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Welcome...

What gets you up in the morning? We asked you on Insta recently and received some brilliant responses, from the aspirational 'God and gratitude' and 'this amazing life', to the all too familiar 'coffee and my child'! It's a question we're returning to this month, and I'm delighted to welcome back the fantastic Anita Chaudhuri to examine it for us. Anita was the main writer of the dossier for several years before life took a different turn and she decided to go back to university. Now she's back (and better than ever!) and sharing her journey to find her own sense of purpose (page 45). She examines the very idea, why it's so popular at the moment, and discovers she was actually suffering a (possibly pandemic-induced) sense of 'purpose anxiety'. She considers the issues so many of us face as we walk through our day-to-day lives, comparing our reality with heroic figures from Mother Teresa and Greta Thunberg to our NHS heroes, and she taps into why we often feel we fall short. Anita explains how she personally found embracing a new passion life-changing, and shares some inspiring ideas to help you find a new sense of meaning, direction, and, yes, even purpose, that don't necessarily involve throwing all the cards up in the air and starting all over again. It's an inspiring – and very useful – read.

This issue, I also got more than I bargained for when I met Hollywood voice coach Samara Bay. I was expecting a discussion on the politics of speech and, perhaps, the political hierarchy, when I suddenly found myself flashing back to my teenage years, as Samara helped me unpick my own issues with voice, accent, and who I really am. As a result, I've never felt so proud of my Yorkshire/Midlands twang, and all the little things it reflects about me. Turn to page 30 to find out more.

We're slowing down this month, too, and learning about the Japanese art of balance (page 36), discovering why kindness is a key tool in beating stress (page 40), hearing confessions from a late bloomer (page 22), and finding out why we all need a little bit more magic in our lives (page 88).

Finally, we're feeling inspired by TV presenter Cherry Healey, thanks to her no-holds-barred interview on page 14. She's a force of nature who's loving the newfound freedom of her forties, and the confidence, intuition and wisdom that comes with it. What a wonderful world it would be if we all felt as comfortable in our own skin. Have a great month, and happy reading!



Sally x

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

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*FOR FULL DETAILS, SEE PAGE 58



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Take control and make yourself heard!

APRIL

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COVER IMAGE: CINTA LONDON



psychologies
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*With you
in mind*



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The advice starts RIGHT HERE!



RICH KARLGAARD

When you don't conform to the dominant social culture, you can feel left behind in life. But, says writer Rich Karlgaard, 'we'll each forge different, equally valid, paths towards blooming.' Celebrate taking life at your pace and the wisdom of age on page 22, and learn how to let go of society's rigid timeline.

DR KAT LEDERLE

The clock change as we 'spring forward' into the new season and lose that hour of shut-eye can have a significant impact upon our health and wellbeing, says sleep scientist Dr Kat Lederle. Take steps to safeguard your sleep and learn some good habits that will help you drift off all year long, on page 76.



RICHARD WISEMAN

'Magic expands our mind and provides a sense of awe and wonder,' says professor of psychology and member of The Inner Magic Circle, Richard Wiseman, as he explores the surprising relationship between magic and the mind. Turn to page 88 to discover some truly 'magical' benefits for your wellbeing!



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

Feeling fruity?

Chocolate eggs might be synonymous with the season, but Easter feasting isn't complete without a traditional simnel cake.

This lighter, sweeter alternative to Christmas cake – with marzipan balls as decoration and a layer of almond paste baked inside – is steeped in mystery as to its origins, which only adds to its appeal. Shrewsbury, Devizes and Bury all vie to claim the treat, but food historians believe all three influenced the modern version.

Theories also abound about the name, while some think the simnel cake started life as a Lent feast-day bake for Mothering Sunday.

Whatever the truth, it's sure to make a striking – and delicious – centrepiece for your celebrations.



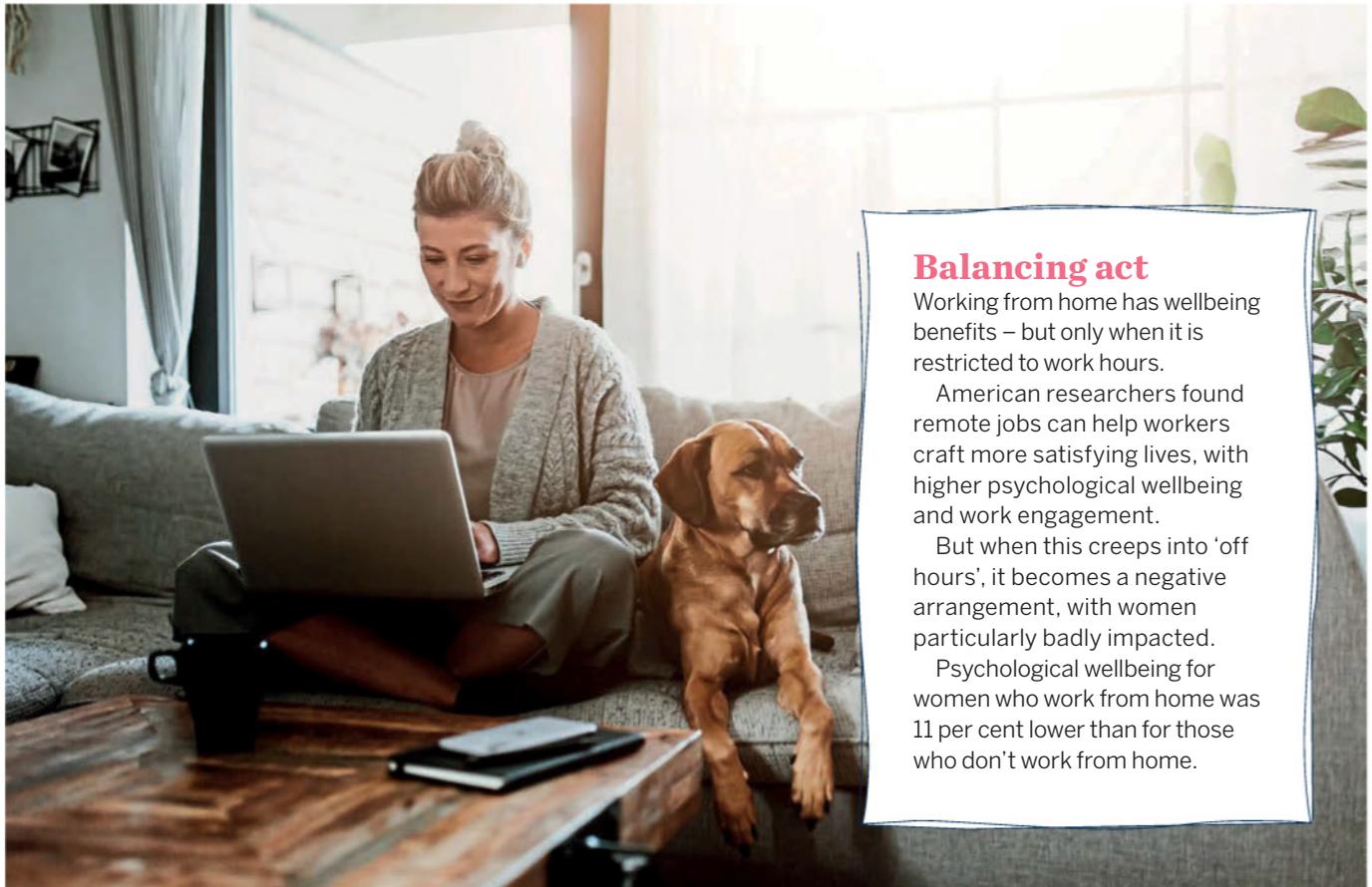
Payment in kindness

Widowed parents who were cohabiting with their late partner are now eligible to claim bereavement benefits, just as their married counterparts are.

A 10-year campaign by charities and grieving families has resulted in an overhaul of the rules, to ensure children are not discriminated against due to their parents' marital status. Around 1,800 more families per year will now be eligible for the help, worth nearly £10,000.

The Department for Work and Pensions is also accepting backdated claims as far back as 2001, which will benefit an estimated 21,000 parents. **The deadline to apply is 24 February 2024. Find out more at gov.uk/bereavement-support-payment**

A quarter of 2022's newlyweds met through an online dating app, according to the National Wedding Survey by Hitched.



Balancing act

Working from home has wellbeing benefits – but only when it is restricted to work hours.

American researchers found remote jobs can help workers craft more satisfying lives, with higher psychological wellbeing and work engagement.

But when this creeps into 'off hours', it becomes a negative arrangement, with women particularly badly impacted.

Psychological wellbeing for women who work from home was 11 per cent lower than for those who don't work from home.

"The goal is not to be in love, the goal is to be happy. I want to be able to genuinely say: 'I love my life'. And I can say that. So I don't need to be validated by this nonsense. Love comes in many forms"

TV presenter Carol Vorderman

WATCH, LOOK, LISTEN



WATCH *Grease: Rise Of The Pink Ladies*. This Paramount+ musical series is a prequel to the 70s classic film, charting how the coolest ladies at Rydell High became friends. From 7 April.



LOOK *Andy Warhol: The Textiles*, at London's Fashion and Textile Museum, explores the pop artist's much overlooked early career designing fabrics. 31 March to 10 September.



LISTEN *The Widowhood* podcast takes a no-holds-barred look at life after loss with mums Rosie and Helen, who cover everything from sex toys to sick children.



Get the giggles!

Laughter is the best medicine – but fewer people are taking a daily dose. A survey by Sky found that 42 per cent of Brits can't remember the last time they laughed out loud, with the average person clocking up just three titters a week.

Laughing not only makes you happier – science shows it can also relieve stress, strengthen core muscles, and boost oxygen intake. The top three modern chuckle triggers are humorous memes, trying to be serious, and funny kids.

Knowledge is power

People with a family history of bowel cancer are being urged to get tested for a genetic mutation called Lynch syndrome. The hereditary condition can make carriers up to 80 per cent more likely to develop the disease, while women are at greater risk of endometrial cancers, too. But catching the disease early through regular screenings increases survival rates by 72 per cent. An estimated one in 125 people have one of the Lynch mutations, but only five per cent of carriers know they have it. Find out more at lynch-syndrome-uk.org and bowelcanceruk.org.uk



3 of the best...
**READS ABOUT
RELATIONSHIPS**



1 *What Happened On Floor 34?* by Caroline Corcoran (HarperCollins, £8.99). Journalist Rose lands a plum role after the usual editor disappears during a night shift, in this tense psychological thriller.



2 *Mother Hens* by Sophie McCartney (HarperNorth, £14.99). Divorcee Cara dices with death – and hangovers – on an Ibiza hen do in this comedic debut by Instagram's Tired and Tested.



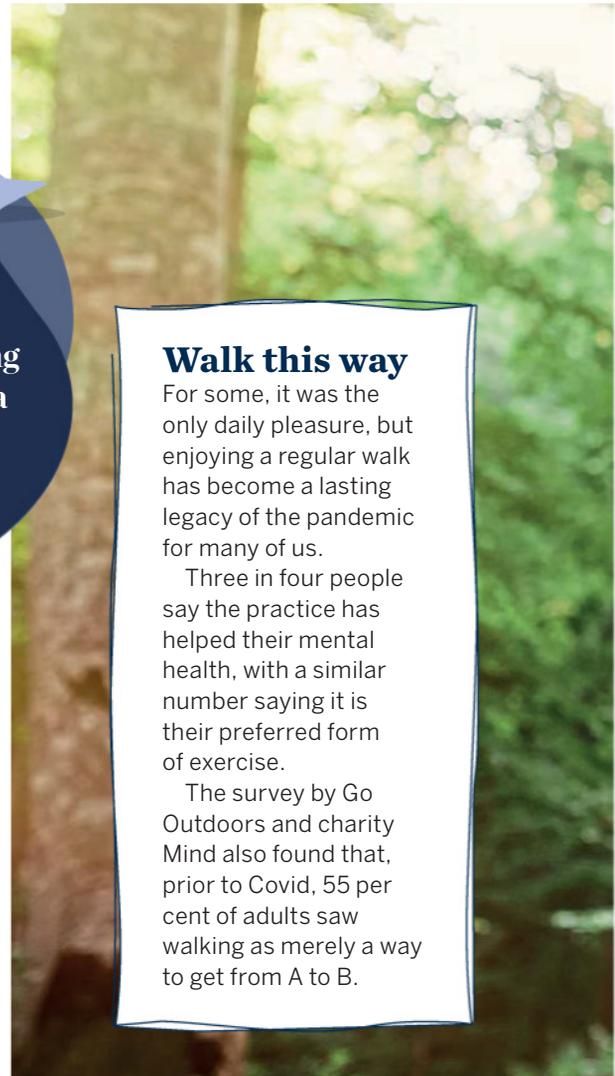
3 *Good For You: A Novel* by Camille Pagán (Lake Union, £8.99). After suffering a career meltdown, Aly retreats to her late brother's lake house – where another guest makes her reassess her priorities in life.



On average, Brits will tolerate 51 minutes before making their excuses to escape a bad date, a survey by Britannia Rescue has found.

Wedded to the job

We spend more of our time with colleagues than our lover – and three-quarters of Brits admit to having a platonic 'work spouse'. In the survey by Krispy Kreme, 43 per cent said they confided more in their workmate than their partner. A further three in 10 said they would consider quitting their job if the other left. Psychologist Dr Audrey Tang says: 'Research has found that close work friends can become "communities of coping".'



Walk this way

For some, it was the only daily pleasure, but enjoying a regular walk has become a lasting legacy of the pandemic for many of us.

Three in four people say the practice has helped their mental health, with a similar number saying it is their preferred form of exercise.

The survey by Go Outdoors and charity Mind also found that, prior to Covid, 55 per cent of adults saw walking as merely a way to get from A to B.





Make the connection

Just one quality conversation with a friend per day can boost your wellbeing. Scientists instructed 900 people to engage in at least one of seven types of communication daily, and then record their feelings each night.

They discovered that, no matter whether participants had a meaningful discussion, a simple catch-up, joke, or offered a listening ear, the interaction reduced anxiety, stress and loneliness.

Face-to-face chats also had stronger results than electronic or social media contact.

Professor Jeffrey Hall, a communication studies expert from The University of Kansas, says: 'We can change how we feel on any given day through communication. Just once is all it takes.'

SOURCE: SCIENCE DAILY.COM/RELEASES/2023/02/230202135217.HTM

70%

of exercise fans now favour Pilates over yoga, opting for the muscle strengthening workout rather than meditative yoga practices, say fitness trainers HFE.



Viewpoint

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



I grieve for the life I missed out on, the years of feeling so misunderstood

Christine McGuinness opens up about life with three autistic children, being diagnosed with the condition herself, and why she still shares the family home with husband Paddy, despite their marriage split

WORDS BY CHRIS

Comments had told Christine McGuinness this time last year that she would be a qualified children's author, she'd never have believed it. These days, the past 12 months have been full of twists and turns, for many different reasons. But as a woman to have autistic children, and having recently being diagnosed as autistic herself, McGuinness is used to facing life's challenges.

Amusingly, it's the same old story. It's a bit like the one I've seen in the past. I'm always shocked that anybody wants to work with me, but to be honest I've never been a children's book... It was such a pinch-me moment, says McGuinness. 'I wonder I believe that anyone would think I could do that. But I have. I'm so proud of what I've achieved. And so she should be. Aimed at raising awareness of children with additional needs, *Amusingly*, she says.

Star letter

Baring all

I love what you do, but wouldn't it have been refreshing if Christine McGuinness had been photographed candidly and unmasked on the front cover of *Psychologies* magazine? She looks so pretty, but I wonder what kind of message this sends, and if it's a lost opportunity. I too am neurodivergent, and we need more opportunities to unmask, and not to feel the need to appease the neurotypical world by presenting a cloaked version of ourselves.

Lenny Laura Donaldson

Source of support
Please keep up the great work you do at *Psychologies*! The varied and uplifting features and articles have become an invaluable resource for me, and have played a huge part in helping me to rebuild my self-esteem and emotional resilience.
Harriet Clayton

We'd love to know what you think

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

Springtime, Return

Lily of the Valley – you worshipped the flower so much you aspired to sprout into it.

From a young age, as I recall you embellished your plain body in it whole. Today, even a whiff of Eve's tears pierces a hole through my soul.

Decades later and I'm caught like a fruit fly, in your honeyed, syrupy scent once more. I've been stuck With the memory of you. Your existence. Your desertion (of us).

I still wear our friendship bracelet. Do you remember, the one we crafted in Mrs Kelley's art class from the bright embroidery floss? It's faded now, but it still maintains traces of fresh jasmine.

As do you.

You mirror the May bells at last: your hair is just as milky and curly at the bottom and your back, like its stem, is curved from the burden of old age.

Concealing your bruised skin is the brilliant token of our familiarity.

Julia Benko

PHOTO FAVOURITES



Mutual respect

I thought I would send you this picture, because it gives me such hope. My granddaughter is able to feed this fox on the beach – total trust on both sides. It's so beautiful to see in these times of distrust and damage to our planet. Surely we could all just get along...

Hazel McKay



Puppy love

This photo was taken by my daughter a couple of springs ago, of our then puppy, Hank, delicately sniffing the blooms on his morning walk. I think it perfectly captures both the moment itself and the beauty of the subject matter. I love this image so much and have it as the screensaver on my phone. It never fails to bring a smile to my face, and serves as a reminder to always make time to stop and smell the flowers along life's way.

Lynne Arnot



Looking to the future

This photo makes me feel grounded and safe, and I wanted to share it with you. Walking in nature makes me feel as though I want to continue my journey through life, despite the past year being very challenging.

I lost my business, became unemployed, and had to give up my car. I became antisocial and developed anxiety and panic attacks, went through a break-up, and had lots of health issues. My daughter moved out to go to university.

I have spend a lot of time on my own, stranded in bed, and it took a lot of strength and thinking to realise how little we actually need in this life.

I slowly came out of the dark times, but it is still an ongoing process. After almost two years, I managed to go for this walk, to see this wonderful view. Remember, there is always a better day – nature is a healer.

Kristina Lebedeva

Sunshine escape

Pictured during some winter sun in Tenerife.
Sarah Hepton



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

PROMOTION

In the picture

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

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

As part of our partnership, we are offering an exclusive free Psychologies Mindful Photography Webinar for readers, led by landscape photographer, tutor and lecturer Charlie Waite, on 18 May. Find out more and sign up at psychologies.co.uk/webinar For more details about the competition, visit lpoty.co.uk and discover more about mindful photography with our columnist Anita Chaudhuri, in Picture This, on page 94.





*I love being
in my 40s.
I feel like I'm at
the top of the
mountain*

TV presenter and writer Cherry Healey talks to *Psychologies* about single parenthood, overcoming her body issues, and why she's never felt more powerful

WORDS: BETH NEIL

Earlier this year, Cherry Healey invited her Instagram followers to share their stories about dating in their forties. She didn't really know what to expect in response, but it turned out to be a subject that struck quite a chord.

The hundreds of replies she received from women – all navigating the complexities of looking for love at 40-plus – were thoughtful, witty, wise and heartachingly honest, which confirmed to Healey, 42, something she already knew.

'Women in their 40s and 50s are just amazing, and truly magical,' she says. 'I learned so much from their responses, and I'm endlessly honoured that people take the time to write to me.'

'I love being in my 40s; it's my favourite decade so far, by such a long way. I feel like I'm at the top of the mountain, and because I've had enough life to see how my actions have played out, I have wisdom based on

experience. Not from an Instagram meme or something I've read in a book, but actual lived experience, which is always the most powerful.

'I can look back on those decades and really start to know who I am, yet I still have a big chunk of life ahead of me and, within reason, I can decide on how the rest of it is going to be. It's very empowering when you realise how much control you have on what's going on around you.'

Nevertheless, dating can be a minefield, especially if you've been out of the loop for some time and are returning to a game you no longer recognise. Hence that social media post. Recently single Healey is getting to grips with it all over again herself, after her six-year relationship with advertising executive Carl Kisseih ended last year.

Helpfully, one of the by-products of the lived experience she refers to is a 'razor sharp' intuition,



and Healey doesn't bother wasting any time with anyone she reckons is going to give her the runaround. She also works hard to protect herself from the 'brutality' of modern-day dating.

'I'm very sensitive, and so if I'm ghosted, it does hurt. I love dating because I love people, and when it's going well, it's an absolute blast – but when it's not, it's awful! I've learned lots of techniques and ways how to manage that – I make sure I'm responsible for my reaction and I move on.

'One of the beautiful things about being in my 40s is that if there's any silly business going on, I have no problem calling it out, because my time is precious. I would never have done that in my 20s – back then, I'd have eight friends analysing text messages!' laughs Healey.

And besides, she says, she has plenty of other things going on in her life to keep her occupied.

'I have two gorgeous children [Coco, 13, and nine-year-old Edward, known as Bear, from her marriage to writer and editor Roly Allen], a career I find incredibly fulfilling, and a body of work behind me that I'm very proud of.'

It's a body of work that is as rich as it is varied. After starting out as a runner, Healey first made her name back in 2010 as an immersive documentary maker for BBC Three, where she explored topics such as virginity, binge-drinking, breastfeeding and childbirth – she filmed herself giving birth to Coco for that one. She went on to write her candid (and very funny) memoir *Letters To My Fanny* (Penguin, £7.99), and has just finished filming the eighth series of *Inside the Factory* with Gregg Wallace, which has been a huge success for BBC Two. She has hosted the revamped version of makeover show *10 Years Younger in 10 Days* since 2020, and last year fronted the ground-breaking series *Women's Health: Breaking the Taboos* for Channel 5.

With her engaging style of presenting, genuine compassion, and refusal to bat an eyelid at even the most squeamish of subjects, Healey has opened up uncomfortable but important conversations, and it's little wonder she's so in demand.

'If we see other people talking openly, it has such a positive ripple effect,' she says. 'If you're honest about how you feel, you give other people permission to be honest, and that's a huge part of what I've tried to do with my career. It's how I interview people – I'll share something of myself so we can both be



vulnerable. It's like a game of tennis: someone has to take the first serve and then everyone relaxes.

'I'm not embarrassed by anything I've done, because my body's natural, having sex is natural, talking about sex is natural. As long as I have integrity, then it's fine.'

It's also meant Healey has shared publicly some deeply personal experiences, thoughts and feelings

"If you're honest about how you feel, you give other people permission to be honest, and that's a huge part of what I've tried to do with my career"



over the years. In the aftermath of her 2016 divorce, she made a series on single motherhood for Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* that required some painful introspection as she worked through her own prejudices around what being a single parent meant.

She says: 'I hadn't realised how many messages I'd picked up about being a single mother or being divorced, and I had a lot of stereotypes to deal with. But single mothers are all different. When I became a single mum, I didn't have a lobotomy. I was still me; I was just me in a different situation.'

'So I had to unpick my own judgments and really question how much I minded what other people thought of me when most people don't actually care!'

What did divorce teach her about herself? Healey considers the question for some time before answering.

'That I'm sometimes impulsive as a person, but when it comes to the crunch, I can be really brave and make good decisions in really difficult circumstances.'

Healey is brilliant and compelling company, whip-smart, full of confidence, and always with plenty of insight to share. However, she hasn't always been quite so self-assured, and struggled with a dysfunctional relationship with food and negative body image all the way through her teens, up until her early 30s.

She says: 'I grew up in the 1990s, where it wasn't cool or sexy to have a strong, athletic body. There were some exceptions, but the body shapes we saw in magazines were, in the main, unbelievably skinny.'

'I was always really sporty, but I never looked at my body and thought: "Wow, I'm so fit and healthy and strong"; I just felt like my body was square and boyish.'

'I look back at photos of myself now and think I was mad! But, at the time, I was trying every diet, and had a very negative dialogue with myself about my body.'

It was after Healey became a mother that the penny dropped. She caught Coco, who was just two at the time, stepping on to the bathroom scales before turning around to look at her bum in the mirror, mimicking exactly what she'd seen her mum do.

Healey was horrified.

'I thought: "God, what am I doing?!" I knew I had to take responsibility. I was fortunate that I could afford therapy, and it changed my life. It transformed me.'

'Gradually, we unpacked all the reasons I placed so much importance on my physical self and why I felt the need to change my body shape. And we did lots of work around appreciating that my body works and that I'm able to go to the gym every day, and from there I started to find my femininity. I have a womanly body; I go in and out all over the place, and realising that has been a really wonderful process for me.'

