

**FIVE EASY WAYS TO MAKE GOOD HABITS STICK**

**CREATE A LIFE YOU LOVE**

UK edition

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MORE,  
LAUGH  
MORE**

**Hacks to feel  
happier when  
the world  
feels tough**

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- **Where to find sanctuary in everyday life**
- **What do you need to take a break from?**

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a summer  
of love!**

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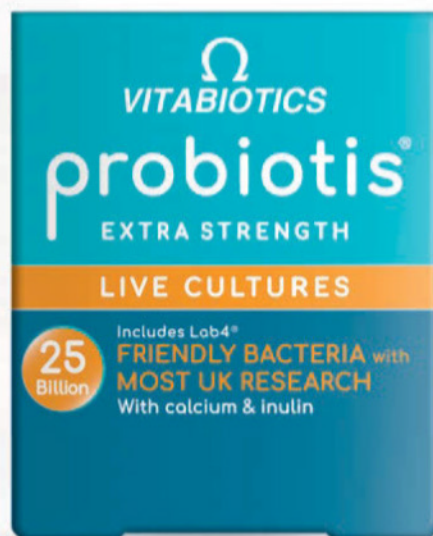
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**VITABIOTICS**



# Welcome...

When you think of the summer, what image does it conjure up for you? Do you think of long, lazy days lying reading in the grass, or hazy picnics on the beach? Or is that picture being elbowed out of the way by the thought of surreptitiously answering emails at the park, sweaty days in the office, grumpy queues at the airport...

The reality is, of course, our dreams of summer and what actually happens never quite match up. But this issue we want to think about how to embrace all of it. We don't want to just think about the two weeks that you (might) manage to escape to the sun, but how do we slow down and enjoy each and every day? How do we channel feelings of peace and calm (and fun and joy!) on work days, on travel days, on rainy days, not just on sunny holiday days? Because these summery months are a time when life often relaxes just a little, when the pace slows a tad, and we can all breathe just a fraction easier. The irony, of course, is all that relaxation might take just a little bit of work — on your mindset. So this issue we're thinking not just about how to enjoy our time off, but how to enjoy our *time*. We're taking a long view. So we're not thinking about how to make our holidays perfect, but how to embrace their imperfection (page 22), and our dossier is packed full of ideas to enjoy a slower pace of life (page 47). I especially love this piece this month: our writer Kellie Gillespie-Wright gives a beautiful, poetic take on how and why we need 'permission to pause', and it's certainly inspired me to take my foot off the pedal and enjoy the day-to-day a little more — I hope it does you too! Plus we've got a fascinating interview with ADHD Love star Rox Pink (page 30) where she describes in her own words the realities of living with the condition (warning: her story is very emotional!); we take a look at how to use visualisation to achieve our dreams (page 44); ask whether we might have 'post-traumatic boss syndrome' (page 70) and discover how to reignite the spark to make this a summer of love, and really, who doesn't want that? Have a great month. Happy reading!



Sally xx

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

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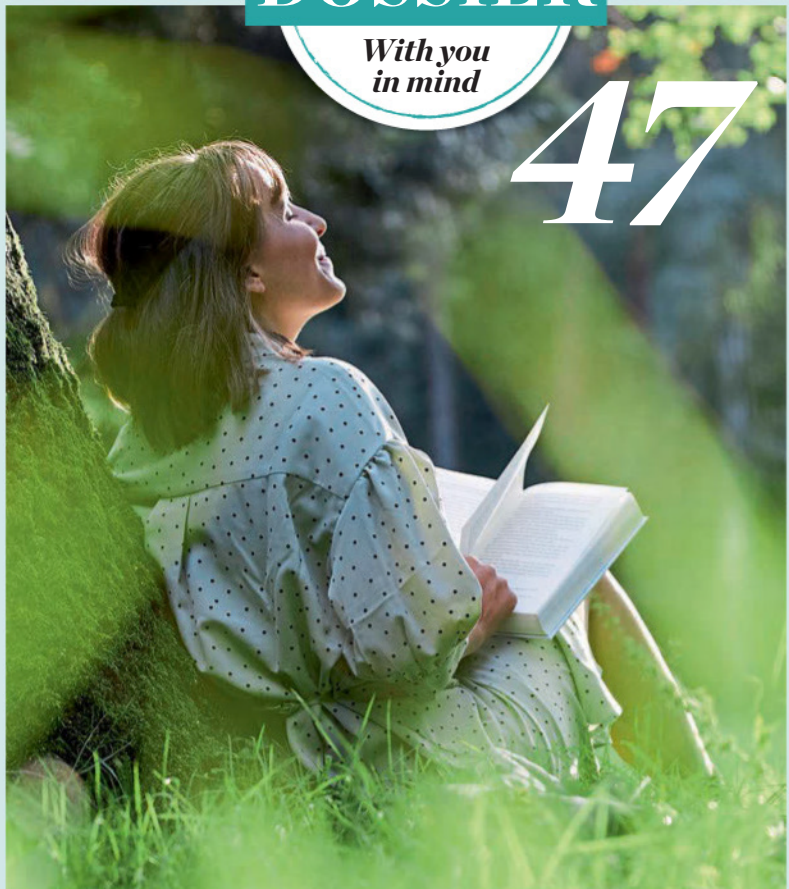
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# The advice starts RIGHT HERE!



## GEIR BERTHELSEN

*'We're not machines made for output, we're human beings made for rhythm. Nature rests, even the heart rests between every beat. Why would we be the only system that must run non-stop?' asks Geir Berthelsen, founder of the World Institute of Slowness. Find out about why we need to take time to pause in our dossier on page 47.*

## DR CLAIRE PLUMBLY

*'When a boss — who holds power over your livelihood and self-worth — uses that power to belittle, manipulate or intimidate, it doesn't just bruise the ego; it makes you feel very unsafe,' says clinical psychologist Dr Claire Plumbly. Discover how to reclaim agency and help yourself recover from a bad boss on page 72.*



## CHANTAL DEMPSEY

*'In times of stress or loneliness, a casual chat can completely change your mood, give you a fresh perspective without obligation or stop your overthinking loop,' says mindset coach Chantal Dempsey. We take a look at the life-changing power of 'low-stakes community' on page 94.*

## 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



## Love makes a difference!

Children who receive more warmth and affection from their mum grow up to be more open-minded and conscientious, a study suggests.

Psychologists tracked more than 1,000 pairs of British identical twins from early childhood to near adulthood, asking their mums how they would describe each one.

The University of Edinburgh team assessed her affection on a six-point scale, based on the language used, with phrases like 'she is a delight' marked near the top. By age 18, those who had experienced the most affection were more agreeable and creative, a bit kinder and marginally more organised, on average.

The twin who received more affection from their mum also ended up with a different personality, despite sharing the same genes as their sibling.

## MPs launch sun screen safety check

MPs have kicked off an inquiry into UV safety in a bid to improve the public's protection against sun damage.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Beauty and Wellbeing want to speak to people in the industry or with personal experience of UV damage, on issues such as education and costs.

There are 16,000 new cases of melanoma skin cancer diagnosed in the UK every year, with 2,300 dying of the disease. But British Beauty Council research found that 57 per cent of consumers think sunscreen is too expensive, with 29 per cent saying they would wear it daily if it were more affordable.

You can submit evidence at [baw-appg.co.uk](http://baw-appg.co.uk)



## Call off the hunt for hare pairs?

Brown hares could be allowed to breed in safety after ministers said they support ambitions to create a closed hunting season in England and Wales. Unlike pheasants and deer, hares are the only game species that can be shot year-round. Numbers have declined by 80 per cent in the past century, according to the Hare Preservation Trust. Author Chloe Dalton, who wrote memoir *Raising Hare* about sharing her home with a rescued leveret, prompted politicians to consider the change after launching a petition that has attracted thousands of signatures. She says: 'It is a core principle of conservation that you don't kill an animal when it is breeding.'



**Brits are going back to basics with their summer barbecues, with 78% favouring sausages and 66% having burgers, a poll by Andrew Peace Wines found.**

## WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



**WATCH** *Fantastic Four.* Pedro Pascal and Vanessa Kirby star in this retro-futuristic action adventure, defending Earth from a ravenous space god. In cinemas 25 July.



**LOOK** *Caroline Walker: Mothering at The Hepworth Wakefield* intimately explores the diverse worlds of women, through large canvases and delicate ink sketches. Until 25 Oct.



**LISTEN** *Good Hang with Amy Poehler.* The comedian and actress chews the fat with famous friends from Paul Rudd to Michelle Obama, talking career, childhood and friends.





### Safety in numbers

Seagulls swooping in to steal your food can ruin a trip to the seaside. But Ghent University researchers say the birds are less likely to pinch your picnic when they are alone, compared to when there is a flock.

They carried out tests with 54 young herring gulls and discovered the species take greater risks when in a group, a result of neophobia — a fear of new or unfamiliar things.

When the gulls were around peers, they went for foods as well as 'new' objects quicker, compared to solo.

### Top banana!

*Brits are going bananas for bananas, with sales of the fruit up 70 million last year. This means each adult bought an average of 80, according to Kantar Worldpanel data, making them the country's favourite fruit. Growing awareness of their health benefits and a surge in sales of homemade blenders to make smoothies is thought to have fuelled the boom. But the downside is it increased food waste, with more than a million binned daily, food waste charity Wrap says.*



**29%**  
**of fans attending this summer's Oasis reunion gigs plan to wear 1990s-inspired fashions, including baggy jeans, tracksuit tops, bucket hats and parkas, according to research by Barclays.**

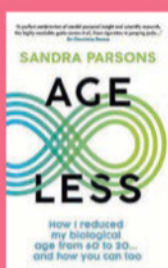




## 3 forward-focused reads...



**1** *Age Less* by Sandra Parsons (£14.99, New River). Journalist Sandra explains how she 'treated' ageing with a three-step, science-based plan of eating, moving and resting.



**2** *Futureproof* by Davinia Taylor (£16.99, Orion Spring). The actress turned biohacker reveals her five key steps to reducing your biological age, from inflammation to stress.



**3** *Fit & Fabulous Over 50* by Alison Cork (£22, AC Publishing). TV presenter Alison shares how she transformed her diet and health in later life, with easy recipes to try.



**47%**  
of British adults are hiding  
a secret pot of money from  
their partner, with an  
average of £6,495 in their  
rainy-day fund, a survey  
by Aviva found.

## Teen tech trouble

It might seem like teens live on their phones these days. But 46 per cent of 16 to 21-year-olds say they would rather live in a world where the internet does not exist, according to a survey by the British Standards Institute.

Nearly 70 per cent feel worse about themselves after spending time on social media while half would support a digital curfew, restricting access to certain apps and sites past 10pm.





## Play your way to less pain

*A brain-training game could help people with chronic pain, potentially freeing them from taking medications. PainWaive, developed by UNSW Sydney researchers, teaches users how to regulate abnormal brain activity linked to chronic nerve pain. A trial of the technology with hundreds of participants saw their brain activity tracked before, during and after four weeks of interactive play. Three out of four people showed significant reductions in pain, comparable or greater to that offered by opioids.*



## Vitamin slows ageing

Taking vitamin D supplements could slow ageing down by as much as three years, new research suggests.

Scientists at the Medical College of Georgia say that the nutrient may help to maintain the stability of telomeres, the protective caps at the end of chromosomes that tend to shorten as we get older.

While this process is a natural part of ageing, it has also been linked to disease like cancer of the bladder, lungs and kidneys.

The study followed more than 1,000 adults aged 50 and older over five years and found those who took a 2000IU supplement experienced significantly reduced shortening, equivalent to three years.



*"If you've ever felt 'less than'... you've hated yourself or felt ashamed, it was never you. It was society, consumerism and capitalism. It was beneficial to someone, somewhere, to hold you down. Whether that was in a relationship, a corporate company or a brand, it was never you. You were always fine just as you are, and you always will be."*

**Activist and presenter Katie Piper.**

# Viewpoint

We want to know what you loved (or even hated) reading in the magazine, write to [letters@psychologies.co.uk](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)

## *In gratitude...*

When I read this magazine, it always makes me realise that I need to reset and refocus my self mentally.

Then I can get back on track, with my goals and aspirations.

This magazine keeps reminding me to think about my 'Ikigai', my core values and what 'my calling' in life is meant to really be.

Reading this magazine always gives me a wake-up call and allows me to notice that staying on track, with my mental health and mindset, is very important to me.

It makes me more aware of my happiness levels, bringing back my inner state of calm, balance and clarity.

This allows me to grow my strengths and focus on my core values and identify what my priorities should be.

My life keeps pulling me in different directions and makes me lose focus, by throwing me off track.

After reading your magazine's articles each month, it helps me stay on track.

I'm trying to teach myself, to have more inner mental strength and resilience.

To see through the setbacks, so I have more focus, concentration and clarity, which is what I want to achieve and pursue in the coming months.

I understand however, that when I allow stressful situations to take control of my mindset, they are happening to teach me a lesson, that I know I need to learn from.

So, that I don't experience them again.

So, I'm really thankful, that I can turn to this magazine each month, to give me a nudge in the right direction and a good insight of self-reflection and allows me to rethink about my Ikigai.

It keeps me mentally clear, which is a must, and is an excellent reminder, allowing me to move forward.

Forever grateful

*Abigail Lasham*



## **Love is in the air**

I thought I would send this photo in. It made me feel grateful and moved.

Every year some relatives on my mum's side meet up at the Midland Air Festival in Ragley, Warwickshire. This year, right at the end of the air show, there were a few

showers, then this beautiful rainbow appeared over Ragley Hall.

It made me think of all my relatives, including my beloved parents' spirit.

Regards

*Diana Lee*

**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](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)!**

***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](mailto:letters@psychologies.co.uk)





# Summer wellness: How to thrive, not just survive!

By Debbie Green



*Somehow, summer is here! And while we all know in theory that we need to prioritise our self-care, in practice, it's all too easy to let it slip to the bottom of the list.*

**H**ow can we make sure we're looking after ourselves while navigating issues like remote working, worries about the cost of living, kids off school for the summer, and maintaining that elusive life/work balance (not work/life as it's often called!)?

Here's a secret. The best time to make a change is during change. So this summer, let's shift the narrative from merely surviving to thriving during these bright and (hopefully!) sunny warm months.

## Structured boundaries

We may have set boundaries and upheld them really well at first, but often what happens is the minute something changes, we revert back

to our old habits and those boundaries become more porous. This is why we need to take time to reset. To reset your life/work balance try these tips:

- Re-establish your working hours: and switch that computer off outside these hours
- Minimise distractions: close social media tabs and turn off notifications
- Ask for help: whether that's from your partner or family at home or support from your boss or manager at work if you're struggling

## The sense of wonder

Summer is the perfect season to really tap into that childlike sense of joy and wonder. We as adults can all benefit from getting back to that completely

immersed, childlike state every now and again.

Last week I went to the beach on a beautiful day, and I went paddling. I took a photo of my feet in the sea and sent it to my friend, and she said, there's your child coming to play. She was so right! Small things matter. Plant a seed and watch it grow, lie down and look at the sky. I hope you can take some time to let your own child, the one within you, out to play this season.

## Looking ahead

Also take this time to think about how to maintain your summer schedule into the autumn and winter months. As the days draw shorter, how are you planning to take the summer warmth into the rest of the year? It's time to start thinking about it and put some plans in place.

Be proactive and focus on something you want to do. Maybe it's time to start something new? Perhaps trying out an art class in a pub, joining a running group or a dance troupe, honing your language skills or laughing at a comedy club?

The key is to be proactive rather than reactive. Don't wait to implement these practices, otherwise summer will have been and gone! Start now, be consistent and watch how your summer experience transforms from one of mere survival into genuine thriving.

**Debbie Green is founder and wellness coach at Wishfish Coaching & Development and co-host of Secrets from A Coach podcast. For more information visit [wishfish.org.uk](http://wishfish.org.uk) and [secretsfromacoach.com](http://secretsfromacoach.com).**



# *I'm a million times more confident than I was in my 20s'*

'Happy Place' podcaster Fearne Cotton chats about being an introvert, OCD and midlife happiness

**F**earne Cotton is redefining what happiness looks like in her 40s. 'It's just maybe a level of average contentment that I'm aiming for —

I don't even know if I'm needing to land on happiness,' says the podcaster and author.

'I'm pretty happy these days when I just feel even and average. I'm not looking for euphoria.

'It's about those moments where there's a bit of mental peace and I just feel kind of balanced,' the 43-year-old explains. 'It's not circumstantial. Before I'd think, [happiness is] being on a holiday with a beautiful beach and no laptop and having a nice cocktail. But actually I could do that and be going mad in my head.'

The former BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2 presenter, who rose to fame first on children's TV and later *Top Of The Pops* in the early Noughties, says her old TV and radio life 'hugely' affected her mental health.

'I wasn't doing so well mentally in my old career,' says Cotton, who announced her split from husband Jesse Wood last December after 10 years of marriage. The pair share two children,

Rex and Honey, and Cotton is stepmother to Wood's two children from a previous relationship, Arthur and Lola.

She's largely left the TV and radio world behind, and says live broadcasting is not a position she wants to put herself in at the moment. 'I think it's so exposing, people are incredibly judgemental.

'There's no room in traditional media, certainly not when I was growing up as a teenager in the early Noughties, in my 20s, to be thoroughly yourself.

'There was no space to fade up the microphone on Radio 1 and say, "I'm feeling like death today." You've got to be jolly and play music — so people probably only saw that side of me, and I was terrified to show the other side of me.'

Cotton — who has been open in sharing her struggles with depression and OCD — started the Happy Place Podcast in 2018, interviewing famous faces and notable people, exploring themes of mental health, wellbeing, and happiness. A year later she launched the Happy Place Festival and now also writes self-help, healthy eating and children's books.

IMAGES: ALEXANDRA CAMERON/PA/HAPPY PLACE







‘I believe that what I’ve created, very luckily, is a career where I’m not waiting around to be chosen by anyone because I’m deemed good enough, or popular enough,’ she says.

Cotton considers herself an introvert, but says: ‘I wonder how much of it is naturally, authentically who I am, and how much of it is almost a response to the more troubling times I’ve had being in the public eye – where you’re so instantly judged and people so easily make assumptions, and you’re so hyper alert to what you’ve said, in case someone takes it the wrong way.

‘So sometimes I wonder, “am I an introvert?” Am I naturally someone that likes to be in my own company, or is it just because it feels safer?’

But, she admits: ‘I crave being on my own with nothing to do, and then when I’m in it, I’m a bit lost, so I sort of have to push myself, because I actually feel great when I’ve had a good experience with other people.’

Connecting with other people is a big theme of both her podcast and festival (now biannual in London and Cheshire). ‘I hope [people] leave feeling a bit better really.

‘I know when I’m going through something that feels mentally trying, I always assume I’m the only person on the planet that’s ever felt like that, because you get into that sort of narcissistic vortex of Hell where you just think no one else has ever had these awful thoughts or felt so low.

‘People have deep conversations off the back of hearing talks, it might make you feel more connected to other people who have been through tricky things. I want people to come together and feel like it’s a safe space to explore whatever they’re going through in their lives and their heads and [know] they’re not alone in it.

‘Once you have said that thing that you feel awful about in the past, or you’re worrying about in the future, or the thing that you’re very uncomfortable with, that you couldn’t say out loud, I think there’s so much power in that, there’s an immediate sense of relief.’

