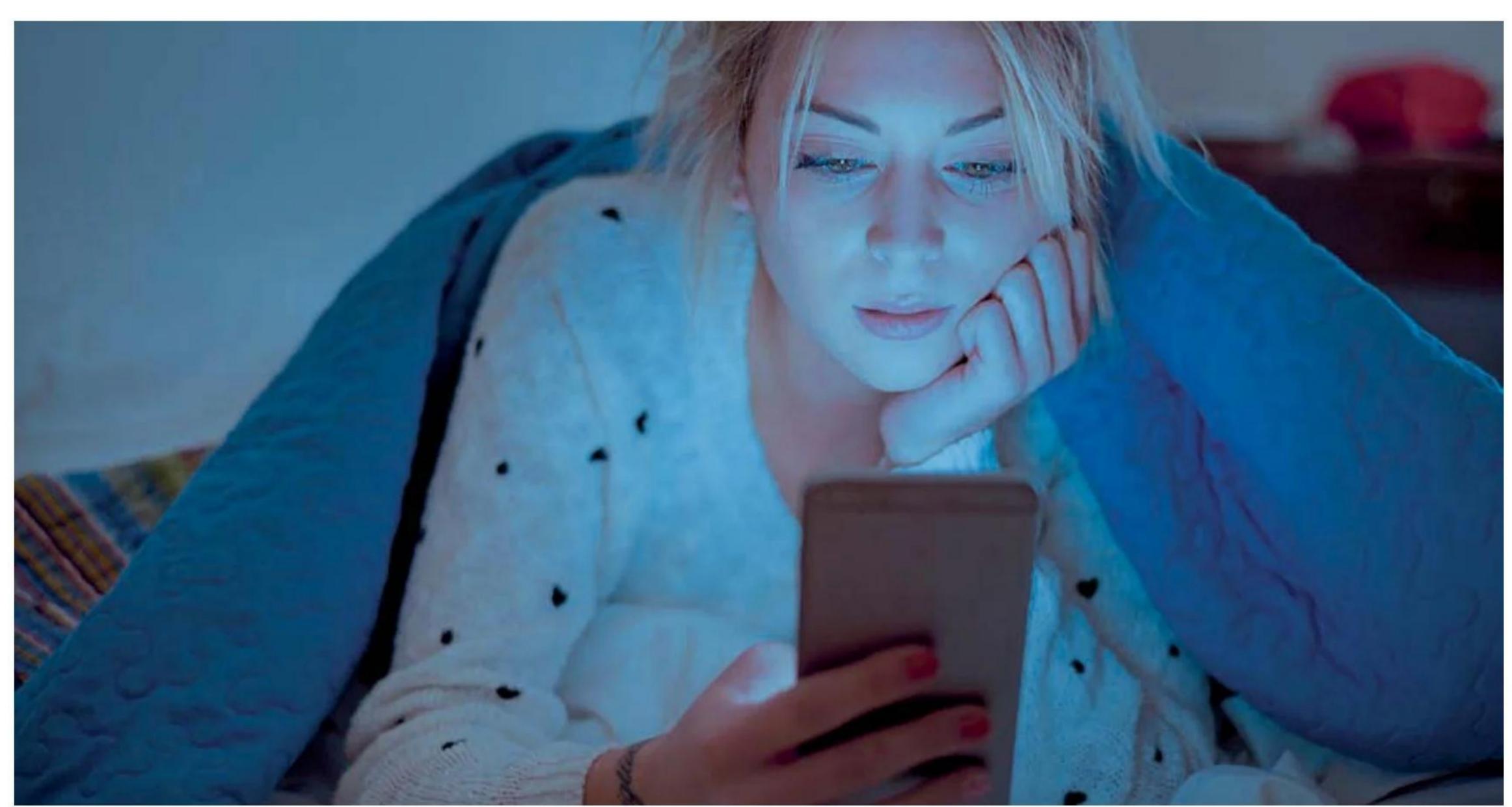
In couple relationships, it is common for people to have different experiences of the breakup, and this can feel hard because if you are experiencing grief intensely it can feel like a betrayal of the relationship that your ex-partner is not sharing in this experience with you. In truth, how someone experiences a breakup says nothing about how they loved, valued, or cared about the relationship while it was ongoing. It only gives clues about the coping strategies that feel most accessible to them when intense emotions show up.

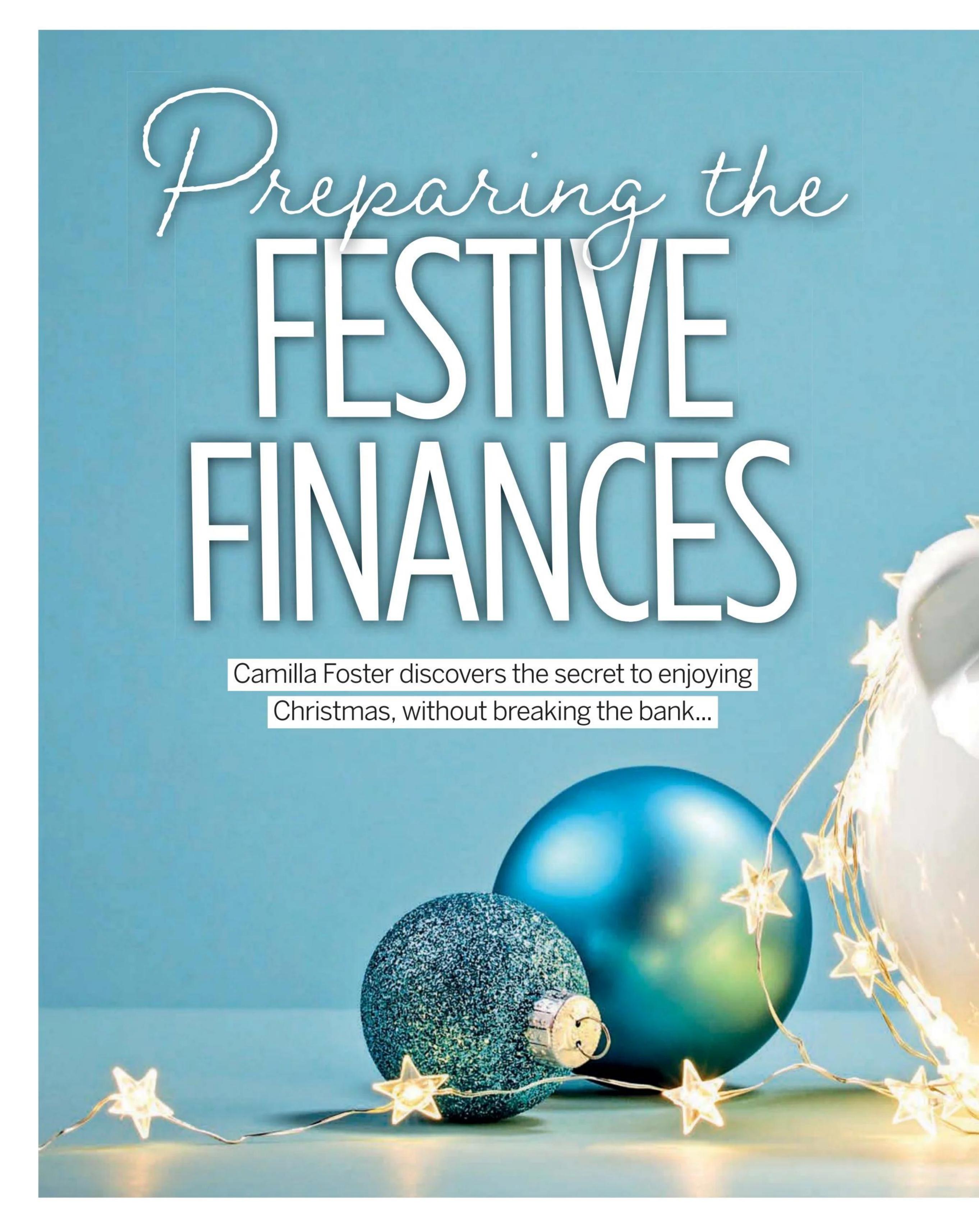
2. I assume you have seen photos and/or comments on social media, or perhaps these have been shared by mutual friends. If this is the case, I want you to remember that photos and videos are never the whole story. Social media often skews your view of someone's world. It's easy to fake a smile for a photo, or cut a video to include laughter and fun. You don't know how your

ex-partner is fully experiencing your breakup, whether he is struggling to sleep at night, getting upset when he wakes up, or finding it hard to focus and concentrate at work. And because you don't have context, what you inevitably do is layer your emotional experience on to the photos you see, which creates inaccurate conclusions and stories about your ex-partner's experience of the breakup.

One of the healthiest things you can do is go 'no contact'. This includes not looking up their social media profile, scouring comments and letting mutual friends know you need space from each other to process and heal with something like, 'please respect my need to not see any photos or hear any news about X. One day, I will be ready to hear about their life and your friendship with them, but for now I need a bit of time'.

All breakups are hard, even when they feel 'right'. Do take care and seek support if you feel like talking to someone neutral might be useful to you.





the festive season, before you get your party dress ready and the turkey on order, there's another important job you'd be wise to do: have some conversations about money with your nearest and dearest. Because unless you've recently won the lottery, this time of year can put a strain on all of our purses. It's easy to get into trouble by spending a little extra here, or splashing out there, all in the name of making Christmas 'special' – or to keep up with, and perhaps

impress, friends and family. But all those little treats and extras can quickly add up to a big heap of cash. This type of spending during the festive season – and the looming fear of debt that accompanies it – can leave us with a nasty financial hangover in January. But in order to avoid a short, sharp budget shock, or to experience some awkward conversations about unmet expectations on Christmas Day, now's the time to chat through what you're thinking and planning, to make sure you're all on the same page.









Hella!