Always conscious of what both her children are absorbing, Healey takes great care over how she talks about herself in front of them, and especially Coco.

'I avoid saying anything negative about myself and only talk about food as something we eat. I don't mention calorie content or say I'm going to be



“naughty” and have a biscuit. Instead, I say, ooh, I would love a biscuit, and which one should I have, and, oh, that was delicious.

‘Life is so short, you’re only given one body, and I’m so sorry for Cherry in her teens and 20s because I lost so much time worrying about being a different shape. So I made a pact with myself to undo the damage, and spent most of my 30s doing just that. And it’s been a joy. It’s been liberating.’

Healey has since continued with therapy on and off, dipping back in if she feels the need, which is normally when there’s a big life event or crisis.

‘I had it for a long time when my dad was really unwell and I had to deal with that. And it was really helpful through my divorce and when I had burnout and wasn’t sleeping. I’d lost my mojo, and therapy helped me build it back up.’

‘My father died last year and I went three times after that, so if I go through something really difficult then I have those sessions. It will always be a part of my life – but at the moment I don’t feel like I need it.’

Another tool that helps Healey enormously is manifesting – a mindful practice that focuses the thoughts on a desired outcome. Healey describes it as ‘driving the bus instead of being a passenger on it’ and it’s a topic she’s so passionate about that, together with her great friend Natalie Lee (AKA @StyleMeSunday), she runs a seven-week online course, Manifest That Sh*t, and they are midway through writing a book, which will be published by HarperCollins.

‘Manifesting for me is like having a love affair with the universe,’ says Healey. ‘I’ve been doing it for about 15 years, and it’s such a wonderful tool that I wish every single person on the planet knew how to use. It’s so powerful when you write something down and, six months later, you look back and realise, oh my god, I’m actually doing it.’

‘Essentially, you’re talking to your subconscious and telling yourself what’s going to happen. Our subconscious runs so much of us – it’s in charge of our reactions, our habits, and how we process information – and sometimes it can push you in directions you don’t want to go in.’

‘By writing down what you want the year ahead to be like, you’re talking to your central computer and reprogramming your subconscious.’

‘It’s about living intentionally and understanding your part in the creation of your life,’ explains Healey.

She says the practice and her course resonate with women predominantly: ‘Generally speaking, women are not taught how to reach for the stars growing up, or how to be financially ambitious, because we live in a misogynistic society where there’s a big onus on women to have children, look after the house and, if you do have a job, make sure it’s looking after people.’

‘Women can feel guilty and selfish about being financially ambitious, so we also do work [on the course] around changing the narrative about money.’



“I made a pact with myself to undo the damage, and spent most of my 30s doing just that. And it’s been a joy. It’s been liberating”

We teach women never to be ashamed about wanting more but also that, in order to ask for more, you have to believe you deserve more.’

What does Healey see as the key battlegrounds for women in 2023? What subjects should we be talking more about openly?

‘There is so much inequality around women’s health, so we need to be talking about the menopause, endometriosis and fibroids, and gynaecological care in the NHS.’

‘And I think our views around marriage are quite interesting. When marriage was invented, it was a social and economic deal between men and women that worked brilliantly, but life has moved on now and it’s kind of amazing that marriage hasn’t. No one loves a wedding more than me, but if a woman decides to not get married, there’s still this idea that she’s on the shelf.’

Healey feels this particularly personally – the reaction from other people to her single status assumes that she needs to find someone to settle down with. And it stings a bit.

‘I get loads of messages from people saying: “Oh my god! How come you’re single?” and there’s part of me that feels a little embarrassed. That’s society telling us that, to be valuable, we have to be with a man – and that’s a big conversation I’d really like to have.’ Knowing Healey, it won’t be long before she does just that.

*Cherry’s next ‘Manifest That Sh*t’ course begins on 1 May. For more information, check her Instagram page: @cherryhealey*

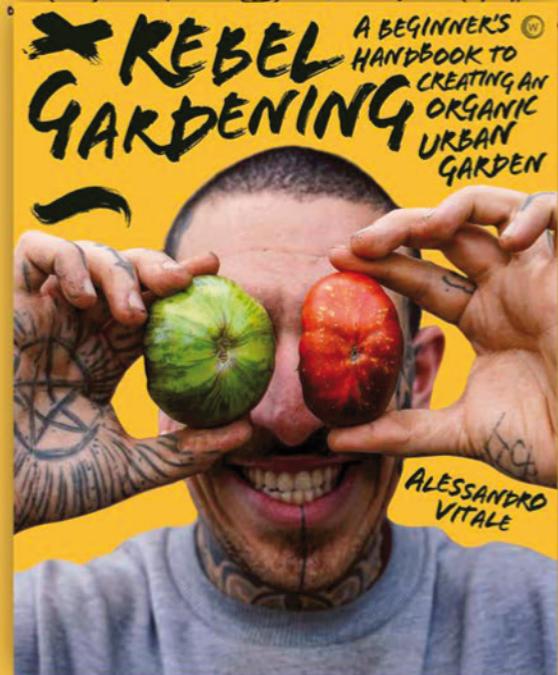
"Manifesting is like having a love affair with the universe; it's such a wonderful tool"





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WINDOWSILL POTS,
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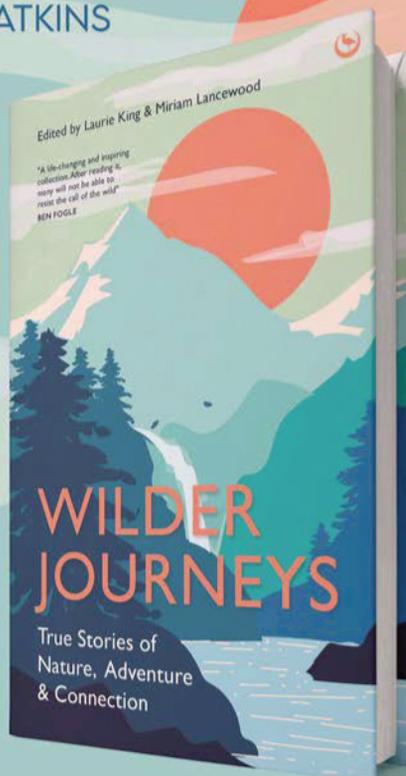
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***If you could wave a magic wand and
achieve one of your ambitions
instantly, which would it be? Why?***

CONFESSIONS OF A LATE *bloomer*

Is it time we stop deifying early achievement and, instead, celebrate the wisdom that comes with finding your way later in life, asks Annabel Chown

When my son was ten months' old, I took him to his medical review. 'You need to do standing exercises with him,' said the health visitor, pulling him up off the playmat. 'His gross motor skills are below average,' she continued. While other babies his age were already careering around on two feet, my son had just started crawling. He's a child who learns by watching, and likes to be well prepared before attempting something new. Was I really going to interfere with his newfound delight exploring the world on all-fours so he could progress to his next milestone faster? Would you force the petals of a flower open, or let it bloom in its own time? I was confident he'd walk when he was ready. And I wanted him to trust in his own rhythm. Something it had taken me half a lifetime to learn.

I first began feeling out of sync in my late teens. Among friends, I was the only one who'd never had sex. While they chatted casually about whether their parents allowed boyfriends to stay over, or how their breasts ached from taking the Pill, I stayed silent.

I finally had sex just after my 23rd birthday. It was worth the wait. But, ashamed by my lateness, I never confessed to my then-boyfriend that he was my first. We broke up a couple of years later, and – occasional fling aside – I remained single for almost 15 years.

'Have you met anyone yet?' I was asked, repeatedly. As my thirties marched on, the wedding invites kept flowing, and a groove of self-doubt formed. I forgot – too easily – how, at 31, my life had been derailed by

"We need to let go of society's rigid timeline. We'll each forge different, equally valid, paths towards blooming"

a breast cancer diagnosis, which put my focus on staying alive, not meeting a soulmate.

Rich Karlgaard, author of *Late Bloomers*, says, 'This lack of conforming with the dominant social culture can make us feel that we don't fit in. We might even question our value as a person. The media wildly adulating youthful success doesn't help, either.' He adds, 'While we are, by evolution, social creatures, we're also individuals. We need to celebrate that, and let go of society's rigid timeline. We'll each forge different, equally valid, paths towards blooming in the various parts of our lives.'

Post-cancer, many areas of my life were blooming. The shock of facing my mortality so young led me to ditch 60-hour working weeks in an architect's practice to go freelance and carve out space for the things I loved. I dove deep into the yoga practice I'd discovered, and later trained to become a teacher. I started writing and joined a writers' group, gathering at a long oak table overlooking the Thames with a wonderful group of women on a Thursday lunchtime.

Yet, I also felt the absence of a partner, especially as most of my friends were now settled. While I sometimes trusted I'd meet someone, other times I feared it would never happen. This anxiety could prevent me fully appreciating all the good things I already had.

I ask life coach Lara Cullen how we can support ourselves at such times. 'Let go of comparison,' she advises. 'To others, but also to your own expectations. We often grow up with fixed ideas about what we should be doing by a certain age. And it's the difference



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

Expert advice



Rich Karlgaard is a journalist, a speaker, and the author of Late Bloomers (Penguin Random House, £14.99). richkarlgaard.com



Lara Cullen is a life coach, founder of The People Person coaching company, and the author of How To Be A People Person (Right Book Press, £14.99). thepeopleperson.org



"I treasure what I have; there's a bedrock of gratitude"

CASE STUDY

Laura Cathcart Robbins, 58, always wanted to be a writer. 'Initially, I set myself a benchmark to make it in a career by 35. By then, I was a stay-at-home mum with two young kids.'

In her early forties, she became addicted to sleeping pills. After getting sober, she began taking writing classes to get her creative juices flowing again. 'I'd submit essays to publications and receive rejection after rejection,' she says. 'Every time, I told myself it made sense: what you submitted wasn't good enough. Why would anyone publish you?'

Joy in the process of writing kept her going, as well as surrounding herself with others who shared her passion. At 55, her first essay was accepted by *HuffPost*. Cathcart Robbins has since had 18 pieces commissioned by *HuffPost* alone, hosts a successful podcast, *The Only One In The Room*, and her memoir, *Stash* (Simon & Schuster, £23.22), will be published in 2023.

She now realises this career couldn't have happened in her thirties or forties. 'I needed to go through addiction, rehab, divorce – and mothering my kids through it all – to do what I do now. We put so many limits on ourselves regarding age, and forget the life experience and wisdom that come with it.'



between expectation and reality that causes suffering.’ Cullen recommends focusing on what you do have – ‘Writing a gratitude list can be very helpful’ – as well as surrounding yourself with people who inspire you.

‘Social media can be a great way of finding your tribe,’ says Cullen. ‘Equally,’ she cautions, ‘it can be a toxic tool for comparison. We see the best bits of people’s lives, which can make us feel “less than” – even though we have no idea what’s really going on. So, curate your social media feed with care,’ she warns.

Karlgard also recommends befriending self-doubt. ‘Everyone experiences it. Late bloomers even more so, because of our less conventional paths.’ He suggests visualising it as an irritating, albeit comic, character. ‘Listen to its chatter with a neutral mindset. When managed well, it can be a source of information and motivation. For example, you’re rejected for a job: rather than buying into the voice that says, “You’re a failure and will never get anywhere,” acknowledge the pain – but also be honest with yourself. Perhaps you weren’t sufficiently prepared for the interview, or knew, deep down, the job wasn’t right for you. Use what you uncover to help you make better choices in future. And reframe your narrative: see your journey as one of learning, curiosity, even excitement.’

In my late thirties, I signed up for online dating. I’d realised I was unlikely to chance upon a boyfriend, given I spent my days alone at home drafting building plans, or at a yoga studio, teaching classes full of women. I resolved to approach dating not just as a means to an end, but an opportunity to meet some interesting people I would have never otherwise encountered. One of these became my husband.

Even though I was almost 40 when we met, we didn’t crack on with trying for children. He wasn’t sure he ever wanted them, and my desire to enjoy this long-awaited relationship outweighed my one for a child. I wasn’t ready to exchange lying in bed with him until the early hours, talking and having sex and eating midnight feasts of pain au chocolat, for broken nights changing nappies and dispensing feeds. Did I definitely even want a child?

‘Sometimes, we don’t know *what* we truly desire. Do we really want it, or are others telling us we ought to?’ says Cullen. ‘It’s important to get close to yourself, so you can hear – and learn to trust – your inner voice.’ She recommends quiet introspective time, and using tools such as journaling, meditation or being in nature. ‘You could work with a therapist or a coach. Or perhaps you’re lucky enough to have a friend who’s a skilled listener and can help you connect with what matters.’

I was lucky enough to have such a friend. One night, we sat on her bed and had a long chat about whether I wanted to become a mother. ‘Deep down, I think you do,’ she said, having listened to me list the pros and cons.

It took my husband and I five years and IVF to conceive. I was 48 when I gave birth to my son: far older than I’d ever anticipated, but inside, it felt right.

I treasure what I have. Not every single moment – for example, when I’m watching a raging toddler throw his trains across the sitting room, or arguing with my husband at 5am over whose turn it is to look after our early riser. But there’s a bedrock of gratitude, especially when I remember the path I walked to arrive here. It’s these steps – particularly the uphill ones – that make us who we are.



▶▶ NEXT STEPS

READ *Thanks For Waiting: The Joy (& Weirdness) Of Being A Late Bloomer* by Doree Shafrir (Penguin Random House, £23). A memoir exploring the pressures we feel as women to hit milestones – and confirmation that it’s okay to live life at your own speed.

LISTEN *How To Find Joy And Success As A Late Bloomer*, on Ted Radio Hour (18 November 2022). Various TED speakers examine the benefits and drawbacks of being a late bloomer, and how age can be an asset rather than a liability. [npr.org](https://www.npr.org)

READ *But You’re Still So Young: How Thirtysomethings Are Redefining Adulthood* by Kayleen Schaefer (Penguin Putman, £20.99). What it means to be a thirty-something today, and how there’s value in many different ways of living.

Coaching in action



Adjusting the balance

In their final session together, the award-winning coach Kim Morgan helps her client Ruby* find a firmer footing



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK, BAREFOOT COACHING. *NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED

Session three...

I know what I should do, but I'm stuck and I'm scared!

Ruby looked tired and deflated when she arrived for her coaching session. Sometimes at the start of a session, I ask my clients to choose a picture card to represent how they are feeling. It's often safer and easier for them to talk about the card than directly about themselves, particularly if they are experiencing difficult emotions.

Ruby looked unimpressed when I presented her with the picture cards. Grudgingly, she chose one and held it up to show me. It was a picture of a seesaw, with one person seated on one end, which was on the ground, and the other person held high up in the air, legs dangling.

I waited for Ruby to speak, as I didn't want to offer her my interpretation (although I didn't think I needed to be Freud to understand it!); I wanted to hear what Ruby had to say.

Eventually, she spoke: 'I am completely stuck. My husband is controlling where I go and what I do. He's stronger than me and has all the power. He will never get off the seesaw. He sometimes lets me get closer to the ground, but always stops before I can jump off and get away.'

'Would you get away if you could?' I asked.

Ruby looked down and said, 'I don't even know if I would – or could. I know I *should*, but I feel so scared of being on my own, and even if I left him, he would

never leave me alone. He is nice to our daughter, and she loves him, but I don't want her growing up learning how to be a bully or how to be the victim of a bully.'

Ruby was fighting back tears. 'I have been reading a lot about manipulative behaviour and narcissism on social media, and I think my husband's behaviours tick every box.' She pulled a crumpled-up piece of paper out of her bag and read: 'Controlling behaviours, emotional blackmail, verbal abuse, gaslighting, sarcasm, sulking, silent treatment, mocking me in front of others. Tick, tick, tick! So why do I stay, and why haven't I even done any of the coaching exercises you set me?' She looked at me imploringly.

'Tell me why you think you stay,' I asked.

Ruby said it was because he wasn't unpleasant and controlling all of the time; he could be lovely sometimes, and she was an eternal optimist. Sometimes he cried and apologised, and asked for Ruby's help to be a better person, and she felt deep sympathy for him. She looked at me and shrugged. 'I know I need to do something, but I don't know what that is...' She trailed off and looked away.

I wondered if Ruby was too considerate of my feelings to tell me that she needed a different kind of support. I had already registered the significance of her telling me that she hadn't done any of the coaching exercises I had set her.

I asked Ruby what kind of support she thought would help her to (in Ruby's words) 'do something.'

'I've enquired about joining a support group for women who are victims of controlling behaviours. It's at a women's centre near me, run by expert therapists, but...' Ruby hesitated and bit her lip.

I smiled at Ruby and encouraged her to continue.

'But I can't see you *and* go to the group.'

A coach has a duty of care to their clients to help them get the best support from a more experienced or specialised practitioner, particularly if the coach feels they are no longer working within the limits of their expertise.

'You will go to the group,' I announced, waving an invisible magic wand, like Cinderella's fairy godmother. Ruby laughed and looked relieved, and I congratulated her for asserting her needs with me – it was a great step in the right direction!

Coaching sometimes turns out to be a gateway to therapy or other professional support. I felt confident that our coaching sessions had created an initial safe space in which Ruby was able to face the reality of her situation, and gain the confidence and courage to move on to more specialised support.

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



Work it out

If you are uncertain about a relationship, try seeing it from different perspectives. This works best if you move around the room, choosing different spots for the different people in the relationship...

First, stand in your own shoes, imagining the other person is in front of you. From this perspective, notice how you think and feel. See things only from your point of view.

Move to a different place and stand in the other person's shoes, and imagine what they may be thinking and feeling about you. See things only from their point of view.

Move into another space as a detached observer. What do you think and feel about these two people? What advice would you give yourself from this point of view?

What has changed for you by doing this exercise? What actions will you take?

MAP OF MY LIFE

1 Divide a piece of paper into three columns. The left-hand column represents the land you live in now. The right-hand column represents the land you would like to live in. The middle column represents what is in your way between the two lands.

2 Put pictures and words to describe where you are now, and then move over to where you want to be and do the same.

3 Now look at the gap between the two lands. What is it made of? What is stopping you from getting to where you want to be?

4 Now, draw a bridge or stepping stones to get you across the gap. What do they consist of? Who could help you cross to where you want to be?

Relationship check

There are several reasons why people find themselves in difficult relationships. Have a look at the checklist below and give yourself a score between one and 10 (one being 'It doesn't apply to me at all', and 10 being 'This has my name all over it').

If you have any high scores (over six), consider embarking on some personal development work to improve your self-esteem and assertiveness, and to change some repeating patterns in your life.

- **Not valuing yourself enough or believing that you deserve to be loved.**
- **Fearing being alone ('Any relationship is better than being single').**
- **Thinking you can change or 'fix' someone.**
- **Putting other people and their needs before your own.**
- **Not really believing that happy relationships exist, and that everyone just 'settles'.**



LIFE AS I KNOW IT

Naked truth

Harriet Minter takes a breath, bares all, and discovers a genuine appreciation of her body



It has only taken me 40 years, but I think I might finally love my body. I know

I've written here before of all the many ways I've made peace with my body over the years, but last week I realised I really am quite in love with it.

This revelation came to me during a breathwork class on a Friday evening last month. A friend had found the class and sent it to me with a 'How brave are you feeling?!' message. You see, this wasn't just any old breathwork class: it was for women only, and would involve being naked for the majority of the event. So, of course, I said yes immediately.

I've never really minded being naked – in fact, I usually feel more comfortable naked than I do in clothes. My theory is that if there's anyone there to see you naked,

they're probably quite a fan of you being naked too, so there's nothing to worry about.

But I'd never been naked in a room of 30 women, standing in a circle as everyone gazed at everyone else. However, if I'd feared judgement or shame, there was none. All I felt was a sense of honour that these women had allowed me to be a part of their experience, and also a deep appreciation of my own body.

So often we talk about women's bodies as a competitive experience. I am as guilty of this as anyone. I eye women up as they walk down the street, either finding myself wanting in comparison or getting a shameful boost at their expense. But in that room, I found myself

able to appreciate each woman's body and yet not want any of them for my own. I was proud of the way my stomach sags, grateful for the calves that will never fit into knee-high boots, and for my sloping shoulders holding up sloping breasts. I felt the beauty in the way my body curves and softens, and at the same time, saw the beauty in all those other women too. There was no hierarchy in that room, only vulnerability and shared experience.

In your lifetime, the vast majority of naked women you will see will be women whose nudity has been carefully curated by producers to appeal to men. I'd urge you to get naked with some women in real life, to see them – literally – in the flesh. And when you do, I defy you not to fall a little in love with them and with yourself, too.

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



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

SPEAK UP, *girl!*



Do you find yourself hiding in plain sight, mumbling your way through life, or hedging every sentence with 'like' and 'sort of'? Hollywood vocal coach Samara Bay talks to Sally Saunders about how we can all find our voice

'My God, where on earth are you from, I can't understand a word you are saying!' I had been at university less than an hour when I received that comment. I was in the queue for my first meal, having tearily waved goodbye to my equally teary parents a few minutes earlier, when it came.

I was in utter confusion. As the daughter of a midlander (Mum is a proud Leicester girl), I had a different accent to my South Yorkshire schoolmates, and was branded too posh. As a result, I spent years studiously trying to flatten my vowels and drop my 'ts' to stand out less (it was bad enough being clever, to be posh as well was inexcusable).

Suddenly, here I found myself at the other end of the spectrum: as far as most of the students around me were concerned, all I needed was a cloth cap and a Whippet and my transformation into a character from some northern sitcom like *Last of the Summer*

Wine would be complete. I was stranded: **neither fish nor fowl**, at home too posh, in my new surroundings too working-class northern.

These are the memories and feelings that come flooding back to me, 25 years later, as I speak to vocal coach-turned-author-and-activist Samara Bay.

We first connect over Zoom as she strolls, impossibly glamorously, through the streets of New York, following a breakfast meeting. Her West Coast tones, accompanied by the backdrop of the streets of the Big Apple, make her seem like a movie star – the likes of whom she has spent most of her career coaching to get their voices 'just so'. But when she arrives at her hotel and we speak again, she reveals a different side. Still bubbly and bouncy, she suddenly becomes passionate about speech, and what it is secretly saying about us.

'The voice we have is the reflection of the ways in which we haven't fit in, and the ways in which we've tried to fit in and succeeded,' she explains. 'There's





IMAGES SHUTTERSTOCK

*Expert
advice*



*Samara Bay
is a speech coach,
speaker, and the
author of Permission*

*To Speak: How
To Change What
Power Sounds Like,
Starting With You
(Penguin, £16.99).
samarabay.com*

*"Each of us is a living
embodiment of the
life we've lived"*

nothing good nor bad about that, it's just what we have done. Linguists will say every habit we've picked up, we've picked up for a reason. And I find that extremely kind, because that means that every habit we have can also be pointed at as a way that we're holding ourselves back.

'So, for example, there's a big stereotype that women say "like" too much. Why did we pick this habit up? Did it serve us in some way? The answer is probably yes. And then we get to start from a completely new place. A lot of the linguistic quirks that we've picked up throughout our life have helped us to be liked, to be approachable, to be unthreatening, to be charming, to be seen as nice,' explains Bay.

'And especially if you're a woman, if you're a person of colour, if there's anything that you feel marks your voice



as “other” to the norm, then you will likely have developed these incredible survival mechanisms.’

This is the point I am hit by memories coming thick and fast. At school, it was survival indeed to change the way I spoke, to soften, to flatten... and to hedge. My conversation was constantly peppered with the phrases ‘sort of’ or, my personal favourite, ‘and stuff’. I tacked it on to the end of most sentences, and onto every definite statement. It was such an issue that I remember my German exchange partner confusedly asking my dad, ‘What does this mean... “and stuff”?’ Looking back through Bay’s lens, I think I was trying to soften the edges of what I was saying, to remove the sharp corners of a statement and neutralise any offence that could be taken.

‘Often, the reason we use hedging terms such as “like”, or “just”, or “sort of” is in direct correlation to how much we believe that we deserve to take up time and space,’ says Bay. ‘Linguists will tell you that hedging is the domain of the less powerful in the space in order to keep the more powerful happy.’

‘But situations change. What we needed to do as teenagers at school is different to what we need as women in

the workplace. You need to think “What if my ideas deserved to be heard? What if my ideas were the best ideas?”

‘This is a thought experiment that can change us. It allows us to show up in moments that matter, hedging less.’

‘Trying on “more powerful” for size means not just that we’re policing ourselves out of hedging, but rather, we’re finding we don’t need it as much. We can say what we mean and mean what we say.’