Cotton says she’d be ‘in trouble’ if she didn’t go to therapy every week.

‘I feel lucky I get to do it because it’s not always accessible and it’s expensive, but I really need that time to talk to someone about what’s going on in my head and sift through all the obsessive thinking that I can get stuck in, and [the] negative thought loops.’

Still says she’s ‘a million times more confident than I was in my 20s – I’m perhaps learning the most about myself than I ever have.’

When Cotton is feeling off balance, she knows the signs to look for. ‘I usually start to not like





*"When everything gets a bit chaotic,  
I don't cope very well"*



myself quite quickly. Like, self-loathing is never far away, so I have to really watch that...

'I start to look at the past and that becomes a bit obsessive, and my OCD kicks in. I might start getting into a bit of an obsessive-thought loop, I do some of the more cliché things, like I have to check all the windows are locked and check the ovens are all turned off. But more so, it's the loops of thought that I get stuck in. The OCD is still on-off, it's not debilitating.'

To counteract and rebalance, she loves smaller social occasions. 'I like really small dinners, like one on one with a mate or two mates. I love painting — it makes me feel absolute euphoria like nothing else, if the painting's gone well.'

And even cleaning. 'I love having my house really tidy. If it's a mess, I cannot cope with life. I have to have everything in its place, neat, with a candle on.'

'I just need everything visually to be in place, so I feel like my head's not such a mess.'

'I actually enjoy the process of doing that. Every morning, I get up, clean the kitchen before the

kids get up, get their lunch boxes sorted or their snack boxes, do a couple of emails. I just like everything being in order. When everything gets a bit chaotic I don't cope very well.'

Walking helps, 'which sounds so basic', she says, 'but there's something about getting out of the house and not being trapped in it all — walking, getting a bit more perspective, seeing other humans.'

'I'm constantly trying to recalibrate and work out what the best thing is in those moments. I know that yoga is going to suit me better than a HIIT workout.'

But like any working parent, she does 'whatever I can fit in, because the mornings are just absolute chaos!'

'So many things you read, it's like, "oh, just get up earlier, do half an hour of yoga, make a smoothie." Yeah, if you've got kids and a job... good luck with that one!'

***Tickets for Fearne Cotton's Happy Place festival are available at [happyplaceofficial.co.uk](http://happyplaceofficial.co.uk).***



# Question time?

*You don't always have to be the font of all knowledge. In fact, sometimes it's good to be clueless, discovers Harriet Minter*



If there is one thing I wish I could drill into my brain it's that I am not required to have

all the answers. I think it comes from being a swot at school and taking far too much pleasure from being called smart, but when someone asks me a question I will always try to find an answer. The thought of simply saying, 'I don't know' fills me with anxiety. Despite knowing this is ridiculous and having spent over a decade trying to get out of automatically answering (or panicking that I should be able to answer), I still find simply shrugging my shoulders very hard.

This regularly gets me into trouble. If I don't know the answer but think I can take a good guess, I'll do that. And I'm someone who just sounds convincing, so I can

very easily persuade a group to believe something that even I am not entirely sure is the truth. It's not a lie, per se, it's just that I might only be 50% sure, but I'd rather go with that than admit I just don't know.

It's also problematic, because if I have to have all the answers, then I don't get to ask anyone for help. This month, however, I'm really trying to let go of assuming I know it all and embrace allowing someone else to be in charge. I've recently started working with a health coach, to help fix my ongoing back issues and set me up for a healthy second half of life.

But I noticed on our first call that whenever she suggested something I'd say, 'Oh yes, I know about that.' Sometimes I did, sometimes I sort of did and sometimes I didn't. But it was almost impossible for

me to just shut up and let someone else teach me for a change.

So I made a decision, on our next call, regardless of whether I know what she is talking about or not, I am simply going to say, 'That sounds interesting, can you tell me more?' I am going to embrace a 'beginner's mindset', where you set away all your past learning and approach a task as though it's entirely new. This mindset allows you to take off the know-it-all hat and instead be open to how someone else might see the world or what they might suggest. The thing no-one tells

you is, a beginner's mindset is an incredibly relaxing place to be, because if you don't have the answer then you don't have to lead the way. And how lovely it is to be an ignoramus being led.





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# Mind

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



***“Always  
remember that  
you are absolutely  
unique. Just like  
everyone else.”***

MARGARET MEAD

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

# *Travel light, or just lighten up and travel?*

Discover the five obstacles to enjoying your holiday  
(and six ways to make them better),  
with clinical psychologist Paola Filotico

**H**olidays are an interesting time and place. Whether we are planning to go away, or to stay at home, we look forward to holidays — to the time off, to seeing more of people we love, and to meeting new people; to visiting unknown places, or places which we long to see again.

Holidays are exciting, and full of promise, yet, all too often, they fail to deliver. Too often we get to the end of the holidays with feelings of exhaustion, disappointment, guilt, frustration, and even relief that we are going back to normal life, at last. Perhaps holidays are more complicated than we believe. In my experience as a clinical psychologist, I believe there are five obstacles that get in the way of us having a good time.

**Perfectionism.** We build a lot of expectations over the months to achieve the perfect holiday. While planning ahead, looking forward and daydreaming can create a sense of excitement, if we approach our time off with too much of a clear idea of what we expect should happen, we are likely to be disappointed. Excessive expectations

can create stress in the weeks or months preceding the holiday: the act of booking hotel rooms and activities, as well as buying equipment, could end up being associated with a sense of performance, pressure to do things right. This way, an activity that was meant to be enjoyable becomes exhausting, and if (when) something does not go as we wish, excitement turns to anxiety.

**Low self-esteem.** Excessive expectations associated with perfectionism could be related to how we see ourselves in the first place. We might attach great importance to things like booking the right room with the right view, or creating the perfect list of books to read, because of an underlying idea that the way we organise our holidays says something important about us. We might also feel ashamed if we are not having the great time that we were expecting; we compare ourselves to others and imagine they do holidays better than us, we beat ourselves up for not feeling as relaxed as we should, for not having more fun. This is linked to low self-esteem: ►



*"It can be tempting to think of holidays as a separate time, when the daily grind disappears"*

### *Expert advice*



*Paola Filotico is a clinical psychologist. Her main focus are self-esteem issues and anxiety disorders. She has an interest in the profound meaning of apparently inconsequential experiences, and their ripples in our psyche. [Examinedlife.co.uk](http://Examinedlife.co.uk)*



if our self-image is negative, we will likely be harsh and unforgiving with ourselves. We see ourselves as unworthy and/or not good enough, so, especially when things do not go according to the plan (that was probably unrealistic to begin with), or if we are stressed, we will jump to the conclusion that we failed, and we are to blame.

**Emotional baggage.** We lead full-on lives, filled with work and responsibilities. It can be tempting to think about holidays as a separate time, in which the daily grind disappears, and the weight of commitments is lifted. One thing that we really hope to get when we take time off is relief from difficult feelings such as anxiety, sadness, and stress. Often though, the painful emotions that we wish we could leave at home are not just the result of tiredness: they might have been with us for a long time, and be related to our personal history and our life experiences. If this is the case, holidays could even make things worse: for example, we could experience sudden sadness or anxiety, we could feel guilty for indulging in something that we think we don't deserve, or painful memories could resurface just because we find ourselves in a specific place.

**How our life looks, and what it should look like.** The tourism industry, the media, and social media add to the image of a holiday as the perfect time away from day-to-day life; we get the promise of peace, relaxation, fun, memorable times, all things that allegedly we don't have at home, but we can easily achieve the moment we are on holiday. The underlying idea is that our lives are miserable, and we should escape as soon as we can. Such messaging feeds a mindset of unrealistic expectations and discontent. Also, we are led to think in a black-and-white fashion: time off becomes the opposite of normality, rather than a part of life that organically blends with the rest.

**The impact of change.** Holidays bring change, and change is always challenging, even when it is for fun. We dive into our holiday anticipating a warm embrace, and sometimes what we get is a cold shower. If we travel, we might experience a sense of displacement: we might find the hotel bed impossible to sleep in, we might dislike the taste of tap water or misunderstand the local sense of humour. Things are not necessarily easier if we spend our holidays at home: we wake up at a different time, we have made plans that we are not sure we want to carry out anymore, we miss small rituals that make us feel good. In both cases, we have no need to rush and a lot of time on our hands, but possibly not a clear idea of how to make good use of it. We might feel bored and anxious, guilty and ashamed for not making the most of the precious hours we worked so hard to earn.





Should we give up on holidays then? Of course not. But let's make them more sustainable — for us — so that they can finally be all that they promise to be, and more. Let's discover the six ideas that will help us achieve that.

**HOLIDAYS ARE JUST HOLIDAYS:** We need to demystify holidays, and think about them for what they are: a time to do something different, a chance to break our routine. If we charge a trip, a cruise, a week off, with too much importance, if we believe that their outcome says something about us (about our competence, intelligence...), we are exerting a lot of pressure on ourselves, and hampering our actual chances to enjoy the experience. Our holidays do not define us.

**EMBRACE IMPERFECTION:** If we expect perfection, we are setting ourselves up for failure. Instead of aiming for an idealised version of a holiday, we could set apart some time to think of what we and the people we are travelling with would really enjoy doing. By spending a little time (10-20 minutes) on this exercise, we will notice that our version is more textured and appealing than the 'perfect' holiday that we had in mind.

**WELCOME THE UNEXPECTED:** Holidays come with the hope of an adventure, regardless of what we plan to do. We dream of coming back to our day-to-day life changed, with a story to tell, a romance to remember. If we try to keep plans in place at all costs though, none of that is going to happen. It is the unexpected opportunities which make journeys memorable, and if we stick to a specific plan, we are going to miss them. When we go on an adventure, the golden rule is to keep it light (we are not talking about the luggage). We want to remind ourselves that no disruption to our plans is the end of the world, and there is probably something to laugh about. If we lower the stakes, everything that happens becomes part of the experience that we are having, which means that nothing can really go wrong — within limits.

**KNOW THYSELF:** If we struggle with our emotions, often wish we were not feeling anxious or sad, have a negative impression of ourselves, or consistently struggle to be with others, there might be a deeper mental-health issue that needs to be addressed. If we are not feeling well, it is unrealistic to think that a holiday will solve our problem, or that it will make us forget about it. That would be like expecting a massage to heal a fractured bone. On the other hand, once we have started exploring and understanding our issues, then taking time off, travelling or going on a retreat, can be part of our healing journey.

**BRING OUR WORLDS TOGETHER:** This idea goes together with the previous one: if we are unhappy with our life, a holiday won't fix it. We

***"Holidays  
can highlight  
what we don't  
like about our  
life, leaving us  
feeling  
trapped"***

might hope that a holiday will give us respite from our dissatisfaction, but instead, it will probably make us feel worse, because it will highlight what we don't like about our life, leaving us feeling trapped. This could have the beneficial effect of acting as a catalyst for change, but it will stir unpleasant feelings in the short term.

As we have seen, the tourism industry, and the social narratives on holiday, tend to split time off from the rest of our lives, creating artificial worlds that are desirable, as opposed to real worlds that are stressful and dull. Holidays become sacred spaces within profane lives. What if instead the time of the holiday and the time of day-to-day life were permeable? What if we decided to curate our life so that we could like it more? In this scenario we would not mind if we were to do some work while travelling. We would not find it an intrusion. The same would apply to other aspects of our mundane life spilling into our holiday time. Quality of life is an important factor for our mental health, so if we are existentially unhappy, we want to take that step and explore the issue, whether that's with the help of a professional, or on our own.

**TAKE CHANGE INTO ACCOUNT:** Last but not least, remember that change is hard. It is normal to feel a sense of uneasiness when we are somewhere new, or when our daily routine is disrupted. We want to give ourselves a moment to settle into the holiday mood. If we assume we can just dive in and have a great time straight away, we are not allowing for the transition period we need to start and feel at ease. It might feel like wasting precious time, but in fact it is the opposite: by giving ourselves permission to find the first day(s) of a holiday challenging, we are improving our chances to enjoy the whole experience.



# KEEP PUTTING *one foot* IN FRONT OF THE OTHER

It's not how you start but how you continue that matters, explains consistency expert Robin Sharma

**C**hange is hard. We all know it. Whether you're trying to get more exercise, eat healthier, use your phone less or go to bed earlier, it's difficult to turn our good intentions into meaningful results.

But despite what your inner critic tells you, that's not because you're lazy, or too busy, or just not good enough. 'It's mainly due to broken beliefs,' says growth mentor and author of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Robin Sharma. 'A lot of us have these ideas that we're not good enough, smart enough, fast enough or able enough to make the changes we want to make.'

'Any good positive psychologist will tell you that your personal story determines how you live in the world,' says Sharma. 'Therefore, our daily behaviour reflects our deepest beliefs and if our beliefs are not helpful, then we're not even going to do the things required to install the new habits or to get the goals done.'

'People also surround themselves with too many energy vampires and dream-stealers. This means that every time we say we want to be healthier, save more money, find love, become more powerful, we often share this with a loved one and they laugh or put us down.'

'They may tell us to be reasonable or remind us that these things never work. Therefore, we need to clean up who we surround ourselves with.'

So why do small changes matter? 'Your days are your life in miniature and it's what you do each day that creates your life,' says Sharma.

'Small, daily, seemingly insignificant improvements, when done consistently over time lead to stunning results. It's not what you do once a year that makes a difference, it's what you do every day.'

'Doing these little things like eating slightly better, being a little kinder, doing one uncomfortable thing often, putting your phone down and having a conversation — all of these little acts of positivity are so easy to do that we think they won't work and so often we neglect them.'

He adds: 'If you look or talk to anyone who's successful or happy, they'll tell you that they were persistent and also minimalists in many ways. They did a few small things, they didn't give up too easily and they just stayed with it.'

'One of my favourite brain tattoos is "all change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous at the end". Whenever we try anything new, it's going to be hard in the beginning and our ego tells you that you're doing something wrong when you are actually doing something right. If it wasn't hard, it wouldn't be valuable. Everything that we now find easy, we once found difficult.'

## How can we stay consistent?

'Number one is do a 30-day consistency challenge. Maybe it's no sugar, no social media, no complaining, no news. Consistency is like a muscle, so we need to exercise it for it to get stronger.'

'Secondly, become boring. If you look at the

## Expert advice



Robin Sharma is a leadership and personal growth mentor, and author *The 5AM Club* and *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. He has launched an audio mentoring programme titled *The Deep Magic of Daily Consistency* (available via Apple and Spotify).





IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK, PA WIRE

many great athletes that I mentor, a lot of professional athletes, they do the same things each and every day until they become automatic. It's called mundanity so be boring, do the same things every day, do the same routines until they become automatic.

'Thirdly, distraction is the enemy of consistency. Don't be a cyber zombie. Use your technology as a servant and a tool, not as your god.

'Fourth thing I would say is strip out the energy vampires and find an accountability, consistency partner. If you look at any changes that last, it's done in groups. Therefore, find someone who can champion and encourage you when you feel like giving up.'

Sharma concludes: 'Lastly, I would say is keep moving forward when you most feel like quitting because often it's when we're at the point of giving up that our greatest breakthrough happens. We may feel like waving the white towel of surrender, but if we just continue, amazing things naturally show up.'

### **What can you expect if you stay consistent?**

'Consistency is one of the greatest recipes,' Sharma explains. 'It's one of the greatest pathways into happiness. It's one of the great ways to become courageous and self-loving. Consistency is not only becoming stronger and installing great habits, a daily routine and results — it's also the DNA of integrity.

'When you're consistent, you're someone who says "here are my values. Even if nobody understands them, I'm going to live by these values."

'That's a great source of happiness, because when we betray our integrity and we've become people that we're not — we don't find happiness.

'If you want to be happier, like yourself more and really want your life to work — keep the promises you make to other people but most importantly, keep the promises you make to yourself. As you keep self-promises, you become more consistent, you start to respect yourself more and someone who respects themselves, lives a much greater life.'



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# 'My diagnosis saved my life'

Singer-songwriter and social-media star Rox Pink on ADHD — in her own words

**W**ere you to be teaching a masterclass on remarketing you could choose few more successful case studies than Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). When most of us were growing up, it was generally considered the sole preserve of naughty little boys who couldn't sit still in the classroom. Now it's everywhere, with countless actors, writers, singers and especially comedians sharing recent diagnoses, and social media abuzz with ADHD-friendly cleaning routines that show us how we can still have a perfect home even if we have ADHD, and how it is the ultimate superpower.

Indeed, the image has become so positively charged that many consider it has been overly romanticised and made almost into some kind of status symbol. But as new figures from the NHS show that almost 2.5 million people in the UK could have the condition, we ask, what is it *really* like to be living with ADHD?

We meet Rox Pink, better known as one half of ADHD Love, where she and husband Rich give a raw and unfiltered view of life with the condition. A successful singer-songwriter (under the name RØRY) as well as a social-media hit with more than 2.5 million followers, Rox went viral when she made a video about forgetting to put in a tampon in 2022. Hers is a world of forgotten, stinking laundry, missed appointments, time blindness, endless scrolling... and joy. We caught up during her recent music tour to find out what life can really be like for someone with ADHD, behind the cameras.





'I was a classic undiagnosed ADHD kid. I was a problem child, bad memory, not very good at school work, always losing things, messy room. It was back in the 1990s, and as a girl that was not how ADHD was considered. We knew the phrase ADHD, but there was just not a chance you're going to be seen that way as a girl. So instead, I was a problem kid.

'And when you get treated and spoken to like the problem kid, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. So problem kid became problem teenager. And I got into some pretty bad stuff. I was a shoplifter. I was an early adopter of alcohol and drugs, sneaking out of the house.

'Looking back now, I can see impulsivity, risk taking, all behaviours that come under a list of classic ADHD symptoms.

'Obviously it led to difficulties with my family relationships, because I was essentially acting out and bringing a lot of stress on both parents. Then, unfortunately, my mum got ill. She got cancer when I was 18, and she passed away when I'd just turned 22.

'I was so woefully unprepared to deal with illness and grief, that I didn't deal with it at all. There's lots of links between ADHD and grief hitting in different ways. I didn't cry at the funeral. I think that says a lot about my just being in shock, not processing what's happened. And for many, many years after, I didn't really cry. I just buried it deep down, kept drinking.

'I left home three months after my mum died, but I wasn't prepared to live alone at 22. I felt a lot older than I was, but that led to a decade of problems across the board.

'I lived in a pigsty for 10 years. I was constantly changing flats and being evicted for late rent. I had electricity boxes ripped out and replaced with prepay meters; I got CCJs; it was absolute chaos.

'And then there was the day drinking, doing drugs, relationship changes. I worked in a pub, worked in a bank, I've been a singer, I've worked in a shop, I've had 20 different jobs.

'That that went on until my early 30s, and it did so much damage to my mental health. I felt so ashamed being in debt, never holding a stable job, living in a pigsty. I believed I was one of the worst people alive, one of life's all-time losers.

'I would try to get clean, to pick up my clothes, to go to the laundry. And every time I tried, I'd do it for a couple of weeks, and then I'd fall back into these awful unclean behaviours, and I'd feel so ashamed of myself that I hid it from everybody.

'I presented to people like I was this young fun party girl, but how I was living was absolutely

disgusting, and it was really affecting my mental health. And I was struggling with self harm when I'd be really drunk, up until my early 30s, which is always a bit embarrassing to say, because it's seen as a bit of a teenage thing.