If you're scratching your head looking for a thoughtful present for your nearest and dearest this Christmas, I have the perfect gift – a subscription to

your favourite magazine! Sharing the joy, care and compassion that comes in each issue of Psychologies is a great way to encourage your loved ones to take good care of themselves, to enjoy some much-needed me-time in our busy world, and to make the most of every day. It's packed full of inspiring yet simple ways to bring about small changes that make a big difference.

Featuring cutting-edge authors, experts and therapists, as well as real-life readers, it's sure to become their new best friend and help them learn how to feel calmer, happier and more relaxed. A subscription takes all the hassle out of tracking it down, meaning that they can spend longer enjoying the uplifting features and exciting new ideas. And if YOU don't already subscribe, make sure to put it at the top of your wishlist, too!

Sally

Editor-in-Chief, Psychologies

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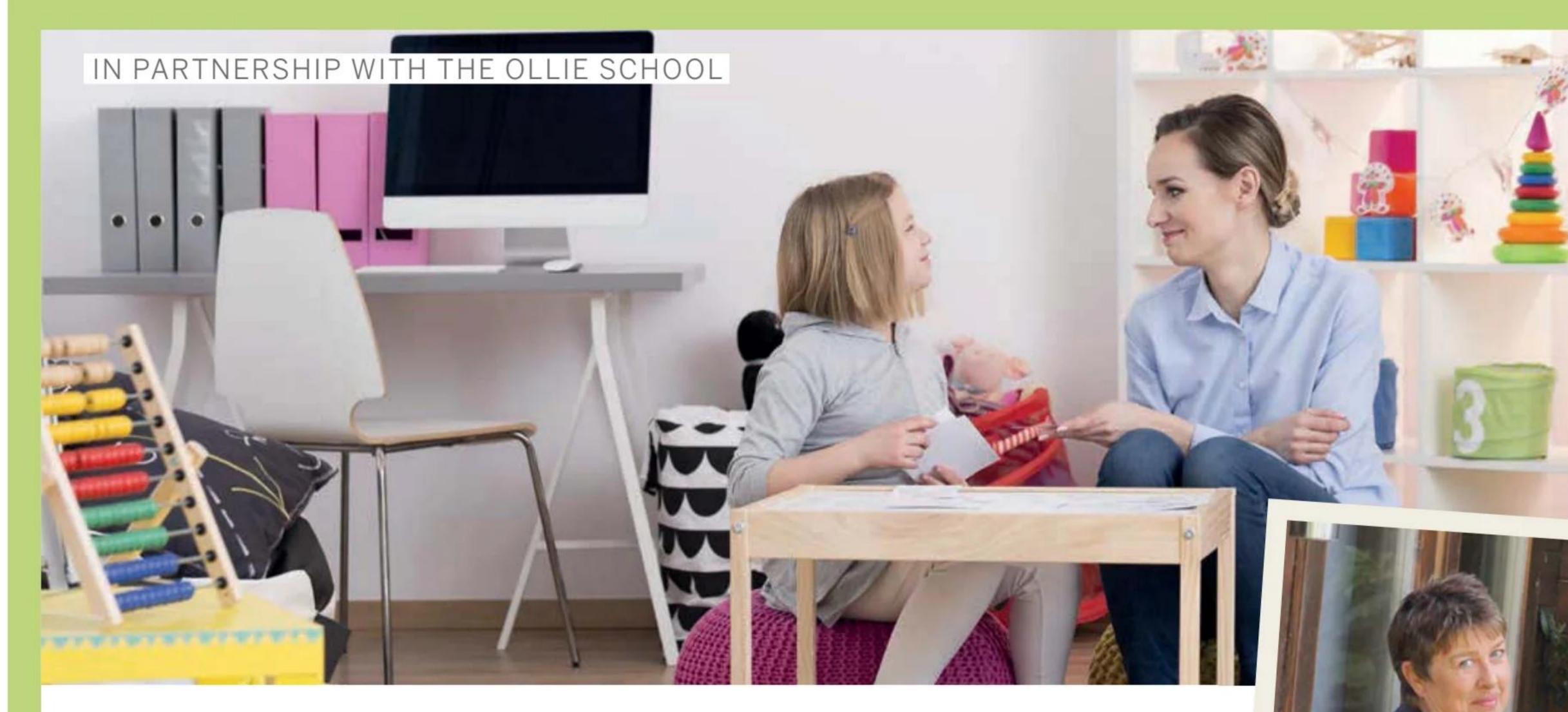
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espite the very best efforts of our education system, it is struggling to cope with fully supporting the emotional wellbeing of our children. Have you ever felt that you would love to help, but were powerless to act? Well, here's your opportunity to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

Comprehensive training

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.

Learn with flexibility

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 find out more.

Connect, grow, and succeed

Courses are a combination of online and in person, offering the best of both worlds, with a limited number of trainees to maximise learning potential. Visit ollieandhissuperpowers.com

The Ollie
therapeutic model
has been successfully
trialled with the NHS,
demonstrating its
commitment to improving
children's emotional
wellbeing across
the UK.

Alison Knowles, creator and author

Ollie And His Super Powers



Get in touch

Get in touch to train to become an Ollie Coach, find a coach in your area, or book an event. Use the QR code below to visit the website, or email info@ ollieandhissuperpowers.com





IAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



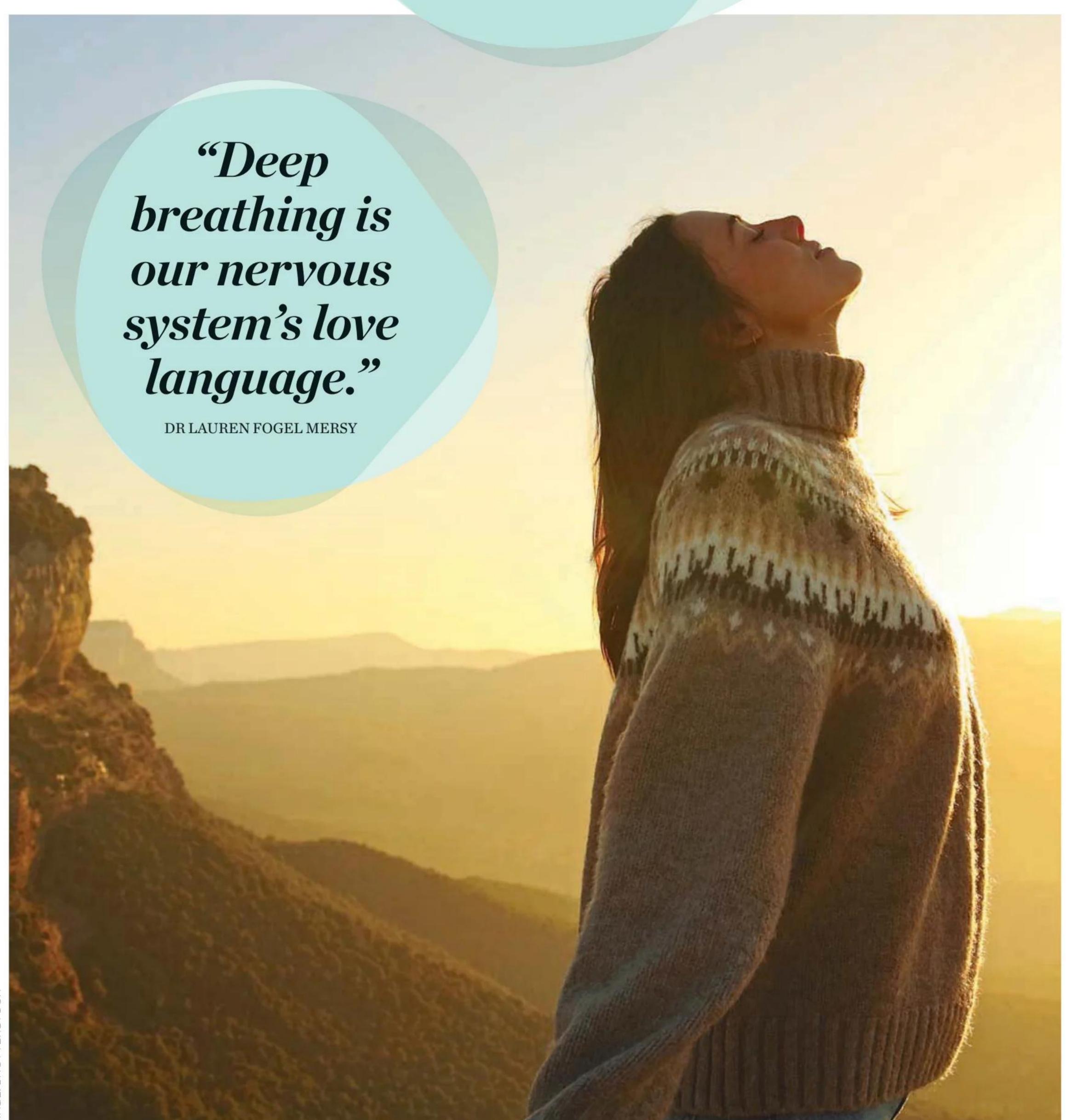
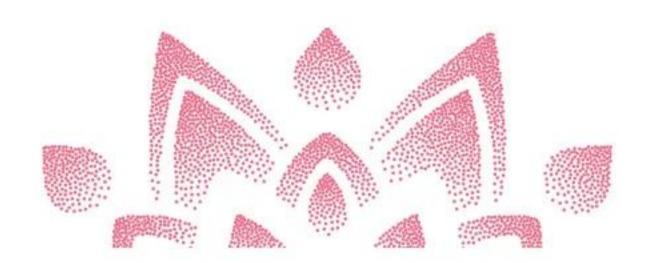
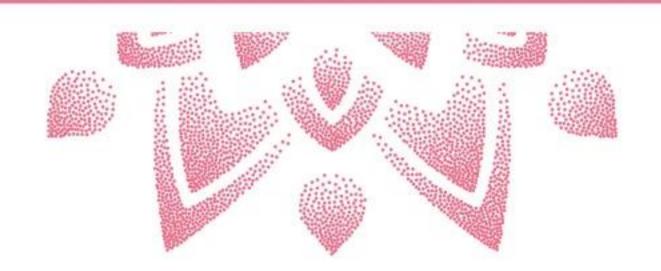


IMAGE: SHUTTERST



MINDFUL WELLNESS



Psychologies wellness director, Ali Roff Farrar, shares simple hacks to increase body confidence, boost heart health and beat your PB on the treadmill, plus an at-home yoga session to combat SAD symptoms

How to manage eczema flare-ups

As well as the almost unavoidable coughs and colds, this time of year can also cause problems for our skin, but here are a few simple ways you can avoid some of the stress as winter comes:

1 Combat the dry air: 'Central heating may keep us warm and snug, but it also strips moisture from the air,' advises the National Eczema Society. 'Placing a bowl of water near radiators can help to offset this drying effect and minimise the impact on your skin.'