It’s an inspiring message: we can free ourselves from the ‘umms’ and ‘ahhs’ by simply believing in ourselves more, by stopping apologising so much. And Bay believes this may lead to us feeling more powerful in our lives.

‘I think most people have, under the surface, a little theory about not being able to get to the next step in their career, not being able to level up, not being able to be taken seriously. And if you feel like that, that is the moment when we get to look at all the habits we’ve picked up along the way, and think about which ones have helped, and which ones are no longer helping.’

‘In the acting world, we talk about choices. We have tools, and then we have choices. And turning something

such as the use of “like” into a choice gives the power back to us.

‘It’s helpful for us to realise, “When I use my regular speaking style, without policing myself, I sound like my friends.” It’s useful to know that you can create certain connections. But it’s also okay to choose not to use it in certain situations.’

‘We all have various communication styles that we use in different scenarios. And some might feel more forced than others. But in all those cases, we have facets of ourselves that show up in different rooms. And instead of focusing on what’s most authentic, it’s more useful to think which one feels the most joyful, or the most powerful,’ advises Bay.

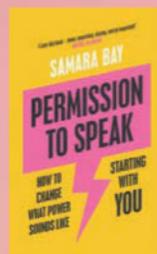
‘The way we use our voice, and the way we use language, connects to a part of all of us that is constantly reflecting the world around us, and wanting to either fit in or stand out, depending on what our needs are in the moment.’

‘What’s so wrong with fitting in? And what’s wrong with standing out? Both are great, and I just want people to love their voices more,’ she enthuses.

I realise that in the decades since my school days, my accent – and my voice – have changed considerably. Living in the south of England, being married to a southerner, and raising three children, as well as spending two decades in the world of journalism, mean I have had to learn to speak up, to sharpen my accent at times, to speak more clearly and powerfully. I feel those two sides to my personality – the posh kid and the working-class northerner – are finally melding into a comfortable whole. And Bay helps me realise that I can be both, drawing on each when the situation calls for it, and also being a powerful, confident woman who has a right to be heard. And that’s the way it should be.

‘Each of us is a living embodiment of the life we’ve lived,’ says Bay. ‘And we’re influenced every day by the places we live, by the people we spend time with, by the version of us that we aspire to be.’

‘This is our voice. And this is why I’m interested in our voice. Not because of the sound waves, but because of the ways in which it reflects the aspects of our identity that matter to us.’



**Permission To Speak:
How To Change What
Power Sounds Like,
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by Samara Bay
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Sonam Taneja

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Take your time, find your balance

Learn to slow down and allow yourself to become immersed in the moments that really matter, says Kaki Okumura

It is perhaps more common to meet individuals who like to move fast, and in big and bold moves, rather than those who see taking their time as the appropriate way forward. Personally, after moving to New York, it only took me a day to pick up on how nobody waited for the pedestrian crossing lights to turn to green, and that the traffic lights were treated more like a suggestion than a rule. Everybody's always in a rush, and an extra minute saved is seen as an extra minute that can be put to work elsewhere.

This mindset stems from a society rooted in fierce competition and, to keep up, many people believe that we need to be doing more and in less time. It is easy to empathise with this need to push ourselves to a psychological and physical limit to get ahead, and it doesn't take much leaning into the world to understand where it's coming from. Competition starts at an increasingly younger age, and spending your twenties working 12-hour days is not unheard of. People pushed to their limit will often go to the extreme for a solution – because when taken over the



“Our desire to be productive all the time is unsustainable”

edge, extreme solutions seem like the only option. Yet, I believe the real solution to our perceived need to work more lies somewhere less revolutionary.

There is a story that I enjoy that I discovered inside *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz (Amber Allen, £11.99), about a man who wished to rise above human suffering and find enlightenment.

The man wanted to find someone who could guide him to his goals, so he spoke with a Buddhist master.

‘Master, if I meditate for four hours a day, how long will it take me to transcend?’

The Master looked at him and said, ‘If you meditate for four hours a day, perhaps you will transcend in ten years.’

Thinking he could do better, the man then said, ‘Oh, Master, what if I meditated for eight hours a day, how long will it take me to transcend?’

The Master looked at him and said, ‘If you meditate for eight hours a day, perhaps you will transcend in twenty years.’

The man was so focused on reaching the outcome of transcendence as soon as possible, he missed the point of how meditation helps one reach it.

While not all of us have transcendence on our list of life goals, many of us have probably faced this similar sentiment of wanting to achieve something as quickly as possible. For example, when learning a new language, if we become so transfixed on wanting to achieve fluency as soon as possible that we commit to studying vocabulary and grammar at a desk for several hours a day, we tend to struggle more, as we forget the value of making friends in the new language or learning more about the culture. Similarly, learning an instrument can feel the same way – if we become so focused on improving our skill that we commit to hours in a room practicing alone, we forget the teaching value of performing in front of others.

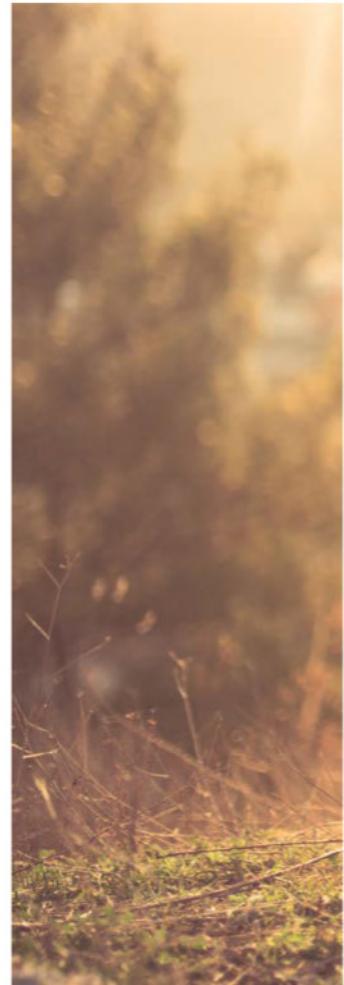
This sense of urgency often stems from the belief that we can’t use the language until we’re fluent, or that we can’t perform in front of others until we’re skilled, but if we spend all of our time only focusing on mastery, instead of enjoying the smaller milestones along the way, we can lose sight of the bigger picture and become frustrated by the journey, instead of being energised by it. Rather, taking our time learning in smaller increments can not only make it more enjoyable, but can make achieving our goals easier.



Competitive society values people who win and excel, and we are raised to believe the good life is the hardworking and busy life. It’s common to find people who constantly want to be doing more and to a grander scale compared to the people around them, and that bigger is always better. But our desire to be busy and productive all the time is unsustainable, for if we fail to also see the value in slowing down, we meet burnout, exhaustion, and find ourselves becoming indifferent toward that which we worked so hard for.

In Japan, a trend of chronic overwork and competition has led to a phenomenon known as hikikomori, or young people who become recluses in their parents’ home and refuse to leave their room for months or years at a time. In China, many individuals have turned to tang ping, or a ‘lying flat’ movement – a popular social protest by young Chinese people that rejects marriage, having kids and getting a job, instead participating in society as little as physically possible. These are not weak-willed people who couldn’t make it; it is a very natural response for any person when overworked to a point of exhaustion. We end up so tired that we just want to be left alone.

This is why the skill of slowing down is so important. Ideally, it can be encouraged by schools, workplaces, and a society that allows room for slowing down without the repercussions of falling behind. More likely, it will start from a place where individuals take it into their own hands to identify their values and priorities, and ease the pressure on themselves independent of what others expect





of them. It may be difficult to shake off the need to always move as fast as possible, for not many things in the modern world see the value in slowing down. New products, services, and even entertainment seem to be made for the sake of being faster, more efficient, and more instantly gratifying. But the world did not always value speed and efficiency – most evidently, we can still find glimpses of where slowing down is valued in a traditional art form.

Traditional Japanese arts like sado, the ceremonial preparation and presentation of green tea, is a notoriously lengthy process. Yet this is neither a concern nor a drawback, for it is an activity that is intended to be done at a leisurely pace. The mindfulness and care with which it is conducted is precisely what makes the art so valuable to the artisan and the audience. The joy is in the slowness.

A Japanese tea ceremony can be as short as 45 minutes; a full-length formal affair can be as long as four hours. It is a practice that was introduced to Japan by Buddhist monks, and is a drawn-out process designed to help one leave the material world to experience peace in the spiritual realm.

Reading about these long and arduous traditional arts, we may find ourselves reluctant to try

experiencing it for ourselves – a four-hour tea ceremony seems like it would be difficult to sit through – but when we are primed for a mindset of total immersion, it is not too difficult. What these arts enable is a state of mindfulness where you are so fully immersed in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; a state coined by Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi as ‘flow’. In this flow state, we feel alert, strong, in effortless control and, most notably, passionate about life.

Someone who gardens may find themselves working outdoors for hours at a time, and then wonder where the time has gone. Many crafters or home-renovators can feel the same way, and people can lose themselves in reading or even conversing with a friend. When we are so absorbed in a moment that nothing else seems to matter, we find ourselves calm but also energised. We feel our best.

People do not just snap into a flow state; to reach it requires patience with ourselves, and a consistent reminder to take our time rather than feel rushed through the process.

Time-consuming activities are not bad for us; choose the right ones, and they can help us feel more awake and at peace.

“In a flow state, we feel alert, strong, in effortless control, and passionate about life”



Read more in
Wa: The Art Of Balance
 by Kaki Okumura
 (Watkins Media,
 £14.99) available
 to buy from 14 March

Behind the headlines

One good deed...

It's been all over the media: a new study has found that kindness can be more effective at treating depression, stress and anxiety than long-established methods that form part of CBT. We catch up with the study's co-author, Dr David Cregg, to find out how helping others could help us help ourselves

Q Tell us a bit about the background to your study...

'We all think that what makes us happy is money, or academic success, or physical attractiveness, but research shows that these things don't really tend to be that predictive of happiness – it's social connection that counts. So I began to think: what if we used kindness as sort of a clinical tool or intervention for folks who are experiencing some significant anxiety and depression symptoms?'

'We gathered a group of people with anxiety and depression, and split them into three groups. One group was assigned to do enjoyable social activities with other people for two days a week for five weeks. Another group was assigned to use a tool from CBT called an automatic thought record, to capture recurring negative thought patterns and reframe them to be more healthy. And the third group were asked to perform three acts of kindness a day, for two days out of the week, for five weeks.'





WORDS: SALLY SAUNDERS. IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

Q What does ‘acts of kindness’ mean in this sense?

‘We defined it as actions that benefit others or make others happy, and that typically involve some cost to yourself, either in terms of time, energy, or other resources, such as money. But, other than that, we pretty much left it up to people to decide what to do; they were free to choose actions that were as big and as grandiose as they liked, or as small and sustainable as they liked.’

‘For the most part, people did just little things throughout their day, such as baking a cake for a friend or co-workers, offering to give friends a ride to work, holding the door open for someone, leaving little notes of encouragement or kindness in their house, or texting friends going through a hard time.’

Q So is this like the ‘random acts of kindness’ movement that was popular a few years ago?

‘I think with that particular movement there’s more of an emphasis on helping people you don’t know, such as paying for the coffee of the person behind you in the line. In our study, people were certainly free to do that, but there wasn’t any requirement to only help people they didn’t know. Because, if you experience a lot of social anxiety or are a bit on the introverted side, asking you to do something for a stranger might be pretty nerve-racking. Most people feel more comfortable doing something for people they know.’



“Doing something small for others can help to bring some of that zest back into your life”



Q And so what did the outcome of the study reveal?
‘The good news was, in all three of the groups, depression and anxiety symptoms significantly improved. But above and beyond the improvements shown across the groups, what we found was that the acts of kindness condition led to *greater* improvements in depression and anxiety symptoms – and life satisfaction – than either of the other two groups. Most importantly, the group doing acts of kindness was the only group that showed significant improvement in social connection – the only one to improve people’s sense of belonging or connections with others. And it did a better job of that than simply socialising with others did.’

Q So helping others was more effective than spending time with them? Why was that?
‘We don’t have data to say exactly why acts of kindness worked better, but I can speculate that when you’re just being around other people, it’s really easy to feel lost in the group, to not feel that you’re all that intimately connected.
‘But when you’re deliberately and intentionally doing something kind for someone, it really is something special – something quite unexpected. I think it catches people by surprise, and it becomes something that they remember going forward. And, so, there’s something about acts of kindness that enhances the connection between people.’

Q What can we learn from this?
‘I think one of the reasons we’re so excited about the findings of our study is that it brings into question some of the traditional wisdom that states that when people are not feeling well, they need to take a step back from serving other people. Our data suggests that, actually, the exact opposite might be true: that even doing something small for others can help to bring some of that zest back into your life.’

Q So how do we do that?
‘We know that depression is a very real clinical disorder, and that it knocks out people’s motivation energies – for sufferers, doing something as small as just getting out of bed in the morning can feel like a very taxing activity. So I would advise starting with the smallest thing that you’re willing and able to do. Even that tiny act of texting a friend or holding the door open for someone can make a real difference.’

Q Why does this help?
‘We think it’s because doing actions for others helps people lose sight of their own mental suffering. So, what I would say is, don’t necessarily do an act of kindness simply because you expect it to make you feel better. Instead, find things that you already intrinsically value. Then, when you are doing things that you value for other people, the improvements in your wellbeing become a nice side effect, or an added benefit that comes with that action.’

Expert advice



David Cregg completed his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at The Ohio State University in 2021. He now works for the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs in San Antonio, TX, where he specialises in treating individuals with serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

Success stories

Acknowledge your achievements and commit them to the page, to follow the path to self-confidence, says Jackee Holder



I've always been fascinated by the concept of confidence, and it seems to be the number-one topic the majority of my coaching clients want to talk about. If I leaf back through the scores of journals I've kept over the years,

confidence – or a lack of it – makes an appearance on almost every other page. So, this month, I want to share an idea about how to grow and nurture your confidence through writing, inspired by the calathea plant in my bedroom. Its huge jade-green leaves are broad and bodacious, giving it the air of a plant very comfortable in its own skin. Every six weeks, like clockwork, one of the plant's largest leaves turns yellow at the tip, slowly consuming itself and dying over the course of a week. At the same time, a new leaf gently uncurls, almost in symmetry. The reason one leaf dies and another buds is that the plant's root system is not yet strong enough to sustain both.

There are lessons to learn about self-confidence from the calathea plant. In order for us to feel more confidence, we need to build a strong inner root system capable of knowing what you have achieved. Building real confidence requires an ongoing connection with your successes that's both conscious and intimate, and also allows breathing space for your confidence to become more deep rooted.

Mindful writing can be a wonderful way of tending to your confidence. At the end of each week or month, make a list of your achievements and successes for that period. Writing them down is essential to this practice – confidence requires cultivation and regular attention. So set aside 10 minutes and answer these questions to help you deepen the experience:

- How do you feel about this period's successes, large or small?
- What skills and strengths contributed to them?
- How does it feel in your body to make these connections?
- What had you forgotten about until you wrote this list?
- What actions and behaviours should you keep on doing?
- What are the words of affirmation you could say to yourself that are the opposite of what your inner critic would say?

Capture this all in writing so you absorb and savour your successes in real, tangible ways. By not writing down your



successes, and not making time for regular check-ins with yourself, you put yourself in danger of succumbing to what psychologists refer to as paradise syndrome: those moments when we experience success, but rather than absorbing the moment, are already thinking about our next goal.

Human beings are hardwired for negativity, which means you have to put in the extra graft to gather in the good stuff that confidence thrives on. Bring up your list when you hit tough times as a reminder of what you've achieved. So much of a wavering confidence is down to forgetting who we are, and what we've achieved that could impact the present and the future.

As a wise coach once said to me: 'Confidence comes after the act, not before.' I've since imprinted those words on my mind, and every time I don't feel I have what it takes, I turn up the volume and do it anyway. jackeeholder.com; [@jackeeholderinspires](https://twitter.com/jackeeholderinspires)

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VISIT: createacademy.com

Nature brings so much joy – different shapes, scents, textures and colours – and inviting the natural world into your home can spark happiness, reducing stress and anxiety, too. Professional floral stylist Willow Crossley describes her work as much more than just creating arrangements: 'It's like therapy to me; it's uplifting and reassuring – it nurtures the soul,' she explains.

Discover the benefits for yourself with her Complete Floristry Masterclass, a range of 43 lessons brought to you from her home in the Cotswolds. Each lesson guides you through different floristry techniques and principles, giving you the tools needed to let your creative floral flair shine through.



Manage your mindset

WHERE: Online

PRICE: £15

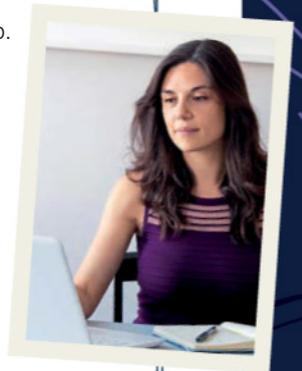
VISIT: themoodclub.com

With a passion for helping people get into a positive mindset, Federica Trimarchi founded The Mood Club. Well known for her beautifully designed Mood Cards, each with practical activities to encourage growth, self-reflection and positivity, Trimarchi has also created online classes to engage with her audience.

Her most popular class, 'How to deal with negativity', is designed to share practical tips to help you navigate life's daily challenges with calmness and confidence.

Priced at £15 each, Trimarchi's downloadable videos and workbooks include:

- How to let go of the past
- How to understand why you feel a certain way
- How to make the most out of a negative situation
- How to face daily challenges with a stronger mindset



Make it count with maths

WHERE: Online

PRICE: £359, or £11 per month

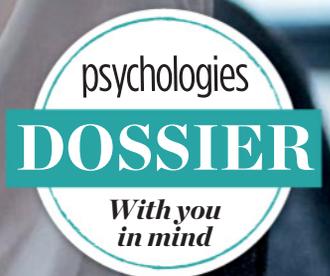
VISIT: openstudycollege.com

Keep your brain sharp, boost your confidence, and harness your analytical skills with a Basic Maths course. Learning something new – or revisiting an old skill in later life – has many benefits, and maths is one of those topics people often feel they struggle with. Put those negative memories of sitting in a stuffy classroom learning algebra to bed once and for all on this engaging adult maths course, and instead challenge your mind positively to learn an essential skill.

FIND YOUR *purpose*



IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK, ANITA CHAUDHURI



When we can make an impact – no matter how seemingly small – we begin to tap into the meaningful motivation that lives inside us all, discovers Anita Chaudhuri



During my father's funeral, a few years ago, a woman approached me and said: 'Do you know, your dad saved my life? I would not be here without him.' My doctor dad had worked as an infectious diseases consultant for more than 40 years, so her words shouldn't have come as a surprise. But, in the heightened emotions of the moment, the encounter brought tears to my eyes. It's one thing to know intellectually that a family member saves lives, quite another to come face to face with the living, breathing evidence.

In the ruminative, empty days of the first lockdown, the incident came back to haunt me. Everyone else in my family had always been employed in the caring professions or public service jobs. My work as a journalist had been exciting and introduced me to a wealth of fascinating people and stories, but I couldn't see that it was having any long-term benefit in the world. It's not like I was even exposing corruption and wrongdoing, let alone saving lives. What was the point of it all? It turns out that there is a name for what I was experiencing – purpose anxiety.

Robert Holden, author of *Higher Purpose*, says that when he hosted the radio show *Shift Happens!*, the question he got asked the most from callers who felt their lives had gone awry was, 'How do I find my life purpose?' So why is it that so many of us grapple with this dilemma?

'I think it's because we've all had those moments when we thought, maybe I'm the only person who doesn't have a meaningful motivation in my life; maybe I'm the only one who's never going to find that,' explains Holden. He knows a thing or two about the topic, having established The Happiness Project, sponsored by the NHS, 30 years ago, as well as being head coach for the team that launched the Real Beauty campaign for Dove.

'Purpose anxiety is essentially a term describing the collection of feelings about how you're not up to fulfilling that purpose, even if you do find it. Or you might feel "I'm not ready for my purpose and I'll never be good enough for it." It's really a cluster of fears and worries.'

Part of the problem for me is that, whenever I hear the phrase 'life purpose',

I immediately visualise a heroic figure, such as Mother Teresa or Greta Thunberg, going out there and saving the world. Focusing on such powerful agents of change does little to alleviate my crisis of meaning. 'Sometimes, we sell ourselves short by thinking that purpose has to be this incredibly big thing, when it might actually be something far less grandiose,' Holden explains.

To some extent, social media has given us unrealistic expectations about making an impact on the world. Entrepreneur Simon Sinek's pioneering TED Talks (70 million views at the last count), and bestselling book, *Find Your Why* (Penguin, £16.99), have raised our awareness of the importance of finding clear direction in life. But the notion that if only we can come up with the right mission statement, fulfilment will surely follow, isn't always helpful.

Life design coach Selina Barker has seen clients getting tied up in knots over it: 'I think, sometimes, when we give ourselves that kind of goal it can be debilitating, because it's like saying, "I'm just trying to find the answer to life." Personally, I do feel I have a fairly strong sense of purpose that involves helping people, but if someone came up to me at a party and asked me what it was, I couldn't tell them. Never would I say to a coaching client, "What we need to do is get you finding your purpose or identifying your why."'

Simply deciding to make a small difference in your local community could be enough to restore a sense of meaning to your everyday. One friend of mine, who always joked that she was a plant killer, began learning the art of plant care, and from this she began to rescue withered plants she spotted in her neighbourhood, as well as embarking on a tiny guerilla gardening project, sowing seeds around a couple of street trees. When we



Expert advice



Robert Holden is a psychologist, coach, broadcaster, and founder of The Happiness Project. He is the author of multiple bestselling books, including Higher Purpose (Hay House, £12.99). robertholden.com



Selina Barker is a career and life design coach, founder of Project You, and the author of Burnt Out: The Exhausted Person's Guide To Thriving In A Fast-Paced World (Octopus, £14.99). selinabarker.com



Jessica Huie is a speaker, mentor, entrepreneur, and the author of Purpose (Hay House, £12.99). jessicahuie.com





“Finding purpose is the journey
to becoming more of who we are”

start by focusing on the collective good, and examine where we can make an impact, that's when we can begin to find greater meaning.

But what if you don't have a clue where to begin? 'Far better to ask yourself, "For this next life chapter that's coming up, what can I do that makes me come alive?"' suggests Barker. 'What are you longing for? Which area of growth is calling you? It could be about expanding your creativity, it could be making a difference to your community, it could be doing something that gives you more freedom. Or, it can be mastery, it can be going deeper into a subject, perhaps through further study. Ask yourself, what are the topics that you find endlessly fascinating, and what contribution do you want to make to the world? The answers to these questions might be your purpose.'

It is reassuring to hear topics such as creativity, education and mastery mentioned in the context of purpose, because these were the themes that, at the onset of the pandemic, were to give my life an unexpected change of focus. During the first lockdown, something strange started happening to me. Until that point, I had never been interested in spending time in nature or investigating the outer reaches of the London neighbourhood I'd inhabited for decades. But, somehow, with not much else to occupy my time, I developed an obsession. Every day, I would go out and walk for miles, exploring far-flung parks, green spaces, and hidden squares. Everywhere I went, I documented my discoveries with either my camera or my phone. I am a keen photographer, but on these daily excursions, I began to experiment with technique, and marvelled at how this daily practice sparked a renewed sense of wonder at my surroundings. Most importantly for me – an extrovert who was feeling lonely during lockdown – I derived a great deal of energy from sharing my discoveries with others online.

Soon, perfect strangers were messaging me if I hadn't posted from my walk for a day or two. And others began telling me how my images had moved them, sometimes sending me images captured on their own solitary wanderings. That creating and sharing photographs could change the way another person felt was a revelation. As my interest grew, and restrictions eased, I also began shooting portraits of friends, something I had always shied away from, and I was surprised by what a positive reaction I received when I showed them the results. 'You really see me,' said one friend. 'You've captured my spirit,' said another.

However, I would never have believed that this interest was going to provide me with a whole new

life direction. Until one day, walking home from my favourite spot, Primrose Hill, an idea popped into my head. 'You need to apply to art school to study photography.' I burst out laughing. Who was I kidding? And, yet, as the days went by, I started researching entry requirements and degree courses. In the end, partly because I was scared about taking such a big leap, I only applied to the most prestigious course, a Masters degree at the University of the Arts London. 'I'll never get in,' I reassured myself. 'And then I won't have to do this big, scary thing.' When I received an offer of a place later that summer, I sat in stunned silence for a few minutes, before jumping up and down with excitement. I was really going to take this leap.