'Then, in 2018, after not sleeping for three days due to more chaos, blowing up another relationship, getting thrown out of another flat, I had a sense of "I don't think I can do this again. I can't lose another relationship. I can't lose another home."

'And they say you've got to hit rock bottom, before you can change, well I've had lots of rock bottoms over the years, but I kept ploughing through!

'But this time I decided to get sober, so I walked into an AA meeting and that was totally life-changing. I turned to songwriting when I got sober to just try and get myself out of debt, and

I really wanted to work hard and live a different life [*she is now a platinum-selling songwriter*].

'But then Covid happened. Many of us went through it of course then, but basically I'd lost alcohol, and then I lost songwriting. I had a mental breakdown, really intense anxiety, paranoia, and I realised I needed professional help, because I was having suicidal thoughts whilst being sober and whilst actually doing okay in my recovery.

'I looked at it and I thought "Human beings don't have to live like this, feeling like they shouldn't be here." So I looked up a therapist, and that lady saved my life.

'I worked through things with her that I didn't even know you needed to work through. And life started to change. I met Rich, [husband Rich Pink] fell in love and became a step mum, and I was starting to build a happy, stable life. But that's when I started to notice all of the weird ADHD things.

'So I went to therapy, and I said, "I'm feeling loads better. The paranoia is gone, and I'm not having panic attacks before leaving the house. But I've lost my wallet three times this week, and coming here, I've gone the wrong way on the train, even though I've been coming here for a really long time."

'I'd never seen that before. I'd never seen the memory issues, the direction issues, because everything was a mess, right? You're an alcoholic, you're in debt, of course you're running late, of course, you can't find anything. It was almost like the smallest of my problems.

'But when the other fires had been put out, and actually, life was going quite well, I was like, "Why am I still losing all this? What's wrong with me?"

'And that then opened up a whole new world of ADHD that I just didn't know about, and I got diagnosed within a few months.

**"You're  
so used  
to calling  
yourself  
lazy,  
scatter-  
brained,  
careless"**

'I say the therapy changed my life, so did getting sober, and so did finding out about my ADHD. It's like these cornerstones of recovery.

'What the ADHD diagnosis did for me was I could go back to thinking about living in that flat, living in an absolute hole, and being so ashamed of myself, and I can look back and go, "All right, yeah, I struggle with executive function. Cool, so does everybody that has ADHD." I struggle with memory. I struggle with administration. These are all symptoms of inattentive ADHD.

'When you read the definition of ADHD, it talks about the memory issues, losing things, and it was so wild to me that those things could be seen through a medical lens. You're so used to calling yourself flaky, scatter-brained, careless. But finding out about ADHD made me go, "Maybe I am not all of these horrible things. Maybe there's something legitimately wrong. And what would life look like if I went through that lens?"

'Then, of course, impulsively, classic ADHD, I was like, "Babe, we need to make a Tiktok about me forgetting to put a tampon in!"

'That's, that's how my entire life change started, with forgetting to put a tampon in and saying to my partner, "It would make great video".

'It was 12 o'clock at night, an impulsive decision, and the video went viral, and then we're like, "Oh, should we make another one? Should we do the thing where you've come down for coffee and forgot to make it, and then gone and decided you want to start a resin business?"

'It was just little moments in everyday life, and whatever the reasons for it, those videos continued to go viral. That was three years ago, and we became unlikely advocates for ADHD.

'Him, who's been working in a bank for 20 years, and me, the queen of chaos. Suddenly, we're on the internet, with a community, with a voice.

'We realised that people want to see people. It's all very well seeing the doctors talking, but you want to see someone who's walking into walls, going the wrong way, losing things. It really helps with shame reduction when you see someone else, and we realised "Oh, bloody hell, we've got an opportunity to be that shame reduction."

'To me now it's so funny, because all the things I used to be most ashamed of are now on video online, with thousands if not millions of views. And the comments are very often full of people saying: "Me too. Oh, my God. I thought it was just me."

'One of the hallmarks of ADHD is that we've all

tried for so many years to fix ourselves, to implement strategies, to read productivity books, but because of the way that we work, it ain't gonna work for the long term.

'We'll buy all the stuff, the new book, the planner, but doesn't stick, and then you end up feeling even worse.

'And the core of our message is, you can't fix it, and actually, you don't need to fix it. You're not broken. You can have ADHD, and you can lead a really wicked life. You probably won't have the cleanest house in the world and you might lose your earphones, but it's okay.

'If you find acceptance there and then double down on what you're great at, which will very often be something that relates to empathy or creativity, and if you give the same energy that you gave to trying to fix your symptoms to what you're naturally gifted at, life really changes.

'Too often, people with ADHD feel that they're broken: They're too old. There's something wrong with them.



*"There are so many people with amazing potential"*



‘Losing stuff and being a bit messy isn’t great, it’s a bit stressful, but it’s okay. But it’s the years and years of feeling all that judgement on them, that’s what’s really damaging.

‘There are so many people out there that have got incredible potential, and the world hasn’t seen it, and they don’t even believe that they have it, because they are just walking around believing that they’re awful.

‘We’ve written two books about that, which have become best-sellers, one about shame, and one about having dreadful self-concepts, like being lazy and useless. And they’re very much about people that are late diagnosed, people that hated themselves, and are struggling with self-esteem.

‘And it’s because these human beings have gone from childhood to adulthood, not knowing about ADHD, being judged, feeling like shit, not feeling good enough. And we thought, if you could get in earlier and raise awareness for kids and parents that there are parts of ADHD that will be tough and there’s other bits that are just brilliant, well maybe then they won’t get the cripplingly low

self-esteem. So we wanted to write a bit of a joyful book. And I came up with this idea of “Ady and me”, which is essentially ADHD as a little blob, a friendly blob that you’re always attached to.

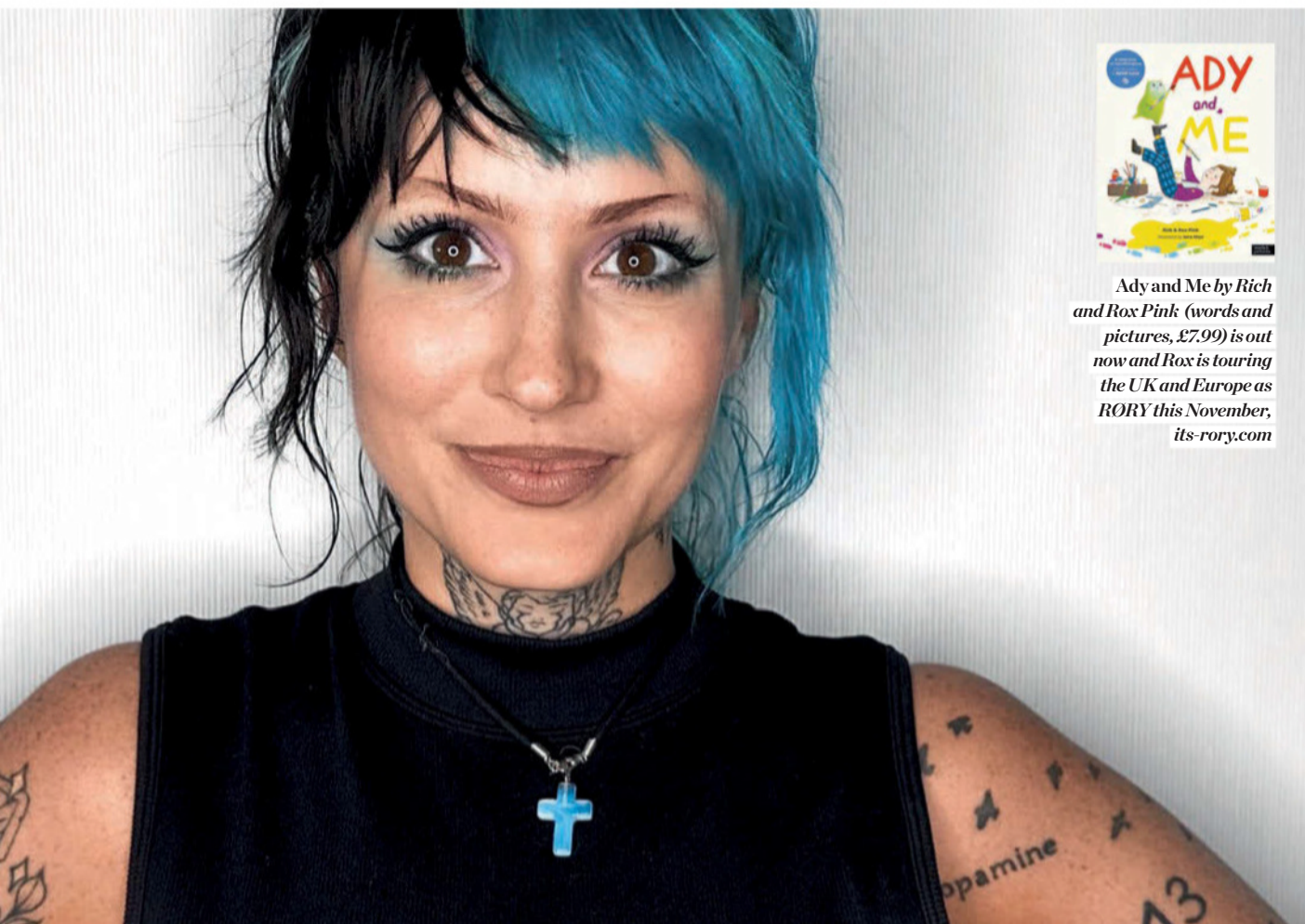
‘He’s your best friend, he will get you into trouble, but perhaps he has some wicked ideas.

‘The story is about a girl called Sophie, who is struggling with Ady at school. He’s knocking things over, but the teacher doesn’t see him, so he shouts at Sophie, he excludes her — all things loads of ADHD kids will have experienced at school.

‘And then, by the end of the book, we have a head teacher who can see Ady, and sees a creative piece of work that Sophie has done, and he validates it and loves it. And then we find out that he has his own Ady too.

‘And it’s just a message about when kids are seen for the beautiful, creative, wonderful things they bring for the world, when they’re defined by that, they will become something.

‘They’ll become more confident, happier, they’ll add to the world, whereas when they’re defined by losing things, issues with time, impulsivity, they will become the bad kid. I’m testament to that.’



*Ady and Me by Rich and Rox Pink (words and pictures, £7.99) is out now and Rox is touring the UK and Europe as RORY this November, [its-rory.com](http://its-rory.com)*

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# Creating a foundation for hope in our broken world

*There's a good reason to tap into happiness right now, and it's probably not why you think, writes Jackee Holder*



I'm watching BBC News in a public space. More civilians dead, women and children. As the horror unfolds, I question: what right do I have to write about happiness?

Then clarity strikes. In times like these, cultivating happiness isn't selfish, it's survival. Not escapism, but the foundation we need for resilience, compassion, and showing up meaningfully in a broken world.

Here's what happiness actually is: not constant joy or the absence of pain, but what former Harvard researcher Shawn Achor calls 'a state of well-being encompassing meaning, satisfaction, and positive emotions while building resilience for life's challenges.' The research on happiness is stunning: happy people live longer, get sick less, earn promotions 40% more often, and experience less depression and anxiety.

So when did you last feel truly happy?  
A couple of months ago I woke up bursting with

*"Tibetans call desire 'putting feathers on things, making them prettier than reality'"*

happiness hormones. It was my birthday and I had planned a garden party in the afternoon. All day long I had a permanent smile on my face. As the day unfolded I found myself standing in the middle of the garden, watching my friends and family members chattering away. I distinctly recall an overwhelming feeling of connection and contentment. A real cherished feeling of belonging.

Now it's your turn. Let's begin by identifying smaller moments from your day that contain elements of happiness. Choose a moment from the last 48 hours. Perhaps it was your morning coffee, a friend's affirming text, anything. Bring it alive with sensory details. Then dig deeper: What conditions created this moment? How can you create more like it? What does this reveal about what truly matters to you?

Our phones are stealthily stealing these moments. We race through days forgetting to pause and notice. Whether you write in a notebook, record a voice message, or use your phone's notes app, the magic is in the pause.

Arriving home from my regular commute into the city I am often greeted with the scene outside my local train station of the homeless woman reading, writing in her notebook. This scene always tugs at my heart, moving me into a space of profound gratitude. It reminds me that gratitude isn't just counting blessings, it's recognising human resilience and finding meaning in the dark.

For a longer and more consistent gratitude practice try this: For one week, write down three new things you're grateful for from the last 24 hours. Crucial twist: include why. Instead of 'grateful for coffee', write 'grateful for coffee because it represents morning comfort and reminds me I can afford small pleasures.' You're training your brain to hunt for meaning, however tiny.

Research gives us a roadmap for tapping into our happiness in our notebooks and beyond. These following four practices, done consistently, rewire your brain for happiness.





## Daily gratitude

**The previous practice trains you to look for positive patterns in all areas of your life.**

## Movement as medicine

**Walk briskly for 15 minutes, four times weekly. Studies show this equals antidepressants for six months. Express gratitude out loud as you walk. I love doing this practice.**

## Mindful breathing at your desk

**For two minutes daily, practise lifting your hands off the keyboard, watching your breath flow in and out. You're building a single-pointed focus towards being present.**

## Notes of kindness

**Instead of scrolling, try this 21-day practice of writing a daily two-minute positive message to thank someone. Every day the email or letter must be sent or written to someone new.**

Try tracking your energy levels to see what happens if you follow these practices for 21 days. Mark your energy level (1-10) daily in your journal, and after 21 days reflect on these prompts: How does kindness affect your energy? Your thought patterns? Your capacity for compassion? What surprises you?

I will warn you though, you could get derailed, as our ancient brains still run on hunter-gatherer dopamine systems. We chase something, achieve it, get the reward, the dopamine fades within hours, and we chase the next hit. This is what happened to me on a recent spur-of-the-moment shopping trip. I convinced myself I needed to purchase a specific pair of jeans. But not content with that, I then decided I had to have the waistcoat, followed by a jacket and topped off with a hat. The mirror rush was intoxicating, until I got home and found nearly identical jeans already hanging in my wardrobe.

The moment we pay for our purchase, the dopamine dies. We're running a wanting system, not a happiness system. Tibetans call desire 'putting feathers on things, making them prettier than reality'. Your stretch practice this month is to take a look around you at your accumulated desires and notice the amount of feathers that have fallen off onto the ground. I did this, then contrasted it with genuine joy: recently I was sitting on a swing under the huge canopy of a Cedar tree after a meaningful day's work with a group of nurses, the sun warming my skin, feeling completely present. The rocking of the swing's forward and backward motion transported me to childhood park visits, settling my nervous system despite some of the challenges around me. In that



moment here's what struck me most: I was simultaneously holding happiness, and grief over a friend's death. Joy and sorrow, connection and loss, gratitude and grief, all coexisting.

This is happiness's deepest truth: it doesn't require difficulty's absence. It asks us to find light in darkness, notice meaning while hurting, remember our joy can coexist with awareness of the world's pain. Precisely in these moments, practising happiness becomes most vital: not as reality's denial, but as hope's foundation.

I want to leave you with a crucial question to explore in your journal: How do you fill the void? Not with shopping, not with endless scrolling, not with the next achievement or acquisition, what are your genuine sources of meaning and connection? What are the specific conditions, practices, and relationships that consistently bring you authentic joy rather than temporary dopamine hits?

Write about: Moments when you've felt genuinely happy (like my swing moment). What do these moments have in common? How can you intentionally create more conditions for authentic happiness? What 'feathers' might you be putting on things in your own life?

Remember: happiness isn't about avoiding life's difficulties or constantly feeling joy. It's about developing the capacity to find meaning, connection, and moments of genuine contentment even when life is complex and challenging. See you next month.



# Hello!

*We're definitely not anti-ageing in this magazine: we*

*celebrate life, experience and everything that comes with it on every page. But that doesn't necessarily mean we want all of that experience to show on our face! That's why we love this month's subscriber gift: Jurlique's Purely Age-Defying Firming Face Oil (worth £52!). This luxurious treatment oil will help your skin feel hydrated and luminous, thanks to its blend of botanical extracts. Pair that with a subscription to your favourite magazine and you'll feel rejuvenated inside and out. After all, Psychologies is 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.*

*Sally x*

Editor-in-Chief,  
Psychologies

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Coaching in action

# *I want to change, and also, I don't...*

Kim Morgan's client Ruth comes to a surprising conclusion about which path she wants to take





## Part Three

Ruth and I had a bumpy start to our coaching sessions. She had forgotten one session, arrived late for another and had expected me to be grateful when she had moved her diary around so she could arrive on time for our last session. I was surprised to see her arriving early for our third coaching session. She looked calmer than she had before, and a bit subdued.

'I've done the exercise you set me,' she said straight away. 'The one with the two parts of me — Courage and Fear. I've been journalling about these parts, listening to them talk.'

I asked Ruth what Courage and Fear had been saying.

'Courage wants me to step off the hamster wheel, even if it's scary. Fear made a good point though. I've worked hard to build this life. I'm good at making things happen and managing a busy life. I'm praised and rewarded for it. It's how I'm seen, and how I see myself. I am not sure I'm ready to give that up.'

I nodded. 'So, what do you want to do with this insight?'

Ruth hesitated. 'I think I want to change... but I also don't.'

'Have you considered if Courage and Fear could design a life together, what would it be?'

Ruth was visibly irritated by my question.

She slammed shut her notebook — noisily.

'Can we forget Courage and Fear for a moment? I am not ready to make this change. When I am with you in this coaching space I feel like I need to change something but when I go back to my life, I realise that I love it, and everything it gives me.'

I kept listening without speaking.

'When I first came to see you,

I said "I want to live a life I don't need to recover from" but I am

revising that statement: "By the time I am 50 I want to live a life I don't need to recover from". That gives me six years to work towards it.

'I do want to stay aware of what it's costing me to keep living this way. For now, though, there isn't enough pain in my current situation to make me want to change and I can't imagine enough pleasure in a different future without my busy life.'

I was about to speak but I could see Ruth had

something more to say. 'Call me shallow but I'm still too attached to the life I have built, all the success, money and achievement and the identity which goes with it.'

I shook my head: 'Shallow is the last word I would use to describe you, Ruth. You are thoughtful, powerful, honest, and self-aware. I honour and respect the work you have done with me and the decision you have come to because of the thinking you have done.'

I shared a powerful quote about coaching, 'Usually the mind that contains the problem also contains the solution — often the best one.' (Nancy Kline)

Ruth smiled and said: 'Well, you've helped me find my own solution — which is to not change. Not yet. Thanks for asking me better questions than I have ever asked myself.'

With that, we said our goodbyes, and Ruth promised she'd be back in a few years' time. Something in me doubted that. I wondered whether she might keep stretching the age at which she would finally live a life she didn't need to recover from.

After Ruth left, I immediately booked a session with my coaching supervisor. My confidence had been a little shaken, and I wanted to explore the use of power in coaching. Power isn't a word we use often in this profession, but it matters. Coaches hold power — through expertise, reputation and presence and so do clients, each in their own way.

Ruth is a powerful person, and perhaps she used that power to persuade both of us that staying the same was a conscious choice. I found myself wondering: Had I challenged her enough, or had I been overpowered? And what about my clients who are less assertive than Ruth — do I unintentionally influence their decisions, or rush them toward change before they are ready?

