

DEVOTED TO MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

ISSUE 72
£5.99

happiful

CHRONIC STRESS CLUB.

And what being a member is doing to your hormones

'Wonder'
about the
possibilities

The best-kept wellbeing
secret, revealed

HANAMI

Blossom into your best self

The Japanese tradition
teaching you to cherish
every moment

The ultimate back-up plan

Should you consider
joining the 'career
cushioning' trend?

17

unusual ways
to boost
motivation





**“Those who don’t believe
in *magic* will never find it**

THE MINPINS, ROALD DAHL

It's the climb

Do you ever have days, or maybe months, where the challenges you're facing feel insurmountable? Time is passing, but you seem rooted in place, making no headway, no matter how hard you try.

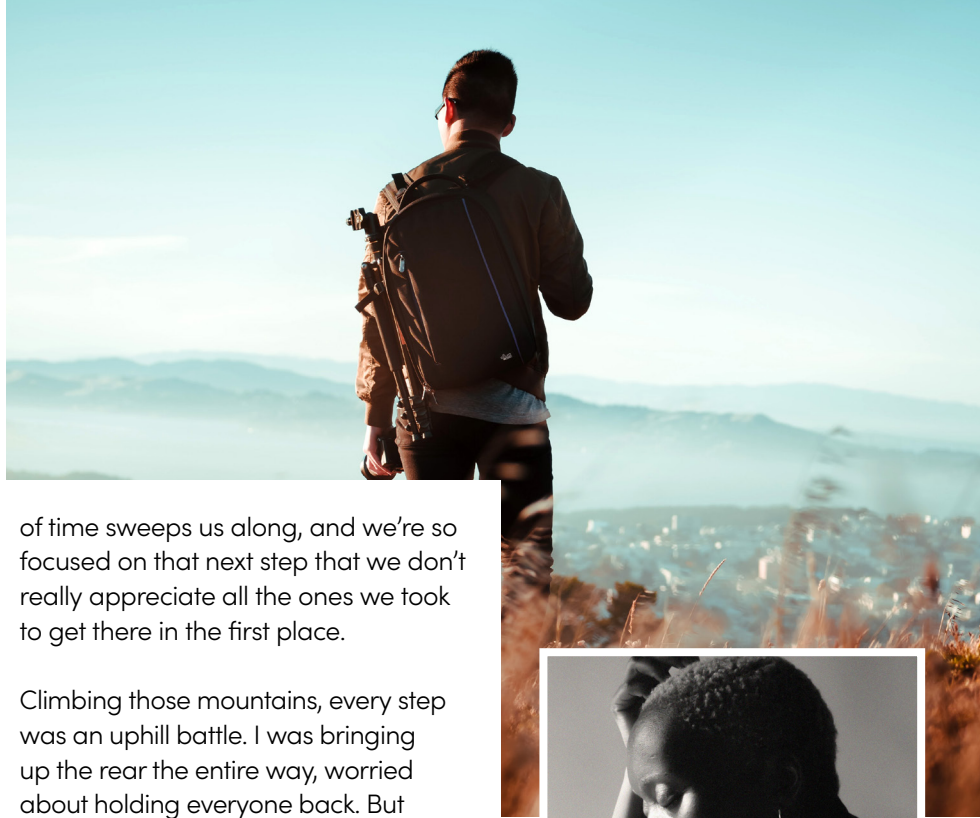
The truth is we're so used to worrying about every stumble, or infinitesimal step back that we don't often look over our shoulders to appreciate how far we've come.

Last summer, alongside a group of friends, I climbed the three highest mountains in the UK in 24 hours for charity - and it struck me what a real-life metaphor this was.

Every ascension offered spectacular views, but we didn't dare take more than a swift glance around us to appreciate the passing beauty, due to the strict timeline.

As we progressed, that view became obstructed by clouds, or the path hidden behind outcrops, weaving between the folds of Mother Nature. And from the top? Elation at having actually made it, knowing we'd come a long way, but, in a literal sense, not being able to see it. Then, moving immediately on.