'During the pandemic, many of us had the time and space to think about our behaviour in a way we hadn't before,' says Jessica Huie, author of *Purpose* (Hay House, £12.99). 'We were all sent to our rooms to reflect on things. Stuff that we might have noticed a flicker of before we got distracted by our busy lives, suddenly there was space for – and it wouldn't go away.' Like me, for Huie, the shifts were radical. She was guided to move her young son and her virtual coaching school for entrepreneurs, the Purpose Academy, to Jamaica, reconnecting to her family heritage. The decision was made against the backdrop of Brexit and the killing of George Floyd. Huie decided that she wanted to create a different environment for her son to grow up in.

'Rather than looking for purpose as this mysterious goal that lives outside of ourselves, I think finding purpose is the journey to becoming more of who we already are,' she says. 'From that space of connection to ourselves. We can't help but be inspired to do new things. Ask yourself, "Who am I being?" and "Am I in alignment with my values?"'

Huie says that she has noticed that there is a greater curiosity about finding more meaning and purpose among people who are successful, than there was pre-pandemic. 'Once upon a time, the topic of finding purpose was mostly for individuals who felt lost in their lives. Now, I think it's not just those people, but also those people who are very established in their work or personal lives, and are acknowledging for the first time that there is a disconnect between who they're showing up as, and who they really are. And I think that's different and exciting, because it's like we're all becoming a little bit more honest with ourselves about the narratives that we've been continuing to propagate. We are developing the courage to interrogate what it means to have a successful life.'

Write your purpose

HOW TO TURN YOUR MESSAGE INTO A BESTSELLER

Shortly after I completed my degree, I received an invitation to attend a writing retreat in Portugal, entitled Write Your Future Bestseller, hosted by literary agent Jacq Burns and writing coach Laura Gale. It seemed like a counter-intuitive thing to sign up for, given that I had spent the better part of two years on pictures. Yet the workshop description piqued my interest. ‘Can’t figure out what to focus on? Have a lot to say but don’t know how to say it? Need time away from work and home?’ Yes, to all of that!

I was at a pivotal point in my journey. Armed with my new knowledge, skills and creative ideas, I was ready to take on the world. But what exactly was I going to do with it? Maybe a writer’s retreat could help me find my purpose?

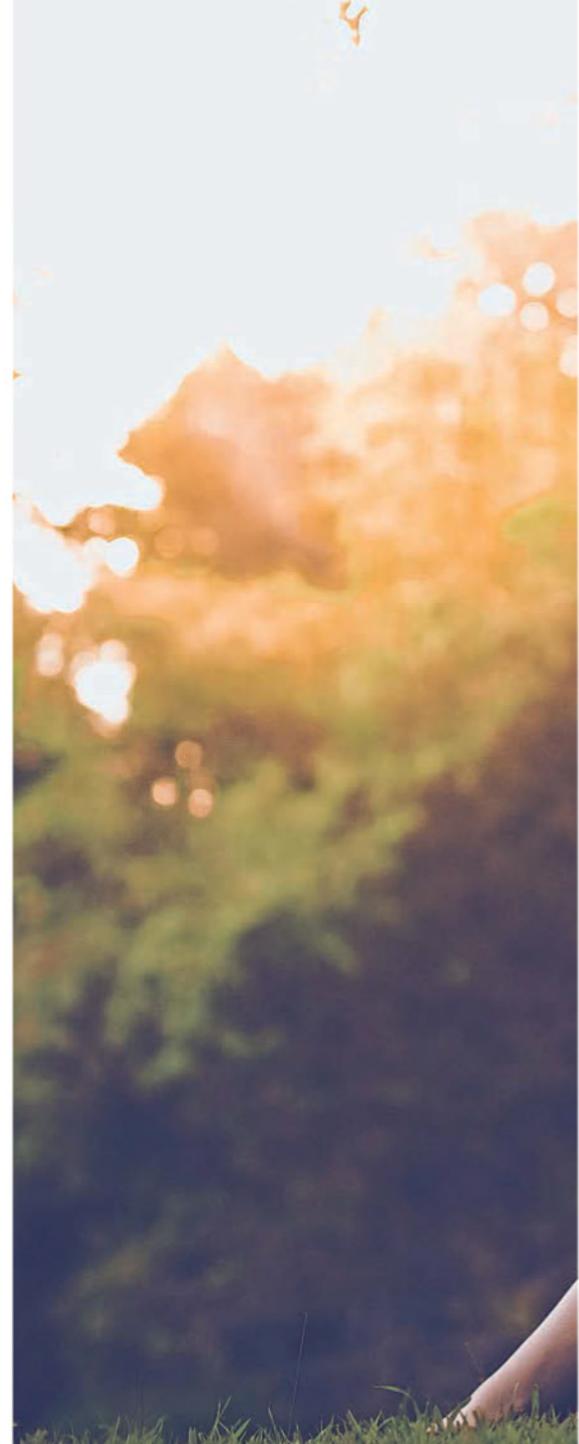
On the first evening of the retreat, I met my fellow attendees. Most of the 11 other people were running businesses or doing jobs with a strong sense of mission (from a menopause warrior to a teen mental health advocate), which they wished to translate onto the page. Even the sci-fi novelist had a burning message to share about the future of artificial intelligence.

Like most journalists, I had long been entranced by the idea of writing fiction, a largely ego-driven daydream that would surely lead to fame, riches and an HBO series. So, it was humbling to come face to face with a group whose writing motivations were genuinely focused on making a positive difference to the world.

The core of the workshop was spent learning how to develop a premise – the book equivalent of a mission statement – and developing a book proposal outline based on that. But what was my message? This took a good deal of brainstorming. It couldn’t be as simple as ‘Photography makes me happy, so it might work for you too...’ Or could it? It was reassuring to observe that everyone else initially struggled to craft these messages, even with encouraging input from our teachers.

The most impactful exercise of the week for me was a ‘visioning’ session, where we drew a map of how our book and message were going to fit in with the rest of our work and life. Questions included: How will your book be a catalyst for your new life? How will it expand both your life and your work?

The prompts, boosted by morning meditation sessions, sparked an astonishing stream of ideas for how I might build purpose into a new career that straddles both words and pictures. Suddenly, I was thinking about possibilities and joining the dots of vague ideas that had never made sense to me before. Working for a charity, teaching mindful photography workshops, selling inspirational prints and cards, shooting women’s portraits to build confidence. All of these things could happily co-exist alongside my career as a writer, infusing everything with the stardust of purpose. jacqburns.com; lauraiswriting.com



“Suddenly, I was joining the dots of vague ideas that had never made sense to me before”

Get your first draft underway...

1 Ten big ideas

Just as the words suggest, write down ten topics, nuggets of wisdom, or big ideas that are central to the message you want to share with the world. Don't edit or judge, keep your pen moving. I was astonished when I ended up with a dozen!

2 Find your premise

When it comes to selling a book, or any big idea, premise is key. In order to hone your message, you need to distill all of the ideas you have into a clear argument. 'Don't include things that are counter to your argument – you can't ride two bicycles at once,' says Burns. 'And, remember, your premise only needs to be true for your book, not the entire world.' If you've gathered a lot of information and research, you can speedily hone in on the most important bits by asking does this help my case, hurt my case, or is it neutral. 'Always throw out neutral,' says Burns.

3 Free-write your memories

After doing the first two exercises, journal about any memories that came up during the process, either from past work experiences or from earlier phases of life. 'The books that stay with you are the ones where you recognise yourself on the page. So using memories, or evocations, are great to bring your words to life,' says Burns.

jacqburns.com/italy-retreat/



Remotivate yourself

FINDING INSPIRATION
AND PURPOSE AT WORK



Sarah Aviram is author of Remotivation: The Remote Worker's Ultimate Guide To Life-Changing Fulfilment (self-published, £13.43), and specialises in helping entrepreneurs, creative freelancers and employees navigate the post-pandemic work landscape

There are three key ingredients to feeling more motivated at work – joy, impact and growth. Answer the following questions related to each:

- **Joy** ‘What kind of work energises me that I’d love to do more of?’ Remember, just because you’re good at something, it doesn’t mean you enjoy doing it; consider what gives you a deep feeling of contentment.
- **Impact** ‘How can I bring more value to my company or clients?’ If you’re struggling to answer, then ask your manager, peers, or clients directly. Prioritise the work that’s in that sweet spot of meeting both your interests and the business needs.
- **Growth** ‘Which skills and knowledge could I gain through these experiences?’ Feeling a sense of progress toward meaningful work is one of the biggest drivers of fulfilment.

In order to bring a greater sense of meaning to the work that you do, you don’t have to create life-saving products or services. Sometimes, all you need is more information to understand the impact that the work you’re doing is already having on others. Try the following four steps to reconnect to the purpose of your work:

- **Step 1:** List out your main tasks or projects from the past week or month.
- **Step 2:** Write the reason why each one

mattered, and the impact it had on its intended audience.

- **Step 3:** On the tasks or projects for which you don’t know the impact, or want to have a better sense of why it was important or the results it had, ask the people you work with.

Identify your core values. It’s not too difficult to choose core values from a list and decide which ones you want to drive your decisions. But it is challenging to honestly evaluate whether or not the values you’ve chosen are indeed your own, or those you think you should have, based on external pressures or expectations. So how do you know the difference? Test yourself by taking the following three steps:

- **Step 1:** Write down three value statements using the word ‘should’ – for example, ‘I should be more ambitious at work’, ‘I should make a stronger commitment to my partner,’ or ‘I should be financially independent’.
 - **Step 2:** Write why you think it’s an important value for you by replacing ‘I should’ with ‘I want’, ‘I don’t want’, ‘I feel’, ‘I enjoy’, ‘I like’, or ‘I don’t like’.
 - **Step 3** Consider whether or not your new statements enable your values or goals, or if they’re based on external pressures, fear of judgment, or others’ expectations. Based on those reasons, decide how you will take action – if at all.
- sarahaviram.com**

“Prioritise the work that’s in that sweet spot of meeting both your interests and the business needs”

WHAT WILL HELP TO CALM YOUR PURPOSE ANXIETY?

If you crave the peace of mind that comes with living a life of purpose, take our test to find out what you need to let go of first

Tick the answers that most closely apply to you, then add up the symbols. Read the section, or sections, you ticked most, to find out how to reconnect with what really matters to you

1 You doubt your life choices when you

- ♥ Get trapped in routine
- ♦ Feel taken for granted
- Ruminates over past decisions
- Compare yourself to others

2 You're most content after a day of making

- Good choices
- ♥ Memories
- ♦ Things happen
- Connections

3 You feel unsettled when you wonder if

- ♥ You're missing out
- You can cope
- ♦ You're stepping up
- You're doing enough

4 In groups, you tend to be the

- Follower
- Outsider
- ♦ Initiator
- ♥ Disrupter

5 Sometimes you wonder if you're too

- ♥ Sensitive
- ♦ Trusting
- Perfectionist
- Ambitious

6 You'd like life to feel truly

- Unique
- ♥ Authentic
- ♦ Useful
- Content

7 Right now, you'd appreciate more

- ♥ Adventure
- ♦ Time
- Confidence
- Inspiration

8 At times, you struggle with other people's

- Judgment
- Success
- ♥ Insensitivity
- ♦ Indifference

9 Something going wrong leaves you wondering if you

- ♥ Took a wrong turn
- ♦ Are in control
- Are coping
- Missed something

10 When life feels meaningful, you feel

- ♦ Connected
- Calm
- Contained
- ♥ Conscious

Turn the page to find out what will help you find your why



psychologies

DOSSIER

*With you
in mind*



What question will help find meaning?



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♥

‘Where can I find more joy?’

Have you noticed that when joy becomes elusive, you also find it hard to hold onto a sense of purpose? But when you feel energised, that direction becomes clearer? You may already be aware that you feel at your best when life includes regular moments of awe. But you may also have phases where you dial down your true self because you’ve been told – or you get the sense that – others think you’re too intense.

Allowing space to be present is at the root of an authentic and meaningful life for you. But you go off track when you over-commit in a search for new experiences. When you feel pressured, small moments that create meaning may go unnoticed. You may despair at how directionless you feel at times, but finding your true course is probably simpler than you think. Try taking some time to audit your daily life, mapping out a timetable of a typical week, then asking how much time is spent on activities that spark joy, energise or uplift. If you are shocked by how little time goes to these endeavours, your task is to ask yourself what you can let go of to allow space for joy – and purpose – to flourish.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ♦

‘How can I make space?’

Has it always felt that if you don’t take the lead for making things happen, no one will? There is no doubt that stepping up can be a source of meaning and purpose, especially if it aligns with values of being your best and making a difference. Society, communities and families need self-starters like you to generate action. But it’s hard to feel like life has purpose if you feel taken for granted, or burnt out.

Saying yes to people who need your help, or volunteering resources – whether at work, in the community or among family and friends – can provide a reliable steer towards a meaningful life. But you go off course when you drift into over-committing and people pleasing. The key is pausing before you say yes, and ensuring you’re applying your resources in the right places. Not every project is the best use of your talents, and just because something needs doing, it’s not always your responsibility to make it happen. When you step back, you may be surprised that others do step up in your place. As humans, we all need to accept that we have limited resources; by allowing space to reflect, you can become clearer on where yours are best used for a truly meaningful life.



IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ●

'How can I feel enough?'

The challenge so many of us face in connecting with our true purpose is trusting our instincts when it comes to making choices. In a world where we're bombarded with messages about how we should or could be living our lives, it can be a challenge to hold onto an authentic sense of self. But without this, it's hard to ever be sure of our direction in life.

When you're craving the contentment that comes from living a life of purpose, it's easy to focus your energies on achieving. But what you may need is to look inward, to the relationship with yourself. Even when you're on the right track to a purposeful life, contentment will feel elusive if you question whether you're enough. An openness to self-reflect is key in finding meaning, but you'll soon be derailed if it is done through a critical lens. Sometimes, self-doubt is a temporary response to life events, but it may be a barrier that you have been limited by for most of your life. There is no more important task than growing your self-compassion, and learning to treat yourself with the same kindness you show to others. With compassion comes clarity, key to living with purpose.

IF YOU SCORED MAINLY ■

'Where do I make a difference?'

When you've given a lot of time and thought to what matters in life over the years, it can be frustrating to still find yourself feeling lost. But it can be hard to stay on course when all you can see are alternative routes that other people are heading down. Even if you are well aware that comparing yourself to others unsettles your equilibrium, it's easy to look at how other people are living their life when you feel a need for inspiration. And carefully curated images on social media can create a narrative that only a unique and outstanding life is one with purpose. When you step back from that, you can remind yourself that living with purpose can simply mean making a difference to the people or community around you, however small. It might mean being compassionate and truly connected to others, offering them your full attention when you talk to them. If you can't change how you earn your living right now, it might be about adding on, and looking for opportunities to volunteer your skills for charity or your community. A purposeful life can look like many things. Trust in yourself and your deepest instincts to follow your heart, even when those around you may choose a different path.

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Hello!

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

Sally x

Editor-in-Chief,
Psychologies

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

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

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

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

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

Licence to help

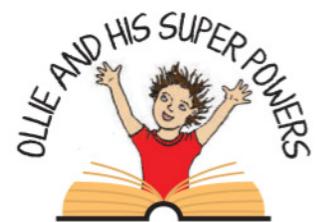
The Ollie School graduates are awarded a certified qualification in NLP and a licence to work as an Ollie coach. If helping children and their families to be more emotionally resilient appeals to you, contact Ollie School for a prospectus and to talk about getting with the programme.



Get in touch

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

Courses are now online and in the classroom, combining the best of both worlds with a limited number of trainees, maximising learning potential. See ollieandhissuperpowers.com



Heart



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



Who is taking up most of your time and energy at the moment? How can you make this a more positive and equal relationship?



Coming up for air

Laying down roots

Sometimes, it's in the being – not the doing – where true growth happens, discovers Caro Giles



I spent yesterday afternoon at our allotment. I haven't been up there for a while – I left it to hunker down over

winter. I imagined the soil throbbing with anticipation and hedgehogs curled under the sycamore leaves that have dropped onto the ground. I tend to ignore this scrap of land for a month or two either side of Christmas: the days are short and I like to keep moving in the cold and chase big skies. During this absence, I often seem to make our allotment a problem, another job to do. It sits adjacent to a very impressive plot with neat trellises and paths made of tiny pieces of gravel that stay where they should. That allotment has vegetable beds with wooden borders and pots of ornamental roses. On summer evenings, our neighbours sit on the verandah

in front of their beautifully painted shed and watch the sky burn.

When we were offered our allotment, which is just over the road and around the corner from our house, it was also an impressive plot. It had been cared for by a retired gentleman who was an excellent gardener. There were several large vegetable beds, masses of flowers, and endless carefully-pruned trees. When we first looked inside the shed we inherited, I found a map of the fruit trees, drawn carefully onto paper and labelled so that each one could be easily identified.

It soon became apparent that we could not sustain this high level of food production. I was not retired; I was a working mother of four, and my children wanted a space to run around in. Over the years, I have turfed over some of the vegetable beds, dug the soil over and rolled new grass down, a little lumpy in places. Early one Saturday morning,

when the kids were still small enough to wear all-in-one waterproof suits, I knelt onto the ground and made a lawn for them while the rain poured down. That was my best lawn, the one I rolled under a dark sky. A few years later, I rolled another one out in between the trampoline and the lupins, but the weather was too dry, and the turf curled and crisped in the heat.

Perhaps it is becoming a bit of an obsession, this desire to make a garden. I have always wanted a house with a garden that my children could play in. Once, in another life, we rented a lopsided terraced house with a long back garden. Blackbirds scuttled in and out of the overgrown borders and we grew our first potatoes. The house where we live now has a tiny front garden where I can lay down a rug or sit and read a book on the bench, but it is too small for kids to race around. During lockdown, they ran up

“I realised that it doesn't matter how untidy my allotment is, how messy my life is”



“It can be as simple as this, walking across the road with a cup of tea as the day is fading”

and down the back lane, chalking rainbows onto the red brick wall and drawing around their shadows.

So, even though the allotment sometimes makes me feel anxious, each year I decide to keep it. Sometimes I pick at the grass that's grown uneven around the makeshift vegetable bed I made out of old planks of wood, and the girls all huddle together on the trampoline. Maybe one of them is lying down while the others bounce around her, or they are putting on a show. At times like this, the allotment is holding them safely, while

my mind drifts and wanders. It has been a good source of childcare, allowing me to read for half an hour while they play, or lie under an apple tree and watch the sun shift through the leaves. My allotment forces me to slow down.

Yesterday, as I stood on the path and surveyed the unruly apple trees, the leaves that need sweeping, the overgrown vegetable bed and collapsing greenhouse, I realised that none of it matters. I chatted with my neighbour about how to build a new fence from the old shed he has taken down. I watched my oldest daughter

tidying her pond. I listened to the littlest two playing on the trampoline. And I realised that it doesn't matter how untidy my allotment is, how messy my life is. It can be as simple as this, walking across the road with a cup of tea as the day is fading. As easy as my children lying back on the grass and watching the rooks nesting above them.

I have to remember to dig below the surface, let go of life as an Instagram image. It's nice to let go of the concept of 'perfect', because nothing ever is. But a scruffy allotment comes close enough.



Make every day Mother's Day!

Having children is a wonderful blessing, but it can also be really hard work!

Poppy O'Neill explores how we can learn to celebrate motherhood

all year round, with a little self-care...

When you become a mother, it's really easy to start putting yourself second. Despite our best-laid

and most feminist plans, babies are born physically and emotionally reliant on their mothers. As a result of this, the habit of neglecting yourself in order to care for your child is formed early – and it's hard to break.

Taking care of your physical, emotional, financial and intellectual needs should not be a bonus you fit in once everyone else in the house is content. You don't always have to be at the back of the self-care queue.

Neglecting your desires leads to anger and resentment, especially if it falls to you to make sure everyone else is fed, entertained and getting enough sleep. Resentment is poisonous to relationships, making it impossible to truly connect with your children or partner. If you're feeling angry, your feelings are justified.

If you feel like it would be selfish to ask for more time, energy or resources to devote to yourself, it's time to acknowledge the fact that you are a human being, and you matter just as much as any other member of your family. Your feelings matter. Your physical and mental health matter. That caring for yourself makes you a better, more energised mother and sets a good example to your children is just an added extra. You *deserve* self-care.

Before kids, meeting your own needs might not always have been easy, but it was a hell of a lot simpler. After kids, even finding the time and headspace to figure out what those needs are feels like a bit of a luxury.

This is your cue to spend a bit of time thinking about yourself. There are six main types of self-care [see right]. As you may have noticed, the boundaries between these different types of self-care can get blurred. Taking a yoga class can be physical, emotional and social self-care, for example.

Think about what you need to feel good in all these different areas of your life, and jot down your ideas in a journal. How are you taking care of yourself already and what areas of your life do you need to dedicate more time to?

It's become a cliché that mums of young kids can't go to the toilet without the baby, toddler and dog in tow. But it doesn't have to be this way! As long as your child is safe, you can take care of

1

EMOTIONAL

Performing activities that help you reflect upon your emotions

Therapy, journalling, creative art

2

PHYSICAL

Activities that improve or maintain your physical health

Pilates, walking, getting enough sleep

3

PRACTICAL

Tasks that are essential in day-to-day life that prevent stressful situations arising

Creating a budget, organising your wardrobe, doing your tax return

4

MENTAL

Doing things that stimulate your mind

Reading, visiting a museum, puzzles

6

SPIRITUAL

Activities that give you a connection to something bigger than yourself

Meditation, self-reflection, yoga

5

SOCIAL

Activities that strengthen relationships in your life

Meeting friends, being part of a club, taking time to talk on the phone

your needs away from them, even if they don't like it. Your child, no matter how old they are, is allowed to experience uncomfortable feelings.

It helps to talk to your child – even if you think they're too young to understand – about where you're going and when you'll be back. Learning that mum goes away and always returns is an important developmental process, and going for a quick wee without them is a safe, manageable way to kick it off.

Temporarily experiencing difficult emotions in a safe, loving environment where they are comforted will benefit your child in the long run, as well as strengthen their bond with other caregivers.

Of course, there are limits to this – for example, the age at which you feel comfortable leaving your child with a babysitter is hugely personal, and not something to be rushed. It takes faith in your own judgement to strike a good balance between responding to your child's emotions, keeping them safe, and taking care of yourself. If taking care of yourself looks like staying with your child, then go with your gut.



Banish the word selfish

When was it decided that putting yourself first was a negative thing? If you don't put yourself first, nobody else is going to. And, yet, so many of us were told as children that it was our job to put other people first in order to be accepted.

Never sticking up for yourself for fear of inconveniencing someone else might feel like it will win you friends, but all it really gets you is trampled boundaries and resentment.

If you use the word selfish to describe yourself or anyone else, try adjusting the language you use:

- 'I'm being so selfish'/'I'm looking out for myself'
- 'She's so selfish'/'She's good at standing up for herself'
- 'That was selfish of you'/'When you did that, I felt overlooked'
- 'Meeting a friend for coffee instead of doing housework is selfish/healthy'
- 'It would be selfish/fair to ask my partner to take on more childcare'

It might feel weird at first, but the words we use to describe ourselves and others have a big effect on our world view. Slowly, the way you think about things will shift, and it will feel easier and more natural to prioritise yourself.



Nurture your female friendships

Perhaps you have a wonderful partner who you love spending time with. Perhaps you have a bunch of funny, kind male friends. Even if these things are true, there is no substitute for good female friendships! Nurturing your female friendships is a powerful feminist act. Even if you have a female partner, platonic relationships with other women are essential to your wellbeing as a mother. Find a circle of women you can laugh, cry and empathise with, who understand what motherhood is like and who you can be your true self around. Who has popped into your head when you read that? Text that friend right now and arrange to meet up.



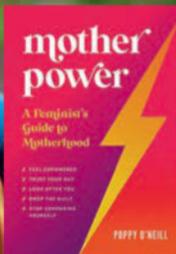
Schedule it in

By now, you'll hopefully have an idea of what you might want or need to do in order to care of yourself better. But when you look at your week, it might not be clear when exactly you're supposed to fit it in. If you have free time, that's great – go ahead and schedule in some self-care right now. If, on the other hand, it's not that simple, you'll need to find time. This might mean letting other obligations go, finding childcare, or asking for support from your partner, family or friends. Remember how important you are, and reach out to others so you can make self-care happen.