I wanted to take these important questions to supervision, because coaching, at its best, is never about getting someone to change, it's about creating the conditions in which they can make the choices which are right for them.

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

# Change readiness review

Even when we want things to be different, we don't always feel able or willing or ready to make the change. Here are some questions to help you to explore the costs and benefits of changing, what is holding you back from changing and to what extent you really want to make this change:

- 1 What do I want to achieve?  
What long term result will I get and by when?
- 2 When I achieve this, what will be the benefit to me?
- 3 What am I doing which is getting in the way of me making this change?
- 4 What are the benefits of staying where I am?
- 5 What are the costs of staying where I am?
- 6 If someone else I knew was facing this issue, what would I tell them to do?
- 7 What will happen if I do this?
- 8 What will not happen if I do this?
- 9 What will this give me that I don't already have?
- 10 Write yourself a message.

Having reviewed all your answers, write yourself a message about why this change matters and how you are going to make it happen. Or, if the time isn't right or the cost of making the change is too high, then write yourself a different message about why you are not making this change now.



## Supervision exercise for coaches

### How do you use your power?

Set some time aside to reflect honestly on your coaching presence. Which of these roles or behaviours do you find yourself using? You may even be brave enough to ask your clients which of these they see in you:

- Action-oriented problem-solver or goal-setter
- Cheerleader or motivator
- Rescuer or fixer
- Preference for deeply emotional conversations
- Over-supportive or rescuing
- Challenger or provocateur
- High levels of self-disclosure

### Consider:

- How might this behaviour impact different clients?
- Does this behaviour come in response to the needs of my client — or my own preferences or patterns?
- Which role do I default to when I feel uncertain or under pressure?

## WORDS OF WISDOM

*"You're allowed to take your time to grow in the direction you need."*

**Daniell Koepke**



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## Expert advice



*Maya Raichoora is a mental fitness and visualisation expert. She is also an international speaker, coach to elite athletes and CEOs; an author, and Nike's First Mental Fitness Trainer; [mayaraichoora.com](http://mayaraichoora.com)*





# CAN YOU IMAGINE YOUR WAY TO *advantage?*

Some of Wimbledon's biggest stars credit visualisation with their success, but what is it really all about? Discover the five types, and how it can change your brain for the better, with expert Maya Raichoor

**W**hat do Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic have in common? Well, besides having enough Wimbledon trophies between them to fill Centre Court, and being possibly the two greatest tennis players of all time, they're also both huge fans of mental fitness and visualisation

We're all used to the concept of physical fitness, but are we giving enough thought to our mental fitness? That's the question being asked by coach and author Maya Raichoor. She is on a mission to make mental fitness and visualisation just as common as physical fitness, after going through a personal experience of chronic illness at the age of 17. 'Visualisation is something that really helped me not only have hope and strengthen my mind, but it also helped me with pain during my illness,' she says. 'It pushed me to learn more about the brain and why it can work to our advantage, rather than what most of us do — which is just leaving it to chance.'

## What is visualisation?

Visualisation has been around for decades, and is, according to Raichoor, the 'intentional creation of images, environments and feelings in your head before they happen.' To use our champion

inspiration for example, both Williams and Djokovic would spend time 'playing' matches in their heads before the big day, envisioning each point — and winner — before a ball had even been hit. 'Some people confuse this with manifestation, but it's different,' Raichoor explains. 'Through my work I show that there are actually five techniques to learn and use — outcome, process, creative, negative and exploration — and I really urge people to consider it as a neurological training technique that is used by elite athletes, c-suites, executives.'

'It is not just a "woo woo" concept of thinking of something and it happens. This is us rewiring our brain every day to build our character, confidence and achieve our goals.'

## What does each type of visualisation mean?

Raichoor breaks down the five types of visualisation. 'Outcome' is where you see the ideal results of something in advance. 'This type really helps with motivation, belief and resilience,' she says. 'Next is "process" visualisation, where you mentally rehearse a task, activity or process to make it better, faster or smarter. This could be a golf swing, public speaking, or even a hard conversation with someone.'



She explains there is also ‘creative’ visualisation, when you make the intangible, tangible. ‘It’s used for pain and managing emotions. Let’s say for example you visualise your anxiety as a red fire, you can then use your mind to pour water on it.’

‘Then you’ve got “negative”, which is when you see the worst case scenario, or things going wrong, but you train your mind to respond to it before it actually happens,’ she explains. ‘Athletes use this all the time to be more prepared and have better performance.’

Last but not least is ‘explorative’, which is apparently what Walt Disney and Einstein used, Raichoor explains. ‘This is where your brain is like a whiteboard and you use it to create, problem solve and make decisions.’

## What is happening in our brains during the visualisation process?

The magic of visualisation is that the brain struggles to know the difference between what is real and what is imagined, explains Raichoor.

‘This means if you were to physically do something like play tennis, certain neurons in the brain fire up. However, if you were to just mentally rehearse playing tennis, nearly identical neurons activate — and we can really use this to our advantage. What’s happening here is you are taking advantage of neuroplasticity — which is the brain’s ability to change — and you are guiding it.’

‘Another part of this is that our brain has something called “mirror neurons”. This means if you are watching someone do an activity — like the athletes I work with, for example, who I get to re-watch their games or people who are better than them — your brain mirrors what you are watching and helps you to perform better.’

## How do we start visualising?

Although this depends on which technique each individual is trying, Raichoor says the first thing to do is have clarity.

‘If you’re looking to visualise increased confidence, for example, ask yourself: what does being confident actually look like to you? If you aren’t clear, you’re just daydreaming. Whereas if you know confidence to you looks like saying “no” more, or being braver, for example, it helps you when you’re in the visualisation’

‘I would also suggest moving to a quiet place, closing your eyes and start by creating the imagery you are now clear on. Then, like watching a movie, I would advise you to mentally rehearse.’

‘Ask questions like “How does this confident version of you walk into a room? How do they talk? How do they interact with people?” Then keep



*“Even if I have hard days, I have these tools to rely on”*

repeating it, maybe three to five times in one visualisation, because the brain needs repetition.’

To finish, Raichoor says a little bit of breath work and a moment of silence is perfect.

‘I would do this perhaps for one minute every day, because doing it only once a week for example is going to be less useful.’

## To what extent can visualisation impact your life?

‘I wouldn’t even be sitting here if it wasn’t for the power of visualising,’ Raichoor admits. ‘I truly know that I have been able to rewire my brain and level up in so many ways because of it.’

‘I also used it for building a global company, getting better at public speaking and my confidence has gone from being performative and fake, to actually feeling confident in the inside.’

‘It also means that even if I have hard days, I have these tools to rely on and I’m not stuck in that state for long, whereas I used to be. I now treat my mental fitness just like my physical fitness, and I’ve gained a really big advantage in life by doing so.’





psychologies

## DOSSIER

*With you  
in mind*

# PERMISSION TO PAUSE

This is your cue to slow down, sit a little longer and let yourself linger, to choose simplicity over stress and joy over urgency, writes Kellie Gillespie-Wright

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



## Expert advice



*Geir Berthelsen is the founder of The World Institute of Slowness, which promotes 'slow' awareness and activities around the world. His work has inspired a global slow movement, inviting people to rethink time, productivity, and what it truly means to live well.*



*Dr Alison Greenwood is a counselling psychologist and the founder and CEO of Dose of Nature, a mental-health charity that improves the mental health and wellbeing of individuals through increased engagement with the natural world.*

**R**est has been misbranded. We've come to treat it as a reward, something earned through exhaustion or squeezed in when we can find time. But from a biological point of view, rest isn't optional. It's a survival mechanism, hardwired into the way our bodies and brains stay balanced, focused, and well.

At the heart of this balance sits the autonomic nervous system, which quietly oversees essential processes like heart rate, digestion, hormone regulation and stress response. It operates on two branches: the sympathetic nervous system, which revs us into alertness and action ('fight or flight'), and the parasympathetic, which slows us down into recovery and repair, or 'rest and digest'.

We're designed to move fluidly between these states, and that rhythm — activation, rest, renewal — is how we stay resilient. But modern life has broken that flow. Constant stimulation, pressure to perform, and digital overwhelm keep us locked in sympathetic overdrive. We override fatigue. We treat anxiety as normal. We forget that rest is built in, not optional.

Over time, this imbalance quietly erodes us. Sleep quality slips, inflammation rises, memory falters, and immunity dips. 'We're not machines made for output,' says Geir Berthelsen, founder of the World Institute of Slowness. 'We're human beings made for rhythm. Nature rests. Even the heart rests between every beat. Why would we be the only system that believes we must run non-stop?'

That idea, that we should always be 'on', is rooted in a myth: the human-as-machine metaphor. We've internalised it so deeply that stillness feels suspect. But nature doesn't work that way. Forests, tides, and cells all operate in pulses. Inactivity isn't waste, it's how complex systems reset, repair, and get ready for what's next.

Biologically, rest is our evolutionary fallback mode. When activity becomes unsustainable, the body downshifts to protect itself and, in the wild, energy conservation is a survival instinct. Every other species honours this, except humans, who override it, often at their own risk.

But pausing isn't weakness, it's how the body begins to recover, and it's built into our DNA.



When we pause, the parasympathetic system re-engages. Breathing slows, cortisol drops, and the brain regains access to memory, reasoning, and emotional control. And it doesn't take long: within a minute, change begins.

This isn't just hearsay. Research from Stanford and independent studies by the HeartMath Institute show that even brief pauses, a few deep breaths, a moment between tasks, can lower stress hormones, improve heart rate variability, and sharpen focus.

And in that pause, something else happens. Neuroscientists now understand that periods of idleness are not empty. They're when the brain integrates, processes, and connects. What we call 'doing nothing' is often the moment we make sense of everything. Rest is pattern recognition time. It's where future thinking emerges. Insight doesn't always arrive while solving, it often comes after we stop, when the mind has space to wander,





sort, and connect. What felt blocked in the noise finds clarity in the quiet.

Even with this knowledge, the real challenge in slowing down isn't physical, it's psychological. 'There's always an underlying pressure to feel like we need more,' says Jo Peters, author of *The Art of Slowing Down: How to find peace and purpose in a hectic world* (Vie, £14.99). 'A better job, a nicer house, a packed weekend. We look at social media and feel guilty for not doing more. So we push, and we exhaust ourselves.'

'To reframe rest, we must stop believing it's something we have to earn,' says Berthelsen. When we stop treating time as something to spend and start seeing it as something to experience, everything begins to shift. If there's ever a time to begin making that shift, it's summer. The long days, loosened schedules, and natural light all create space to ease off the accelerator. But rest isn't about doing nothing, says Berthelsen. 'It's

about doing things with intention, without rushing. It's a mindset. A recalibration. A return to what makes us human.' He continues: 'You don't burn out from doing too much. You burn out from doing the wrong things, too fast, for too long.'

Still, for many, slowing down doesn't come easily. And that's not a personal failing, it's the result of a culture that taught us to override our own biology. The real skill isn't in learning how to stop. It's in remembering that we're allowed to.

'Slowing down isn't stepping back,' Berthelsen says. 'It's stepping in.' And when the pressure creeps in again, let this be your reminder, in the words of Berthelsen: 'Joy doesn't come from chasing time. It comes when we pause long enough to let it catch up.'

So when the sun is warm and the day opens wide, take it. Sit a little longer, let yourself linger. Not because you earned it, but because it's the way it should be.







*"The best  
picnics aren't  
ambitious,  
they're  
thoughtful"*



# The art of pressing pause A SLOW SUMMER GUIDE

**T**here's a particular kind of calm that settles over the UK in the summertime. Hedgerows hum with bees, washing lines sway in the breeze, and the sun lingers longer, draping everything in a golden haze. Summer here never shouts, it leans in close and whispers. But to hear it, to truly settle into its rhythm, we have to stop trying to outrun it.

'Summer reminds us that the purpose of life isn't to keep moving, it's to fully arrive,' says Geir Berthelsen, founder of the World Institute of Slowness, and that's the invitation at the heart of this guide: to slow down and reconnect with what matters. To choose simplicity over pressure, quiet over noise, joy over urgency. To let go of pace in favour of presence, and create space to actually feel your life as it's happening to you right now.

## Slow food: Savouring the season

Summer brings a feast of simple pleasures: tomatoes that taste of sunshine, peaches so ripe the juice runs down your wrist. But to truly taste any of it, we have to slow down, because slow food isn't just about what we eat, it's about how we eat.

When we eat slowly and mindfully, the body softens, breath deepens, and digestion improves. We feel full not because the plate is empty, but because the body has time to listen. But, it's more than a biological shift, slow eating brings us back to our senses. It's a way of waking up to the moment.

As we slow down and pay attention, the details return — the peppery hit of rocket, the sweet-tart pop of a raspberry on your tongue, the crack of sourdough crust giving way to a soft, warm centre — and mealtimes become an invitation to linger.

Of all summer's food experiences, the picnic may be the purest expression of slowness, a meal that begins long before it's eaten. Chosen, prepared, packed, and carried, then gently unfolded into the landscape. A blanket laid on sand or grass, sun on your shoulders, no schedule, no script. Just the unhurried rhythm of hands

reaching for food, refilling glasses, brushing away crumbs. The best picnics aren't ambitious, they're thoughtful. They favour food that travels well and improves with time and warmth: soft cheeses like Cornish Yarg wrapped in waxed paper; slices of ripe melon steeped with lemon and mint; couscous laced with cucumber and dill. A crusty loaf, torn rather than sliced. A chilled bottle of rosé, packed with frozen grapes in place of ice cubes.

The preparation is part of the ritual: choosing a spot under an oak tree, by a river bend, or on a pebbled beach as the tide creeps in. The quiet joy of spreading a blanket then opening each container and discovering what you packed hours ago, now slightly altered by travel and time. Each bite is framed by sunshine, by birdsong, by the company or the solitude you bring with you.

And when the food is finished, there's no rush to move on. No pressure to clear plates or reset the room. Just the slow gathering of leftovers and the quiet satisfaction that comes from having tasted the day as it happened.

## Slow movement: A different kind of stillness

One of the most powerful ways to slow down in summer is to move differently, with softness, with rhythm, not toward results but towards a calmer way of being.

'Exercise is often synonymous with personal bests and weight loss goals,' says Jo Peters, author of *The Art of Slowing Down*. 'But while targets may feel like good motivation, they often become a cause of stress. If we turned exercise into a source of enjoyment and a small reprieve from the chaos of life, we'd have a far better chance of keeping it up.'

Tai chi expresses this beautifully. Its slow, circular motions calm the nervous system and ground the mind. The movements, weight shifts, arm arcs, and gentle rotations, are deceptively simple. But in moving slowly, the body becomes one coordinated flow. Time slows, the breath deepens and the mind settles.

Practised barefoot on dew-cool grass or in the golden hour by the sea, tai chi connects your internal rhythm with the world around you. It stops feeling like exercise and starts feeling like return to balance.

Yoga offers the same stillness, not through power flows or peak poses, but through slower practices like Yin, Restorative, and gentle Hatha. In these forms, breath leads the body, movement softens, and time begins to loosen. This is exercise that doesn't drain you or exhaust you, this is exercise that restores you.

Or skip all structure entirely. Walk without a destination, let the path lead you, take a loop through long grass, shoes in hand, warm ground beneath your feet. Lose track of time, get lost in the world around you, let your senses take over.

For some, that freedom comes in unstructured wandering. For others, it's about softening familiar routines. 'Opt to go for slow scenic runs or leisurely outdoor swims rather than laps round the track,' Peters suggests. 'Not only will you benefit from the happy hormones exercise produces, but the hit will be doubly satisfying as you immerse yourself in your surroundings without a stopwatch in sight.'

'It's also a great moment to practise some mindfulness,' she adds. 'The combination of being at peace in mind and body couldn't be more perfect.'

### **Slow time: Stretching hours, not rushing through them**

Some days pass in a blur of wall-to-wall appointments, obligations, and half-finished thoughts and there never seems to be enough hours in the day. But time can stretch, if we learn to meet it differently and with the right tools, it can slow right down like a long summer afternoon.

'Maintaining a mindful attitude is one way of slowing down time,' says Peters. 'Rather than fretting about the past or future, the aim is to experience life as it unfolds, moment by moment.'

You don't need hours of stillness to begin. Many of the best chances to slow down are already built into your day if you're paying attention.

Even your commute can become a valuable pause. 'See it not as a hindrance,' Peters says, 'but as gifted time. Let your mind wander. Look out the window.' If you take the train, leave your phone in your bag for the first ten minutes. Notice how the light changes, how the landscape moves.

You don't need to overhaul your life to feel the difference. Sometimes it's about meeting the same moments in a new way. 'A slow day isn't about doing nothing,' says Berthelsen. 'It's about feeling everything.' Not to manage it or measure it, but to experience it fully and let it unfold in its own time.

This mindset shows up in the smallest choices. Peters encourages single-tasking, doing one thing



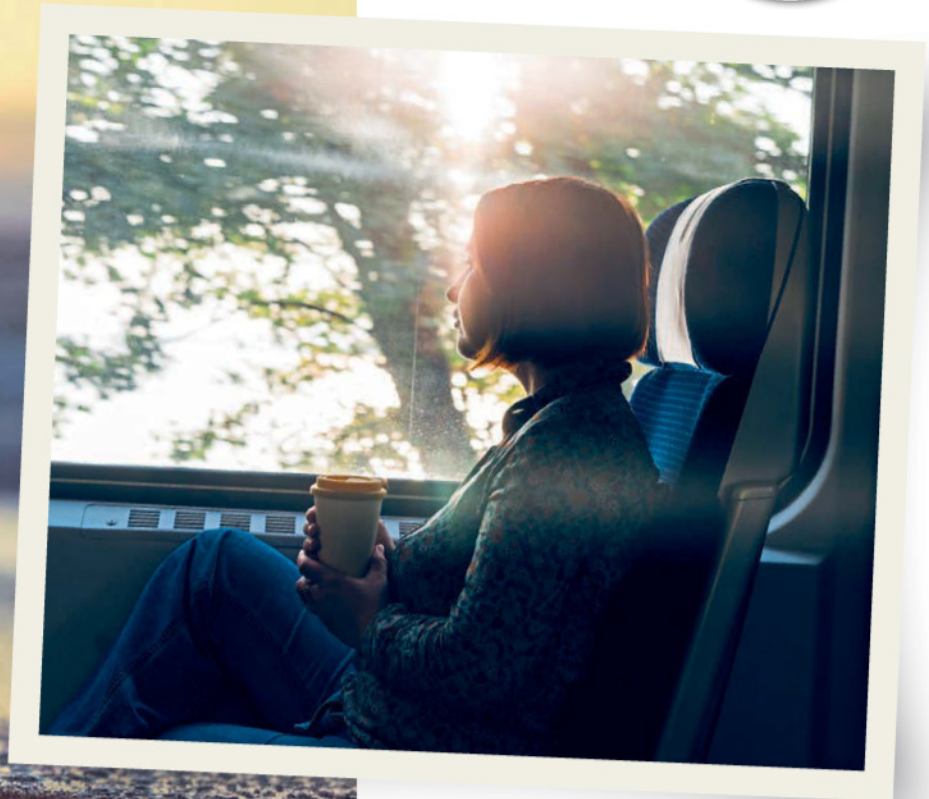
at a time, and giving it your full attention. Drink your tea without checking your phone. Let the warmth of the cup hold your focus. Walk without a podcast. Listen to the wind, the birds, the sound of your own steps. Eat without a screen. Notice texture, temperature, the first bite and the last. Let part of your day belong only to itself.