2 Exercise can trigger flare-ups: we might worry about the cold in winter, but managing the moments we overheat is important, too. 'Overheating can trigger eczema flare-ups. Wearing loose-fitting clothing (while exercising) can also help keep your body temperature down,' says dermatology consultant nurse at Epimax, Paula Oliver. 'Sweat and bacteria left on the skin after exercise can also lead to irritation and potential flare-ups. Showering promptly with lukewarm water and a gentle, fragrance-free cleanser can help remove these irritants without stripping the skin of its natural oils. Remember to pat your skin dry with a soft towel rather than rubbing it, and after showering, apply a generous amount of moisturiser to damp skin

to lock in hydration. Consistent moisturising helps maintain the skin's barrier function, crucial for those with eczema-prone skin.'

all wear more clothes in winter with big jumpers and long sleeves to keep warm. But when it comes to eczema, not all fabrics are equal. 'Polyester and nylon cause overheating, sweating and irritation,' according to the National Eczema Society. They advise eczema-friendly materials such as 100% cotton, bamboo and silk. Try BAM Clothing for their comfortable and warm bamboo autumn and winter range.





Eat well

Roasted Winter Salad

As an avid avoider of lettuce, this is far more enticing to me than most salads. It's also very helpful at this time of year that the ingredients can be bought well in advance – no last-minute supermarket dash for some greenery. If you're making the full recipe, you may need to spread it over two baking trays, so everything has space to cook. This can be eaten warm, or, if you're serving it from the fridge, allow it to come to room temperature.

SERVES 6-8 (AS PART OF A BUFFET)

- 1 butternut squash, deseeded and cut into 3cm cubes (no need to peel)
- 500g carrots, peeled and cut into 3cm chunks
- 2 red onions, peeled and cut into 3cm chunks
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp garlic granules
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp paprika
- 500g vacuum-packed cooked beetroot (from the supermarket fridge section, not in vinegar), drained and cut into 3cm cubes
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the dressing

- 6 tbsp olive oil (extra virgin if you have it)
- 4 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 3 tbsp runny honey (or maple syrup)
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp sea salt

To serve

- 75g dried cranberries
- 100g feta cheese, crumbled

(optional)

50g pecan halves



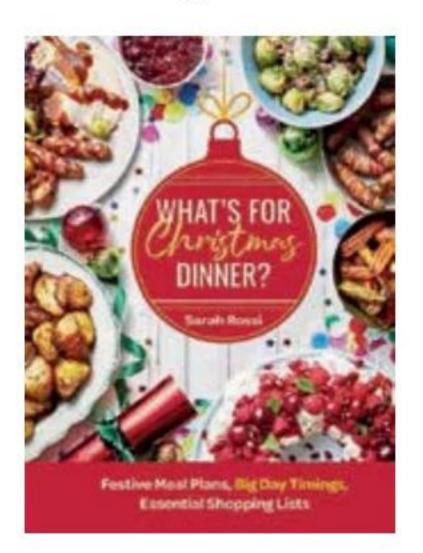
Preheat the oven to 200°C fan/220°C/Gas Mark 7. 2 Put the butternut squash, carrots and onions on a large baking tray (or two), drizzle with the olive oil, sprinkle with the garlic granules, cumin and paprika, season with salt and pepper and toss well until everything is coated. Roast in the oven for 45 minutes. 3 Remove the tray(s) from the oven and add the beetroot, stir gently to coat it in the cooking oils. 4 Bake for a further 15 minutes. While the vegetables are cooking, prepare the dressing by whisking all of the ingredients together in a small bowl or jug. Set aside. 5 When the vegetables are cooked through, remove from the oven and transfer to a serving dish.

Pour over the dressing, toss well and finish with dried cranberries, crumbled feta (if using) and pecans sprinkled over.

TO MAKE AHEAD

Roast the vegetables and make the dressing up to 24 hours before serving, chilling them separately until needed. Combine and add the toppings just before serving.

Extracted
from What's for
Christmas Dinner?
by Sarah Rossi,
(HarperNonFiction,
£22 Hardback).
Photography by
Sam Folan (2024).



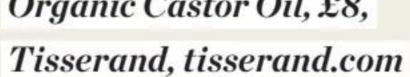


Clinical cold defense

If there's one thing we can be sure of this winter, (aside from rising fuel prices) it's that at some point, we will catch that dreaded winter cold. It's rare to find a product backed up with a published scientific paper, but here's one that looks promising - a cold supplement clinically proven, after just three days of taking it, to reduce the duration of illness (therefore speeding up recovery), helping to lessen the severity of symptoms. It works by keeping the peak viral load to a minimum so that your immune system can gain the upper hand. 'Your adaptive immune system usually takes four to seven days to recognise that there is a harmful virus and create antibodies,' says Dr Alka Patel. 'By then, a virus can have spread to millions of your cells, overwhelming your immune system for many days, even weeks afterwards and causing ongoing illness. The clinical research shows that taking Winter Rescue at the very beginning of colds reduces a virus's ability to multiply.'



For a loving winter hair treatment, add two drops of your favourite organic essential oil to 10ml of Castor Blending Oil. Massage into the scalp and comb through hair, leave in for approx. 30 minutes before washing out with your regular shampoo. Organic Castor Oil, £8,



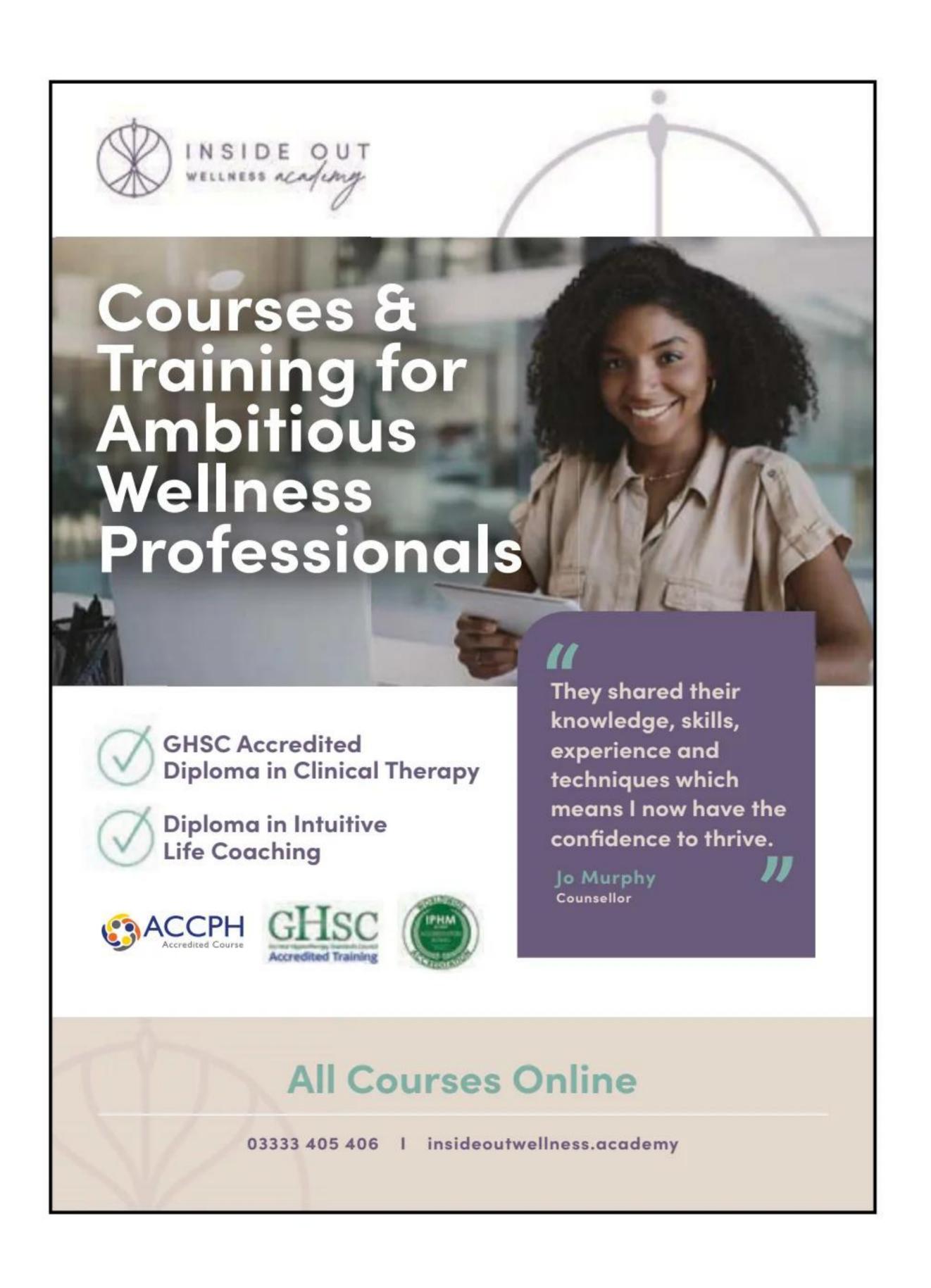


What's the deal with meat vs plant-based alternatives and our health?