Be creative

Depending on your individual set-up, you might need to get creative in order to meet your needs and build a life that works better for you. When you're juggling caring for others, caring for yourself is rarely simple. Not all self-care needs to cost money, requires formal childcare, or even takes up big chunks of time. Here are some tips for thinking outside the box:

- Look for small pockets of time in your day – could you fit in a regular five-minute stretch or a 15-minute nap?
- Build habits of self-care, such as packing snacks and water for you as well as your kids.
- Keep a journal close by, or write in your phone's notes app, for safe, emotional venting while you're with your children.
- Use your early mornings and evenings to grab a bit of alone time while the children are asleep.
- Make good choices – grab a book instead of doomscrolling.



Read more in
Mother Power
 by Poppy O'Neill
 (Octopus, £10.99),
 out now

Q&A

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



MARY FENWICK is a writer, speaker and executive coach. She is also a mother, divorcee and widow.

GOT A QUESTION? Email letters@psychologies.co.uk, with 'life question' in the subject line.

FOR MORE about Mary's work in leadership and team coaching, her 'Writing back to happiness' programme and free resources, go to maryfenwick.com

“How can I avoid making the same mistake again?”

Q I can feel the pull within me to go back to a man whom I had a kind of a 'thing' with for a few years. He's married, and I was the one who ended it, because I wanted something more. I really like him and particularly miss the sex, and I know it will take a long time to create that kind of ease with someone else. How can I stay strong and stay away?

I'm sure a lot of readers will recognise your feelings, even if not the exact circumstances. It's hard to stay away from a person who makes you feel good, especially when even a simple hug has been fraught for the past few years. Sex and relationship therapist Cate Mackenzie says this man has been an important resource for your wellbeing, and the challenge is to find other ways of finding connection, gratitude and joy.

That might be throwing yourself into something creative, or walking in nature, or having a laugh with an old friend. Sex can be a spiritual as well as a physical connection, so perhaps you can find other ways of feeling that sense of awe – I've recently become obsessed with an app called Stellarium that helps me look at the night sky and know

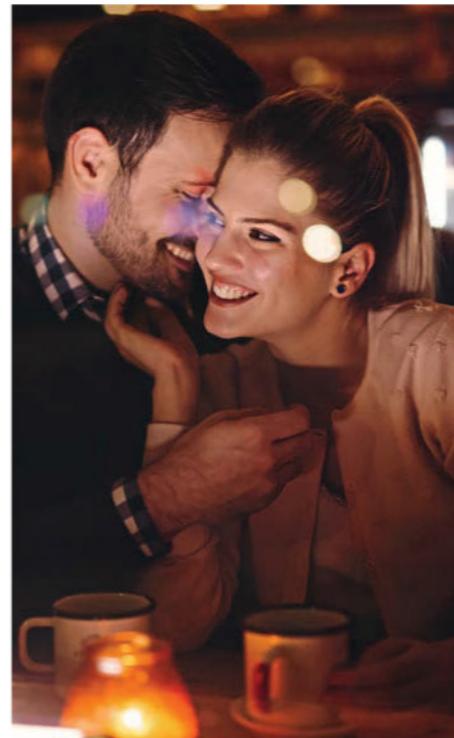
exactly what the stars and planets are doing in my location.

None of this is a direct replacement of course, but they are ways of rediscovering what makes you catch your breath, or lose all sense of time, or feel alive all over. In parallel, be as kind as you can be to your physical self, with massage, gorgeous scents or fabulous nail colours – whatever rocks your boat. Mackenzie suggests a two-minute rule – when you find yourself thinking of this man, set a timer and indulge, but then stop.

If you'd consider therapy, have a look at the directory for COSRT (College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists). Finding the right expert to help you make sense of these feelings could be transformative for your future relationships. catemackenzie.com; cosrt.org.uk

Goodbye – and thank you!

This is my last column for Psychologies. It's been a privilege writing for this wonderful magazine for the past nine years. The readers and the community are what make it exceptional, with kind and constructive conversations. If you'd like to keep in touch with what I'm doing next, find me on LinkedIn.





“Is her ‘stuff’ a symptom of something more serious?”

Q I’m pretty sure that my mother would be described as a hoarder, and I don’t know how to help her. She lives on her own a few hours away, but I can’t stay in the house when I visit because the spare room is so full of stuff. My brother and his wife live much closer, but my sister-in-law is very judgmental and refuses to have anything to do with the mess. What can I do?

It’s so tempting to judge other people’s mess, isn’t it? There’s a free resource available online, called the Clutter Image Rating Scale (CIRS). It’s used by the police and social workers to assess whether someone has a hoarding disorder, which is a clinical condition affecting between 2.5 and 6 per cent of people. Some of the criteria includes whether there are smells, flies, or unused household appliances in odd places.

Most of us are within the 94 per cent of normal messy, but even that has different meanings – one person’s treasured memory is another person’s clutter. I’m typing this next to a broken phone, a lip balm, some old Christmas cards and

a painting by my daughter in front of me. And I don’t mind at all.

Caroline Rogers is a member of APDO (Association of Professional Declutterers & Organisers) and has done Masters-level research on the link between clutter and wellbeing. She points out that the spare room might be full because your mother doesn’t *want* anyone to stay. The only way to start unpicking this is by gentle curiosity and a lot of listening. You might say ‘I’d love to see more of you, Mum, but the spare room seems pretty full – I wonder if that’s bothering you at all’. Keep your focus on your mother’s feelings, rather than your own or your sister-in-law’s.

Try to use the same language your mother uses – perhaps she talks about her things, her stuff or her collection. And use positive imagery, such as reclaiming space, enjoying her home or making room for a hobby. If you talk about junk, or getting a skip, you’ll close down the connection.

Tempting as it is, don’t ‘get stuck in’. Your mother probably knows exactly where everything is that she needs, and it could make her feel helpless and overwhelmed if you take over. The Hoarding UK website has a list of local groups if you feel the need for more support, but if you keep the focus on feelings and respect, you can’t go far wrong. roomtothink.net; apdo.co.uk; hoardinguk.org

Become a health coach, and change lives

Are you fascinated with nutrition and natural ways to be healthy? Would you love to have the skills to improve the health, happiness and wellbeing of others? Perhaps you would like to change your own health and find a brand-new purpose in life?

Then consider a new career as a Health Coach, one of the fastest growing professions in the UK. You can be qualified and making a difference to yourself and others in less than a year.



Este Rabe, Health Coaches Academy Graduate

I have never experienced anything close to this course - partly because the team are so passionate - what I saw on the live training was life changing. You have empowered us so we can empower others. So professional, but so person-centred and a feeling of being part of the HCA 'family' too.



WHAT IS HEALTH COACHING?

Have you ever made New Year's resolutions to improve your health or fitness and found, like 85% of us that by the 3rd week in January they are a thing of the past? It can be difficult to make positive changes to our health and stick to them. A Health Coach works alongside clients to re-think the way they live and create a brand new set of lifestyle habits that lead to living a more vibrant and energetic life. Health Coaches then support clients and hold them accountable to achieve their goals and enjoy a new found level of health and wellness.

Why are Health Coaches needed now more than ever?

With spiralling statistics for preventable diseases such as heart disease, obesity and cancer, there is more awareness about the changes we need to make to avoid certain 'lifestyle' related diseases and prevention is always better than cure; but how do we change and where can we get the right support? People must take a more active role in their own healthcare and this is where a Health Coach comes in. Health Coaches can

educate people on how to be healthy and importantly, then help inspire and motivate them to change their lives for the better. Health Coaching is a 6 billion dollar profession in the US and has more recently taken off in the UK as we recognise an area of healthcare that has not yet had sufficient focus – mindset and behaviour change. That's exactly how a health coach can help.

Could you be a good Health Coach?

Most Health Coaches who train with us have their own story that led them to the profession. This could be their own health reaching crisis point or the sadness and frustration of seeing those who matter to them suffer when so much could be done to help them. Whatever story brings people to us, the common theme is a deep desire to do something positive to change the quality of the lives of others, a fascination with natural ways to promote health and wellness and a strong desire to work in this field and do something that really matters. Does this resonate with you?

Become a Health Coach with the Health Coaches Academy.

Founders Carolyn St John Loder and Ann Garry and their expert team have been Health Coaching in the

UK since 2003 and provide a thorough and professional training pathway to becoming a highly skilled professional Health Coach.

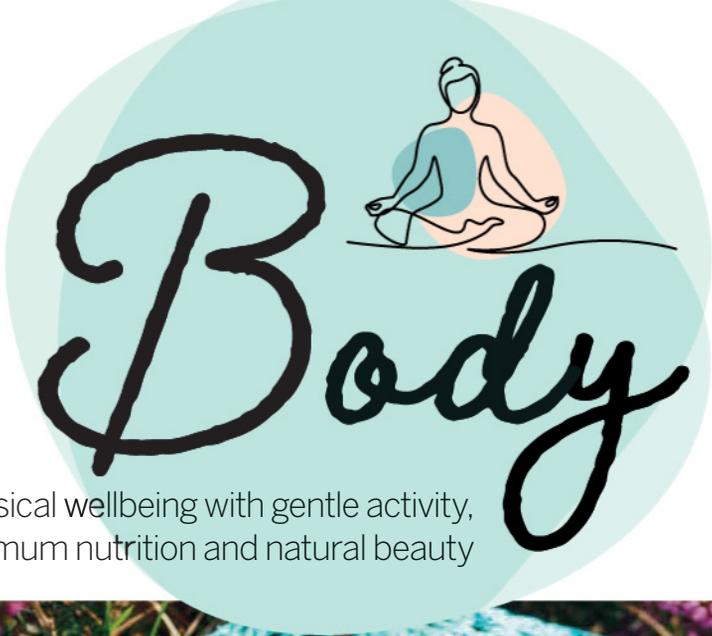


The HCA Health Coaching Diploma course is part-time and flexible with a blend of online, distance learning and 6 days of in-person live training. There are 6 intakes per year.

Next intake: 9th of May & 10 July 2023

Scan the QR code below to join one of our free events, or book a personal call to discover health coaching for yourself.





Body

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



What would help you feel better in yourself? Do you need a short-term goal or a long-term improvement?





MINDFUL WELLNESS



Our Acting Wellness Director, Elizabeth Bennett, shares new research, strategies and wisdom on aspects of wellbeing, this month looking at how you can better your nutrition and bolster your brain health

Eat well



A HEALTHY CHOCOLATE FIX

With Easter just around the corner, and the supermarket aisles chock-a-block with the sweet stuff, it can be hard to resist stocking up. While everything – even chocolate – is fine in moderation, if you're looking for a nutritious alternative that is still super-delicious then Cosmic Dealer might be just the thing. This French chocolate brand specialises in raw, low-sugar and herbal-infused chocolate that's still creamy and indulgent.

From £3.50, available at contentbeautywellbeing.com

WHOLE GRAIN GOODNESS

Whether it's served alongside curry, stew or as a side to fish or meat (see this month's recipe, right, for inspiration!), rice is a kitchen cupboard staple we all need. A great source of energy, if you're looking to maximise its health benefits then brown rice is the way to go. While it's well known that whole grain carbohydrates are better than their white counterparts, new research from Okayama University in Japan compounds this further: researchers have recently identified cycloartenyl ferulate (CAF) as the main antioxidant in brown rice, which has been shown to protect the body from stress.





Cajun salmon

Serves 4

- 4 skinless salmon fillets
- 250g (1 small head) broccoli
- 1-cal sunflower oil spray
- Sea salt and ground black pepper

For the Cajun seasoning:

- 1 heaped tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp garlic granules
- ½ tsp hot smoked paprika
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried thyme

For the dirty rice:

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 red pepper, cored, deseeded and finely diced
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- 200ml fresh chicken stock
- 400g tin black-eye beans
- 500g cooked brown rice
- 4 spring onions, finely sliced

To serve:

- 1 lime, cut into wedges

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas mark 6. To make the Cajun seasoning, mix all the ingredients together in a small bowl with 1 tsp flaky sea salt. Pat each salmon fillet dry with kitchen paper and then sprinkle with the seasoning on all sides. Leave to marinate while you prepare the broccoli and dirty rice.

2 Line a baking tray with a silicone mat (or spray with oil). Cut the broccoli into bite-sized florets, season with salt and pepper, and spread out on the tray. Cook on a high shelf in the oven for 12 minutes, or until the broccoli is lightly charred and cooked through.

3 Meanwhile, for the dirty rice, heat the oil in a large sauté pan over a medium heat. When hot, add the onion and cook for 4–5 minutes, until softened. Add the garlic and cook for 2 minutes, then add the red pepper and tomato purée, and stir well.

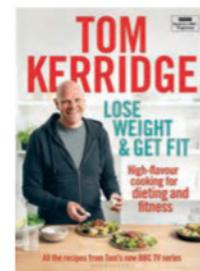
Add the oregano, thyme and stock, and bring to a simmer.

4 Drain the black-eye beans and add to the pan with the rice. Cook for another 5 minutes. Season well with salt and pepper, and stir through the spring onions.

5 Heat a medium non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Spray the salmon fillets a few times with oil, then place in the pan. Cook for 2–3 minutes on each side or until lightly charred and cooked through.

6 Spoon the rice into 4 shallow bowls or containers and add the broccoli and salmon. Serve at once, with lime wedges. Or cool, then seal and keep in the fridge. Eat within 2 days, either cold or reheated.

Lose Weight & Get Fit
by Tom Kerridge
(Bloomsbury, £22).
Photography by
Cristian Barnett



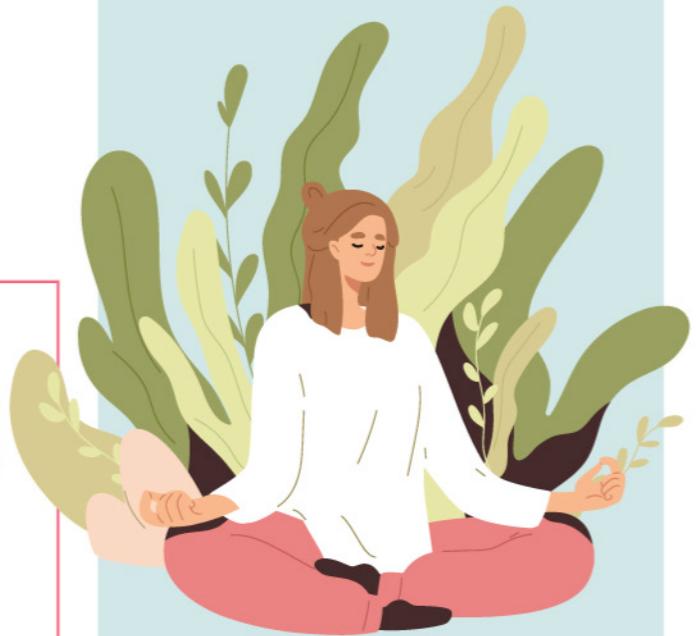
Be mindful

GO WITH YOUR GUT

You only have to think about the phrase 'gut feeling' to be reminded just how inexplicably linked our stomachs and our brains really are. The health of the gut-brain axis is fundamental to wellbeing, and sometimes the gut needs a little assistance to ensure its smooth running.

Heights Smart Probiotic is the first gut supplement designed specifically for brain health, using seven clinically studied strains in one daily capsule.

From £40 a month, yourheights.com



Boost your memory

Try these yoga moves to give your grey matter a workout...

1 Satanama There are 16,000 nerve endings in our hands, and conscious movement of the hands and fingers engages the brain in a multitude of ways. Using both hands in sync, tap each finger on your thumb. Go back and forth a few times. To introduce an extra challenge, start by placing one hand's thumb on the index finger and the other on the little finger before you start. Rest your hands on your lap and take a few mindful breaths to end.

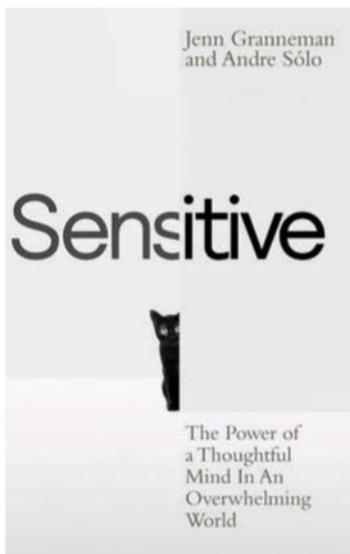
2 Directional viewing Looking at screens for extended periods of time can reduce users' focus and make eyes tired and strained. Directional viewing can relieve eye strain, relax the body and focus the mind. Open your eyes wide and, without blinking or moving the head, look up, down, then right and left. For an extra challenge, imagine looking at all the numbers around a clock. Start anti-clockwise then repeat clockwise. To end, with your eyes closed, take a few mindful breaths.

3 Nadi shodhana This is a type of nostril breathing that is incredibly powerful in helping one organise one's thoughts. This hands-free way of practising nadi shodhana can be utilised anywhere. Start by gaining breath awareness and control, and then proceed with ten rounds of 'inhale through the left nostril, exhale through the right nostril; inhale through the right nostril, exhale through the left nostril'. End by breathing naturally through both nostrils a few times.

Maria Jones is a chair yoga specialist, and the founder of Yuva Yoga; yuvayoga.co.uk

Show some sensitivity

While being oversensitive is often seen as an insult, a new book – Sensitive: The Power Of A Thoughtful Mind In An Overwhelming World by Jenn Granneman and Andre Sóló (Penguin, £18.99, from 30 March) – looks at the upsides of being sensitive, a predisposition that affects three in one of us. Based on more than 20 years of research in neuroscience, psychology and human genetics, it will be the first book to explore the science of sensitivity.



Bit of a stretch

LET GO

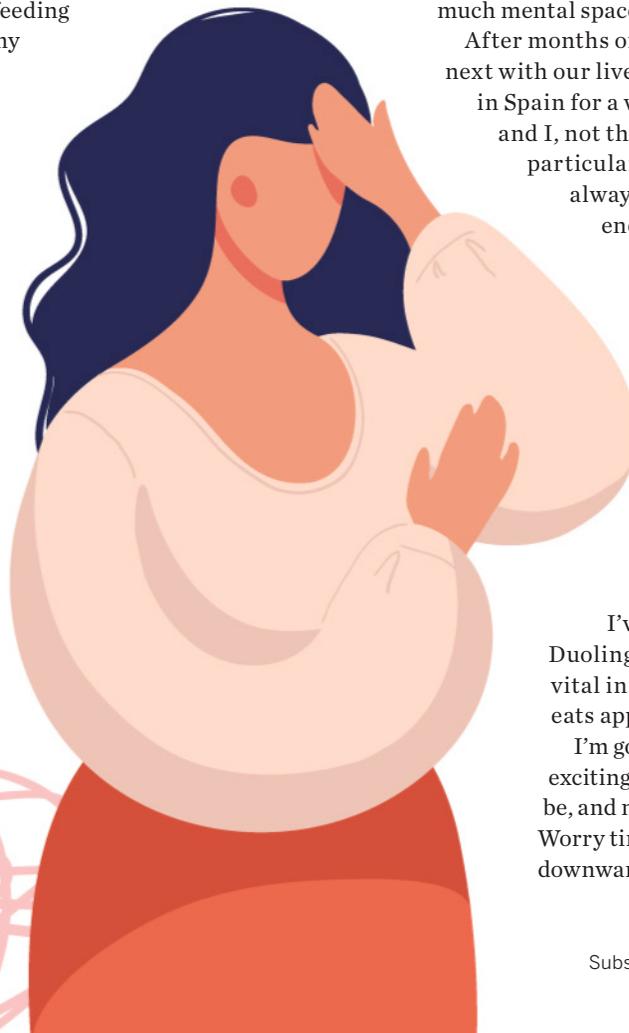
Hollywood child actress Rachel Hurd-Wood swapped the red carpet for a yoga mat in her new life as a Pilates teacher and mum of two



Anyone else an over-thinker? If so, you'll know how good it feels when you get a little respite, with a calm, quiet mind instead of a busy one. Without conscious effort to counter it, I get caught in the web of indecision paralysis, 'What ifs' blocking any

way forward. It can also manifest as hyper vigilance; it's no exaggeration that I've sized up swans in the local park, wondering how best to defend against an attack, questioning if it is still against the law to maim one should the situation call for it. Instead of a gentle Sunday feeding the ducks with my kids, I'm stuck in my head, debating avian combat tactics. When I catch these thought-spirals in action, it's like a rabbit bounding frantically ahead of a moving car; exhausting and pointless.

I had always hoped that methods of professional help or self-help would teach me how to grasp the reins of control a little tighter, but the opposite is true. I'm learning that letting go is the best – and hardest – way to keep anxiety in check. The most helpful technique has been a CBT-based one, called 'worry time'. When the 'What ifs' start firing out, I write them down and allocate



ten minutes per day to go over them. If one requires action to be taken, then great. If not, it goes over into the next day's worry time and I put it out of my head until then. I can't tell you how much mental space it has freed up.

After months of uncertainty about what to do next with our lives, we've decided to try living in Spain for a while. ('We' being my husband and I, not the royal type.) It's not for any particular reason, other than that we've always wanted to give it a go, and soon enough the kids will be locked into the term-time tedium of drop-offs and pick-ups and Qashqais and hurried hi-and-how-are-yous. Anyway. While it might not be the most strategically sound life plan, it's a fun one, and we've paid the non-refundable rental deposit now, so it's too late to reconsider. In preparation,

I've been racking up the hours on Duolingo, and can confidently express vital information such as 'the woman eats apples' and 'the museum is closed'.

I'm going to focus on making it the exciting, happy adventure that it should be, and not let the mind-rot run riot. Worry time, calm breathing and a few downward *perros* should do the trick.



TIME TO CHANGE YOUR BODY CLOCK?

Early bird or night owl? Whatever your typical circadian rhythm, 'springing forward' into British Summer Time can impact all of us, discovers Sally Saunders

Expert
advice



Dr Kat Lederle is a sleep scientist and the author of *Sleep Sense: Improve Your Sleep, Improve Your Health* (Exisle, £12.99). drkatsleep.com



Olivia Arezollo is a sleep expert, coach, speaker, and the author of *Bear, Lion Or Wolf: How Understanding Your Sleep Type Could Change Your Life* (Bonnier Books, £12.99). oliviaarezollo.com.au

Spring forward, fall back. The clock change has always fascinated and confused me in equal measure. At this time of year, it's an invitation to head outdoors – and, then, as the year recedes, to hunker down inside. But what is the clock change really about, and how does it actually impact us? (Other than leaving you feeling red-faced and flustered, when you turn up at your child's Sunday sports fixture an hour late!)

The clocks changing is seen by many as a hangover from outdated wartime and industrial practices, which just don't apply these days. And it seems that some of its staunchest opponents are the sleep experts.

'Naturally, we have our biological clock, which sits up in the brain, and that clock tells the body when to do what: when to be awake, when to be asleep, when to eat,' explains Dr Kat Lederle, a sleep therapist.

'If we didn't have our social clocks – our wristwatches and phones – we would live according to the sun: getting up when the sun comes up, going to sleep when the

sun goes down, which changes across the year, and across the seasons.

'But today's human beings, with our modern electric lighting, can override all of this natural instinct, at least to some degree,' says Dr Lederle, 'and we have introduced this somewhat-flawed clock change twice a year.

'The clock change in the spring is certainly worse for our health and wellbeing, and losing that hour of sleep can have significant impact,' she adds.

Sleep expert Olivia Arezollo explains: 'If you look at rates of heart attacks on the morning of the day when we lose an hour, they increase by about 20 per cent. Then, in the autumn, when we gain an hour's sleep, that following day we experience a decline in heart attacks by about that same 20 per cent. That's a collective variance that happens year after year,' says Arezollo. 'It's not just by chance.'

So why is the impact so significant? Surely an hour's sleep can't impact us that dramatically?



‘It’s a shock to the system – a really big change,’ explains Dr Lederle. Doesn’t the same dramatic impact occur when we change time zones, then? Not so, explains Dr Lederle: ‘When you visit, say, Australia, your light environment when the sun comes out and goes down also changes – so your environment changes.

‘But our environment doesn’t help us when we do our clock change: in fact, it makes it even worse! We wake up earlier, but it’s actually darker. And that confuses our body clock. And that’s probably why we see negative longer term effects on health and wellbeing.