When you move through the day like this, with presence, even ordinary routines begin to feel like grounding rituals. Your nervous system has space to settle. Your senses have time to return. Slowly, the rhythm of your day starts to shift. Moments open up. The pace loosens. And time begins to feel less like something to outrun and more like something you're inside of.

Berthelsen calls this a return to rhythm. 'Slowness begins with small, intentional acts that reclaim your time and attention,' he says. 'Wake ten minutes earlier, not to do more, but to make space.' These shifts are subtle, but powerful. They change your pace, and over time, your perception of time itself begins to stretch. You feel more, you remember more, and the day doesn't rush past, it unfolds before you.

***"The day doesn't begin with an alarm. It begins with light. With breath"***





## Slow travel: Presence over itineraries

Slow travel isn't about doing less. It's about noticing more. It's not about staying still, but about truly showing up. It begins by letting go of checklists and embracing the idea that simply being somewhere is enough.

Whatever you do, resist the urge to optimise. 'Even on holiday,' says Berthelsen, 'we try to optimise our rest, which is both ironic and exhausting.'

We cram downtime with plans, squeeze in sights, and try to prove we relaxed enough. But slow living isn't a performance. It is presence.

When we stretch time this way, travel becomes something else entirely. It's no longer about checking places off a list, but about belonging to them for a while. Leave hours unplanned. Walk without maps. Choose meals by mood, not by reviews. Watch, wait, let the place reveal itself.

'In slow travel, nothing is rushed,' says Berthelsen. 'The day doesn't begin with an alarm. It begins with light. With breath. No rush. Just birdsong.'

The UK lends itself beautifully to this kind of travel. A week in a shepherd's hut on a hillside in Snowdonia. A slow train along the Settle to Carlisle line, watching cloud shadows drift across stone walls. A long weekend in Whitstable, where days follow the tide, not the clock.

Try keeping a travel notebook. But don't record what you did. Write how it *felt*. The scent of the air. The warmth on your skin. The taste of lunch. The way the light shifted. The hush at dusk.

And when the sky fades into evening, sit outside and let time blur. No countdown, no itinerary, just presence and the feeling that you have all the time in the world.

'The goal,' Berthelsen reminds us, 'is not to be more efficient, but more alive.' Stretching time isn't about controlling it, it's about letting the moment open just enough to be felt. So lie in the grass, let the page stay unturned, say no to one more thing, and say yes to a little less.

Let this be the summer we stop asking time to make space for us and start making space for time itself.





# *The ecology of calm:* **HOW NATURE RESTORES A TIRED MIND**

**N**ot everything that restores us comes in a bottle. Sometimes it arrives on the breeze, especially in summer, when the outside world feels more inviting, more generous. The scent of honeysuckle, the warmth of sun on skin, the distant sound of birdsong, these ordinary moments offer what modern life

so often withholds: space to slow down, exhale, and reset. And this need for nature isn't a luxury or a nice-to-have, it's biology. We're wired for nature, and that pull toward green spaces and fresh air is rooted deep in who we are.

This connection to the natural world, what scientists call biophilia, is part of our blueprint.



Humans didn't evolve under fluorescent lights or on concrete streets, but in open landscapes, beneath trees, beside rivers. Even if modern life keeps us indoors, our nervous systems haven't forgotten the quiet recalibration of standing beneath trees and watching light move through leaves.

'Our brains and bodies evolved in natural environments, surrounded by trees and birds, rivers and mountains,' says Dr Alison Greenwood, founder of the mental health charity Dose of Nature. 'So it's no surprise we thrive when we're outside in nature, and don't do so well stuck indoors all day, surrounded by TVs and toasters, and separated from the world in which we evolved.'

She explains that our systems respond instinctively to our surroundings. 'When we're inside, "trapped" in our geometric boxes by walls and ceilings, and surrounded by shapes, sounds, and smells that are unfamiliar to our old reptilian brains, our sympathetic nervous system (our fight/flight response) is activated. However, when we step outside into the natural world, with the freedom of an open sky above us, and surrounded by nature's familiar sights and sounds, our parasympathetic nervous system (our rest/digest response) is activated, our heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol levels all reduce, and we feel more relaxed.'

Dr Greenwood adds: 'Just being outside in nature is good for our bodies and brains. It can help us to feel calmer, happier, and more energised; we focus better, think more clearly, and even live longer.'

And that kind of clarity and calm are increasingly harder to come by these days. Modern life fractures our attention with constant notifications, headlines, inboxes, and background noise — all designed to seize our focus instantly and repeatedly. But our brains aren't built for that kind of constant vigilance, and the result is mental fatigue, irritability, creative block, and that all-too-familiar sense

of being overwhelmed by everything and connected to nothing.

Cognitive scientists have identified two kinds of attention. One is hard fascination, or directed attention, and it's what we use to complete tasks, follow conversations, or navigate busy streets. It takes effort, it's finite, and it's prone to depletion.

On the other hand is soft fascination, the kind of effortless attention that happens when something gently captures your focus without requiring concentration or response. It holds your mind just enough to quiet internal noise, but not so tightly that it drains your energy. It's the attention you give a flickering candle or the

slow movement of clouds across the sky and it's subtle, absorbing, and restorative.

By contrast, hard fascination (think breaking news alerts, high-octane movies, or intense social media content) grabs our attention forcefully and fills our mental bandwidth. It's compelling, but leaves little space for reflection.

Soft fascination leaves that space intact and restores what overstimulation wears away. You've likely experienced soft fascination without naming it: standing at the edge of the sea watching the waves roll in, tracing patterns in the clouds, or watching the countryside drift

past from a train window. These are the moments when time slows and your mind, for once, doesn't try to race ahead.

Natural environments tend to be the richest sources and researchers studying attention restoration often point to landscapes with 'soft edges' and gradual movement: woodlands, rivers, dunes, meadows. These places gently draw our focus without requiring interpretation or reaction or a solution. They hold our gaze, but never trap it.

But soft fascination doesn't require a sweeping vista. You might find it watching raindrops run down a windowpane, or a candle flickering in low light. These moments hold more than stillness. They invite presence and the trick isn't escape, it's recognising the quiet

***"When  
we notice  
the  
natural  
world  
around  
us we are  
living in  
the  
present"***





thresholds already in your life, the subtle, overlooked scenes that ask nothing of you, yet offer everything your tired mind needs.

And, this gentle awareness creates space for something else: creativity. When the mind is no longer overloaded, ideas surface. Artists and scientists alike describe their best insights not at desks, but during walks, while gardening, or in the shower. These soft-attention states are open, relaxed, and quietly generative and they create just enough mental space for connections to form.

This isn't just a feeling of relaxation, it's neurological. Functional MRI studies confirm that time spent in green spaces or engaging in soft fascination can reduce activity in the part of the brain associated with worry and rumination.

And nature doesn't have to be remote or untouched to work its effect. 'It is a mistake to imagine that you have to be in the countryside to be in nature,' Dr Greenwood reminds us. 'As soon as you're outside your front door, you have sky, the same sky that's over mountains, oceans, forests and hills. And if you have sky, the chances are you have birds and insects, and weather and fresh air. Even in our most urban environments, there are usually a few trees and plants to notice.'

Her advice is simple: build nature into your daily routine. 'Go for a walk with a friend instead of meeting at a café. Exercise outside instead of in a gym. Eat your lunchtime sandwich on a bench instead of at your desk. Step outside with your first hot drink of the day and spend a few minutes looking up at the sky or across a neighbour's garden. Notice the dandelions in the pavement cracks. Reach out and touch the bark of a tree.'

These don't require a lifestyle change, just an attention shift. 'Incorporate into your daily life a few new habits of noticing nature with all of your senses alive,' Dr Greenwood says, 'a moment in the morning, a lunchtime walk, an after-dinner stroll, and you'll soon see the difference it makes to your mood and general wellbeing.'

Noticing nature isn't just a feel-good habit; it's a way to reclaim presence in a world that constantly pulls us away from it. 'Our lives are increasingly stressful, demanding, challenging, and most of us spend far too long regretting the past and worrying about the future,' says Dr Greenwood. 'When we notice the natural world around us, we are living in the present, and the more we live in the present, the more we are living life.'

Nature doesn't fix everything, but it reminds us of something essential: we are part of a larger rhythm. A slower, wiser one. Sometimes, all it takes is stepping outside, looking up, and letting the world soften at the edges. In those quiet moments, we don't escape life, we return to it.

## THE TAKE-A-PAUSE TOOLKIT:

# 10 ways to find calm in under a minute

*No gear, no yoga mat, no app required...*

### 1. BOX BREATHING (45 SECONDS)

**A Navy SEAL-approved technique that calms the fight-or-flight response.**

**How:** Inhale for 4 seconds  
Hold for 4 seconds  
Exhale for 4 seconds  
Hold for 4 seconds  
Repeat 3 times

**Why it works:** This simple breathing pattern signals to your nervous system that you're safe. It's especially effective before high-stress moments — meetings, hard conversations, or the mental chaos of the 3pm slump.

### 2. SHAKE IT OUT (30–45 SECONDS)

**Yes, literally shake.**

**How:** Stand up. Shake your hands, arms, legs, shoulders. Bounce lightly on your feet.

**Why it works:** Animals naturally discharge stress by shaking. Humans forgot how. This goofy-looking move releases tension, resets your posture, and boosts circulation. It's surprisingly effective when you feel stuck or overstimulated.

### 3. NAME 5 THINGS (GROUNDING SCAN)

**Anchor yourself in the present moment, fast.**

**How:** Look around and name:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste

**Why it works:** This sensory inventory pulls your mind out of anxious spirals and back into your body. Great for moments of overwhelm or racing thoughts.

### 4. SIP WITH INTENTION

**Turn your coffee or water break into a ritual.**

**How:** Take a slow, deliberate sip. Pause. Feel the temperature, notice the flavour, let yourself actually taste it.

**Why it works:** Drinking is automatic. Making it mindful turns it into a moment of pause, no extra time needed. This creates a natural break in your day and gently redirects your focus inward.

### 5. HANDS OVER HEART

**So simple it's almost absurd, but profoundly calming.**

**How:** Place one or both hands over your heart. Breathe slowly. Stay here for 30–45 seconds.

**Why it works:** Touch activates safety and connection cues in the body. This small gesture lowers stress hormones and gives you a moment of comfort, especially when no one else is around to offer it.



*"Turn it into  
a moment of  
pause, no  
extra time  
needed"*

## 6. THE EXHALE EMPHASIS

**Shift your nervous system with just one breath.**

**How:** Inhale naturally, then exhale slowly and fully, twice as long as your inhale. Repeat 3–5 times.

**Why it works:** A long exhale activates the parasympathetic ('rest and digest') system. It tells your body to chill, even if your brain hasn't caught up yet.

## 7. VISUAL GREEN BREAK

**Calm your brain through your eyes.**

**How:** Look at something green, a plant, tree, photo of a forest, even a screen-saver. Focus on it fully for 30–45 seconds.

**Why it works:** Studies show that

simply viewing natural elements can reduce cortisol, lower heart rate, and improve focus.

## 8. PALM PRESS RESET

**Use pressure to signal calm to your body.**

**How:** Press your palms together at your heart centre. Hold with light pressure. Breathe slowly.

**Why it works:** This posture creates a physical 'closed loop' that's grounding and centring. Bonus: it's discreet and works well before presentations or calls.

## 9. MINI MENTAL

**DE-CLUTTER**

**Drop the noise by naming what's on your mind.**

**How:** Say (or write) the top 3 things occupying your thoughts right now. No solutions, just name them.

**Why it works:** Labelling emotions and thoughts reduces their grip. It clears mental space and lowers internal pressure fast.

## 10. COLD-WATER RESET

**Snap out of spirals with sensation.**

**How:** Splash your face with cold water, or run cold water over your wrists for 20–30 seconds.

**Why it works:** Cold triggers the mammalian dive reflex, slowing heart rate and calming the nervous system. Great for anxious moments.

# WHAT STOPS YOU PRESSING PAUSE?

If you're craving a slower pace of life but can't seem to make it happen, take our test to find your personal block to pressing pause

Circle the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section, or sections, you circled most, to find out what stops you from slowing down

## 1 You'll slow down when

- ♥ You're in a better place.....□
- ♦ People need you less.....□
- Life is less full on.....□
- You're in the right mindset.....□

## 2 You most enjoy a break when

- You're somewhere you know and love.....□
- ♥ There is plenty to do.....□
- ♦ You're not organising everything.....□
- You're up to date before you go.....□

## 3 You tend to fill a free evening by

- ♥ Doomscrolling or binge-watching.....□
- Getting ahead for the next day.....□
- ♦ Saying yes to a last-minute invite.....□
- Overthinking about what to do.....□

## 4 Your ideal retreat would involve

- ♥ Structured days.....□
- ♦ Group activities.....□
- Time on your own.....□
- Plenty of guidance.....□

## 5 Doing nothing can make you feel

- ♥ Initially relieved, then restless.....□
- ♦ Worried, as if you're letting someone down.....□
- Unproductive, like you should be doing something.....□
- Uneasy, as there's too much time to think.....□

## 6 You most want to press pause when you can't

- Lift your mood and energy level.....□
- ♥ Focus on what needs to be done.....□
- ♦ Stop feeling taken for granted.....□
- Work out what's really urgent.....□

## 7 You admire people who seem to

- ♥ Be good at switching off.....□
- ♦ Never feel guilty.....□
- Aim for good enough.....□
- Let go of mistakes.....□

## 8 Deep down you know you need more

- Self-acceptance.....□
- Self-compassion.....□
- ♥ Self-discipline.....□
- ♦ Self-belief.....□

## 9 When you have free time on your own, you tend to start

- Planning for a future event.....□
- Learning something new.....□
- ♦ Organising a social event.....□
- ♥ Something random you never finish.....□

## 10 You'd relax more if you could avoid feeling

- ♥ Unfocused.....□
- ♦ Selfish.....□
- Lazy.....□
- Anxious.....□

Turn the page to find out what you need to press pause







# What do you need to press pause on?

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

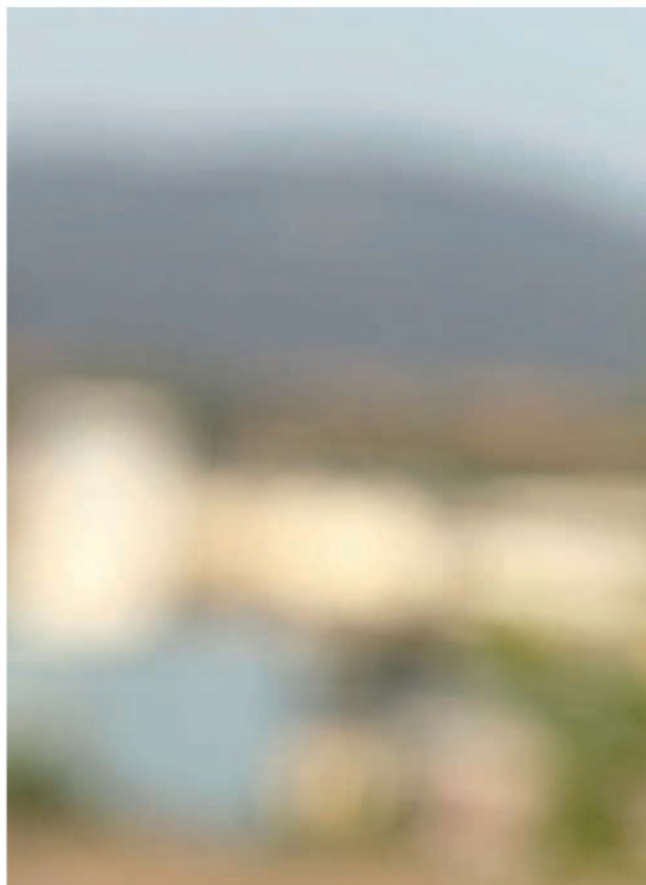
## *Distraction*

You know you need to press pause but somehow you've lost confidence in your ability to relax. Instead, when life gets overwhelming, you've got into a habit of numbing your feelings and carrying on. You might find yourself endlessly scrolling, binge-watching or snacking without even realising it. But the more we rely on distraction to cope, the more disconnected we can get from our feelings. You're particularly vulnerable when you're overloaded, emotionally depleted or not sure what kind of rest you actually need. And when you've got used to constant stimulation, the prospect of slowing down can seem boring, pointless or even terrifying. Your first step towards pressing pause is to notice your go-to distractions with curiosity, not criticism. Tune in to what's inside and try to connect with the feeling under the craving for distraction. Then simply accept it and make space for it — don't try to analyse or change what you're feeling. Instead ask yourself, what could you try before reaching for your phone — a few moments of conscious breathing, a quick walk, or just 10 minutes focusing on your body and trying to let go of tension? Small moments like this will build your confidence in allowing gaps in your day to remain unfilled, and to see them as opportunities for calm.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♦

## *People-pleasing*

People who thrive on social connections often put everyone else before themselves. Pressing pause will be a challenge if you find it hard to say no, and when you do get time alone, it can feel unfamiliar or even selfish. Your instinct to care for others is a big part of who you are, but it's draining your capacity to care for yourself and to slow down. You may fill your days with calls, commitments, or emotional labour, leaving no space to just be. What's more, pressing pause can feel unappealing when you're not used to prioritising your own needs. You may be well aware that you need clearer boundaries but might find it hard to tolerate the thought of upsetting people. But if you try to pause before you jump in and take responsibility for making others feel okay, you might find that a sense of having more time starts to naturally unfold. Although allowing small moments to pause throughout the day is important, you could also benefit from more structured time on a regular basis, such as a regular art or yoga class. If guilt creeps in, remind yourself that you don't have to prove your worth by putting yourself last, and your loved ones will also benefit when you are truly thriving.







IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ●

## *Perfectionism*

For you, slowing down often feels impossible, because there's always something more you could or should be doing. You thrive on achievement and a sense of progress but your inner perfectionist drives you to constantly stay busy, often at the expense of your wellbeing. Even self-care and rest can become another area to 'do right' if you're convinced you need to learn to meditate or do more yoga. There may be tangible benefits to filling every moment with productivity, and others may admire your motivation and high standards, but deep down you know that having little room to pause, breathe and step off the 'what's next?' treadmill is taking its toll. The truth is, making time to pause is not a reward for when you've 'done enough', it's something you need right now — you don't need to finish the list to deserve it. Next time you notice the voice that insists it's not the right time to slow down, try to gently challenge it. If it helps, schedule in moments to pause throughout the day, such as sitting with a cup of tea or taking a slow walk somewhere green. Creating space in your life for slowness is the opposite of giving up, it's making a conscious and courageous choice to live differently, and trust that something good will emerge.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

## *Overthinking*

It can be deeply frustrating when you long for a slower pace of life, but pressing pause just seems to make your mind busier than ever. As a reflective person, you may be genuinely interested in analysing past conversations, or thinking about how you and others have behaved. And mulling over the past, present or future can create a sense of being prepared or more in control. At times it does make sense to think things through, but overthinking is rarely insightful, and an overly busy mind can make you feel like your life is more overwhelming than it actually is. Mental busyness is not only a significant barrier to creating a slower pace of life, but left unchecked it can leave you vulnerable to low mood and anxiety. It might seem hard to resist filling slow moments with thinking, and you'll no doubt get sucked into it without realising. When you do, simply acknowledge by mentally saying 'thinking' and then bring your attention to the here and now by connecting with what you can see, hear and feel. Your aim is not to silence your thoughts, which is an impossible task, but to build trust that you can switch off from them, and instead, savour the opportunities to pause that present themselves throughout the day — however small.