When bringing together this issue, our sixth anniversary edition, naturally it felt like a time to celebrate, to reflect on how far we've come. But in doing so, I realised how little we do that very thing in real life. How the passage



of time sweeps us along, and we're so focused on that next step that we don't really appreciate all the ones we took to get there in the first place.

Climbing those mountains, every step was an uphill battle. I was bringing up the rear the entire way, worried about holding everyone back. But descending? I felt like I was flying down. Yes, I fell repeatedly, but did I get back up? Yes. Did I make it to the end? Yes.

Much like in life, we need to go at our own pace. We struggle and succeed uniquely, and above all, we'll all get there in our own time.

You'll get there in your own time.

If you take one thing away from this issue, know that you deserve to feel proud of every little win. That, much like the Japanese tradition of hanami teaches us, we need to relish the moment and celebrate our victories - we do ourselves a disservice to continue allowing time to pass us by without recognising them.

Happy reading,

REBECCA THAIR | EDITOR



At Happiful, inclusivity, representation, and creating a happier, healthier society are at the forefront of our mission. To find out more about our social and environmental pledges, visit happiful.com/pledges

W | happiful.com

F | happifulhq

T | [@happifulhq](https://twitter.com/happifulhq)

I | [@happiful_magazine](https://happiful_magazine)

Outside the box

14 What is hanami?

Could watching cherry blossom trees teach us about life and mortality?

25 What's your back-up plan?

Discover 'career cushioning' and why it's all the rage right now

28 A trip to the care farm

Join us to visit an organisation cultivating a new way of doing things

57 Let's talk about men's health

What are the pros and cons of making men's healthcare more accessible?

65 Real stories of hope

79 I wonder...

The power of tuning-in to awe-inspiring revealed

Food & health

34 Allergy or intolerance?

Learn to spot the difference

48 A twist on a classic

This is no ordinary chocolate cake

62 Can food help ADHD?

What would an ADHD-friendly diet look like?

71 Chronically stressed?

Explore the impact of cortisol imbalance

Relationships

17 Why pronouns matter

And how to use them

54 Be there for a friend

How to support a friend through an infertility diagnosis



Culture

8 Good news

13 The wellbeing wrap

30 This month's page-turners

42 Our top 10 recommendations





Wellbeing

36 How to deal with shame

38 Autism and eating disorders
Is there a link?

50 Tips for boosting motivation

Find your drive and get going

68 Self-care rituals

83 It's time to celebrate!

Cheer yourself on, with our journaling pages

Positive pointers

20 Routines in new places
How to re-establish them

22 A new way forward
What does the future of green energy look like?

31 Breaking age stereotypes

45 Living seasonally: spring
The second instalment in our series exploring our connection to nature

60 5 greatest career lessons
Michelle Elman shares her biggest mistakes and what they taught her

74 Start scrapbooking

Try this at home

44 What anxiety actually is

70 How to say 'no'

77 Try self-massage

82 It's time to go plogging

Expert review

Every issue of *Happiful* is reviewed by an accredited counsellor, to ensure we deliver the highest quality content while handling topics sensitively.

We are all inherently a creation of the natural world. Sometimes we forget this and become so wrapped up in life that we don't connect with nature, despite heaps of data suggesting that doing so will enhance your wellbeing. Head to p45 to check out some tips on getting out in spring – a transformative month, bringing in the new, after letting go of the old. Who knows, perhaps a walk in the spring air will have a transformative effect on you.



RAV SEKHON

BA MA MBACP (Accred)
Rav is a counsellor and psychotherapist with more than 10 years' experience.

Happiful Community

Meet the team of experts providing information, guidance, and insight throughout this issue



CLAUDINE THORNHILL

NT DipCNM mANP

Claudine is a naturopathic nutritionist and health coach.



DANIEL BROWNE

Ad.Dip CP Dip Hyp CS MNCS MHS

Daniel is a counsellor, psychotherapist, and hypnotherapist.



ALEX PETT

LLB CPCP NLP Cert ICF

Alex is a resilience coach, cold water swimmer, author and wellness podcaster.