‘Bluntly said, it’s a stupid idea, and we’d be much better staying on standard time all year round!’

And it seems some are more badly affected by the change than others. Arezollo has researched our circadian rhythms and found three distinct chronotype categories: Bear, Lion and Wolf. Those with an early phase are the lions, who like to go to bed and rise early. Next come the bears, who are mid phase. And, finally, we have the wolves, who like to go to bed and wake up particularly late.

‘Chronotypes also indicate our ideal sleep length,’ she says. ‘Bears statistically need more sleep compared with lions and wolves. If you have a friend who is always complaining she needs more sleep, she’s probably a bear!’

Arezollo says her research also shows that circadian rhythms can interlace with personality traits, and can provide an insight into what sleep issues may arise.

‘Bears have a high likelihood to become anxious, so they may struggle to switch off in the evening,’ she says. ‘There’s a

tendency, because they need lots of sleep and might not get that need met, that they feel very tired in the afternoon, so they may reach for that afternoon coffee more than lions and wolves. And as a result, they are wide awake in the evening – and probably get even more anxious as a consequence.

‘Wolves, because they have the latest chronotype anyway, are typically extremely sleep deprived. Naturally, they might not really feel an inclination to sleep until late at night, around midnight or one o’clock in the morning, but most of the time, they need to get up at six or seven o’clock, because that’s how society works. So, they’re chronically sleep deprived, then try to catch up on the weekend, so their circadian rhythms are even further desynchronised.’

These are the types most hard hit by the clock change. ‘Wolves and bears feel it most – wolves because they’re already sleep deprived, and bears because they have a greatest sleep need,’ she explains. ‘Lions have the lowest sleep need and the highest sleep health, so they typically accommodate changes a little easier than bears and wolves.

‘But, if you have wolves who are already perhaps only getting five or six hours sleep anyway, then due to the clock change it becomes four or five hours, that’s really quite debilitating,’ says Arezollo.

We’ve all had some nights when our sleep is impacted, and most of us just grin and bear it. But what are the actual consequences of reduced sleep?

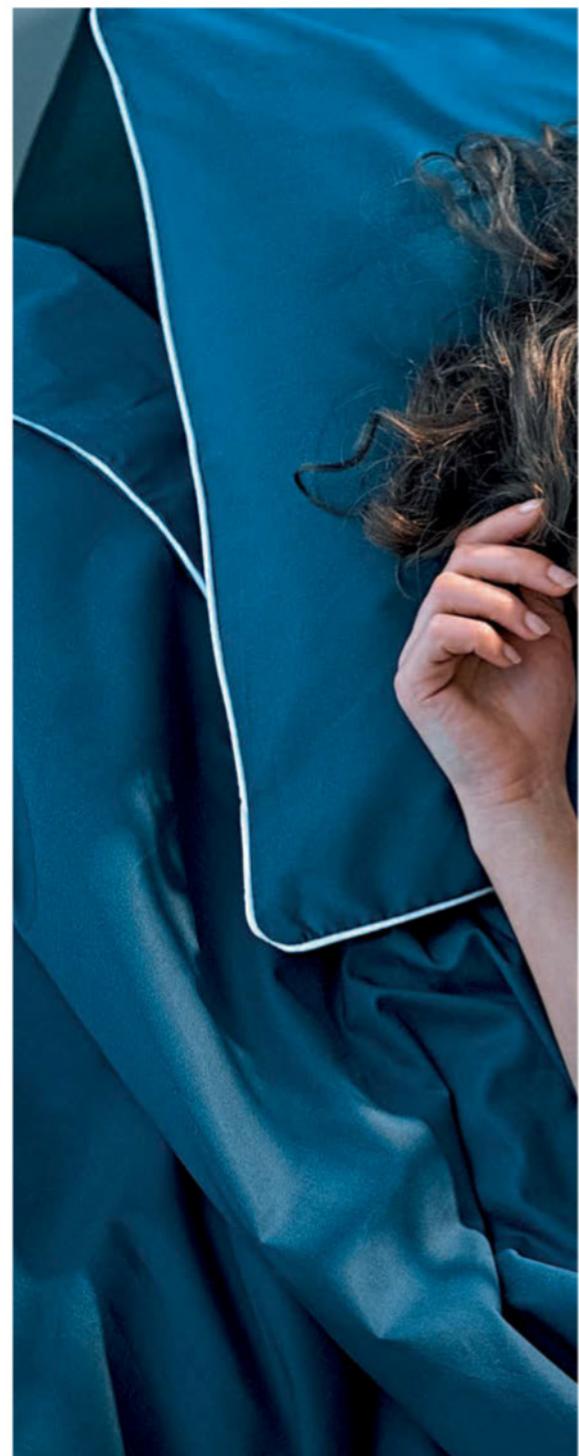
‘When you lack sleep, your cortisol – the stress hormone – increases by 37 per cent, which leaves you anxious and unable to switch off,’ says Arezollo.

‘Sleep deprivation also impairs the brain’s frontal lobe, which is responsible for decision making, judgement, memory and mental clarity. So, basically, you become unable to think straight.

‘Physically, there is a greater likelihood of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, and on a more immediate basis, when we sleep for six hours rather than seven, we have a four times greater likelihood of catching a cold.’

All very good reasons to take action. So what exactly can we do to help ourselves?

‘It’s the same as what you would ideally do if you were going to Australia,’ says Dr Lederle. ‘For a few days before the

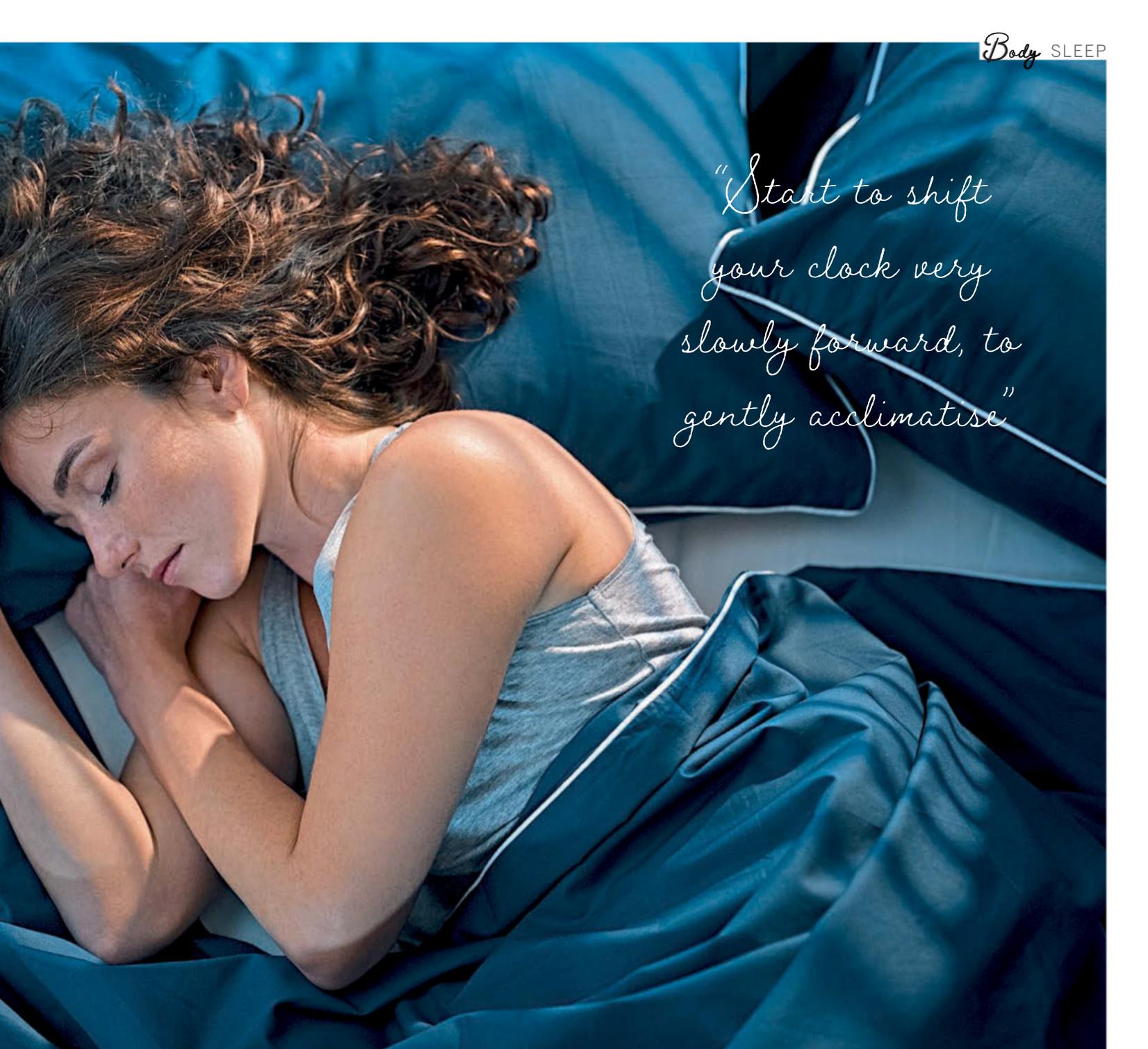


change, go to bed maybe 10 or 15 minutes earlier. Don’t force yourself to sleep, but get into this quiet, dark environment.

‘In the morning, try to get up 10 minutes earlier. This way, you start to shift your clock very slowly forward. And, ideally, try to move your activity and eating window a little earlier as well, just to acclimatise yourself gently.’

Arezollo agrees that bedtime is crucial, with a big focus on light. ‘Practice a solid bedtime routine that involves blocking out blue light for two hours before bed,’ she advises. ‘That could mean using blue light glasses, and reducing light generally

“When we sleep for six hours rather than seven, we have a four times greater likelihood of catching a cold”



“Start to shift your clock very slowly forward, to gently acclimatise”

as much as possible. And you definitely need to cut off from screens, ideally an hour before bed. There was a study that found those on their phones in the last hour before bed were 48 per cent more likely to take over an hour to fall asleep.

‘And you definitely need to use an eye mask. Because light throughout the nights can impair melatonin synthesis by 50 per cent, even if it’s just a dim interior light left on overnight.’

So now we know what to avoid, what positive steps can we take to safeguard sleep? ‘You should definitely try to have an evening bath or shower, as this helps

your body produce melatonin. When our bodies decrease in core body temperature, which occurs when we move from a warm shower or bath to our bedroom, that is a catalyst for melatonin production, which helps us sleep.

‘It’s important to wind down before bed. There are many practices you can try, such as meditation and yoga – things that increase our mental wellbeing and have been clinically proved to reduce stress and anxiety. These tools are especially powerful if you’re an anxious bear-type, but something we can all benefit from,’ says Arezollo.

‘Outside of that, we can incorporate natural supplements. For example, ashwagandha has been found to reduce stress across many clinical trials, and Reishi mushrooms are incredibly calming for the nervous system, as well.’

So as we prepare to spring forward into the new season, whether you’re an early-rising lion, a perpetually tired bear or a late-sleeping wolf, why not make the effort to look after your body and mind? And perhaps start some good habits that will help you drift off all year long. Sleep tight!



A TASTE FOR THE *beautiful*

Get out what you put in, with these deliciously nourishing plant-based dishes from Elisa Rossi's *Happy Skin Kitchen* – they're packed with great 'skingredients', for a healthy and radiant complexion

Chickpea & almond curry

'A one-pot wonder, this simple curry is ambrosial, easy to prepare, budget friendly, and therefore one of my regular weeknight dinners! The coconut sauce is thick and creamy thanks to the ground almonds and coconut milk, while the ginger and lime juice add a refreshing tangy note. Chickpeas are definitely one of my storecupboard heroes. They are super-versatile, and loaded with skin-boosting antioxidants, protein and fibre. They make this curry really filling, and they also help to regulate your blood sugar levels, for stable energy and clearer skin. I can devour this curry simply in a bowl on its own, or make it a bit more special with brown basmati rice and fresh coriander.'

Serves: 4

- 1 tbsp melted coconut oil, for cooking
- 1 white onion, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- A thumb-size piece of ginger, grated
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 x 400ml tin of full-fat coconut milk
- 3 tbsp ground almonds
- 1 tbsp smooth almond butter

- 1 x 400g tin of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 generous handfuls of baby spinach
- Juice of ½ a lime
- Salt and pepper, to taste

To serve:

- Rice of your choice
- Fresh coriander, chopped

1 Put the coconut oil into a large pan on a medium heat. When it's hot, add the chopped onion and sauté for 5–8 minutes, until it starts to caramelise. Add the garlic and ginger, and cook for another couple of minutes, then add the ground cumin, ground coriander and turmeric. Stir everything together and add the tomato purée. Cook for 1 more minute.

2 Using a hand blender or a small food processor, blitz everything until you have a fairly smooth paste. Add the coconut milk, ground almonds and almond butter, stir everything together and cook on a low simmer for 10 minutes. Add the drained chickpeas and cook for another 10 minutes.

3 Mix in the baby spinach and cook for another couple of minutes, until it has wilted. Season with salt, pepper and lime juice. Serve with rice of your choice and a sprinkling of chopped coriander.



Creamy cannellini, mushroom & cavolo nero stew

'Whenever I head back to the countryside around Bologna, where I grew up, this is the first dish I will always cook. My dad – whose diet consists of about 95 per cent beans and cabbage – has a garden overflowing with emerald-green cavolo nero (also called Tuscan kale) plants. As with most Italian dishes, this recipe is about quality ingredients, cooked simply to allow them to sing. The cannellini beans, when blended, help create a luxurious creamy, thick stew without the need for any cream. It's no secret that kale is good for you, but did you know that just 50g of raw kale delivers over 200 per cent of your daily vitamin A (a powerful vitamin for preventing ageing) and 120 per cent of your daily vitamin C (essential for collagen production)? Pair that with the selenium content of the mushrooms and you have got yourself a wonderfully beautifying warming supper.'

Serves: 4

- 2 x 400g tins of cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 400ml vegetable stock
- 200ml unsweetened oat milk
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 1 stick of celery, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 bay leaf
- A few sprigs of fresh thyme, leaves picked
- ½ tbsp white miso paste
- ½ tbsp tamari sauce, plus extra for drizzling
- 50g cavolo nero or kale, de-stemmed and finely chopped
- 200g mixed mushrooms (I used a mix of chestnut and shiitake), sliced
- Salt and pepper, to taste

To serve:

- Fresh parsley, chopped
- A drizzle of good quality extra-virgin olive oil

1 To make the creamy broth, put 120g of cannellini beans into a blender with the vegetable stock and oat milk. Blend until smooth, then set to one side.

2 Put 1 tablespoon of the olive oil into a large pan on a medium heat. When it's

hot, add the chopped shallots, carrot and celery. Cook for 8–10 minutes, until the shallots start to caramelize. Add the crushed garlic, bay leaf and thyme leaves, and cook for another couple of minutes. Keep stirring, as garlic can burn very easily.

3 Add the miso paste and tamari sauce, stir to combine, then add the remaining cannellini beans and the creamy broth. Turn the heat down to a simmer and cook the stew for 20 minutes, until it has started to thicken. Add the chopped cavolo nero, mix everything together, and cook for

another 5 minutes, until the cavolo nero has softened.

4 While the bean stew is simmering away, cook the mushrooms. Put the remaining oil into a frying pan and, once it is hot, add the sliced mushrooms. Cook them on a medium heat for 10 minutes, until they start to brown around the edges and all the water has evaporated. Drizzle with tamari sauce and remove from the heat.

5 Serve the cannellini stew with the pan-fried mushrooms piled on top, a sprinkle of chopped parsley and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.



Savoury carrot & sun-dried tomato muffins

'These muffins are a big obsession of mine. For this recipe, I use chickpea flour, which is a powerhouse of nutrients and minerals, high in fibre and protein. Chickpeas are a brilliant source of magnesium and copper, both key in promoting skin elasticity. They are also rich in zinc, an important beauty mineral to help keep breakouts at bay. These muffins are also a fab way to squeeze extra vegetables into your diet, and carrots are a wonderful source of beta-carotene, which our body converts into vitamin A, one of the most essential vitamins to help prevent premature ageing.'

Makes: 12 muffins

- 180g chickpea flour (also called gram flour)
- 40g buckwheat flour
- 30g nutritional yeast
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp salt
- A twist of black pepper
- 400ml oat milk
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 30g pitted olives (I use Kalamata), finely chopped
- 40g sun-dried tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2 medium carrots, finely grated

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6 and line a 12-hole muffin tray with muffin cases. In a large bowl, mix together the chickpea flour, buckwheat flour, nutritional yeast, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, smoked paprika, oregano, turmeric, salt and pepper.

2 In a separate bowl, mix the oat milk with the olive oil, olives, sun-dried tomatoes and carrots. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and mix until you don't see any more dry flour.

3 Place around 3 tablespoons of the mixture in each muffin case, and bake in the oven for 30 minutes, until risen and golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool in the tray for 10 minutes, then transfer to a rack to cool down completely. Store the muffins in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2–3 days.



Happy Skin Kitchen by Elisa Rossi (Harper Thorsons, £25), is available to buy now



BRAIN-BODY BOOST

Vitamin B

Discover the abundance of mind-bolstering benefits...

The B vitamin complex plays a vital role in many areas of mental wellbeing, including neurotransmitter efficiency, emotion and stress regulation, and keeping your nervous system in tip-top condition. With so much to gain from this multifaceted vitamin, independent nutrition consultant Rob Hobson guides us through its strengths, and what we really need...

Spring clean your brain

'B vitamins are a group of eight vitamins that form the B complex,' says Hobson. 'Each has an important role to play for our bodies and minds, but when working as a team, all of vitamin B's components have been found to be exceptional at cleansing our brains of waste proteins and toxins, allowing cells to function at their best.'

Turn back the years

'Of particular note when it comes to brain health are B6, 7 and 12,' says Hobson. 'Experts have found that low levels of these components can impact how well the brain functions with age – so top up to stay sharp!'

Enjoy elevated mood

'Another key player in mental wellbeing is vitamin B6,' adds Hobson. 'Recent

research has shown that taking B6 supplements can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Researchers believe this is due to an increase in the production of a calming neurotransmitter called GABA, which helps to slow an overactive nervous system.'

Your natural source

'Vitamin Bs are water-soluble, except for B12, which can be stored in the liver,' says Hobson. 'This means they need to be topped up from the foods you eat and, in some cases, with supplements. Different foods contain different types of B vitamins, but examples of well-rounded B-filled choices are:

- Nuts, seeds and yoghurt for vitamin B1 (thiamine)
- Mushrooms, eggs and pork for vitamin B2 (riboflavin)
- Tuna, chicken and rice for vitamin B3 (niacin)
- Lentils, avocados and potatoes for vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid)
- Tofu, bananas and leafy greens for vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)
- Sweet potato, mushrooms and salmon for vitamin B7 (biotin)
- Asparagus, beans and dark green veggies for vitamin B9 (folic acid)
- Seafood, fortified cereals and dairy for vitamin B12 (cobalamin).'

Did you know?

As well as all the mental health benefits B vitamins brings, the complex also plays a crucial role in your physical health, too, helping enzymes convert food into energy, and thus maintaining healthy skin, hair and nails.

From tablets and capsules to on-the-go sprays and easy-to-take liquids, there are plenty of ways to supplement your B levels this spring...

Healthspan Vitamin B Complex tablets (from £7.95, healthspan.co.uk)

BetterYou B-Complete Daily Oral Spray (£11.95, betteryou.com)

Floradix Vitamin-B-Complex liquid (£13.99, hollandandbarrett.com)

'I feel more like me again' says Susan after trying Ashwagandha+

'When you get to your late forties to early fifties there are lots of hormonal changes in the body and it can often take you by surprise,' says Susan Ince (52) who has run her own cleaning business for the past fourteen years.

When she turned 48, Susan began to feel more anxious than she used to, and wasn't sleeping well. All the physical exercise from her cleaning work, her regular pilates and walks just didn't seem to help.

One of Susan's relatives recommended a health supplement called Ashwagandha+ that might help. Now, she wouldn't be without it.

'I now have a much more comfortable night's sleep and feel so much more like I used to. I feel calmer and more relaxed during the day and I'm sure I'm a lot less agitated than I was before I started on them.

'I take one in the morning and one

at night and if I forget to take it at night, I'll get out of bed and go downstairs to take it – that's how strongly I feel about them.'

To develop an advanced solution to support mental wellbeing, the scientific experts at nutritional supplement company, FutureYou Cambridge turned to ashwagandha; the 'Prince of Herbs'.

Dr Miriam Ferrer, PhD and Head of Product Development at FutureYou Cambridge, says: 'Our Ashwagandha+ provides 600mg of KSM-66® ashwagandha full-spectrum (meaning it maintains the balance of the various constituents of the original herb) root extract. 'This formulation helps support relaxation, mental



and physical wellbeing and contributes to emotional balance and general wellbeing during periods of emotional stress.*

Ashwagandha is an adaptogen that has been used for general health in traditional Indian cultures for centuries. Adaptogens are a range of herbs which promote homeostasis – the optimal internal state of a healthy

body where physical and chemical conditions are in balance.

Says Susan: 'Ashwagandha+ has helped me navigate those changes and I feel more like me again.'

**Ashwagandha+ contains ashwagandha which contributes to optimal relaxation; mental and physical wellbeing; contributes to emotional balance and general wellbeing. It also contains vitamin C which contributes to normal psychological function and to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue.*

Try before you buy

*Just pay £2 towards postage

Leading Cambridge company to offer free science-backed supplements to support relaxation and mental wellbeing.

FutureYou Cambridge, a nutraceutical company known for its well-researched nutritional supplements, is giving away packs of its high-quality ashwagandha supplement to new customers for free.

The offer is aimed at helping the those who often feel stressed. It comes after the Cambridge firm received a flurry of positive reviews for its high-strength ashwagandha supplement developed as natural support for emotional balance and wellbeing during periods of anxiety and emotional stress*.

'I had problems sleeping and

sometimes a low mood, as well as feeling tired. So I decided to give Ashwagandha+ a try,' says Maz Naheed, 66, a full-time

"I can honestly say it really made a difference to me. It helped lift my mood and I was sleeping better."

carer. 'After two weeks I can honestly say it really made a difference to me. It helped lift my mood and I was sleeping better. I'm really happy I found it.'

Adam Cleevely, FutureYou



Cambridge's Chair, explains the thinking behind the offer: 'We conducted our own survey of British attitudes to stress and found that a lot of people still aren't aware that a science-backed supplement like Ashwagandha+ can help to support mental wellbeing. After so many encouraging reviews, we hope that by offering a free trial pack, more people will be able to discover a positive experience like Susan and Maz.'

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR FREE PACK

To claim your free 28 day Ashwagandha+ subscription trial pack worth £19 visit FutureYouOffers.co.uk

or freephone
0800 808 5740
quoting code

AWA807

Your first box is free (just pay £2 postage) and you will be enrolled into a flexible subscription costing £19 (inc. postage) every 28 days, which you can cancel at any time, without obligation.



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in Cambridge



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FutureYou
CAMBRIDGE

*Ashwagandha+ contains ashwagandha which contributes to optimal relaxation; helps to support relaxation, mental and physical wellbeing; contributes to emotional balance and general wellbeing. It also contains vitamin C which contributes to normal psychological function and to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue. Introductory offer valid for new UK customers only. Offer expires 31st May 2023. See FutureYouHealth.com/AWA807 for full terms and conditions.

psychologies inspiration

“Nature has given us all the pieces required to achieve exceptional wellness and health, but has left it to us to put these pieces together”

Diane McLaren





Soul

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



***If you could be a fictional character from any book or film, who would you be?
Are you attracted to their character or their life?***

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK



It's a kind of *magic*...

When you open your mind to the seemingly impossible, you begin to see the world through a prism of hope and positivity, says Richard Wiseman

There's something deeply mysterious about magic. People of all ages are drawn to it, and it's been present in almost every culture throughout recorded history. Magic has always played a significant role in my life. I saw my first magic trick when I was eight years old, worked as a magician in my teenage years, and became a member of the Inner Magic Circle. I eventually became a professor of psychology, and have studied the science of magic. Over the years I have worked with lots of magicians, including Derren Brown and David Copperfield.