Knowledge is power and sometimes the science speaks for itself... if you're interested in keeping your heart healthy, a new review study* analysed the results of a number of smaller studies, all comparing the impact of plant-based meat alternatives and animal-based meats on health, consistently found that versus meat, plant-based alternatives decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease. When it comes to meat and increased cancer risks however, it's not so black and white. Only red meat is classed by the World Health Organisation in the Group 2a risk factor, meaning there is a link between eating red meat and cancer, but studies are limited. However processed meat (sausages, salami, hotdogs, bacon, ham – any meat or poultry that has been processed to improve its preservation) is classed in Group 1, carcinogenic to humans. 'In the case of processed meat,' the WHO states, 'this classification is based on sufficient evidence from epidemiological studies that eating processed meat causes colorectal cancer.' The WHO reports that eating 50g of processed meat a day increases your risk of developing bowel cancer from 6% to 7% – a significant amount, they say.

We cannot selectively numb emotions, when we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions.

BRENÉ BROWN









ISON STUDIES. JOURNAL OF ALTERNATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE, 16(1), 3-12. MINOBUTYRIC-ACID, AND ALLOSTASIS IN EPILEPSY, DEPRESSION, AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER. MEDICAL HYPOTHESES, 78(5), 571-5

The real reason that exercise beats depression

Exercise is known to be helpful for easing symptoms of depression, but until recently, scientists haven't been able to pinpoint why exactly – it's often explained that exercise releases the mood-boosting hormone endorphins that relieve symptoms. But recent research has uncovered that the full processes may be more complex. Depression is associated with two biological changes – elevated inflammation, and disrupted dopamine levels. These key processes can lead to decreased motivation of physical or mental effort. However, exercise has the opposite effect, reducing inflammation, boosting dopamine function, and enhancing motivation, which is why researchers believe exercise really offers an antidepressant effect.

Snuggle season



A natural boost

A happy tip for runners and gym-goers alike, if you want to improve your time and performance, the humble cranberry could provide you with a natural boost. A recent study found that athletes who took a cranberry extract supplement for 28 days noticed improvements in performance through increased speed and reduced fatigue. Scientists found muscle reoxygenation rates were faster, lactate buildup was decreased (less stitch – phew!) and running speeds increased by 1.5% – enough to beat that PB!

Three SAD-busting yoga poses to enjoy...

BY ALI ROFF-FARRAR, YOGA TEACHER AND MINDFULNESS EXPERT.

Standing Forward Bend (Uttanasana):
Standing Forward Bend is a simple yet
powerful pose for easing SAD symptoms.
By folding forward at the hips and allowing
the head to hang lower than the heart,
this pose allows blood to flow to the brain,
improving mood and cognitive function.
Release every muscle in your neck and let
your head hang heavy. It can also feel nice
to hold your elbows and swing gently side to
side. Research* has found that forward folds
can help to reduce symptoms of depression
and anxiety by stimulating the nervous system
and improving blood circulation, potentially
helping to manage low emotional states

Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana): This is a gentle, heart-opening pose that helps to improve posture and encourage a sense of openness in the front of the body, which can feel empowering in the darker months when we often curl into ourselves with blankets and hunch our shoulders inside our coats from the cold. A 2017 study** on the benefits of yoga found that backbends, like Cobra Pose, can help alleviate stress and improve mood through spinal stimulation. Cobra Pose can also help counteract feelings of fatigue and sluggishness associated with SAD by boosting energy levels and releasing emotional tension***.

commonly experienced with SAD.

Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose (Viparita) **Karani):** This is an extremely relaxing, restorative yoga pose which feels especially blissful when snuggled under a blanket often like to end my yoga classes with it. The upside-down position encourages a gentle inversion, which improves circulation (perfect if you're on your feet or sit a lot) and also soothes the nervous system. Studies**** suggest that restorative yoga helps to reduce anxiety and depression by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which could in turn help alleviate SAD symptoms through the promotion of relaxation and reduced stress. For an extra boost, add in micro-elements of joy to further boost your mood, like relaxing music, your favourite aromatherapy candle, and a cup of hot chocolate to look forward to afterwards.

Speak to your GP or a healthcare professional if you are struggling with low mood.

Time for honey

Wellness tips from nutritionist Kate Cook to help you feel your best this autumn

e all know that feeling
– when your energy
dips, and you're not
quite yourself.

Whether it's the first signs of a cold or
just feeling a little run down,
incorporating a few easy wellness
habits into your routine can help your
body recover faster and get back to
feeling your best. Nutritionist Kate
Cook shares her expert advice on how
to give your immune system the
support it needs this autumn.

1. Optimise your bedtime routine

Poor sleep can affect so much in the body including your immune system. Without sufficient sleep, your body doesn't get the chance to recharge ready for the following day. Make sure you have a bedtime routine that will help to optimise sleep. For example, keep away from screens and mobile devices just before bedtime and instead take a long soak in the bath with magnesium salts to relax.



2. Say no to toxins

Your immune system deserves all the love and support it can get, so it's essential to avoid harmful toxins like smoking and excessive alcohol. These can compromise your body's natural defences, making it harder to fend off illness. Instead, focus on nourishing your body with wholesome foods and plenty of hydration. By keeping your environment as toxin-free as possible, you'll empower your immune system to do its job, especially during the chilly autumn months.

3. Take Mãnuka Honey

If you've ever reached for honey when you had a scratchy throat, you're not alone. While all honey has some antibacterial properties, Mãnuka Honey uniquely contains stable, measurable naturally occurring antibacterial activity graded by MGO ratings. The higher the grade, the stronger its intense flavour and immune-boosting benefits, supporting daily wellness and aiding in soothing sore throats.

You can enjoy Mãnuka Honey straight off the spoon or opt for convenient lozenges that offer quick relief from those pesky cold symptoms. When you





need that extra boost, reach for a higher strength, like Melora's Mãnuka Honey Jars, offering MGO ratings from 300+ to 850+. These provide intense antibacterial and anti-inflammatory benefits, making them perfect for soothing sore throats and supporting your immune system. For on-the-go immunity, Melora's Mãnuka Honey Lozenges combine the soothing power of Mãnuka Honey with Propolis, Lemon, Peppermint, Zinc, and Vitamin D for additional immune support.

Why choose Melora's Mãnuka Honey?

- High-quality Mãnuka Honey: Melora's Mãnuka Honey is sustainably harvested from the untouched forestlands of New Zealand, ensuring you receive natural and authentic products that support local communities.
- O Versatile formats: Melora's Manuka Honey is available in various formats, from jars to squeeze bottles, lozenges and even a new oral spray, to fit seamlessly into any routine.
- Graded antibacterial strength: With MGO ratings ranging from 40+ to 850+, Melora's Mānuka Honey offers varying levels of antibacterial benefits, allowing you to choose the perfect strength for your wellness needs.

Discover the goodness of Melora's Manuka Honey collection, available from melora.co.uk and Amazon.

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

Combat the cravings

Why does our appetite rise when the temperature drops, asks Camilla Foster

he return of pumpkin spiced lattes and hearty soups often pique our interests for warmer, more comforting foods this time of year.

But what are the reasons behind these cravings, and what should we be fuelling our bodies with as the temperature drops?

'As the weather turns cooler, we tend to crave warmer, cosier and comforting foods,' says Dr Carrie Ruxton, dietitian at the Health & Food Supplements Information Service. 'So, hearty stews and soups may come to mind, or we may be more likely to treat ourselves with extra snacks or drinks.'

What impact do these foods have on our body?

Many of our favourite comfort foods are high in sugar and carbohydrates, which can impact our hormone levels.

'Seeking out and eating foods
higher in carbohydrates or sugar
can trigger the release of dopamine
in our brains,' says Ruxton. 'This
gives heightened feelings of pleasure,
and the more dopamine that is
released the more pleasure we feel.'

Dopamine is our motivation hormone, so it drives us to repeat specific actions that the brain deems as rewarding, explains Rosie Carr, a dietitian at Second Nature.

'Eating foods rich in sugar in colder weather will feel highly rewarding, and we're more likely to repeat this action in the future,' says Carr. 'Dopamine will act as the main driver, developing the association in our brain between cold weather and energy-dense foods such as pastries, doughnuts, or hot chocolates with marshmallows and cream.'

Eating highly palatable, highsugar comfort foods can also stimulate the release of endorphins.

'These are chemicals released by the body to help reduce stress, which can temporarily improve mood,' explains Ruxton. 'However, eating other enjoyable, nutrient-packed foods such as a slow-cooked vegetable stew could also release endorphins.'

What are the reasons behind these cravings?

The drop in temperature during autumn can intensify our hunger.

'When the body is exposed to cooler temperatures, our energy expenditure (the amount of calories we burn) can increase to help our bodies maintain its core temperature,' explains Carr.

'This increase in our energy expenditure can lead to increased hunger. However, with central heating and warmer clothing, most people aren't consistently exposed to the colder temperatures during winter, so an increase in energy expenditure is unlikely.

'The main factors influencing our cravings in winter are more likely to be habit, environmental cues, and cultural norms around the season.'





What do our bodies need this autumn, in terms of food and nutrition?

The reduction of sunlight during autumn means our bodies might not be getting the amount of vitamin D that they need.

'Vitamin D is an important winter nutrient as we cannot make enough vitamin D for our bodies during this time, as the sun is too low in the sky,' explains Ruxton. 'There are only a few foods, such as egg yolks, oily fish, red meat and fortified cereals, that provide vitamin D, so this is one nutrient where it is vital to top up with a supplement.'

Ruxton also recommends eating a varied diet to help bolster immunity in the lead up to winter.

'Nutrients for immunity
(immunonutrition) are also important
during the winter months,' says
Ruxton. 'Dietary patterns, as opposed
to single nutrients or single foods, are
important for reinforcing immunity.
We should be aiming to eat diets
that are as varied as possible.'

For Carr, a good balanced diet encompasses high-quality protein sources (fish, meat, eggs, tofu, cheese), fat from whole foods (nuts, avocado, dairy products), high-fibre carbohydrates (brown rice, sweet potato, pumpkin and lentils) and an assortment of colourful fruit and vegetables.