ANGELIKA CUTUK-SHORT

BSc MSc

Angelika is a nutritionist, menopause specialist and weight loss coach.



KAREN SCHUMANN

Dip.Couns MBACP

Karen is a person-centred counsellor and EFT practitioner.



JEREMY SACHS

BA Hons DipCouns

Jeremy is an integrated psychotherapist who specialises in trauma.



JO ROWKINS

DipNT MBANT

Jo is a nutritional therapist with more than 10 years' experience.



CARLEY SYMES

BSc MBACP

Carley is a humanistic integrative counsellor who specialises in self-esteem.

Our team

EDITORIAL

Rebecca Thair | **Editor**

Kathryn Wheeler | **Features Editor**

Lauren Bromley-Bird | **Editorial Assistant**

Bonnie Evie Gifford, Kat Nicholls | **Senior Writers**

Becky Banham | **Content & Marketing Officer**

Michelle Elman, Claudine Thornhill | **Columnists**

Lucy Donoughue | **Head of Multimedia**

Ellen Lees | **Head of Content**

Keith Howitt | **Sub-Editor**

Rav Sekhon | **Expert Advisor**

ART & DESIGN

Amy-Jean Burns | **Head of Product**

Charlotte Reynell | **Creative Lead**

Rosan Magar | **Illustrator**

COMMUNICATIONS

Alice Greedus | **PR Manager**

CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Browne, Rosemary Richings, Fiona Thomas, Erica Crompton, Jacqueline Hooton, Caroline Butterwick, Laura Cooke, Jeremy Sachs, Rebecca Beattie, Jenna Farmer, Monica Parker

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Pett, Angelika Cutuk-Short, Karen Schumann, Jo Rowkins, Carley Symes

MANAGEMENT

Aimi Maunders | **Director & Co-Founder**

Emma Hursey | **Director & Co-Founder**

Paul Maunders | **Director & Co-Founder**

SUBSCRIPTIONS

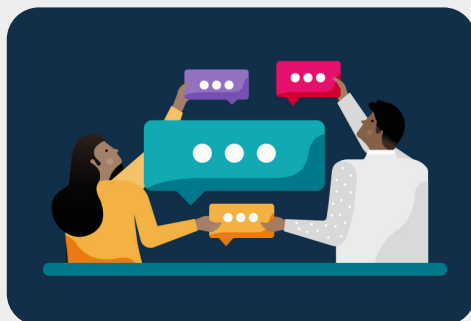
For new orders and back orders, visit shop.happiful.com, or call Newsstand on +44 (0)1227 277 248 or email subenquiries@newsstand.co.uk

CONTACT

Happiful, c/o Memiah, Building 3, Riverside Way, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3YL
Email us at hello@happiful.com

HAPPIFUL FAMILY

Helping you find the help you need.
Counselling Directory, Life Coach Directory, Hypnotherapy Directory, Nutritionist Resource, Therapy Directory



Join the Happiful Expert Panel

Are you a wellbeing expert with valuable insight to share? Happiful professional membership includes opportunities to be featured in our award-winning magazine. Discover how to join by emailing us at professionals@happiful.com



WORLD
LAND
TRUST™

www.carbonbalancedpaper.com
CBP006075



Find help

CRISIS SUPPORT

If you are in crisis and are concerned for your own safety, call **999** or go to **A&E**

Call Samaritans on **116 123** or email them at jo@samaritans.org

GENERAL LISTENING LINES

SANeline

SANeline offers support and information from 4pm–10pm: **0300 304 7000**

Mind

Mind offers advice Mon–Fri 9am–6pm, except bank holidays: **0300 123 3393**. Or email: info@mind.org.uk

Switchboard

Switchboard is a line for LGBT+ support. Open from 10am–10pm: **0300 330 0630**. You can email: chris@switchboard.lgbt

p25 **CONNECT WITH A LIFE COACH**
Learn more about life coaching and connect with a professional using lifecoach-directory.org.uk

p38 **SUPPORT FOR EATING DISORDERS**
Find information and support for those with eating disorders and their loved ones at beateatingdisorders.org.uk

p57 **MEN'S HEALTH**
To learn more about men's health – both mental and physical – and to discover local support, visit uk.movember.com