# Embrace calm

*Let yourself switch off and enjoy a little peace and quiet this summer with these relaxing ideas*

## Embrace calm through kindness

The Three Wish Journal offers a simple daily ritual proven to foster resilience, release oxytocin, and soothe the nervous system. Wish well for yourself, others, and the world. A beautiful practice for inner calm and connection.

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This highly recommended multi-award-winning flower essence blend is designed to help you relax, unwind and let go. Breathe Deep, Seek Peace is ideal for those times when you are stressed, uptight or just can't sleep.

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# Heart



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

***“Women’s  
friendships are  
like a renewable  
source of power.”***

JANE FONDA



IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK





*Expert  
advice*



*Susie Masterson  
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Counselling and  
Psychotherapy  
registered relationship  
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[ultraliving.uk](http://ultraliving.uk)*





# *Make it a summer of love...*

Feeling stuck in a rut? Discover eight simple, honest and surprisingly candid ways to rekindle the romance and relight that fire, however long you've been together

**A**s we settle into our routines, romance can sometimes fade into the background. Whether you're 25 or 75, if you're in a long-term relationship things can start to get, well, a little familiar, to put it kindly. But especially when you have been together a long time, or if you're facing significant life changes, be they hormone-related, due to illness, or other issues, you may find your relationship starts to suffer.

'When we live with people and have been with them for a long time, there is a lot of repetition in the things that we do and the structure that we have at the timetables in our lives, and if it doesn't breed contempt, then it can certainly breed a bit of disillusionment,' reflects Susie Masterson, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy registered relationship therapist and coach. 'It can take the shine off our relationship.

'Also, when we're older, and have health issues or go through life changes, we may not feel comfortable in our own skin for whatever reason, and it can be very difficult to feel sexy

and to feel desirable.' One of the most common ways that women in particular express frustration is when they see their partner as taking them for granted. This might be as a result of raising a family together, when chores and responsibilities were assigned in a certain way, or if you were both working full time and rushed off your feet.

But if you now find yourself in a stage of life where you feel the situation has changed but your relationship hasn't, or you feel that your expectations aren't keeping up with each other, it might be time to think again.

Alternatively, you could be feeling that bedroom antics have become somewhat predictable, or even fallen out of favour altogether.

But don't worry: it definitely doesn't mean it needs to be the end of the relationship.

If you are brave enough to be intentional and proactive in breaking these patterns, you can reignite that spark and turn up the heat to make it a summer to remember for all the right reasons! Read on to find out how...





## 1 Spark curiosity

‘Try and spark a curiosity together,’ advises Masterson. ‘There’s all sorts of stuff online about love languages that you can learn about and there are also intimacy games which actually don’t have anything to do with sex.’

[Psychotherapist] ‘Esther Perel has a card game which I often use with couples in a therapy setting, which asks questions like, “what’s your biggest regret, or what was the best time of your life? Or tell me something that makes you uncomfortable.”’

‘It’s more about igniting an emotional intimate connection, than a sexual one. I think that curiosity and that willingness to question each other is important, because often people will find out things that they didn’t know, that can actually spark a revived interest.’

## 2

### Have a frank conversation about intimacy

‘Say things like, “this isn’t working for me because... or I would like more sex because...”’ suggests Masterson. ‘Find some examples of when it was good between you, in a sort of positive coaching way, and say “I really miss this” or “you’re great at doing that”. Or you could say to your partner, “I’ve never done this before” or “I want to try something different, but I want to try it with you. Are you open to doing it with me?” I think these questions very rarely get asked.’

## 3 Go for walks together

Sometimes having a conversation about your relationship during a walk, rather than in a high-pressure setting, can be more constructive and relaxed. ‘There’s lots of research-backed papers around the what we call “parallel processing”,’ notes Masterson. ‘When we’re walking, it’s a parallel movement.’

‘We’re moving in alternate weight, that can help us process and can help us feel freer in what we’re talking about and lower our stress levels. But also not making eye contact can be really helpful.’



## 4 Instigate touch throughout the day

'Touch is a really important thing, it's also a really difficult thing for some people,' reflects Masterson. 'You can even say, "Look, I'd really appreciate a hug. How do you feel about doing that?" 'But it can even be just a touch on the back or a touch on the arm, where if you continuously do it, you start to actually regress a little bit and your brain goes back to remembering the first time that we were touched as infants, and that was both comforting and nourishing. It's about little baby steps to increasing the amount of touch that you have with your partner, and doing that on a consistent level.'

## 6 Schedule in one-on-one time

'Schedule time to have a conversation,' suggests Masterson. 'It could be that you put in your phone that every Sunday you agree to check in, and then from that, scheduling probably happens in a lot more free way. It's just about making sure that you continuously review the relationship.'

## 5

### Compliment your partner

'Show signs of appreciation to start to build up the confidence of the other person,' advises Masterson. 'Notice and comment on things like "you smell good today," and bring out the bits that you appreciate in the other person, and deliberately, consciously practise and cultivate that.'

## 7 Try something new together

'Starting something new shows renewed investment,' says Masterson. 'It says, "You matter. I matter, this relationship matters and we're willing to experiment." It could be that you take up squash and you're both hopeless. But remember that it's the trying that is important, rather than a particular outcome. I think it's really important for people to try and find new ways to invest in the relationship.'

## 8

### Reminisce

'Try to reminisce if there are things that you would like to bring back into your relationship,' recommends Masterson. 'Because if you're talking about something that's already happened between the two of you, that's going to seem a lot more achievable to potentially reignite.'





*Coming up for air*

# Nothing stays the same...

...yet no matter how far you travel, some things never change, remembers Caro Giles



I was a summer baby and my star sign is Leo. Both of these things make me happy, although I'm not really a star sign

sort of girl. The lion reminds me that I can be fierce and powerful, and I like the fact that I was born under sunny skies. My mum tells me she remembers the early weeks of mothering in the garden of the little terraced house that was my first home. I enjoy the freckles scattered across my face and the way I notice that my skin is sun-kissed because there's a white band on my wrist when I take my watch off. There's a line in a St Etienne song — 'she is the

sunshine girl' — that I like to claim as my own.

If last summer was my summer of love, the current one is my summer of uncertainty. My life is up in the air and I am struggling to stay grounded. I'm on holiday in Devon with my children, my friend and her daughter. Seven girls tucked into a flower-filled valley. Devon is four hundred and fifty miles from our home in Northumberland, its landscape far removed from the heather-strewn hills and wide sandy beaches I am used to. From our farm cottage I can see the steeple of a church beyond a patchwork of fields. The sea on the horizon creates an ombre blur with the sky.

Although it's summer, the sun comes and goes. The wind seems fierce here,

curling its tongue underneath the tiles and wrapping itself around the stone walls until it feels as if we will be lifted into the air and blown away. There are moments when a squall is flung in from the coast, and raindrops roll down the windows. Then the clouds rush across the sky revealing glimpses of blue and a hazy sun. We spend our days dancing between heat and chill, dry and damp, rough and smooth, and I'm reminded once more that everything passes. Nothing stays the same.

Even though it is summer, and the sun often hangs high above me, parts of my world are shrouded in darkness and I'm finding it hard to stay out of the shadows. My family is in a transitional phase. Nothing is certain except the urgent



***“I want to hold everything at bay for as long as I can, ignore the serious business of being a grown-up”***



longing I have to be settled in a new life.

Summer is often equated to optimism and good times, blue skies and sunshine, but there is always night, as soon as the sun drops below the horizon. I lie in bed in this holiday house under wooden beams strung with spider silk. I have done all of the things I normally do when I am at home: tucked in my littlest daughters, soothed crumpled foreheads, kissed sweet cheeks. A pile of books tumbles across the duvet but none of them contains words I want to read. I toy with the idea of a film, but don't have the energy to dive into another world. The one I am in is drama-filled enough.

Outside, above the noise of the wind whipping the walls, I hear shouts and laughter. I stretch my legs out of bed and

walk across to the long window, peering through the gap in the curtains. My two older daughters and their friend are leaning back on swings and laughing into a burning sky. They spot me and wave, point at the sunset and jump up and down. I watch them bathing in these final years of childhood, want to hold the hands of the clock still, capture this moment for ever.

The next morning I wake early, just before 5am. The sky outside is already bright and light. The day is flooding through the curtains, trying to pull me from my sleep. I doze, enjoy the heavy sensation of my body, try to stay inside these early hours before I have to properly enter the real world. At the moment I want to hold everything at bay

for as long as I can, ignore the serious business of being a grown-up. Later this week I will pack my car up with suitcases and girls and drive back to Northumberland. Summer will still be stretching its glittering arms out for a good few weeks to come, trying to pull us from the shadows. And I will spend my time wishing that time will stand still whilst simultaneously hoping everything will soon be quite different.

This turbulent summer I am willing myself to enjoy the little moments. I'll sit on the bench outside my house drinking coffee and feeling the warmth on my face. Sit with my littlest girl and listen to her playing the guitar. Lie back on my pillows and watch the swifts dive. And time will pass. It always does.





# DO YOU HAVE *post-traumatic boss disorder?*

Understanding the full impact that a former (or current) boss is having on you can help you heal and move forward, says Greta Solomon

**T**wenty-five years ago, in my first job after university, I worked as a junior in a fashion PR consultancy. One day, my boss sent me to the office of an editor to present some client images to her. She gave me strict instructions of exactly what to say, to guide the editor to choose her preferred image. But the editor chose a different one and, despite my questioning, there was nothing I could do about it. 'You stupid girl!' my boss exploded on my return, and gave me a dressing down in front of the entire office. This type of behaviour became standard, and after three months of walking on eggshells, being ultra stressed, tearful, and dreading each day, I left, along with three of my colleagues.

This wasn't what my boss was expecting. Her parting words to me were that my career was over, and that I'd never get another job in media. Her power and influence would see to that.

Shell-shocked, I somehow managed to pick myself back up. I got work experience at a women's magazine and became a journalist — a role I still happily hold today. I'd love to say that I never looked back. But that awful experience never fully left me, despite having had many excellent bosses since.

It wasn't until I recently stumbled on the term post-traumatic boss disorder that it all made sense. Todd Cherches, the CEO of a US consulting company, coined the term to describe a series of horrible bosses he worked for as an admin assistant in Hollywood. When I read about his experiences, I realised that painful memories stay alive until you find a way to process them.

## **A widespread problem**

Statistics vary, but the most recent research suggests that 50 per cent of people in the UK have been bullied at work or have witnessed it happening to others. And it can be harrowing. 'When a boss — who

### *Expert advice*



*Dr Claire Plumbly is a clinical psychologist and the director of Good Therapy Ltd, a psychological therapy centre based online and in the UK. Her private practice specialises in trauma-related issues and burnout, and she is the author of *Burnout: How to Manage Your Nervous System Before It Manages You* (Yellow Kite, 2024). [drclaireplumbly.com](http://drclaireplumbly.com)*

holds power over your livelihood and self-worth — uses that power to belittle, manipulate or intimidate, it doesn't just bruise the ego; it makes you feel very unsafe,' explains clinical psychologist Dr Claire Plumbly, author of *Burnout: How to Manage Your Nervous System Before It Manages You* (Yellow Kite, 2024). 'This can have a lasting impact on your autonomic nervous system, especially if you feel trapped or financially dependent. The workplace becomes an environment of chronic threat.'

When this happens, the body's in-built threat response — better known as the fight-flight-freeze-fawn system — gets activated. Dr Plumbly says: 'With a bullying boss, people often fluctuate between all four of these states. They feel frustration or irritation; have fantasies of quitting; feel stuck, disconnected, or as though they're on autopilot; and try to appease the boss and stay on their good side.'

'When the nervous system stays stuck in a state of threat, cortisol and adrenaline remain high, meaning that sleep suffers, digestion gets disrupted, and the immune system weakens. Over time, this can lead to health issues such as migraines, gut issues, and burnout. Psychologically, people experience hypervigilance, anxiety, avoidance, shame, and even flashbacks,' she says.

## How the past impacts the present

'If you've never had a chance to process what happened, your body can stay stuck in survival mode long after the boss is gone,' says Dr Plumbly. 'If the bullying triggered earlier experiences of not being safe or seen — perhaps from childhood — it can leave deeper emotional scars. Our minds evolved to remember danger to protect us. But when that protection becomes overactive, it keeps you locked in

**“Start  
to find  
small  
ways  
to  
reclaim  
your  
agency”**

the past, watching for further signs of trouble — even when you're technically safe now,' she explains.

If you've been impacted by a bullying boss, no matter how long ago, it's possible to heal.

'Regulate the nervous system through breathwork, movement, and grounding exercises. Your body needs to feel safe before your brain can rewire,' says Dr Plumbly, who recommends working with a trauma-informed therapist.

'I like using Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing or Compassion-Focused Therapy. These can help you process past experiences and break out of deep-rooted patterns that may no longer be serving you but made sense at the time. And redefine success. Let go of the toxic hustle narratives. You can take your time on the career ladder and build a healthy work-life balance,' she says. 'If the toxic boss is still in the present, start to strengthen your support system and find small ways to reclaim your agency. Don't try to process the trauma you're currently in. Instead, start to find psychological safety in relationships, therapy, or community. If things don't change, start planning your exit. It's not "quitting" — it's self-preservation.'

## Creating better boundaries

When your boundaries have been consistently eroded, fawning or people-pleasing can become your default mode. So, the first step is to become gently aware of how you react and respond. It can help to journal about what you need and want.

'Start getting clear on your values — what matters to you and what you need to feel well at work. Then build boundaries from that place, rather than from fear or guilt. Practice saying no with warmth, or delaying your yes by saying, "Let me think about that and get back to you". Boundaries don't have to be hard walls, they can be flexible gates that protect your energy,' says Dr Plumbly.

Looking back, there had been warning signs within the first two weeks of working for my boss. I just hadn't understood their significance. She would say something and then deny that she had said it. She'd micro-manage every task, withhold praise, use sarcasm, and make accusations. I should have walked out then, and immediately cut my losses, but I doubted my instincts and judgement.

Dr Plumbly explains: 'Power dynamics distort reality, and manipulation is designed to make you question yourself. After all, we all want to belong, and we'll work incredibly hard to maintain our place in a social group and with people whose opinions we care about — even if those same people hurt us. Self-blame is a survival response, "If it's my fault maybe I can fix it". Healing begins when you realise it wasn't your fault, and you don't have to carry it forever.'







## Got workplace woes?

Read Dr Plumbly's checklist of post-traumatic boss disorder symptoms below, and tick off what's true for you. This isn't a diagnostic tool, but it can help you reflect on your experiences.

### DO YOU:

- ☐ Have a heightened startle response at work
- ☐ Walk on eggshells whenever your boss is around
- ☐ Try to do things perfectly, to ward off criticism
- ☐ Find it difficult to concentrate, which makes mistakes more likely
- ☐ Have imposter syndrome, dialled up to eleven
- ☐ Believe that asking for help is unsafe, or makes you vulnerable to attack
- ☐ Have sleep disturbances
- ☐ Feel like everything is your fault and over-apologise — even outside of work
- ☐ Fear that you may be fired, demoted, or publicly humiliated if you stand up for yourself
- ☐ Feel irritable or angry, or numb yourself with alcohol or substances
- ☐ Have chronic pain, migraines, gut issues, or fatigue, especially if medical tests come back 'normal'
- ☐ Isolate yourself from friends, as you try to work harder
- ☐ Feel exhausted, or on the road to burnout
- ☐ Blame yourself for your boss's behaviour
- ☐ Put on a brave face, despite the inner turmoil

- ☐ Dread going into work — and even call in sick, so you don't have to be there
- ☐ Rationalise to yourself that it isn't that bad

### HOW MANY DID YOU TICK?

**Less than four:** You've had some difficult moments at work, but they haven't left a lasting imprint

**Five to eight:** Your experience may fall into the realm of boss-induced trauma

**More than nine:** You're showing strong signs of trauma. You can also use this tool to help you connect with past experiences. To do so, cast your mind back and consider how you felt while at work. And remember that even if your symptoms are no longer active in your day-to-day life, they could still be affecting you.



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**D**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.

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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.

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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](http://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.



## 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](mailto:info@ollieandhissuperpowers.com)







# Body

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***“You are  
imperfect, you are  
wired for struggle,  
but you are worthy  
of love and  
belonging.”***

BRENÉ BROWN

**I AM  
~~WORTHLESS~~  
WORTHY**



# MINDFUL WELLBEING



Ali Roff Farrar shares expert advice, ideas, stats and the newest research on all things wellbeing this summer, including heat hacks, the secret to getting the most out of your skincare, a show-stopping salad and some very useful products to try this summer season!

## The mental-menstrual link: why getting to grips with your cycle can help you live better

Dr Cornelia Hainer, head of science at leading menstrual health and reproductive health app Clue shares three steps to supporting your mental health through understanding your menstrual cycle.

### 1. Track how you feel throughout your menstrual cycle

The menstrual cycle is linked to many aspects of health, including mental well-being. Fluctuations in hormones like oestrogen and progesterone influence various bodily processes that can affect how we feel. Tracking your cycle, along with your emotions, mental state, and other experiences, can help you understand your personal patterns and what's typical for you. This can be simply done in a paper diary or on your phone notes app, or through a tracker.

### 2. Use your insights to live in tune with your menstrual cycle

Tracking how you feel and what you experience during your cycle gives you insights into your cycle-related patterns and what to expect at different times of the month. This allows you to plan activities accordingly, whether that means scheduling important events during your most energy-filled times or prioritising rest and self-care during other times.

Many Clue users report that simply knowing hormonal shifts are likely the reason for emotional changes — and being able to anticipate them — helps them feel more prepared and better manage daily life. User research indicates that this self-awareness can lower stress and help women feel more in control of their health and feel less stress over it.

### 3. Know when to seek support for premenstrual mood changes

Hormone levels drop before your period. If you experience mood changes during this time, you're not alone. Around 8 in 10 women report at least one premenstrual symptom. Mild symptoms can often be relieved by changes in lifestyle, such as regular aerobic exercise, relaxation therapy, diet changes, or healthy sleeping habits. Around 1 in 10 experience symptoms intense enough to meet the criteria for clinical premenstrual syndrome (PMS), while a smaller group experiences a more severe condition called premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). If mood changes heavily impact your quality of life, help is available. Please reach out to a mental health professional.