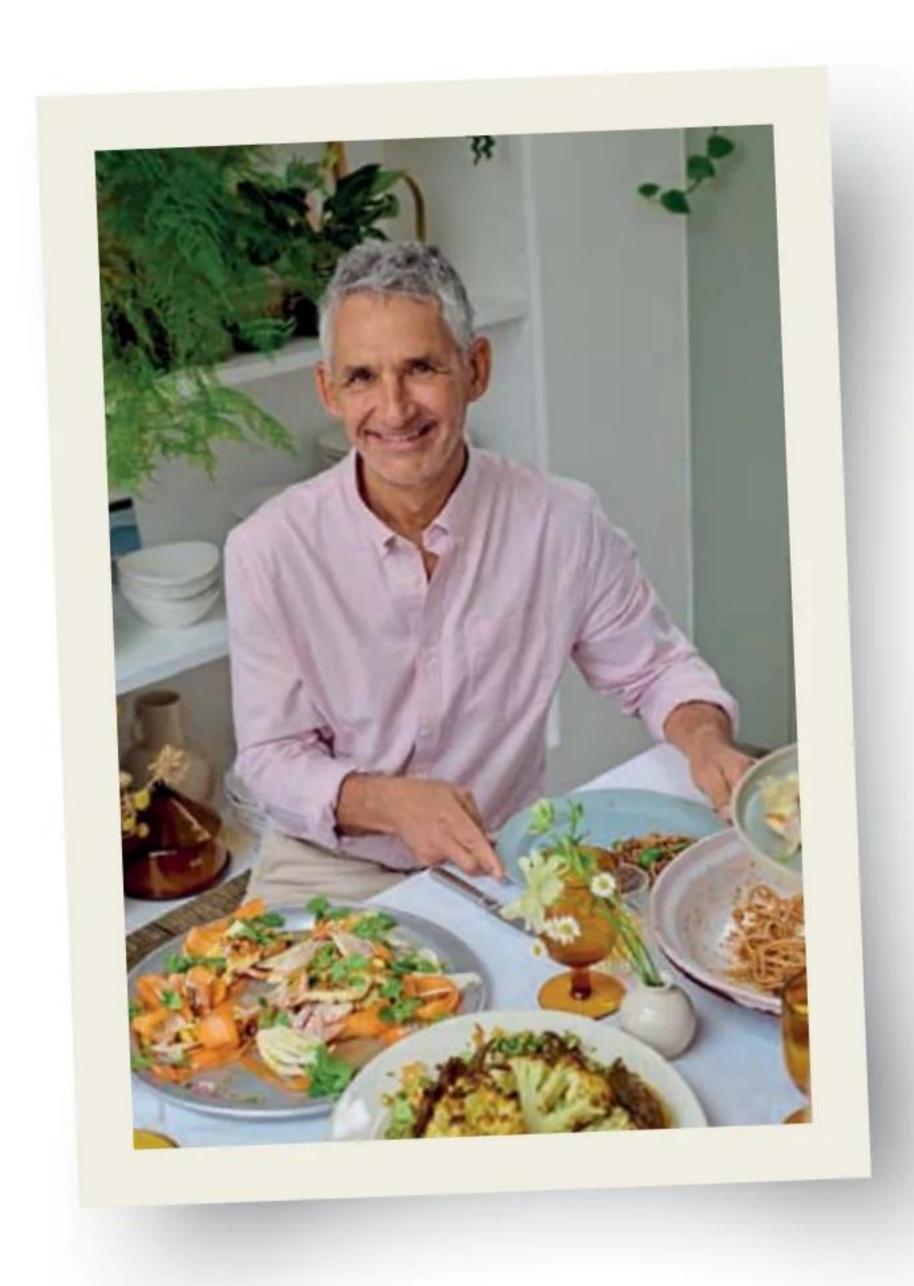
What type of foods should we be avoiding this autumn?

'Comfort foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat should be eaten less often and in small amounts,' advises Ruxton.

However, everything is OK as long as it is in moderation.

'We don't need to avoid these foods altogether; life would be very dull if we restricted ourselves only to whole foods,' says Carr. 'However, if we eat whole foods most of the time, we can enjoy the odd dessert mindfully and without guilt.

'If you're still craving something sweet, try swapping in a healthier option like apple and peanut butter, or Greek yoghurt with berries.'



Comfort food with a twist!

Looking for indulgent treats that also do you good? Health expert Tim Spector has the answers

Creamy Kale Pasta

A good pasta can be so satisfying, and this recipe improves the nutritional value by adding our beloved fibre-packed beans, which also make the sauce creamy and delicious. Including extra seeds on top will bring a delightful crunch, plus added fibre, good fats and protein.

10-15g FIBRE 4 PLANTS

PREP TIME: 5 minutes COOK TIME: 10 minutes

SERVES: 2

- 90g wholewheat pasta
- 100g kale or cavolo nero, stalks removed and thinly sliced

- 1 garlic clove
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 1 x 400g tin cannellini beans and their liquid
- Salt and black pepper

TOP-UPS

- Sauerkraut
- Seed Mix

SWAP

Parmesan for nutritional yeast

I Bring two saucepans of salted water to the boil. Put the pasta in one and cook for 8–10 minutes, or until al dente.

2 Put the kale and garlic in the other

saucepan and blanch for 3 minutes. When ready, drain and add to a blender with the lemon juice and nutritional yeast.

3 Pour the beans into a sieve set over a bowl, keeping the liquid from the tin. Add a quarter of the beans to the blender along with the reserved liquid and blitz until totally smooth.

4 When the pasta is ready, drain it, reserving 2 tablespoons of the cooking water. Return to the pan with the remaining cannellini beans, reserved cooking water and the blended sauce. Heat through for a minute or so, taste and season if necessary and serve.



Aubergine Parmigiana

What could be more comforting than an aubergine parmigiana? We've given this classic a gut health twist by adding fibre-packed lentils, but this will work just as well with any bean. Add a mix of both to increase the fibre and plant protein in this dish, making it even more hearty and satisfying.

10-15g FIBRE 7 PLANTS

PREP TIME: 15 minutes COOK TIME: 1 hour SERVES: 4 with leftovers

- 3 aubergines, sliced lengthways into 1cm-thick slices
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced
- 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 x 400g tin black or green lentils, drained
- 30g basil, leaves torn, plus a few to garnish
- 125g ball of mozzarella, torn
- 20g finely grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and black pepper

TOP-UPS

- Kimchi
- Extra basil

SWAPS

- Black-eyed beans for lentils
- Vegan cheese alternative

Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/400°F/gas 6. Line a large baking tray with baking parchment and lay out the aubergines in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle 1 tablespoon of the olive oil all over. Bake for 25 minutes until golden and soft. 2 Meanwhile, place a frying pan over a medium heat and sauté the onion in the remaining oil for 3 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and chilli and cook for 1 minute more. Pour in the tomatoes and lentils, then half-fill the tomato tin with water and add this to the pan too. Simmer for 10 minutes until slightly thickened. Add the basil and cook for 5 minutes more, then season with salt and pepper. 3 Spoon a third of the ragu mixture into the base of a 20–23cm square ovenproof dish (or similar) and top with a layer of aubergine. Repeat this twice more, then finish with the mozzarella and Parmesan. 4 Bake for 30 minutes until the cheese is bubbling and golden brown. Serve with some steamed greens.







Pecan Chocolate Cookies

These cookies are a ZOE favourite on our Instagram. They're a great alternative to UPF snacks, as they're really easy to make and require minimal ingredients. The nuts and olive oil help moderate your blood sugar response, but you can also add other fillings such as spiced oats and raisins. If you like a chewy cookie, take them out of the oven a little early.

<5g FIBRE 4 PLANTS

PREP TIME: 10 minutes
(plus 15 minutes standing
time for the flax egg)
COOK TIME: 10–12 minutes
MAKES: 12 cookies

- 2 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 3 tbsp light brown sugar
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 200g ground almonds
- 50g pecan nuts, roughly chopped

- 80g dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa solids), roughly chopped
- Pinch of salt

SWAP

- Pumpkin or sunflower seeds for pecan nuts
- I Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas 4 and line a baking tray with baking parchment. To make the flax egg, mix the ground flaxseed with 4 tablespoons of water and set aside for 15 minutes.
- 2 Mix the brown sugar, olive oil and flax egg together. Add the ground almonds, pecan nuts, chocolate and salt and mix again.
- 3 Shape into 12 tight balls and flatten slightly into cookies about 1cm thick (it helps if you do this with damp hands). Bake for 10–12 minutes until tinged golden brown at the edges, then leave to cool completely on the tray. Store in an airtight container.

Coming next month

- Take the stress out of Christmas shopping and discover the art of giving the ideal gift
- Perfect the art of small talk in time for any festive gathering
- Review and reset: use this special time to reflect on what this year has meant to you
- Are you masking? Discover the signs you or someone you love could secretly be living with ADHD
- Mind the gap! Find out how to manage a 'wage-gap' friendship

December issue on sale November 22!