Our two-for-one tree commitment is made of two parts. Firstly, we source all our paper from FSC® certified sources. The FSC® label guarantees that the trees harvested are replaced, or allowed to regenerate naturally. Secondly, we will ensure an additional tree is planted for each one used, by making a suitable donation to a forestry charity. Happiful is a brand of Memiah Limited. The opinions, views and values expressed in Happiful are those of the authors of that content and do not necessarily represent our opinions, views or values. Nothing in the magazine constitutes advice on which you should rely. It is provided for general information purposes only. We work hard to achieve the highest possible editorial standards, however if you would like to pass on your feedback or have a complaint about Happiful, please email us at feedback@happiful.com. We do not accept liability for products and/or services offered by third parties. Memiah Limited is a private company limited by shares and registered in England and Wales with company number 05489185 and VAT number GB 920805837. Our registered office address is Building 3, Riverside Way, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3YL.



Keep it rolling



Illustration | Rosan Magar

£5.99
Per month

Monthly dose of positivity

Includes UK delivery

Cancel or pause anytime

shop.happiful.com

happiful

One undeniable truth is that finding the right help for each individual is a journey – what works for one of us will be different for someone else. But don't feel disheartened if you haven't found your path yet. Our Happiful family can help you on your way. Bringing together various arms of support, each of our sister sites focuses on a different method of nourishing your wellbeing – from counselling, to hypnotherapy, nutrition, coaching, and holistic therapy. Download our free Happiful app for more.

Prices and benefits are correct at the time of printing. For full terms and conditions, please visit happiful.com

The Uplift

SELF-LOVE

Diversifying our social feeds can improve body image

Scrolling social media and seeing countless bodies through a filtered lens can lead us to become pretty self-critical. But what if there was something we could do to counter this, and build a healthier relationship with ourselves? According to a recent study carried out by the University of New South Wales, Australia, looking at body positivity and body neutrality content online can help us do just that.

The two-week study saw 159 women, aged 18–24, join either a body-positive Facebook group, or an appearance-neutral group. By seeing as little as one post a day from these groups, researchers found it to be a ‘micro-intervention’ that decreased reported body dissatisfaction.

This research offers a sense of hope in an era where leaving



social media entirely isn’t feasible for many. Instead, filling our feeds with different body sizes, ethnicities, and disabilities can prevent or limit the negative impact social media can have.

“Being unhappy with your body is a risk factor for many mental health disorders. It’s an important predictor of eating disorders and depression, and is also linked to

some anxiety disorders,” explains lead author Dr Jasmine Fardouly.

“It’s very unrealistic to expect that adolescents will stop using social media altogether, so it’s not an effective long-term strategy. Social media isn’t going away. But as we’ve shown, it’s also not really the time you spend on it, it’s what you’re doing when you’re on it.”

Writing | Kat Nicholls

WORK

‘Tinder for flexible working’ job site launched

It’s time to swipe right on the flexible working job of your dreams. Award-winning campaigner, author, and broadcaster Anna Whitehouse, better known as Mother Pukka, has officially launched the new ‘Tinder of flexible working’. WorkYourWay aims to match both parents and non-parents with flexible working roles to suit their needs.

Despite research showing 87% of us want to work flexibly, just one in four roles are advertised

as offering this. To help bridge the gap, WorkYourWay, co-created by Whitehouse and Tim Grimes, is designed to help fill roles that have been sitting empty across all industries. Hoping to create more transparency for job hunters who want or need flexible working, WorkYourWay looks to fill a much-needed gap by removing the awkwardness of bringing up flexible hours.

With hundreds of companies already live and listed, jobseekers can filter by 23 different options

including workload, working patterns, as well as workplace and life events.

Anna commented: “For decades, we have all kept our lives and struggles secret, desperately trying to work around an archaic 9–5pm workday. Now, it’s time for change. Flexible working isn’t just for mums or dads. It’s for everyone.”

It’s long past time to avoid the awkward dance around the topic, and make finding flexible roles more transparent.