I have recently teamed up with science journalist Marnie Chesterton to create a new psychology-based podcast called *Richard Wiseman's On Your Mind*. In each episode, we discuss ways in which people can change and improve their lives, and in one of my favourite conversations, we explored the surprising relationship between magic and wellbeing.

When you see a good magician, you experience something that is supposed to be impossible. Maybe a person defies gravity, or a coin mysteriously appears in thin air, or someone is apparently sawn in half. We grow up with so many assumptions built into our brains: that objects don't appear, disappear, or float. Magic

expands our mind and provides a strong sense of awe and wonder. It inspires us to think of extraordinary things that might be possible in the future. Might it really be possible to float and to fly? Or could an object suddenly appear or disappear? I think the ability to think 'What might be?' plays a crucial role in progress and change. Without that sort of attitude, we would never have built amazing bridges, travelled to the moon, or created mobile telephones that allow us to speak to people on the other side of the world.

The same is true in our personal lives. Reminding people to think about what might be plays a vital role in change and growth. Who do you really want to be? What sort of career do you want to have? What kind of relationship would really make you happy? In fact, the language used by many counsellors and therapists is based on magic, because they talk about making issues disappear and transforming lives. Magic provides us with hope and encourages us to think about how the seemingly impossible might actually be possible.

Then there is the impact of magic on emotion. Most people enjoy watching magic, and a good performance makes them laugh and smile. It also gives them something to discuss with others and so promotes connectivity.



Expert
advice



Richard Wiseman is a professor of psychology, an author, and a speaker. He is also a member of The Inner Magic Circle.
richardwiseman.wordpress.com

There are many benefits associated with learning magic. To be a good magician you must spend time practising a trick, and that is good for your sense of focus and self-control. I think that is especially valuable now. So much of present-day culture revolves around instant gratification. We want to be able to buy something right now, or watch a video clip within seconds. Many magic tricks are not instantly gratifying. They take time to learn and to rehearse. However, when you eventually gain the necessary skills, it is enormously rewarding.

You also must be able to perform the illusion for others, and it's a great way of developing your social skills. Also, once people know that you are a magician, they will often ask you to show them a trick, and so it is good way of breaking the ice. Magic is especially interesting because you have to fool people and not reveal the secret, but still get people to like you! It can be a challenge, but is a great way of boosting your confidence.

There's a strong element of control as well. As a magician, you need to be in charge of where people are looking; you have to control what they're thinking; and, most particularly, you have to control their memory of the performance. As such, it is empowering and good for people's self-esteem.

When you become properly involved in magic, you become part of a well-organised community. Magicians meet up in local clubs and stage large conventions and conferences. Every year, there is a huge meeting of magicians in Blackpool that attracts over 4,000 people! Magic is a small, close-knit world, where everybody knows everyone else. You can also make a meaningful contribution to the art by inventing tricks. It's hard to write a play or song that's going to attract international attention, but with magic, you can create a new illusion and become famous around the world. Again, lots of research shows that wellbeing often involves being part of a community and making a meaningful contribution. In magic, that is surprisingly easy.

We know that singing, dancing and drama are good for people. But magic is also highly beneficial and provides people with a unique and wonderful skill set. In fact, I've argued that magic should be taught in schools as part of the curriculum. We have already carried out some work in this area and shown that magic really boosts children's creativity. A key part of this involves storytelling. Let's take a basic piece of magic that children can easily learn, such as showing an empty box and then magically producing an object from it. Learning the trick is fine, but what are you going to produce from that box? What story are you going to tell? Children often come up with beautiful and highly creative answers. They will start to think about using funny spells or create a magic wand that needs to be waved in a particular way. It's all very creative.

If you are interested in the topic, then there are loads of online videos and books out there. And it really can be an inexpensive hobby. In fact, you could become the world's greatest magician with only a pack of cards! My advice would be to just give it a go and see whether it suits you. Who knows, maybe your inner magician will emerge and within a few years you will be starring in your own Vegas show! With magic, anything is possible.

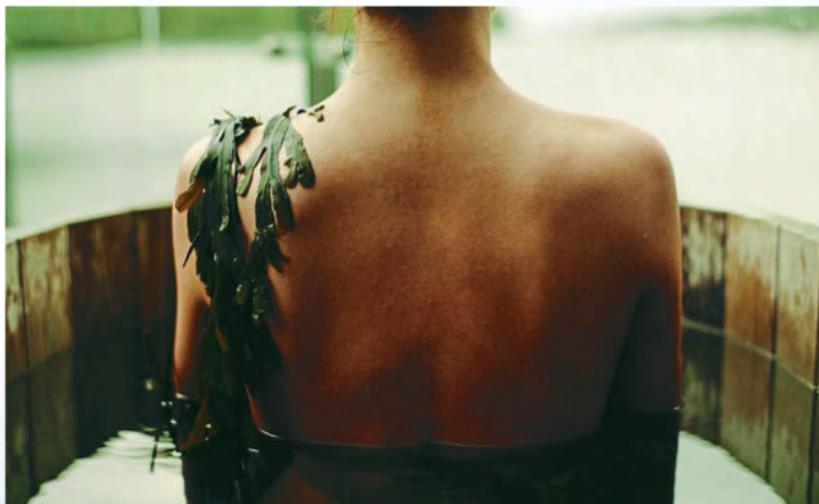
Richard Wiseman's On Your Mind is available on all podcast platforms.





Retreat into April

This month, enjoy the best the natural world has to offer, from awesome sights and mindful experiences to indulgent spa treatments



COAST ALONG

If the longer, less chilly days of spring are making you think ahead to seaside trips, but you don't yet fancy a dip in the sea, why not take in a spa that offers some coastal inspiration instead? The Spa at Laceby Manor opened in Lincolnshire last year and offers the Voya Organic Hammam Seaweed Leaf Wrap, which uses organic seaweed leaves to exfoliate and soften your skin, and the Voya Seaweed Massage, which eases tension using seaweed oil infused with citrus and lavender. If you can't make it to the spa, purchase the Voya Lazy Days Detoxifying Seaweed Bath (£22, voya.ie) to enjoy at home, instead. lacebymanor.co.uk

Bluebell bounty

At this time of year, a country walk can be extra special if you take in a bluebell wood as part of your stroll. Stumbling across a sea of blue in an ancient woodland is truly awe inspiring, and the fact these lovely blooms are so fleeting makes the sight even more precious. According to the Woodland Trust, bluebells are linked to several meanings in the language of flowers, and one of them is gratitude. So why not take your gratitude practice out into the woods, for a blissful bluebell walk? Focus on the flowers and appreciate their transient beauty. Discover some very special places to see bluebells this spring at woodlandtrust.org.uk and nationaltrust.org.uk.

Let your creativity run wild

Give yourself a mini break with a day-long retreat that takes in mindfulness, nature and creativity. The Spring Wild Wellbeing Retreat, hosted by Lakeland Wellbeing and Wild Soul, takes place at the Brown Robin Nature Reserve at Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, this month.

The day aims to help participants feel nurtured, let go of worries, and connect with nature. Included in the retreat is forest bathing, yoga, and the creation of a beautiful spring wall hanging. The day costs £70 per person and takes place on Saturday 22 April, from 10.30am to 3.30pm. Also provided are forest tea and vegan cake! mywildsoul.co.uk; lakelandwellbeing.co.uk



“How can I pick myself up and push myself on?”

Our brilliant agony aunt, Mary Fenwick, turns her gaze to the world of work, helping sort out the problems you are struggling with day to day

Q I've had a maternity-cover contract at a place where I really enjoy working. I had hoped that I might stay on, because the work is really interesting, and I've seen them train other people into roles that I'd love. But that's not going to happen, and it feels quite personal. How do I find the energy to look for something else and be my usual cheery self when I feel so hurt?

You wouldn't be human if you weren't feeling this: in some ways, your experience is similar to redundancy, which itself can be a form of grief. Pretending that emotions don't exist

takes a lot of energy and doesn't ultimately work, but I agree that you want to keep them in their place.

One technique you might try is expressive writing. In one research project, engineers who had been made redundant were divided into three groups – one group wrote about their thoughts and emotions for twenty minutes at a time, four days in a row. A second group wrote about an unemotional subject, and the third group did nothing. At the end of six months, the expressive writers were more likely to be in a new job. The most likely explanation is that they had processed all their anger on the page and did not bring it into job interviews.



Laurie Macpherson describes herself as a career wing-woman. She works at all stages, from planning to CV writing, networking and interview preparation, and suggests that after you 'feel the feels', you'll be more likely to turn your focus to what you *did* get out of this job. What has it given you – a new friendship? A great reference? A glimpse of what is possible if you take a slightly different direction? What might you need to learn? For instance, was there something that might have added to your case for staying?

How can you harvest this experience to add to your CV? Are there new action words you can use, such as delivered, implemented, created, mobilised? In

Learn to use LinkedIn

LinkedIn was founded on the philosophy that giving is more important than taking if you want to build long-term relationships. Macpherson suggests that you:

SEARCH

Use keywords or hashtags, look at who your favourite people are connected to, and find out what people are talking about in your sphere.

JOIN IN

At first you might feel silly, but acknowledge, ignore and go with it. You'll soon start to spot the hot topics in your industry.

SHARE

Make connections and give opinions – not randomly, but where you see genuine value. You want your next employer to think, 'this person really knows what they're talking about'.

BE YOURSELF

Stick your head above the parapet. Talk about what you do, how you see the world, and how you help. Use the 'block and delete' functions, if necessary, to keep the conversation professional. Think of this as gathering or calling in connection rather than hunting for it.

"The normal human response is to push a lot more energy into the short term. In fact, what you want to be doing is what a lot of other people aren't doing. It's part of how you stand out from the pack"

Reid Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn

the time you have left in the job, focus on gathering evidence so this becomes part of your big, beautiful, varied work story. What have you gained that will mean a slightly different insight for your next employer? Have a look on LinkedIn, for example, to see what people are talking about in your sector.

Macpherson says many people fall into a role and get stuck there without ever asking whether it's what they really want. Painful as it is, you now have a clearer vision of what kind of role you would like in the future. You are just one or two good conversations away from reconnecting with the big wide world of possibility.

lauriemacpherson.com



Mary Fenwick is a writer and director of coaching at teamsandleadership.com. She's also a mother, divorcee and widow. Connect with her on LinkedIn or Twitter @MJFenwick



Picture this

The waiting game

Patience is a virtue – in life *and* in photography
– discovers Anita Chaudhuri

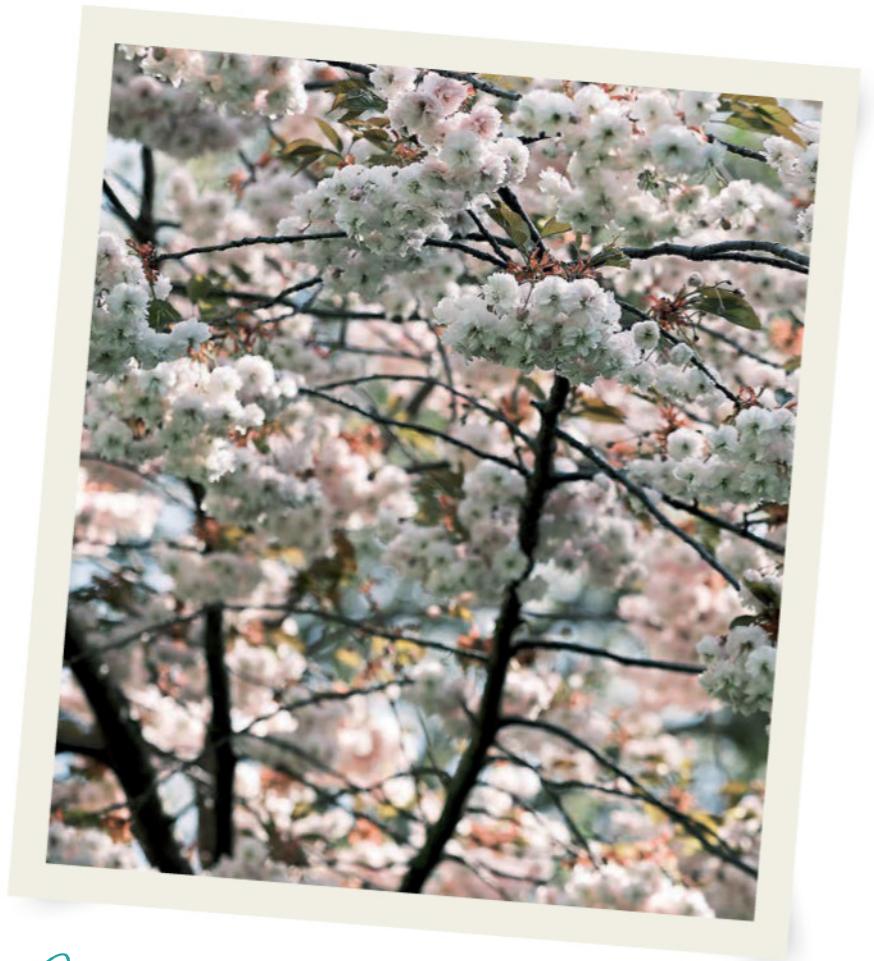
Patient is not a term I'd normally use to describe myself. And since fracturing my shoulder before Christmas, the irony of the double meaning of 'patient' has not been lost on me; it feels like I've been playing an endless waiting game – clock-watching in outpatient clinics, counting down the days until my next X-ray, obsessing about getting back to normal.

'It would be a good idea to get out and about doing things you enjoyed before the injury,' suggested my brilliant physio. For me, that means adventures with my camera, and as I begin to heal, things should get easier. In his book *The Visual Toolbox* (Pearson Education, £36.99), the photographer David duChemin devotes a whole chapter to patience: 'Patience is what will keep you from giving up, from chasing shortcuts, from getting so paralysed by your disappointment or fear that you can't do anything but make the same photograph over and over again. Patience with your scene, the light, the people you work with, and most of all yourself and the creative process that's uniquely yours, imperfect, and tormentingly slow.'

Why is patience so important, in photography and in life? The benefits, apart from adding shine to one's halo, have been well documented. Back in the 1960s, Stanford professor Walter Mischel conducted the now-famous 'marshmallow test', which revealed that children who opted for delayed gratification were more successful throughout their lives. Other studies have reported that patient people experience fewer negative emotions, and have better relationships.

It was Paolo Coehlo who observed that patience is not about waiting, but how we act when things take longer than we expect. Perhaps more than any other art form, photography is preoccupied with the manipulation of time. Beautiful pictures can be captured from long exposures – keeping the camera's shutter open for precious whole seconds – or by taking a series of rapid images and collating them as a sequence.

But, mostly, there is the time you spend waiting for the perfect shot – whether that's catching your dog backlit by evening light in the garden, or watching a child jump puddles, waiting for the most exuberant smile. Recently, I had to hold on to my last remaining shreds of tolerance waiting for signs of spring on my daily photo walk in the park. The days dragged, the light faded, nothing seemed to change. And then, suddenly, it did. Snowdrops, daffodils and tiny buds on trees that burst into fragile blossom. The reward for revisiting the same location every day with your camera is immense; you can't help but pay attention to tiny changes from day to day, even when it seems like nothing is happening. It reminded me of the words of Dennis Potter: 'Looking at it through the window when I'm writing, I see it is the whitest, frothiest, blossomest blossom that there ever could be, and I can see it... The fact is, if you see the present tense, boy do you see it! And boy can you celebrate it.'



*"Nothing seemed to change.
And then, suddenly, it did"*

TRY THIS:

1 Choose a single subject or location – for example, your cat or a favourite house plant. (Choose something accessible rather than say, your mother, who lives 400 miles away, or the Eiffel Tower.)

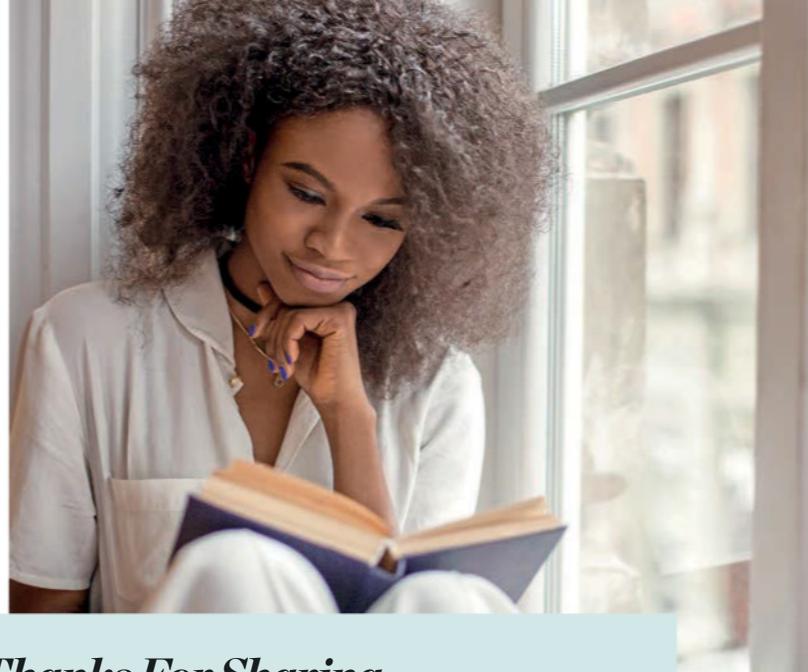
2 For at least the next week – better yet, the next month – take one photograph a day of this subject, ideally at the same time. (Boring? Yes. That's the point.)

3 After you have taken your shots, print them or create an album on your computer so you can see them together. How did the object change between shots?

Select one image and journal about why you chose it and what you learned from the experience. **Share your images with us with the hashtag #psychologiesdaily and you may get featured on @PsychologiesMagazine!**

The words

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



Book
of the
month

Thanks For Sharing by Eleanor Tucker

(Aurum Press, £12.99)

Sharing is caring – especially when it comes to the planet – and using swapping, renting and sharing apps can cut our carbon footprint and outgoings. But is it a realistic way of life for the average family? Eleanor Tucker commits to a year of finding out, with heartening and hilarious results.

From the social etiquette of collecting a stranger's leftovers, to what deodorant to use while wearing another woman's dress, her journey is relatable and, crucially, feels achievable.

Tucker's experiences of sharing everything from food, clothes and dogs to cars, homes and skills, are also accompanied by handy guides on how to follow her lead.

Coffee First, Then The World by Jenny Graham (Bloomsbury, £16.99)

She never set out to break a world record. But when the chance came to navigate the globe on her trusty bike, Jenny Graham thought: Why not?

This diary of her 124-day solo adventure is gripping, inspiring and remarkably down-to-earth – whether she is camping on Russian roadsides or dodging bears in Canada.

Graham might be an amateur athlete, but at heart she's a 38-year-old mum whose cycling passion was ignited once her son started school.

As she concludes: dreams can drive you, but true enjoyment comes from the journey to reach the starting line.



The Blend by Tobi Asare (Headline, £18.99)

Every working mum knows the juggle is real – but how do you navigate it? Businesswoman and parent Tobi Asare shares her tips on getting the best of both worlds, with the view that you will never find a balance but you *can* find a blend.

The book isn't just for high-flyers; it's packed with practical information on your rights and responsibilities, pay and benefits, flexible working, and childcare. Asare also covers navigating the maternity-leave return, confidence, and promotions.

It's especially handy reading for mums-to-be wanting to go into this exciting but demanding life stage with eyes wide open.



The Patchwork Family by Rachaele Hambleton (Little, Brown, £16.99)

As her online moniker Part-Time Working Mummy, Rachaele Hambleton won a loyal following for her refreshing and honest tales of her complicated but loving blended family. In this follow up to her 2018 bestselling diary, *Part-Time Working Mummy: A Patchwork Life*, she welcomes in a new baby while entering teen territory with her eldest.

This isn't your standard mum memoir however. Hambleton – who was in care as a child, and is a domestic abuse survivor – bares her soul about the toll of lockdowns with six kids, her children's autism diagnoses, and suffering adult bullying.



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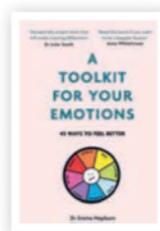
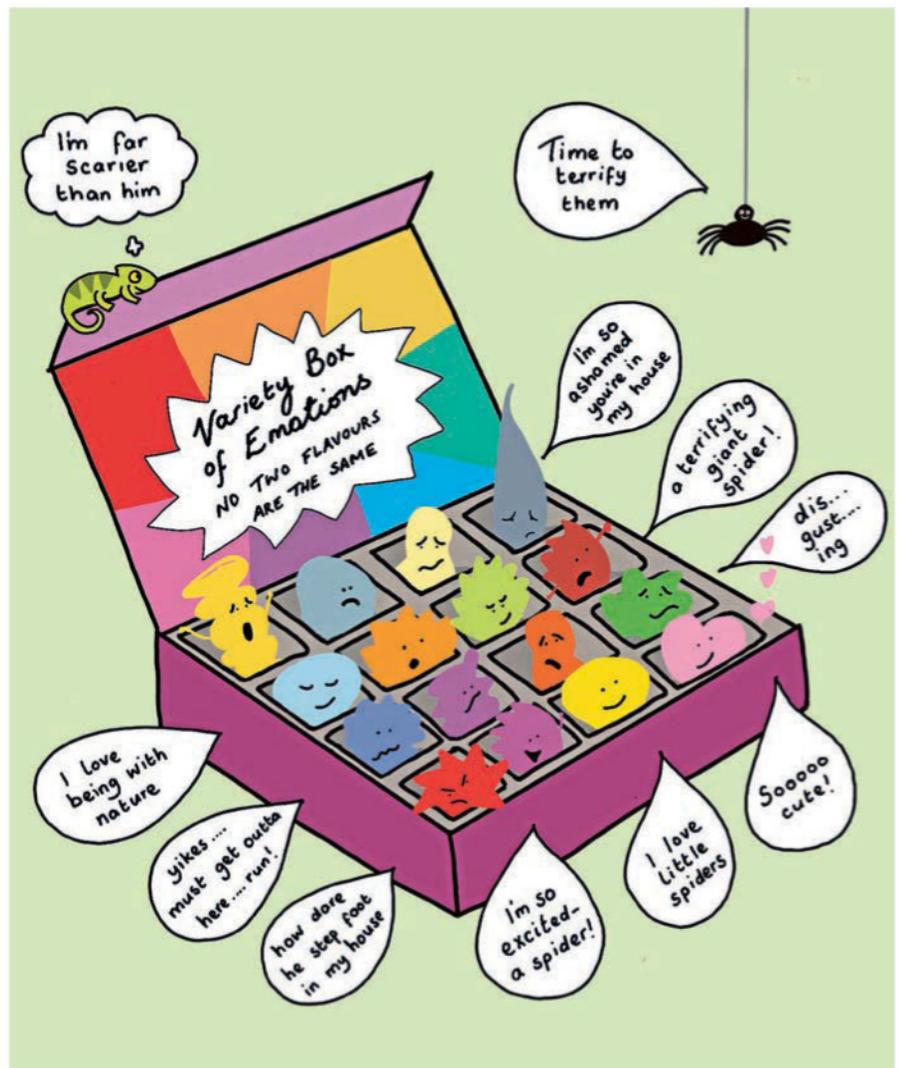
How to be happier

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

If we put 20 people in a room with spiders, their body and brain responses and emotional experiences would vary. Even two people who describe a similar emotion, such as feeling scared, might have very different body and brain responses. When my children see a spider and I tell them, 'There's nothing to be scared of', I am factually incorrect. My brain may not be creating a body sensation that's understood as fear, but if their brains are predicting differently, creating a body response that they understand as fear, that is entirely real and valid. So, my response is dismissive of the emotion they are experiencing. Sorry, kids!

We might think we should be able to look at objects or events and determine an objective reaction. The correct response for a burglar would be fear, while a butterfly provokes wonder, for example. However, it's not that easy, and the myth that people should be feeling a certain way in a particular situation can contribute to emotional and mental-health stigma. We've all heard variations of 'You should be happy, look how lucky you are', 'What's he got to be sad about?' or my own 'There's nothing to be scared of'. We apply these maxims to ourselves and others, leading us to think that how we are feeling is 'wrong' in some way (which can lead to greater negative emotions). However, in doing so, we fail to recognise that each individual's background and experience is unique. You cannot say how someone should or will feel, so let's stop using that as a stick to beat ourselves or other people.