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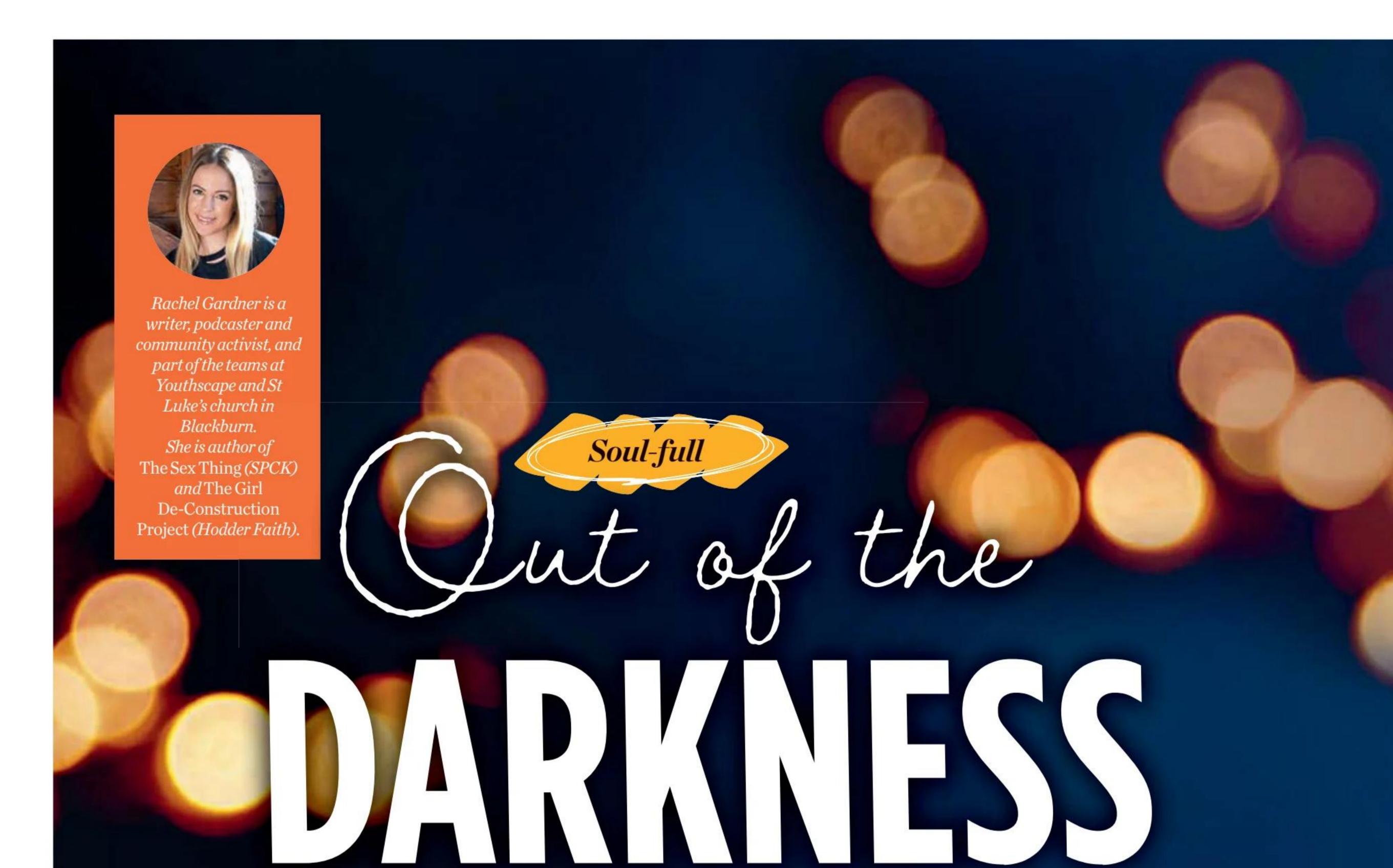
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Discover ways to make your soul sing... with creativity, nature, finding your purpose in life and at work, travel and spirituality





In a world where we struggle to switch off from our screens, Rachel Gardner searches for a deeper level of connection

've got a confession to make; I like to sit in stillness and quiet about as much as I like to pull hair out of the shower drain. Yet the older I get, the more I crave a slower, more contented pace. I'd like to be less consumed by my phone. I'd love to be less easily fooled by the 'perfect lives' I see when I doomscroll the socials – and I don't just want this for myself. It's a longing for a fuller, more connected life for my screen-hooked kids and stressed-out friends, too.

Could it be that the life I'm longing for, that maybe what we're all longing for, is the other side of a breath, a pause? Maybe even a power cut?

Last week the power went down. The collective groan was soon replaced by stillness as everyone in the house came

into one room to be together in the dark. No screens. No Internet. With just the noises of the rain-drenched streets and the beating of our hearts to fill the air. We lit the fire and some candles, and watched the flames lick the wood as it lit up our faces. The

kid-bickering stopped. We found our pause. We found our moment, and it was blissful. For the first time in weeks, maybe even months, I felt well and I felt like me, again.

Good soul health is about embracing the interconnectedness of our mental health, emotional health, physical health and seeing how in all these areas of our being, we're connected to something that is bigger than us. Something that our soul recognises as good and true.

As I watched the flames, I sensed a presence that was longing to be felt, a voice yearning to be heard. I felt an urge to lay down my 'shoulds' and 'coulds', to just be me. Present to my loved ones and this moment. Present to the love in the roots of my life. Present to myself. I heard the voice of my soul, calling me into deeper connection.



I wonder how you would describe your soul. I love the thought that my soul is the heart of my spirit.

The 'me' within me, who longs to be heard. Who longs to take me out of myself, into this wild and wide world, full of curiosity and hope. Dare I listen to her? Dare I truly allow myself to be seen? To acknowledge my wounds, my brokenness, my light, my hunger for connection. Or do I choose the distraction that's so easily accessed, fingers poised over the screen, itching to swipe, to push, to scroll. Covering over our souls like a perma-frost. Why do I do this? Why do we do this? When

we have the chance to dive into our own mysterious waters, why are we so content to just bounce off the foam of other people's 'best lives'? When we could know greater soulstrength, why do we wait for a power cut to sense a greater power?

When did you last listen to your soul, the 'you' within you?

When this happens, you may, like me, find that random or unwelcome thoughts fill your mind. Most of it is our false self, telling us we're not worthy of being known and loved at our very core. But we can take those thoughts to court, and one way is to

"When we could know greater soul-strength, why do we wait for a power cut to sense a greater power?"

repeat a phrase that rings true for the soul, that helps us to feel rooted in love and ready to connect with ourselves and others with greater authenticity.

I often use these ancient words written by a song writer who spent most of his younger years in the wild mountains near his home. His songs and poems are drenched with a longing for his soul to connect with a bigger reality than his singular experience of life.

'As a deer pants for the water, so my soul longs for you...'

Who is the 'you' your soul is longing to connect deeply with? What wonderful things might you discover as you pause and listen to your soul? As you listen, may your soul speak of the many ways you are already deeply known and loved. And may you feel more connected to all that matters most.

Nature in focus

Connecting with nature has a host of wellbeing benefits, and can even be enjoyed from the comfort of home...

n November, autumn gradually becomes winter. Long nights and colder conditions return and those changes bring different experiences. With strong winds, most trees will be bare, but on a woodland walk you can still find colour and brightness through fallen leaves, fungi, acorns and chestnuts. It can be easier to spot lichens, too. Garden birdfeeders will get busier, perhaps with some new visitors, such as redpolls, bramblings or siskins. Blackbirds and song thrushes will be hopping about searching for worms and fallen berries. In the field, corvids, such as rooks and jackdaws, will gather. By the coast, large flocks of waders can be seen. This is also a peak time for grey seal pups.

VIRTUAL NATURE

As the days shorten and winter takes hold, getting out and noticing nature can be more of a challenge. Fortunately, and especially for those with limited mobility, virtual tools can provide an alternative way to engage with nature. These can range from immersive experiences using a headset, to more modest engagement through watching a video. Virtual can also be film of real or simulated nature, the benefit of the latter being that nature doesn't have to be disturbed by human presence to make it.

It's early days for research into the impact of immersive virtual reality on nature connection, but there are positive signs that it can improve it, albeit less so than contact with real nature. As for watching videos of nature, there is evidence that this too can lead to a short-term boost in nature connection.

ACTIVITY: Nature's gallery

This activity invites you to connect with nature through a personal lens - your photographs of nature. Gather a collection

of your nature photos through the year, ones you're particularly pleased with or that remind you of a special moment with nature. With digital cameras and smartphones it has never been easier to view, select and sort photographs - although the sheer number can be a problem! There are also many services available to help you turn your photos into books, calendars or simple prints.

- Gather and sort. Revisit your pictures from the year, allowing yourself to be transported back to the moment, place and feeling they captured. Reflect on what drew you to record the moment, what you noticed, or a story related to the image.
- Create groups. You can sort your photos and create albums simply by month or season; you could also arrange them by landscape theme (woodland, views, coastal scenes) or according to their emotional content (separating images that induce calm from those that evoke excitement or a darker mood, for example), or meaning, (those with a story to tell). Reflection. Take some time to reflect on your collection. Which photos mean the most to you? Which bring you the most joy or calm? Share. Perhaps share your favourite photo and its story with a friend or create