Writing | Bonnie Evie Gifford

HEALTH

New breast cancer screening units will help save lives

In 2021, it was estimated that nearly 11,000 women in the UK could be living with undiagnosed breast cancer as a result of the pandemic, which is why it’s more important than ever to continue having regular screenings. With this in mind, the government has recently pledged millions towards breast screening equipment for the NHS.

In line with the NHS Long Term Plan to improve early detection of cancer and survival rates, the £10 million pledged from the government will help to ensure the best outcome for patients by accelerating diagnosis and treatment for tens of thousands of people.

This funding is invested towards 29 new breast screening units (static and mobile), along with nearly 70 upgrades (58 live remote access upgrades for existing units, and 10 software upgrades to carry out X-rays and ultrasounds). Equipment will be delivered to sites where they are most needed, and the investment will allow patients to receive care close to home.

Steve Russell, NHS national director for screening and vaccinations, said: “Screening is vital in detecting breast cancer early and getting better outcomes for patients, and this further investment is great



news for improving access to breast screening services for women across England.”

Writing | Lauren Bromley-Bird





LIFESTYLE

Desk workers could undo sedentary lifestyle in minutes

These days, a sedentary lifestyle is something that can come with the job. But while it's often a commonly accepted part of modern-day living, this kind of lifestyle can come with serious health risks. So, what can you do about it? A new study published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports and Exercise* has an answer.

In the study, 11 healthy, middle-aged and older adults were invited to sit in a lab for eight hours for five days, replicating the standard working week. On one day, they sat for the full eight hours, only getting up for bathroom breaks. On the other days, the researchers trialed different strategies for breaking up the participants sitting, their goal being to discover what the least amount of walking we could do to offset the harmful effects of sitting.

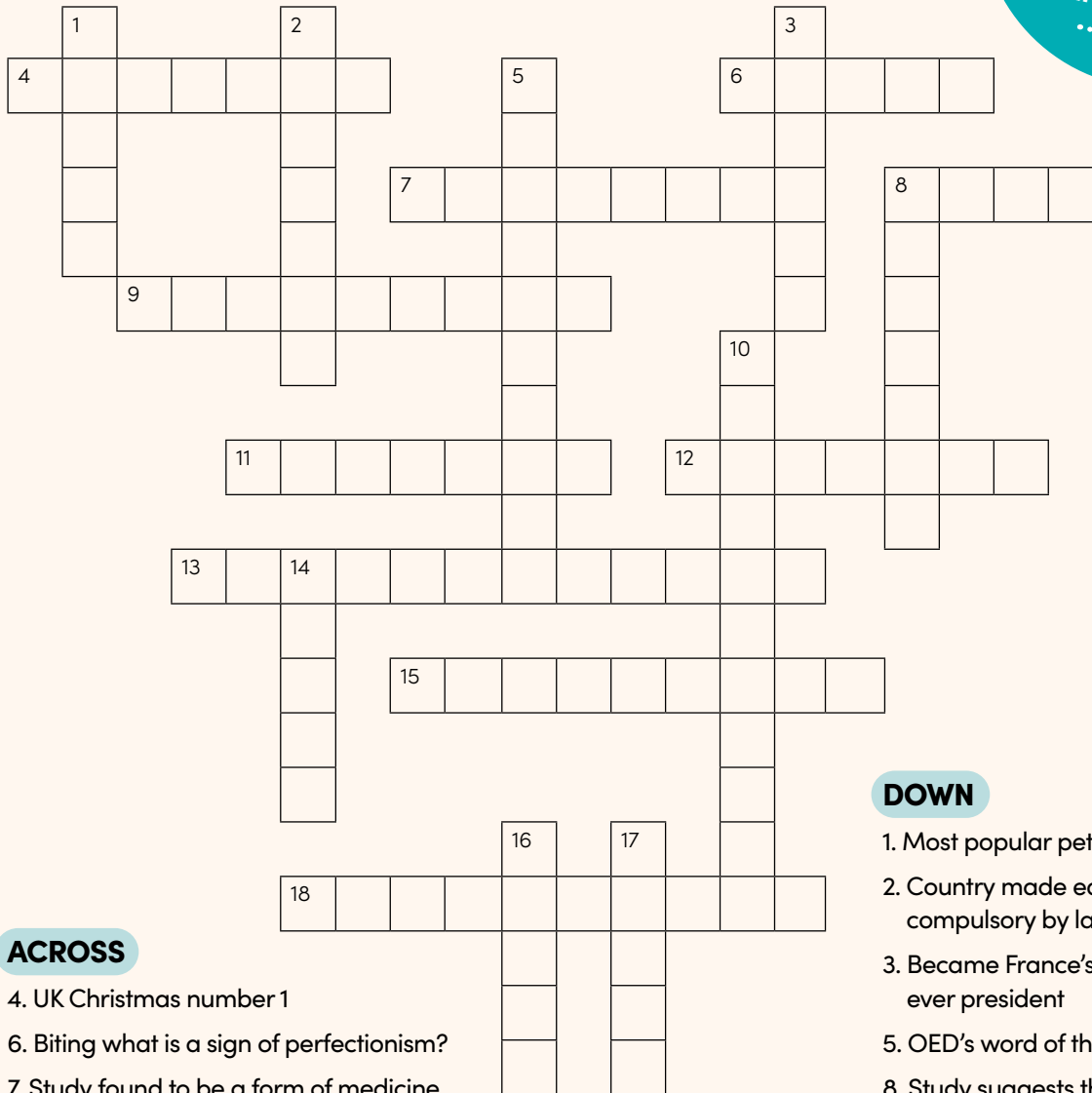
What they found was that a five-minute walk every half an hour was able to significantly reduce blood sugar levels, and also reduced feelings of fatigue and improved the participants' mood. That said, they saw that even short walks – such as a one-minute walk every hour – still reduced blood pressure in the participants.