[www.helloclue.com](http://www.helloclue.com)





## Orange, Radish, and Olive Salad

*Vibrant and refreshing, this Moroccan-inspired salad is tossed with a cumin and paprika dressing, evoking, in my mind, the heady and aromatic scents of North African souks. This is a salad where the ingredients can vary immensely – from the acidity of the oranges to the saltiness of the olives – so use your judgment and adjust the quantities if necessary. If your black olives are particularly salty, you can also leave them to soak in cold water for 10 minutes and then drain. I like to use blood oranges when they are in season, or a combination of regular and blood oranges for a more vivid visual appeal.*

SERVES 4

- 2tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2tbsp lemon juice
- ½ garlic clove, crushed
- ½tsp ground cumin
- ¼tsp sweet paprika
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 5 or 6 blood oranges or 4 large navel oranges
- 2 or 3 radishes, very thinly sliced
- 60g Kalamata olives, pitted and sliced
- Finely chopped coriander leaves, for serving
- Aleppo pepper or other mild chilli flakes, for serving

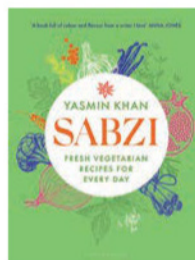
### Method

**1** To make the dressing, whisk together the oil, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, paprika, ¼ teaspoon salt, and pepper in a small bowl and set aside for the flavours to infuse.

**2** Peel the oranges and slice into thin discs. This is best achieved by cutting

the top and bottom off each orange, placing it on a chopping board, and using a sharp knife to slice down the sides, removing the rind and pith.  
**3** Put the oranges in a large bowl and pour over the dressing. With your hands, very carefully mix in the dressing, then lift out the orange slices and arrange on a serving plate.  
**4** Add the radishes and olives to the bowl with the remainder of the dressing and mix well. Strew the radishes and olives over the oranges, pour over any remaining dressing, and finish with a sprinkle of chopped coriander and chilli flakes.

*Extract taken from  
 Sabzi by Yasmin  
 Khan (Bloomsbury  
 Publishing, £26,  
 Hardback).  
 Photography ©  
 Jonathan Gregson*



## Hydrate!

These handy little electrolyte tablets are easy to travel with and perfect for boosting hydration and energy levels especially after sport or illness. Clinically formulated, they are the only electrolyte tablet prescribed by UK doctors on the NHS, formulated to World Health Organization (WHO) standards for optimal hydration, backed by clinical studies and used in hospitals and sports medicine. Vegan, gluten-free, low-calorie and available in multiple great-tasting flavours, they are suitable for adults and kids, you just drop them into normal drinking water – a must-pack in your suitcase this summer!

**O.R.S EVERYDAY HYDRATION**,  
 from £6.49, [orshydration.com](http://orshydration.com)



## What's the deal with... skin layering?

More is more, right? That's the thinking behind the 'skin layering' trend of applying product after product onto the skin, hoping for optimum results. However, renowned dermopharmacist Dr Colette Haydon, who has over 40 years experience including formulating products for brands like Jo Malone and REN, says this isn't actually the best practice when it comes to skincare, particularly when it comes to products with highly active ingredients such as retinol. 'Actives used one at a time allow your skin to rest and reset, before switching to another,' she says. 'Skin likes change, switching stimulates the

skin to get better results. Active ingredients for specific skin concerns when used for too long saturate the skin and no longer deliver results. It is good to switch them around to avoid the plateau effect.' Her skincare



brand Lixirskin was born from observing people overwhelmed by conflicting advice from non-professionals using too many products containing too many highly active ingredients — applied one after the other. 'Products with too many active ingredients which work on different metabolic pathways confuse the skin. It works too hard, cell energy is depleted, the skin gets tired and gives up. It is better to ask the skin to do one thing at a time, but to do it well. 'Layering too many products is likely to produce the same result. There is also potential for counteraction and irritation if not paired correctly.'

**Lixirskin, NIGHT SWITCH RETINOL 1%,  
£32, [lixirskin.co.uk](https://lixirskin.co.uk)**



*"I have only to break into the tightness of a strawberry,  
and I see summer — its dust and lowering skies."*

- TONI MORRISON

### Fast food = fast effects

A new study\* has found that high-fat foods such as fast food can have an impact on the gut protective protein, depleting it significantly. Though the external warning signs of the inflammation that these foods cause can remain unseen for years, the study is significant in finding that this protective gut protein rapidly decreases after just two days of eating high-fat fast food. 'We've shown that every meal we consume actively shapes our gut health,' says researcher Dr Cyril Seillet.



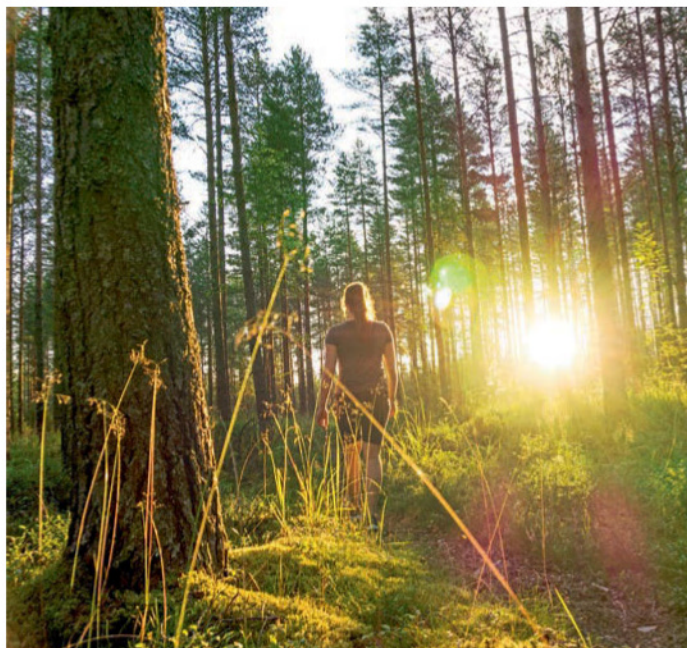


# Seasonal joys

## Summer by candlelight?

Missing the ritual and cosiness of your winter candles? Atelier Noite has just launched a magical offering: Amber Night, designed to capture the essence of summer at dusk, blending golden amber, soft woods, and delicate florals to be both grounding and transportive. I love the idea of attaching this scent to encapsulate the memories of special summer seasons. It's a late sunset, the hush of warm air, the magic of those treasured summer evenings.

Atelier Noite, Amber Night Candle, £48



\*\*NATURE SUSTAINABILITY, 2025

## Head into the forest

Want to give your wellbeing a double boost over the summer? Head into the forest – researchers\*\* have found that forests with many varied species of tree gave even greater wellbeing benefits. Even better, a dense canopy was found to reduce heat stress by providing more shade and creating a more stable microclimate, while also improving air quality by increasing leaf surface area — both crucial elements in urban areas where heatwaves and airborne pollutants are more abundant.

# 26.2%

**The new ONS government report on wellbeing for 2025 shows the proportion of adults experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety remains higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic – with nearly a quarter of all adults (22.6%) experiencing a high amount of anxiety, rising to 26.2% of women.**



## Summer spritz

Deliciously summery, MOMO X Natoora Blood Orange Kombucha is a fantastic non-alcoholic alternative with the added benefit of being a brilliant booster for your gut health too. The fermentation process gives kombucha a delicious flavour which separates it from sugary soft drinks — pop it in a tumbler with ice and garnish and you might just trick yourself into believing it's a summer cocktail without the negative effects of one too many Aperol Spritz's!

MOMO X Natoora Blood Orange, £28 for case of 6, [momo-kombucha.com](https://momo-kombucha.com)



## The green phenomenon

We know there is a beneficial link between living close to green spaces and health – but scientists are taking their research a step further to understand why and how to increase the benefits. For example, one theory is that financially it often costs more to live near to green spaces – so are the health benefits of living near to green spaces just a result of better socioeconomic factors on health? Or perhaps the phenomenon is due to the theory that healthier people who already enjoy time outdoors would choose to live closer to green spaces? Well, a new study\* debunks these theories: researching healthy births as a measure of health, they found that for mothers living near newly planted trees (which were planted after the mother settled to mitigate socioeconomic factors), births were associated with three key measures of newborn health: higher birth weight, lower risk of small-for-gestational-age birth and decreased risk of pre-term birth.

\*SCIENCE OF THE TOTAL ENVIRONMENT, 2025



## Sunscreen without the nasties

Mineral sunscreen (minus the toxic chemicals) used to be powdery, thick and leave a ghostly residual white smear across the skin it was applied to – it seems as though no good deed was left unpunished! Until now that is – we just tried and tested the new Dussl Natural Sunscreen, which smoothly glides onto the skin with ease, leaving no white cast or greasy paws after, and best of all it's made from 100% naturally derived ingredients, with zinc oxide (non-nano) for broad spectrum UVA & UVB protection, cacao seed butter to hydrate, nourish and help maintain soft skin, aloe barbadensis (aloe vera) extract to reduce redness and inflammation from sunexposure and panthenol (provitamin B5) for moisturising and soothing with anti-inflammatory properties.

Dussl Natural Sunscreen, SPF 30 or SPF 50, £36 for 150ml, [dussl.com](https://dussl.com)

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## Fitness first

A new study has looked into how the time of day we are most active influences our wellbeing. The study\*\* found that earlier daily peak activity, that is, the time of day when we are most active, is linked to improved cardiorespiratory fitness and walking efficiency. Greater consistency in our daily activity patterns, such as ensuring our peak activity occurs at the same time each day, was also associated with better wellbeing outcomes. The activity doesn't have to be time at the gym or jogging necessarily — it's simply when we are most active in the day — gardening, walking, doing physical chores. However, the researchers note that everybody's circadian rhythms are personal and unique, and that the best time to move your body for optimum results may be defined by your 'chronotype' — whether you are an early lark, or a night owl!



\*\*MEDICINE & SCIENCE IN SPORTS & EXERCISE, 2025

## Always Remember

For fans of the whimsically wise *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* (selling 10 million copies across the globe, no less), the highly anticipated second book by Charlie Mackesy is here and it doesn't disappoint.

Following the four beloved characters once again, they journey through the book supporting each other with enlightened compassion, mirroring the challenges we come across in life, reflecting the emotions we battle with, and even when it seems they have lost their way and are not sure which turn to take, hope is never abandoned. It's a book to return to again and again, and one that touches the heart differently with each visit. It's not out until the autumn, but preorder now to make sure you get your hands on a copy!



*Always Remember* by Charlie Mackesy  
(Ebury Press, £22, out October 9)

## Expert advice: Yoga for summer heat

*Turn to these yogic aids to stay cool either at home during a summer heatwave, or take them on holiday with you — the last one is an especially effective yogic secret for those hot balmy days!*

**1 Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the Fishes Pose):** This is a balancing gentle twist which releases internal heat and also aids digestion. Sit on the floor with your legs extended, then bend your right knee to cross your right foot over and place it down outside your left thigh. Bend your left leg to place your left foot up near your right hip (or keep it extended if that's more comfortable). Inhale and lengthen your spine, then place your right hand behind you and your left elbow outside your right knee as you exhale and twist to the right. Relax here for a few breaths, then switch sides.

**2 Viparita Karani (Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose):** This relaxing pose is fantastic for reducing swelling in the legs, cooling the body and also calming the mind. Perfect as a post-flight pose and long hot days exploring new cities in the sunshine. Shuffle your left or right hips up to touch a wall, then swing your legs up, lie on your back and extend your legs up against the wall. Keep your back flat and arms relaxed at your sides or overhead. Close your eyes and breathe gently. Stay for 5–15 minutes.

**3 Sheetali Pranayama (Cooling Breath):** Yoga is not only physical poses — it is also breathwork, otherwise known as pranayama, and you'll feel the cooling benefits of this easy practice within moments. Sit comfortably with your spine straight. Curl or roll your tongue into a tube (or just purse your lips if you can't curl your tongue). Inhale slowly through your tongue or pursed lips. Close your mouth and exhale through your nose. Repeat for 8–12 rounds.



# GIVE YOUR GUT A BREAK!

Embrace the body-brain connection and discover how looking after your gut can lead to a happier holiday!

**H**olidays are something many of us look forward to all year long, but when the time comes it's natural to feel a few butterflies in your stomach. However, if your anxiety goes deeper than that — or if it feels like you've got more than just butterflies churning up in there, it might be time to consider how your gut health is impacting how you feel before you set off, both physically and mentally.

'Travel can be a really good thing for the gut, but it can also be a really bad thing,' explains Dr Megan Rossi, aka The Gut Health Doctor. 'When we talk about the gut, we're specifically focusing on those trillions of bacteria called our gut microbiome.'

'And stress can really impact that microbiome. We see through the studies that if you are stressed it can really strangle your gut and have a negative impact on your overall health. We find that all the time with gut disorders, for example, we know that if you go through chronic trauma or stress, you've got a much higher risk of getting irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).'

'Now, one of the benefits of travel is that stress can be reduced. So if you are going somewhere and getting to actually relax and put your emails away, then the reduction in stress and cortisol, stress hormone can have a really positive impact on your gut.'

'Another way to lower your stress is diaphragmatic breathing, that can really reduce

the stress between the gut and the brain. So if you are in a very stressy headspace, taking some really deep breaths right into your belly can really help relax the gut and fizzle out some of that stress.'

Of course, one of the most impactful ways we can impact our gut health is by looking at our diet — and this can also affect our mind, Dr Rossi explains. 'How you feed your gut microbiome can really impact your mental health.'

'One of the key things to think of is that there are six different plant based food groups. I call them the Super Six. So your whole grains (wheat, quinoa, buckwheat, oats etc). Then you've got your fruit, your veggies, your nuts and seeds, your legumes (chickpeas, lentils, butter beans etc) and your herbs and your spices.'

'Each category contains different fertilizers to feed different microbes. So typically, we recommend people try get something from the Super Six each day. So instead of there being like one miracle food, actually, what we're seeing is diversity is really key. So you need to fertilise all the different microbes, instead of just like over feeding one type of bacteria.'

'So I would say when you go overseas, think to yourself, "Where can I get something from the Super Six most days?"'

'And particularly leading up to when you're traveling, when you are very much in control, really focusing on plant diversity should really help mentally and emotionally, while also protecting your gut and all-round health.'





## Expert advice



*Dr Megan Rossi (PhD, RD is an award-winning gut health scientist and registered dietitian. She founded The Gut Health Doctor to empower everyone to take control of their own health and wellbeing. [theguthealthdoctor.com](http://theguthealthdoctor.com)*

## Dr Rossi's golden rules for a smoother holiday transition

**1 Taking a specific probiotic could be a game-changer:** Starting *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG (LGG) two days before travelling and for the duration of your holidays can help those with sensitive stomachs stay symptom-free.

**2 'Eat to your holiday' for smoother digestion:** Just like you, your gut has a circadian rhythm. So shifting mealtimes to match the timezone of your destination before travelling can help your gut adapt to a different time zone.

**3 Slow and steady:** Go easy on any new foods for the first two days upon arrival to your destination and ease your gut into the experience...don't go from nought to 100, especially with street food.



# *Big crowd,* *small* *budget?*

BY LAUREN TAYLOR

Supper club chef and author Rosie Kellett gives her advice for keeping costs down when you're feeding family and friends

**C**ooking for a small crowd week in week out — whether that's a family of four to six, or lots of housemates — can be difficult when you're on a tight budget.

But when food writer Rosie Kellett moved into a six-person East London warehouse five years ago, keeping costs down and flavour up became a joy as well as a challenge.

However, with a budget of £25 per person a week (which also covers other household goods), each night there is a 'delicious meal on the table', she writes in her debut cookbook, *In For Dinner* — which includes

101 recipes 'that are affordable, achievable and good for you and good for the planet alike'. Here the 32-year-old writer — who also hosts supper clubs — shares her top tips for making lots of (wholesome, healthy) food on a strict budget.

## **Do your grocery shopping online**

'I'd say online shopping saves us a lot of money because we get delivery once a week, and it's far easier just keep track of what you're spending, you can always see your basket, and you can take









advantage of the deals. And you're not doing all of those little trips to the local mini supermarket and picking up a couple of things here and there. You plan a bit better and know what you need to use up. I think that mentality really helps to budget.

'Because you're never going to shop more frequently than once a week, towards the end of the week it's quite slim pickings, but it forces you to really utilise what there is in the fridge and in the cupboard and you become a bit more inventive.'

A lot of Kellett's recipes have been born from moments of 'looking at a fridge at a bag of carrots, and I'm like, "Cool, what are we going to do with that?"'

### Make plants the focus

'In our house we eat mostly vegetarian with a little bit of canned fish. We buy anchovies and tinned tuna and sardines. Apart from that, we don't buy any meat, which really keeps the cost going. For protein we really utilise legumes, a lot of beans, pulses and lentils, and tofu. Also, shop seasonally where you can, because oftentimes what's been grown in the UK season will be cheaper.'

### Buy these hero ingredients

Frozen raspberries are not only cheaper than fresh ones but Kellett says they often work better in baking. 'The raspberry sponge [in the book] has four ingredients and one of them is frozen raspberries and it's an incredibly cheap dessert to make — it's very easy and quick and simple. You need 700g of frozen raspberries — if you were to buy them fresh it would be very expensive, but there's no need. Also my blondies use frozen raspberries — I've done it with fresh and I've done it with frozen, and frozen just works better. They become quite jammy.'

Tins of chickpeas, beans, legumes, tomatoes and fish (she's 'absolutely obsessed with tinned fish') are key for her cupboard though. 'And things that are pickled or preserved in jars. So capers, gherkins, sauerkraut and preserved lemon, with all of those things, a little goes a long way, and they last forever.'

'I think it's really good to make sure you've got a pantry stocked with all of those things, so that all you really need to be buying fresh each week is a couple of vegetables, a bit of fruit, and you can kind of build a meal quite often from your pantry.'

'Buy the best quality you can afford. If a bean is going to be the bulk of your meal, and the main source of protein, if you can buy jarred, then the texture and the flavour is so much better [than tinned]. And the difference between the cheapest tomatoes to the middle range is pretty vast.'

### Make more from scratch

'We don't buy packet granola, I always make granola for the house. I think it can be a bit of a fallacy to think that you're saving money by buying a bag of granola, for £3 to £5, because all of the ingredients might cost slightly more but the recipe in my book makes 1.2kilos of granola, and you're probably buying a bag that is 500g.'

'So actually, when you get into the rhythm of buying ingredients in bulk and making your own granola or making your own flatbreads or pancakes or whatever it might be, you do save a lot of money in the long run. We never really buy bread.'

'I think it can seem daunting, but actually, when you're in the habit of doing that, it benefits everything in your life, from like your wallet to your mental health to your body's health, there's a snowball effect.'

*"It can seem daunting, but  
when you're in the habit it  
benefits everything in your life"*







## Savoury sweetcorn French toast with cherry tomato salsa

*'Savoury will always win over sweet for me, but no more so than in a French toast recipe,' says Kellett. 'This version is creamy, substantial, has an acidic hit from the salsa and – like all the best things – is topped with a shower of grated cheese. This is one of my favourite savoury breakfasts and is a great crowd-pleaser.'*

SERVES: 6

### Ingredients

#### FOR THE SALSA:

- 300g cherry tomatoes, finely diced
- ½ red onion, finely diced
- Juice of 1 lime
- A bunch of soft herbs: coriander, flat-leaf parsley or dill, or a mix of all three, roughly chopped
- 1 green chilli, finely diced, including the seeds if you like a kick
- A glug of extra virgin olive oil
- A good pinch of flaky sea salt and a grind of black pepper

#### FOR THE FRENCH TOAST:

- 6 eggs
- 1 small tin of sweetcorn (165g drained weight)
- 1tsp sea salt
- ½tsp black pepper
- ½tsp smoked paprika
- 6 slices of thick-cut white bread (use gluten-free bread to keep this recipe GF)
- Butter, for frying
- 50g strong Cheddar cheese, grated
- Hot sauce (optional)

### Method

- 1 Make the salsa first, by combining all the ingredients in a bowl and setting it to one side to marinate.
- 2 Crack all the eggs into a large bowl, and add the drained sweetcorn, salt, pepper and paprika. Blend the mixture with a stick blender until silky and smooth.
- 3 Submerge each slice of bread in the batter to coat.
- 4 Heat a little butter in a frying pan over a medium heat and fry each slice of bread until golden brown and crisp on both sides, adding more butter to the pan when needed.
- 5 Serve each slice with a little grated Cheddar, a generous helping of salsa and perhaps some hot sauce on the side.