It's quite incredible to think no one else in the entire world has a mind just like yours, or no two brains function in exactly the same way. Our complex brain adapts and wires itself to the environment in which it exists. As you grow, learn and proceed through life, your brain encodes and creates patterns to account for the

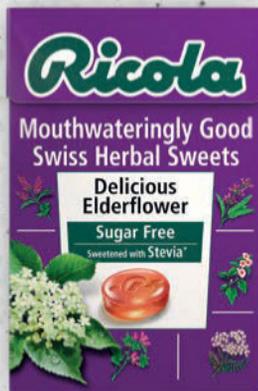


A Toolkit For Your Emotions: 45 Ways To Feel Better by Dr Emma Hepburn (Greenfinch, £14.99)

information that comes your way and uses this to understand and predict future information. Your 85 billions neurons, alongside supporting structures and chemicals, can never work in exactly the same way as anyone else's. That's why it makes no sense to compare how you respond in any given situation to anyone else; you are not the same, your minds work differently.

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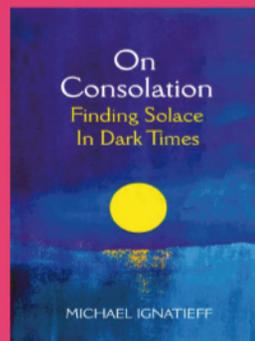
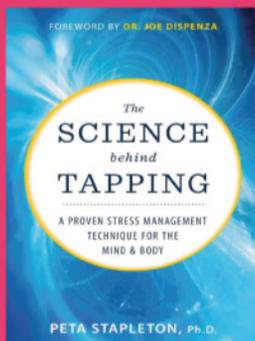
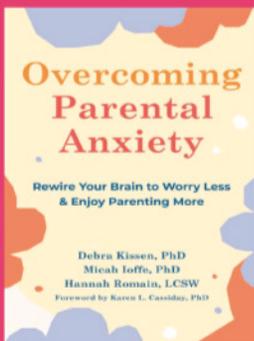
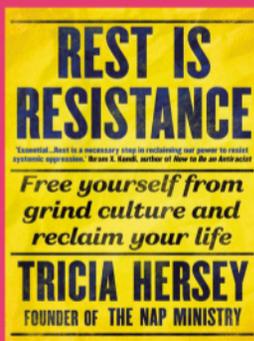
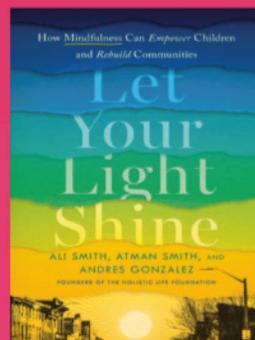
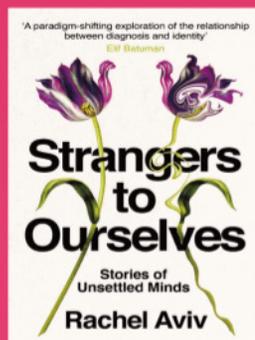
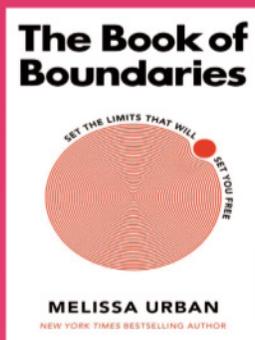
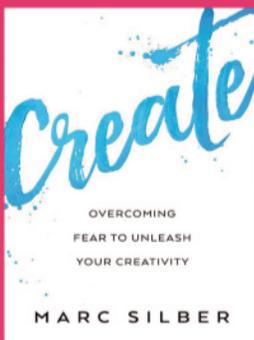
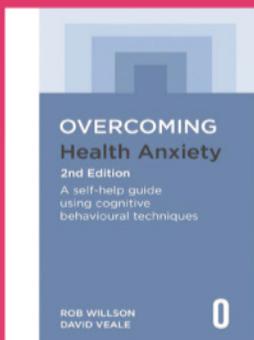
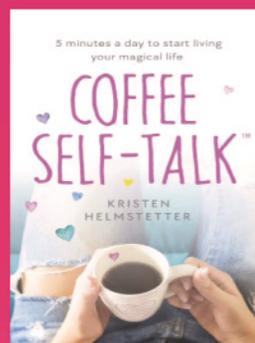
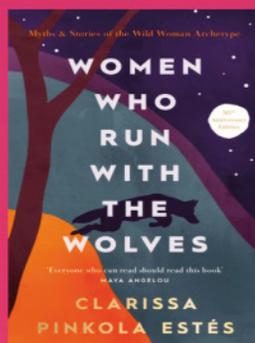
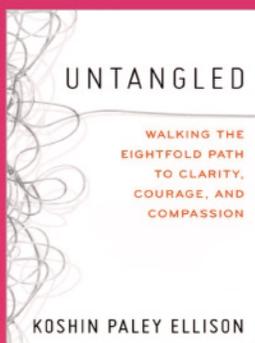
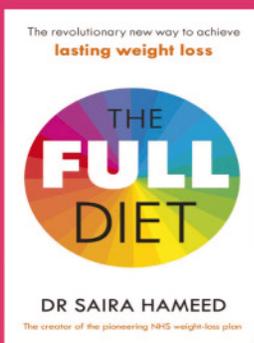
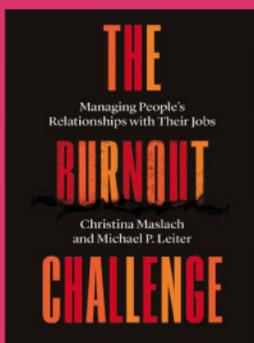
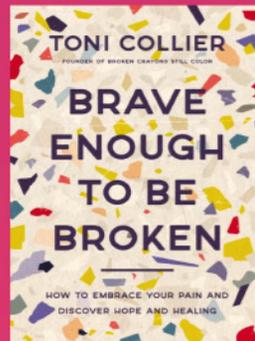
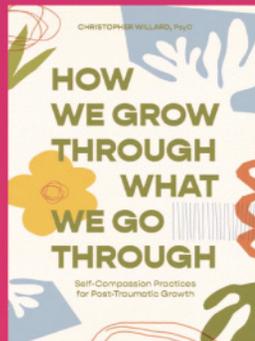
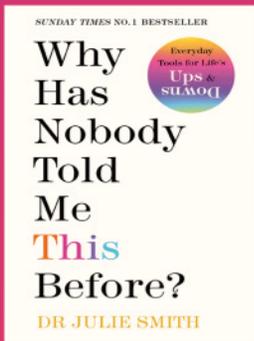
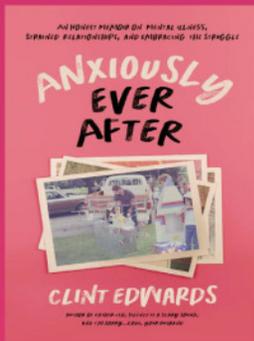
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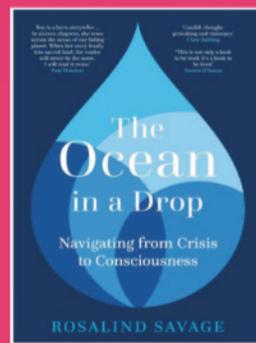
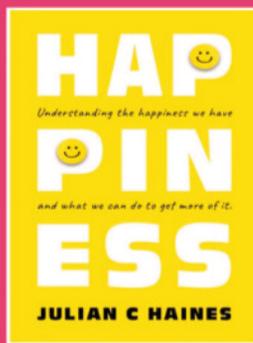
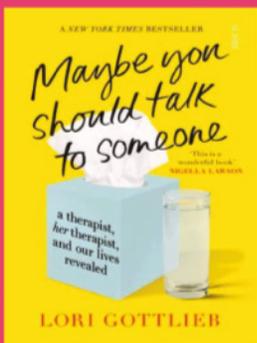
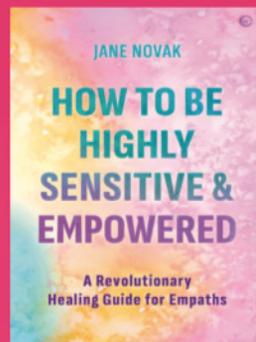
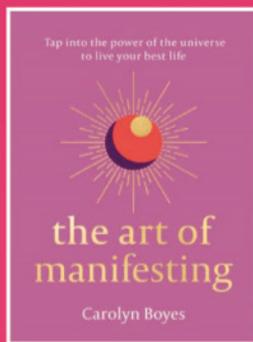
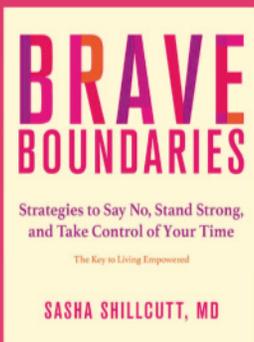
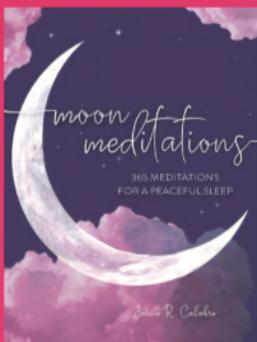
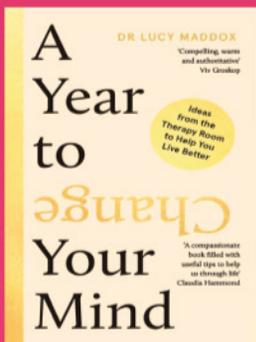
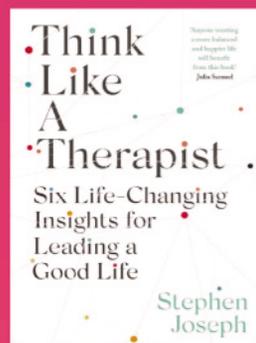
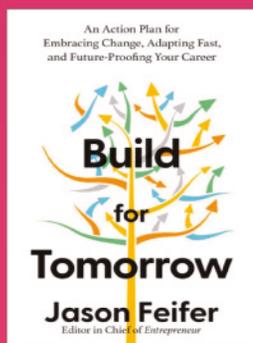
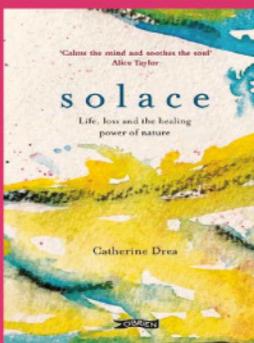
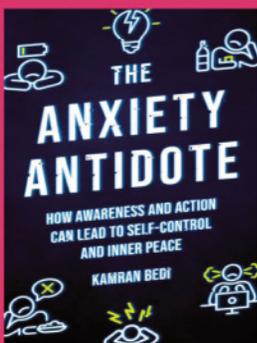
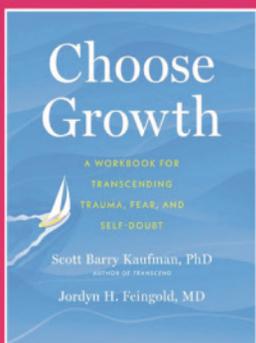
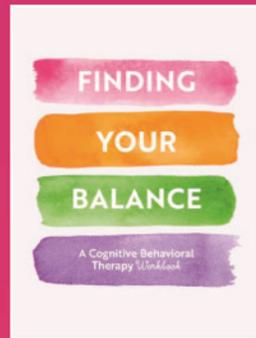
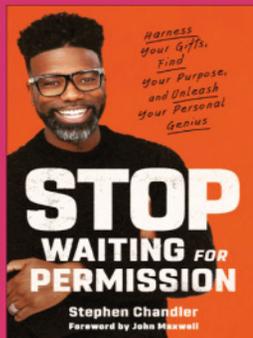
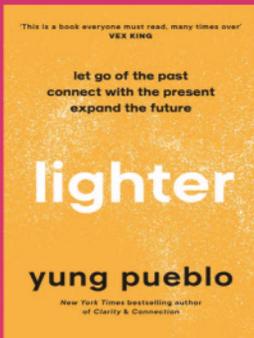
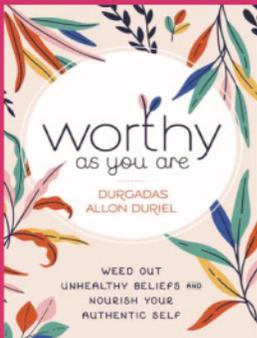
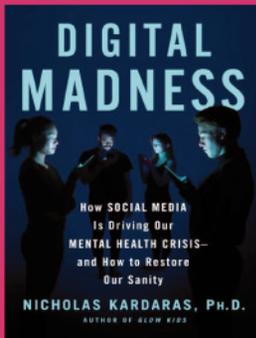
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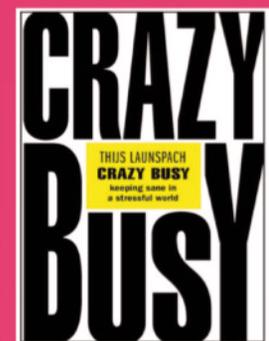
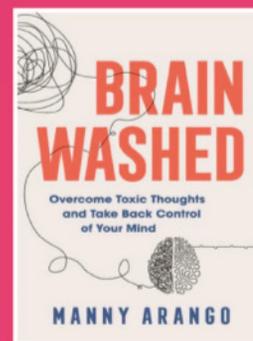
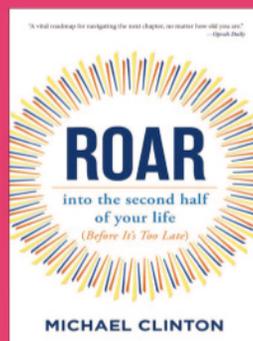
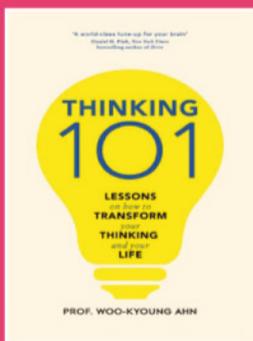
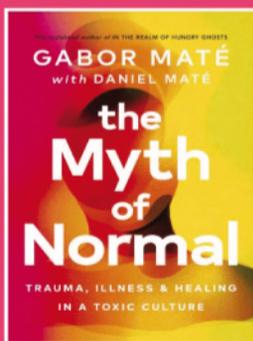
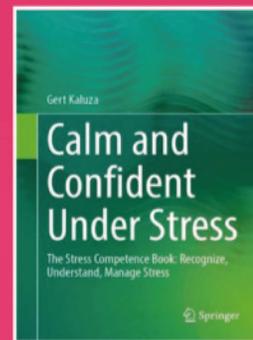
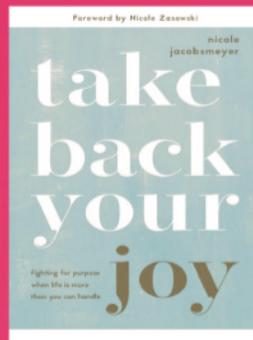
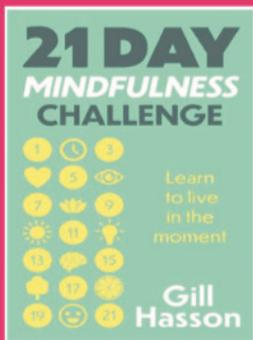
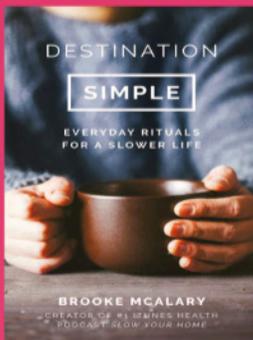
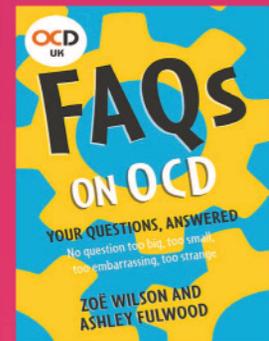
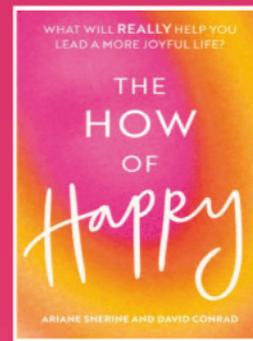
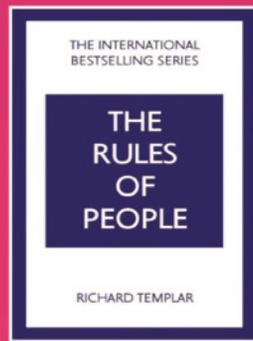
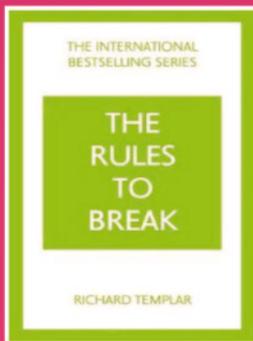
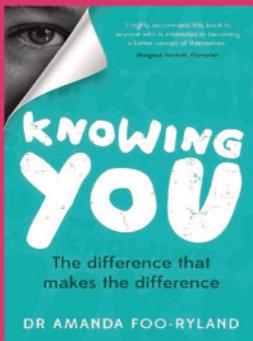
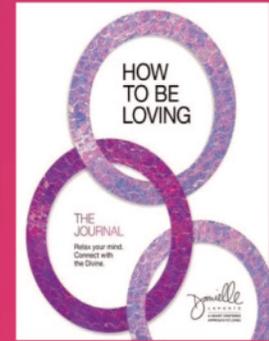
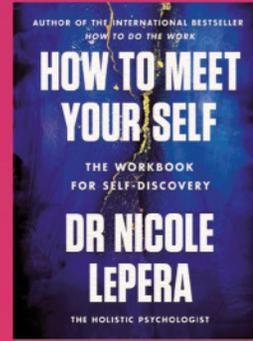
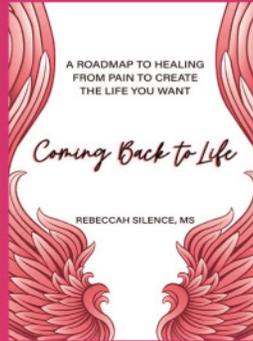
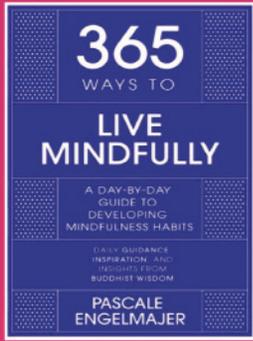
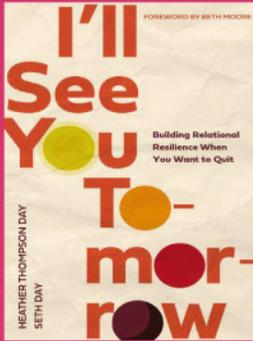
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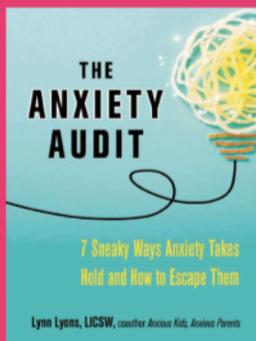
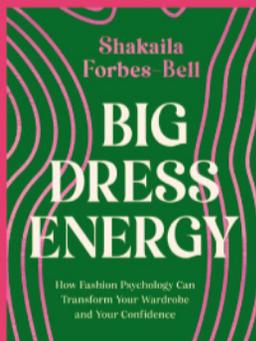
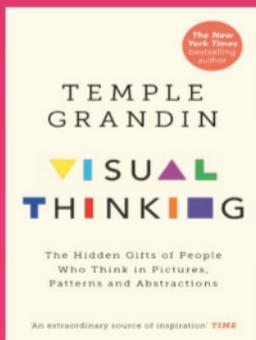
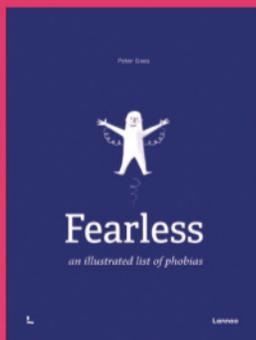
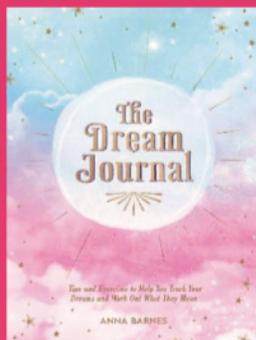
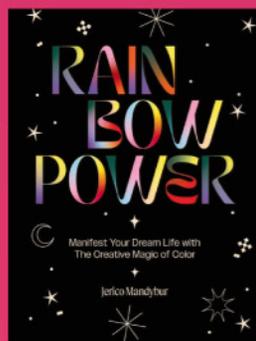
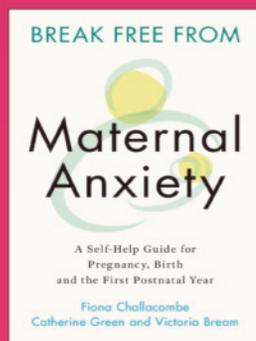
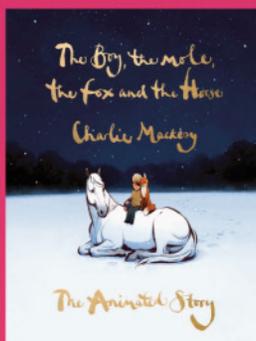
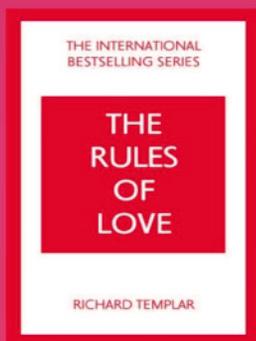
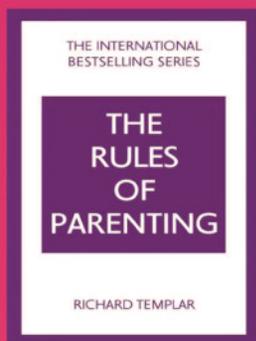
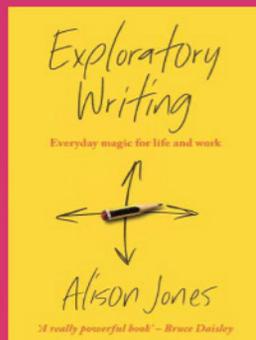
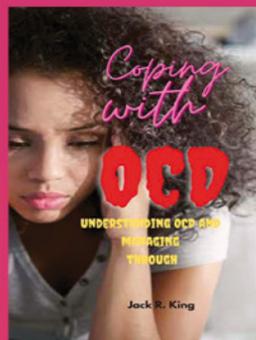
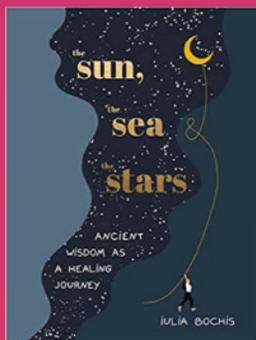
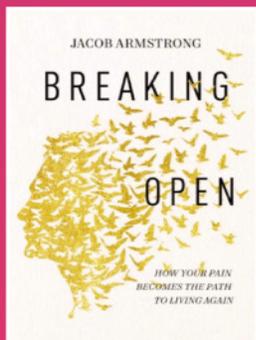
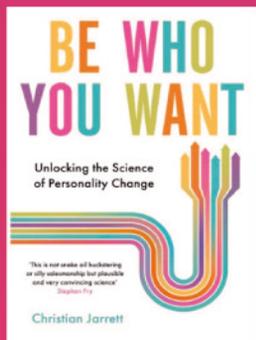
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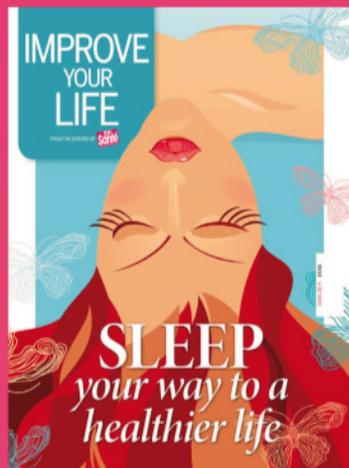
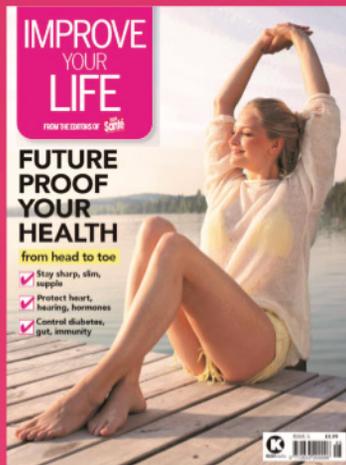
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