When it comes to breaking out of a sedentary lifestyle, it can be hard to know where to begin. But this study provides a stepping stone to discovering how best to split up your day, and feel the full benefits of movement. **■**

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler

Take 5

Take a trip back in time, as we celebrate Happiful's sixth anniversary with a 2017-themed crossword



ACROSS

4. UK Christmas number 1
6. Biting what is a sign of perfectionism?
7. Study found to be a form of medicine
8. Charity launched campaign to prevent loneliness at Christmas
9. Best picture winner at the Oscars
11. Surname of artist with biggest hit single of 2017
12. What did research find begins by looking inwards
13. Fruit that keeps minds sharp
15. 25th country to legalise same sex marriage
18. Country that became 29th member of NATO

DOWN

1. Most popular pet name in the UK
2. Country made equal pay compulsory by law
3. Became France's youngest ever president
5. OED's word of the year
8. Study suggests this yeast spread might be brain food
10. Author of bestselling book of the year
14. Became a 'living entity' in New Zealand
16. What plays a role in sleeping patterns?
17. Movement began following bombshell report in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*

The wellbeing wrap



Polignano a Mare, a town in southern Italy, has been named **'the friendliest in the world'**, according to data from *Booking.com*



Black Mountains College, in Wales, is launching a **climate degree**, to inspire the next generation of activists



Guinness World Records named a new **'world's oldest dog'**, **Bobi**, who reached a milestone 30 years and 266 days as of 1 February



Edinburgh is the first European capital to back meat-free school meals in a bid to reduce its carbon footprint, and promote the 'Plant Based Treaty'

A STONE'S THROW FROM SUCCESS

Did you know there's a science behind skipping stones? Yes, the ideal pastime for some solitary contemplation can be perfected by opting for a heavier, curved stone. While you might typically choose thinner, flat rocks, this suggestion in *Proceedings of the Royal Society A* is based on the idea that a heavier stone can get what applied mathematician Dr Ryan Palmer calls "a super-elastic response, where you get a mega-bounce". Maybe a sign that success can come in surprising ways?

3PM SLUMP ALREADY?

When are you most productive? And when do you drop off the boil? New research from Office Freedom claims to know the exact time! In general, workers hit their stride at 10:22, but slump at 13:27 – followed by another at 14:06. But don't worry, we've got you covered. Head to p50 for 17 tips to maximise your motivation.