STORYTELLING

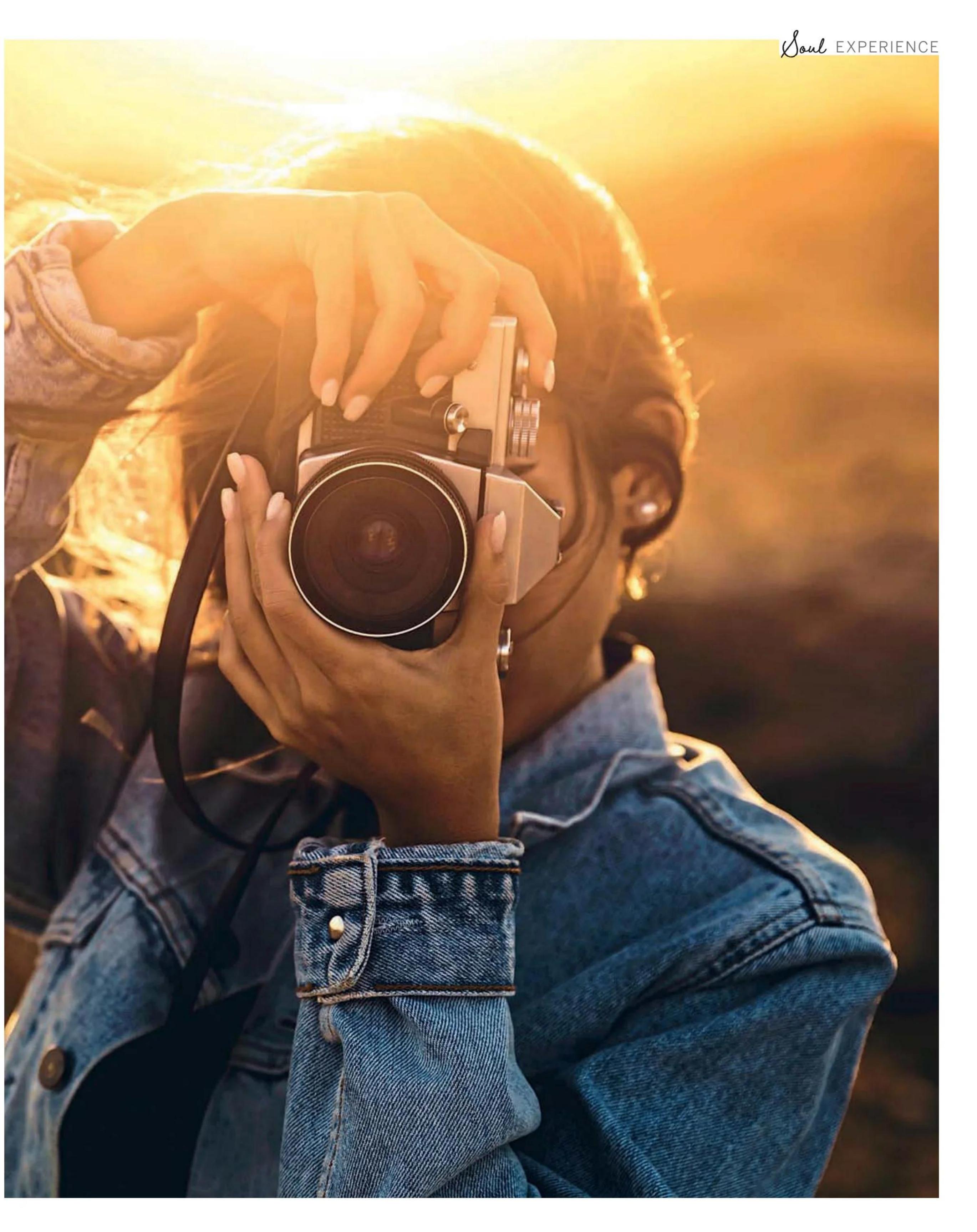
Billions of photos are taken each year, the vast majority stored on phones or computers, servers and the like. That data stores our stories. How long will it survive? Will it be accessible to our descendants? Stories,

a physical or a digital album for the year.

Look ahead. Select an aspect of nature

you'd like to focus on next year.





folklore and myths can be evocative and enduring. They are a fundamental tool for creating, sharing, and maintaining culture and also one of the key ways in which we present ourselves to others. Stories promote communication and learning, drawing people in, firing imagination and building relationships. They help organise our experiences and make sense of our lives. Having been a part of human existence for tens of thousands of years, stories are hard-wired into our brains.

Storytelling and folklore are also an important part of our relationship with nature – both good and bad. Stories create a reality that can be positive or negative. Wolves, for example, are generally portrayed as threatening and sinister. Such stereotypes matter as they inform beliefs and can create fear. These fairy tales and fear-inducing myths about the 'Big Bad Wolf' have survived through many generations and are still told by parents and teachers to children, contributing to their perceptions and worldview.

ACTIVITY: Create a nature connection story

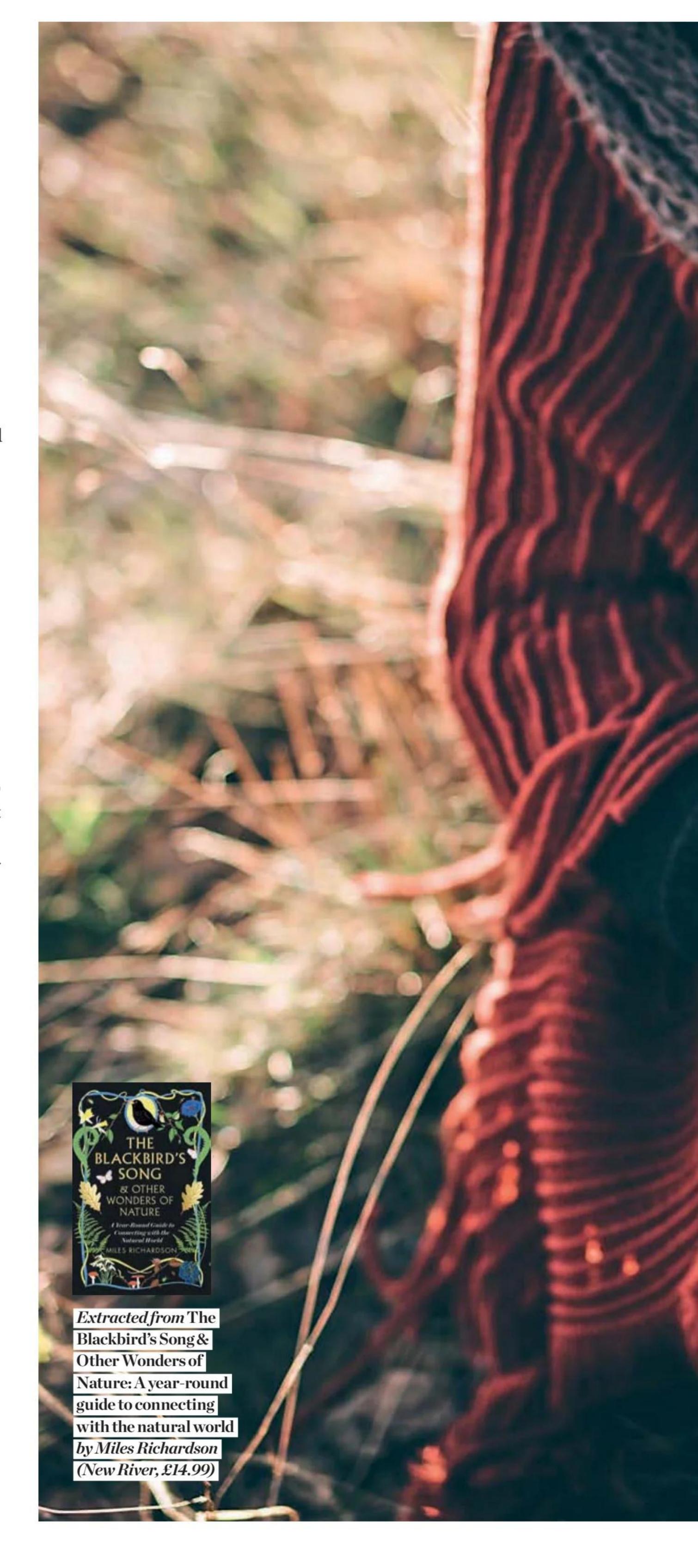
In many non-Western cultures, storytelling and folklore transmit valuable lessons about nature conservation. And even in Western communities, where oral story-telling, the traditional way of communicating down the generations, is beginning to fade away, tales and folk-lore can still be an important part of our relationship with nature. Inspired by your journal and photo gallery, create a nature connection-themed story. Your story will need to include:

- ocharacters, either human or non-human
- a focus on emotions or essence
- causally related events
- an unexpected challenge or development
- the effect of the challenge on the characters
- a resolution that affects the characters.

Your story might aim to celebrate nature and highlight the commonalities between the reader's life and those in the natural world. You might write a story to tell a child or grandchild, one they could go on to tell to their own offspring.

ACTIVITY: Cherishing favourite moments from the past

As an emotion tied to meaning, nostalgia is a great basis for nature connection. This activity is about looking back and bringing a past moment into the present to encourage a sense of belonging. To start, think of a favourite moment you have had with nature, a cherished memory. Consider what made that moment special, where you were, what you were doing and how you felt at the time. Imagine that scene, and perhaps find an old photograph or reconnect with someone else who was there.





SING WITH PSYCHOLOGIES!

A TO Z OF REASONS TO SING (PART THREE)

Musician and choir leader James Sills explains how singing can help us to lead happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives.



his month, I'm sharing the next installment of my A to Z of reasons to sing, explaining how singing supports our physical, social and mental health.

P is for Posture

If you take one-to-one vocal lessons or sing as part of a choir, it is likely that you will be given some guidance on how to best adjust your posture for singing which, in turn, can help improve your posture in day-to-day life. As a starting point, try the following when preparing to sing:

- Keep your feet a shoulder's width apart, with knees unlocked
- Stand (or sit) up straight, feeling a lengthening in the spine
- Keep the shoulders and abdomen relaxed

Take deep breaths into the belly The aim here is to feel aligned, balanced and strong, whilst releasing any muscular tension that may affect the airflow through the body and therefore restrict the singing sound.

Q is for Quality of life

Singing helps to improve quality of life in a number of different ways, something that I have experienced first-hand, both as a singer and as a vocal leader. Through countless studies, we know that the benefits of singing are multi-faceted, as it supports our physical, mental and social health. This is particularly pertinent for people living with conditions that affect their quality of day-to-day life. In recent years, there has been a rise in social prescribing in the UK, which is a way to help people improve their health and wellbeing by connecting them to community services and activities.

Singing and music have an important role to play here. Dr Tola Dabiri, the Arts and Culture Lead at the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) says: 'Activities such as singing, dancing, crafts or reading a good book boost our mood and creativity, and are essential wellbeing tools. We know that taking part in arts and culture activities can help a range of people, from those



James Sills is the author of *Do Sing* (The Do Book Co, £8.99), and founder of The Sofa Singers; thesofasingers.com. Find out more about James at james-sills.com, or follow him on social media @jsillsmusic

living with dementia, Parkinson's Disease or suffering from depression or long-Covid, their families and carers.'

R is for Release

When we sing, we are releasing ourselves into the present moment, temporarily stepping out of the concerns and pressures of everyday life. This is one of the reasons that

I always start my singing sessions with short breathing exercises, to help participants to slow down, focus and simply 'arrive,' just like at the beginning of a yoga class.