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# Soul



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

***“Someone  
I loved once gave  
me a box full of  
darkness. It took me  
years to understand  
that this too,  
was a gift.”***

MARY OLIVER



# Is it even harder to save in summer?



Discover the connection between your finances and your mental wellbeing — and some handy tricks to get on top of them both!

**C**hristmas has a rather bad reputation when it comes to spending money. All those expensive pressies, fancy new outfits, decorations, Secret Santas, works do's, nights out with the girls, Christmas markets, etc, etc... they sure add up. Summer, in contrast, seems to be one long, free beach day, with perhaps the odd ice cream thrown in for good measure. That's what we think when we're in mid-December spending fury, anyway. However, when it's midsummer and your credit card is hot from use and not just the temperature outside, you remember it's a rather different matter. Even if you choose not to spend a single night away from home, the cost of day trips, beach parking, meals out, picnics, afternoons in the beer garden and all the rest can quickly add up to a pretty penny. Meanwhile, if you do decide to go abroad (especially during the school holidays) the cost can literally be more than a small second-hand car, without so much as a private swimming pool in sight. But summer is supposed to be a

time of kicking back and relaxing, not worrying about something as boring as money, right? Unfortunately, financial stresses, pressures and concerns are a huge worry for many of us. New data from MoneyPlus revealed that Generation X (ages 45-60) are facing some of the worst financial strain in particular, with over half even cancelling holidays due to their financial situation, or using buy now, pay later schemes to stay afloat.

***“The cost of the summer can escalate quickly if you don't make the effort to budget”***

## Why does it feel harder to save in summer?

MoneyPlus also found that 60% of people surveyed felt a pressure to spend a lot of money on big events and milestones — which may be amplified during summer.

It may be that they're building on existing problems: a recent survey from the Financial Conduct Authority found that nearly 12 million people feel overwhelmed or stressed dealing with financial matters, including 40% of adults with credit or loans saying they suffer anxiety and stress.

Dr Elena Touroni, a consultant psychologist and co-founder of The Chelsea Psychology Clinic, says that when money is tight, it can have effects on our sleep, mood, relationships and even our physical health.

She explains it's not about 'pounds and pence. It's about how supported and stable we feel on a daily basis.

'When things are going well financially, it can boost confidence, reduce stress, and give people the freedom to plan and enjoy life.'





Digital content creator Patricia Bright worked as a business analyst and consultant for investment banks for seven years before founding her own companies The Break Social and Uwa World. She says one issue to be aware of is 'lifestyle creep', which means the more people earn, the more they spend, which often leads into a more negative situation.

'I truly think that people know when they have a problem with their finances, and that feeling can be suppressed,' she says. 'You have to be in tune with how you feel to know where you financially are. Ask yourself if you feel anxious, do you have a tightness in your chest when you think about bills, or if you get a ticket or an expense? All of these things are signs.'

'For me, I knew when I couldn't stop working and was anxious to stop working and enjoy life, because I wanted to have all my ducks in a row or reach this imaginary figure in my head.'

'Once I let that go and looked where I was at and created a plan, I felt a lot more comfortable and relaxed.'

### What does good financial health feel like?

Touroni explains that financial health is closely tied to how safe, secure and in control we feel. Bright echoes this, and says it also adds to feelings of calmness.

'You might not have everything you need in that moment,' she says.

'However, you have a plan, a strategy, expectations and most importantly you feel comfortable with where you plan to go or where you need to be. You feel prepared.'

'For me personally, good financial health allowed me to make choices that were right for me in comparison to making choices where I had to compromise what I believed in or how I wanted to spend my time.'

### How can we work on our financial health?

'The first thing I would always say is you need a budget,' Bright says. 'You really have to open your eyes and get an





awareness of what's going on. A lot of people operate in blindness and shut their eyes, because they don't want to look at their finances. However, at least if you have a budget, you can get to grips of where you're at and that's a really valuable tool.'

Finance expert at Moneyfacts, Rachel Springall, assures us that 'it is possible to both save and have a sociable summer', but agrees budgeting is a crucial first step. 'It is down to consumers to budget and be conscious of any essential bills whilst also juggling their aspiring saving goals,' she says. 'The cost of the summer can escalate quickly if someone does not make efforts to budget. It's unwise to neglect building a saving pot at this time and it is true that consumers could be a bit apathetic this time of year to save. However, putting a little bit of cash aside each month could really make a difference in the months ahead.'

Here, Springall and Santander financial advisor Mark Weston share their tips for balancing saving along with enjoying the summer.

***"Ask yourself  
if you feel  
anxious, do you  
have a tightness  
in your chest  
when you think  
about bills?"***

### **Automate saving habits**

'During this time, the arrival of app-based savings providers can be useful for those who want to automate their savings habits,' Springall says.

'There are apps available, such as Plum, which can connect to a customer's bank account and work out their weekly savings amount.

This is incredibly handy for those with busy lives who may forget to make a manual payment each month into their savings pot.'

### **Know your income and expenditure, and plan**

Weston explains that the more you're aware of your spending and the more you plan, then the more likely you are to have flexibility.

'Having a clear idea of your expenses and budget is a great start,' Weston says. 'Using budgeting tools is a good way of getting a handle of what you're actually spending and what you can afford to spend.

'Making sure you understand where your spending has come from and also having a budget plan for the whole year, with summer in particular, can help for planning ahead.'

'Using a budget app like Emma, could be useful on the go,' Springall adds. 'It monitors spending and can help build a pot towards different goals, like holidays, an MOT or even Christmas.'

*"When things are going well financially it can boost confidence, reduce stress, and give people the freedom to plan and enjoy life."*





## Check all costs

'When trying to balance saving and still having a social life, it is important to question if all costs you are making are relevant,' Weston says.

'Ask yourself, could you cut back on some things such as coffees every day, and spend that on a holiday instead?'

## Use regular savings accounts

Springall explains that these types of savings accounts are ideal for slowly building a pot, as they instil good habits. 'However, consumers will need to work out if they are the right choice for them as some can be restrictive and might not be suitable for larger deposits,' Springall says. 'Regular savings accounts can also revert to a flexible account after the term ends, which might not pay a good rate, so savers must make a diary note to reinvest if they are still building funds toward their future goal.'

## Have savings for a rainy day

'For parents in particular, we would

***"When things feel out of control, even simple steps like writing down what's worrying you can help ease the pressure"***

advise them to have savings put away in advance for a rainy day,' Weston says. 'If you know that your normal monthly disposable income is a bit tighter due to children being home more rather than being in school, it is good to have savings put away so it is still possible to socialise and do things with them in the summer.'

## Shake it off

'Consumers need to shake any apathy they may have and take a step back to decide how their money could work harder for them during this time period also,' Springall says.

'It would be wise to explore the latest top rate tables and read up on some tips and guides to help them on their savings journeys.'

## Just make a start!

Touroni adds that people should 'start small' when they are trying to improve both their wellbeing and finances.

'When things feel out of control, even simple steps like writing down what's worrying you or talking to someone you trust can help ease the pressure,' she says.

'Reaching out to a debt charity or financial adviser can be a turning point. From a psychological point of view, it's about regaining a sense of control, bit by bit.

'And above all, know that you are not alone. Financial stress is incredibly common and support is out there.'







# THE WONDER OF WEAKNESS...

Chatting with a barista in the coffee shop, nodding at that woman you see every day as you walk your dog. Sociologists call this type of connection 'weak ties', but their impact is anything but weak, writes Kellie Gillespie Wright.

A friend of mine was driving to work one morning, when a woman driving in the opposite direction started waving frantically at him. He was alarmed, and pulled to a halt. Partly he was worried because he'd seen this woman every morning on the way to work for years. They'd passed on the stretch of same road — if it was beyond a certain bend he was making good time, or perhaps she was running late. But they always saw each other, and

had long since taken to giving each other a wave. And now she was waving at him again, but frantically. Was something wrong?

It turned out it was nothing of the sort. She was getting married, and had come to value the acknowledgement, their little connection each day so much that she wanted to invite him to the wedding. He went, and 20 years on they still exchange Christmas cards.

Now, we're not suggesting that you follow this example and start accosting

virtual strangers in the street. But there's method in the madness and magic in the small things: the quick nod from the neighbour on your morning walk; the running joke with someone you only see at the gym; the moment at the end of the workday when everyone exhales and starts talking about nothing in particular. These interactions aren't dramatic. They don't make headlines. But they stitch something vital into our lives: a sense of belonging that asks very little and gives quite a lot.





IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

In a culture that constantly pushes us toward self-optimisation and high achievement, we're often taught that connection must be profound to be valuable. But not every relationship needs to be soul-bearing. Not every gathering needs to be transformative. Sometimes, what we need most are the low-stakes interactions that expect nothing extraordinary from us, just our presence. This is the quiet power of casual connection. The kind of community that forms around quiz

nights at the pub, dog-walking routes, shared allotments, or weekly Park Runs. It's the come-as-you-are camaraderie that builds through repeated encounters, silly rituals, and cups of tea that stretch longer than planned. These aren't necessarily your ride-or-die people. But they're your people nonetheless. And their presence can have a surprisingly deep impact on your mental health.

As Professor Sir Sam Everington OBE, a leading advocate of social

prescribing and Patron of the National Academy for Social Prescribing, explains, what makes these ties so powerful is precisely their low pressure: 'The stakes aren't high, and the chances of negative feelings are low. It's low risk, unlikely to knock someone's confidence.' That sense of ease is a big part of their quiet strength.

Sociologists call this type of connection 'weak ties'. The term might sound, well, weak, but its impact is anything but. Research by Stanford's Mark Granovetter shows that casual acquaintances, neighbours, and friendly faces in familiar spaces play a crucial role in social cohesion. They bring rhythm, visibility, and comfort.

***"Weak ties  
provide small  
doses of  
belonging,  
reminding you  
that you exist,  
that you are seen"***

'The brain's parasympathetic nervous system, which calms us down, can be triggered by small acts of kindness or connection as much as via more intense interactions,' says Mark Rowland, chief executive of the Mental Health Foundation. 'If these "weak ties" are regular and part of the pattern of our lives, they can provide an effective way of relieving low-level stressors and a bridge towards better mental health.'

'Any interaction is an opportunity for connection,' adds life coach and mindset expert Chantal Dempsey. 'For many, this may be the only one. "Weak ties" provide small doses of belonging, they remind you that you exist, that you are seen.'

This kind of connection shows up in the glance at the bus stop, the shared biscuits over the garden fence, and the mismatched friendships formed in walking groups or choirs. It doesn't ask for your life story. It just asks that you show up. And show up we do, when we're allowed to do so without





## Expert advice



*Chantal Dempsey is an award-winning mindset and confidence coach, NLP expert and master hypnotherapist. [chantaldempsey.com](http://chantaldempsey.com)*

pressure. The reality is, many people want more connection, but they're tired. Tired of overthinking. Tired of performance. Tired of feeling like every interaction needs to be productive or profound.

'It's important that we lower the psychological entry bar for people to get the human contact we need,' says Rowland. 'Especially when we are low confidence, we can be intimidated easily. Informal, playful and casual opportunities to interact can help us find a way past isolation.'

The joy of low-stakes community is that it lets us exhale. You don't need to solve anyone's problems. You just need to sit at the table.

'We need gentle, come-as-you-are spaces,' says Dempsey. 'The casual nature gives the room to participate how you want. You can be present and speak very little, show up fully or quietly observe. Because it is light and easy, you are much more likely to go. Over time, this builds trust, psychological safety, and the belief that it's okay to just be yourself.'

These settings, such as a walking

group or board game night offer something precious: consistency without obligation. You can skip a week and no one's offended. You can come with low energy and still be welcome. You can arrive not quite yourself and leave feeling just a little more like you. There's power in predictability. The same faces, the same rhythms. It grounds you. 'In times of stress or loneliness, a casual chat can completely change your mood, give you a fresh perspective without obligation, or stop your overthinking loop,' says Dempsey. 'A warm smile or simple exposure to

someone's positive energy can trigger the release of oxytocin and calm the amygdala.' It doesn't have to be deep, just safe enough, warm enough, real enough.

Real-life examples of this kind of connection are everywhere. A woman in Sheffield started a Sunday cake club on her street. No agenda, just 'come if you fancy it.' Soon neighbours who had never spoken were sharing stories.

A group of dads in Newcastle began early-morning runs that turned into a WhatsApp group, then a support network. In Glasgow, a 'bring a chair to the green' afternoon became a regular gathering of strangers who slowly became friends.

These aren't dramatic stories. That's the point. They're simple, replicable, and deeply human. 'All efforts to bring people together confers a value on the people who participate,' says Rowland. 'You are saying you matter enough!'

And if you're hesitant, unsure whether something so small can make a difference, Rowland has a clear message: 'Providing a light touch social space for colleagues or neighbours may be the only time those people feel seen

***"All efforts to bring people together confers a value on those who participate"***





*"Every person is reminded that they are not alone and this place is holding space for them"*

matter how small the interaction, it still creates a sense of belonging.'

'Every time you exchange a few words with someone,' she adds, 'you are subconsciously integrating the belief that you are successful at talking to people... and over time, it challenges the belief that you don't belong.'

As Alexa Knight of the Mental Health Foundation notes, 'Helping others is good for our wellbeing, you can meet other like-minded people, and it gives you a sense of purpose that can boost your self-esteem.' Even a light-touch space can offer that, just through the act of showing up and being part of something.

'Gentle reciprocity is another key factor,' says Dempsey. 'Having a space where people have the opportunity to both offer and receive, whether it is a cup of tea, a story, or a skill.'

Of course, no space is perfect.

Sometimes people flake. Sometimes the group chat goes quiet. But low-stakes community is built to absorb that. You don't need to hold the whole thing up. It lives in the culture you create; easy, generous, welcoming.

'Even if you don't see an immediate ripple of engagement,' Dempsey says, 'every person that comes is reminded that they are not alone and this place is holding space for them.' That's the quiet power of showing up, not to guarantee connection, but to make room for it.

So if you've been waiting to feel more connected, maybe the answer isn't another soul-searching retreat. Maybe it's a communal BBQ. A weekly walk. A bit more space for the people already around you. Because not all community needs a mission statement. Sometimes it just needs snacks and a playlist. And honestly, that might be enough.

and cared for.' It really doesn't take much. 'Key ingredients are simple,' he says. 'Don't have an agenda beyond bringing people together, put fun at the heart of it, and support people to take on shared tasks or activities that build social bonds.'

And often, what makes these spaces so powerful is their lightness. There's something liberating about the silliness that often emerges, laughter as social glue. Inside jokes, made-up traditions, and spontaneous games disarm us. They level hierarchies. They allow people to connect across age, class, and background. Often, these low-stakes spaces are diverse in unexpected ways, not because people share world views, but because they share a willingness to show up.

For those struggling with loneliness, grief, or burnout, these gatherings offer a lifeline that feels manageable. You don't need to explain everything or be okay. Just being around others can help you feel included again. 'Repeated interactions add a sense of familiarity and safety, because they create a habit of connection,' says Dempsey. 'No



# 'We need to get over the stigma of men's mental health'

Jamie Laing opens up about his own mental-health journey

**H**e might play the happy-go-lucky class clown on TV, but Jamie Laing has revealed his 'really scary' mental health battle as he encourages other men to open up about their challenges.

The presenter and podcast host, 36, who shot to fame on E4's *Made in Chelsea*, says his lowest point was his first panic attack — which left him feeling 'lonely and isolated' and resulted in severe anxiety.

During that first panic attack 14 years ago, he didn't understand what was going on. 'Back then, this conversation around mental health that we have now, didn't exist. I was feeling very lonely and isolated within myself. I also felt embarrassed and scared about what I was feeling,' he says. 'I didn't talk about it to anyone and because of that, I didn't understand if it was ever going to stop. When you don't know if something is ever going to end, it's a really scary position to be in.'

Laing, who now openly speaks up about the power of men sharing how they are feeling confirmed that as soon as he reached out to a friend many years later, it was a 'huge moment of relief. After telling him how I was feeling, I got an echo back and he told me not to worry. He said that we would go through it together,' he says.

'It was one of those moments when I realised that a lot of people go through similar feelings and it felt better in numbers. I didn't feel alone anymore. I wish I had spoken about it earlier, but I just didn't have the courage.'

Although times are changing and the conversation around mental health is growing, Laing says there is still an issue around it. 'I think we're still scared or nervous to talk about it. I still



think we need to get over the stigma of mental health,' he says.

'Typically in men — we don't talk about it. I think what men could do individually is gather their friend group around and genuinely ask how everyone feels and I promise you, every single one of them will open up and say how they feel.'

Laing and his friends have their own WhatsApp group chat called 'Checking In' which was formed after they all went for drinks together. 'I remember we were out and I asked: "Does anyone ever feel lonely?" and one by one, each of my friends said, "Yeah I feel really lonely at times." From there, we created the group chat and it's a beautiful thing. It's really amazing.'

Laing also found his mental health being challenged while completing an Ultra Marathon Man Challenge for Comic Relief, running 150 miles over five days and raising over £2 million.

Finding himself in what's known as a 'pain cave' for many moments during his run, Laing shared what got him through. 'One thing that helped me was remembering that the pain is only temporary. I told myself at some point this is going to stop and that was also

a metaphor in regards to mental health too. You just have to think that it is temporary. You will get through it. I promise you, it will pass,' Laing says.

'It might take a week, a month, a year or two years, but you will get through it. You just have to keep going.'

Laing is fast becoming part of the public discourse around the importance for men of being vulnerable and opening up, but he understands it's not always easy.

'The first step is, I would say, acceptance, or trying to accept that this is something that is OK, that lots of people go through it, that you will get through it. Then the second thing is, talk about it. Really talk about it to your friend, your neighbour, anyone at all. And the third thing I would say, which really helps is exercise. If you have a combination of those three then you're in a good place to try and make it better.'

The idea of success and what being successful looks like has changed over the years, he says. 'For many, success looks like getting up and going to the gym to bench press a certain amount of weight, or driving a Lamborghini and flashing cash.'

'What I now see as success as is being open and vulnerable, or being a kind person, a good friend, colleague — whatever it may be. I think it can be dangerous that we aren't being open and honest about the way we feel and that we're putting on this bravado attitude. In reality, what's actually way cooler is talking about who we are and what we're feeling.'

Laing was a cast member of reality show *Made In Chelsea* for 10 years — from the age of just 22 — but he looks back now with some compassion for his younger self. 'I would tell him to stop caring — stop caring what people think of you as much.'



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