Through connecting with their voice, expressing their emotions and accessing the flow state, many people describe the feeling of intense liberation when they sing. It's powerful stuff! And when we sing with other people, there's another form of letting go: the release from self into the collective.

As singer Lisa Stansfield says: 'To me, singing is like a freedom. It's a very therapeutic thing. It's incredible. I can lose myself. It's sort of like meditation.'

Experience the joy of singing by joining me for the next Sing With *Psychologies* session. It's a free thirty-minute feel-good singing session taking place on Friday 22nd November when we'll be singing the Joe Cocker version of 'With A Little Help From My Friends'. Book your free place by scanning the QR code or by using

the following link: bit. ly/4dS23Qy. You would be most welcome!



S is for Self-esteem

Singing can be a great way to boost confidence and self-esteem, especially if you have previously

held a self-limiting belief about your own ability. To learn or develop a new skill is empowering, as writer Tom Vanderbilt discusses in

Beginners: The Joy and

Transformative Power
of Lifelong Learning.
He argues that: 'As you
plunge into learning
some art or skill, the
world around you appears
new and bursting with
infinite horizons. Each day
brims with new discoveries
as you take your tentative
first steps, slowly pushing
the bounds of exploration.'

We also get a boost from the 'happy hormones' that are released when we sing, such an endorphins, dopamine and oxytocin. Plus, if we are singing as part of a group, we feel the support of the other members which can help alleviate nerves and further promote feelings of wellbeing.

T is for Therapeutic

When I worked as a music teacher at a secondary school, I used to run a lunchtime choir for staff and students. One of the regular members, a deputy head at the school, described the rehearsals as her 'weekly therapy session'. She really understood the value of being able to step away from the stresses of her job for half an hour each week and to engage in something that nourished her mind, body and soul. She was able to return to her desk with a renewed sense of focus, calm and perspective, which is immeasurably valuable.

Whilst I wouldn't ever claim to be a therapist (or even a music therapist – this is something different again) there is undoubtedly something very therapeutic about the singing experience, particularly as part of a group. This is supported by the science that shows how cortisol levels lower during a singing session, thereby reducing the concentration of this stress hormone in our blood. At the same time, feel-good hormones are released, which boost our mood.

To conclude, as Elton John says, 'music has healing power.'

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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...



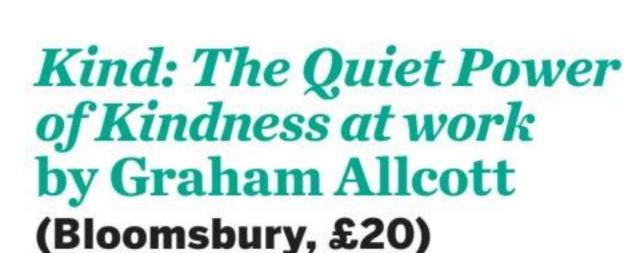


Labels can be a shorthand way to define who we are and find our tribe, but they can also be a curse, robbing us of complexity and humanity.

Philosopher and journalist Laura Kennedy explores the labels that have been attached to her to explore why and how we use these powerful descriptors, in a sharp and distinctive book.

Each chapter combines memoir with incisive analysis, as she reflects on personal identifiers like Irish, working class and neurodiverse some inherited, some bestowed and some proudly claimed.

There are moments of warmth, humour and naked honesty, and the end product is wise, thoughtful and much more.



PARTS

LAURA KENNEDY

The modern workplace is often built on a ruthless culture of survival of the fittest, but productivity expert Graham Allcott says an atmosphere of kindness improves outcomes, as well as having happier, more loyal staff.

This philosophy of 'kindfulness' was developed after his son was born with a rare chromosomal disorder and he saw the power that empathy, dignity

and trust could have on people.

In his book, he persuasively guides you through eight principles to create a 'kindful' way of working.

It's positive, dynamic and refreshing.



Hyperefficient by Dr Mithu Storoni

(Yellow Kite, £16.99)

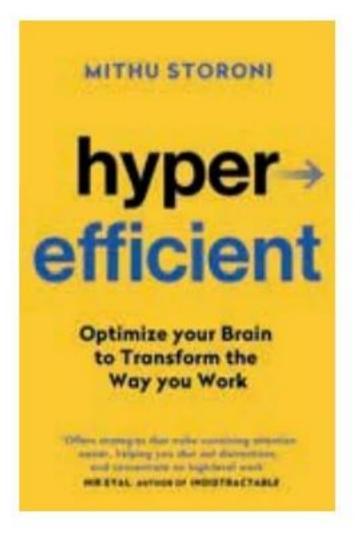
Maximising the usefulness of our time is the holy grail for so many in this frantic world. We want to make every minute productive - but surgeon Dr Mithu Storoni says the secret to efficiency isn't packing in more.

In this detailed analysis of making the most of our brains, she explains why 21st-century humans are going against biology, trying to be machines.

She argues we need to refocus on

improving quality of work, not quantity.

And her methods for this - all backed up by science – are ones we can all get on board with, such as afternoon naps, walks, hot baths and plenty of rest.



Self-Care For Winter by Suzy Reading

(Aster, £16.99)

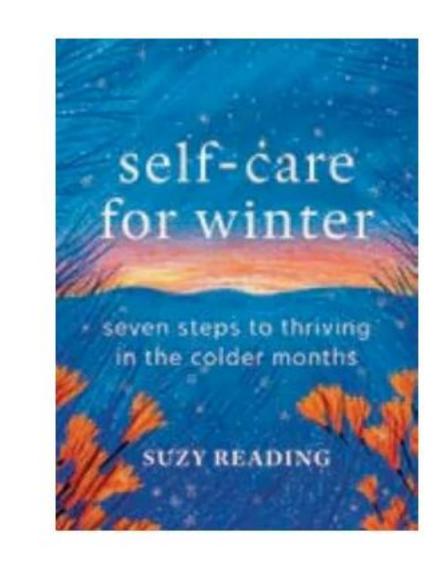
While most mammals slow down in the colder months, humans balk at hibernating, battling dark days and bad weather to their cost.

But Suzy Reading believes that winter can be a time of joy and rejuvenation, if you work with the season not against it.

Her seven-part, gorgeously illustrated guide is packed with activities and methods to increase colour and warmth, reduce stress

and sickness, promote sleep and stay fit.

It'll leave you looking forward to, rather than dreading, those cold, frosty mornings and dark evenings.



"Abuse shows me I'm doing something right"

Former Countdown maths whizz Carol Vorderman tells Prudence Wade why she now dedicates so much of her life to political activism.

Vorderman would be affected by the sheer amount of online abuse she's subjected to, but no – instead, she says: 'I quite enjoy it'.

Over the past few years, the former *Countdown* star has become increasingly vocal about politics online, regularly criticising the previous Conservative government – making her a bit of a target for those who don't agree with her strong opinions. But does criticism – from public figures and online trolls – bother Vorderman? Not in the slightest.

'I quite enjoy it – they don't realise, bless them, the trolls, that they're a bit of my oxygen,' she says.

'It's like when the Tories came after me, I knew I was doing something right – so I'll carry on, because that's the way I'm built. I won't shy away from it. Most of the responses from trolls are misogynistic or abusive – there's no argument, there's no debate based on fact. It's just abuse, bless them.'

To understand why Bath-based Vorderman, 63, decided to dive head-first into politics, she says it's important to know her background growing up in North Wales.

She was 'brought up in poverty, a free-school-meals kid from the northwest – everything going against you back in those times,' she explains. 'But, for whatever reason, people gave me opportunities, and I'm a grafter, a natural workaholic,' – so she's been able to do things that '99 per cent of people aren't'.

This means she feels a sense of responsibility to speak out. 'I have a great anger at how the working class – which is where I'm from – get treated, how they're sidelined.



'Even in television, only 10 per cent of people who work in telly and the film industry are from what you would say is the working class. So everything goes through this filter of middle-class values. That's why social media is great... people think you're talking in their language. And it's difficult for people who are from the upper-middle class to recognise that, because you are what you're from.

'To not know where a meal is coming from – I haven't had to do that as an adult, but absolutely we did as children. Those things never leave you... they certainly haven't left me.'

Vorderman says working on construction sites in the 1970s with her stepfather also means she's now 'hardened to stuff' – so a bit of online trolling doesn't phase her.

And she describes feeling 'free' after sending her first political post in 2022. 'Social media meant I didn't have to go through the filter of an editor anymore. It's not that I didn't care – that's not true – I felt as though I'd found my voice. I could present facts and evidence and data as I felt it – I was my own editor, and in that way I felt freer.'

Vorderman isn't unappreciative of the career she has had so far, but she's also very aware of the new platform that social media has provided her.

'Don't get me wrong, I'm very grateful, I've been very, very lucky. I'm one of the few of my age group who's been around since they were in their 20s. There are women my age on the telly, but they haven't been on network telly for 40 years – some have, but very few, and I'm one of those few. So I've lived through the sexism, the ageism, every other "ism" – fattism, thinism, whatever.

'I call myself an old bird with an iPhone, which is what I am – it's literally just me screenshotting stuff. I don't have a team of people or a newsroom to fall back on – and I'm fascinated by that, because one of my big things is about communicating information. That's what's always driven me, whether it's science programs, tech programs, or whatever it might be.

'I've always been the same – I'm a workaholic. I think they should have group sessions for that, I'd be first on: My name is Carol Vorderman, and I'm a workaholic,' she jokes.

'It's been my pattern all the way through my life, I work, work, work, work, work, then I "collapse". That's very much in inverted commas. But in the past, about every 10 years, it's led to some kind of heart issue or something like that.

'So as you get older – I'll be 64 in December – you have to be a little bit more careful. I haven't been remotely careful over the past two years in terms of the amount of work, but I will have to look at that. I just get so passionate about it – that's the thing.'

Now What: On A Mission To Fix Broken Britain by Carol Vorderman is out now in hardback, by Headline, priced £22.

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