Stepping up to explore the outdoors, Britons reportedly walked an average of 1,588 miles in 2022, according to Garmin, which is equivalent to travelling from Land's End to John O'Groats, and nearly all the way back again! Feeling inspired? Get out in that fresh air and see where your feet take you.



What do you meme?

They may be a surefire way to get a laugh from a friend, but memes also help new audiences discover classic literature. A study by Cambridge University found that after Shakespeare, Jane Austen's characters in *Pride and Prejudice* are most 'memed', showing how they resonate with modern audiences.

HOW REFRESHING

We all know how important it is to stay hydrated, but a new study in the *eBioMedicine* journal offers even more reasons to keep on top of that H₂O. Analysing data from 11,000+ adults over 30 years, it found that proper hydration can help slow ageing, and reduce your likelihood of developing a chronic health condition. So, if you needed any more reminders, grab yourself a good glass of water – it's definitely looking half-full now.

In an effort to help clean up our planet, new regulations have come into effect in Spain that will require tobacco companies to help foot the bill for cleaning up cigarette butts. By doing so, they may be incentivised to reduce single-use plastic in production, and will be held accountable for waste!

Lots of love...

Finding ways to cope with grief is no easy feat, but an idea from a nine-year-old in Nottingham, who missed her grandparents, has resulted in an outpouring of love. Matilda Handy contacted Gedling Crematorium over Christmas, suggesting it could offer a postbox for people to write to lost loved ones. The team installed a 'postbox to heaven', particularly to help those needing to express their emotions, and struggling over anniversaries and holidays. Within weeks, it received more than 100 heartfelt letters.

EVERYONE'S A WINNER

Sportsmanship seems to be the real winner at the recent Tour of Slovenia, as a pair of teammates leading the pack made an unusual, but amicable, choice on who should cross the line first. While on their bikes, cyclists Rafal Majka and Tadej Pogacar used the classic game of 'rock, paper, scissors' to decide the victor. Rafal won, and just edged over the line first, but both had their arms around each other in celebration.





What is hanami?

As spring quickly approaches, what can tuning-in to the transience of the world around us tell us about ourselves?

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler Illustrating | Rosan Magar

The phrase ‘beauty is fleeting’ can feel melancholic, like life itself is slipping through our fingers before we’re able to get a proper hold on it. And, to combat that fleetingness, we humans often do whatever it takes to cling to the beauty around us while we can – these days, filling our camera rolls with thousands of snaps, encasing flowers in resin, making the temporary permanent. Still, the landscape painters of the Renaissance era were trying to do the same thing: hold on.

Ultimately though, we can’t contain the passing of time. That all the awe-inspiring, living things around us will eventually die and decay isn’t, on the surface, an uplifting sentiment. But perhaps it should be?

Between March and April, Japan’s cherry blossoms, also known as sakura, peak. The soft, pink and white flowers create a flourishing canopy over rural and urban landscapes alike, and are a big deal – with the public able to access daily bloom updates on national news, and festivals are held across the country. In Yoshino, Kansai, more than 30,000 trees bloom together, while in Tokyo, Ueno Park is home to 1,000 trees, which are illuminated every evening so that the public can marvel at the blossoms.

But this season is more than just a feast for the eyes. At the centre of the festivals and celebrations is hanami, the custom of gathering underneath the trees with friends and family, to enjoy both the transience of the blooms, and togetherness. People pack picnics,

sometimes with spring-themed foods such as ankake meatballs, inari sushi, strawberries, and red bean mochi.

It’s a custom that is thought to have begun in the Nara period, between 710 and 794. Later on, Emperor Saga of the Heian period began holding flower-watching parties beneath the blossoms, and poems written about the flowers from across the centuries see them as a metaphor for life, in all its fleeting beauty. Matsuo Bashō a renowned Japanese poet of the Edo period put it like so:

*“How many, many things
They call to mind –
These cherry blossoms.”*

Like the cherry blossoms, our lives are fleeting. The whole concept of hanami is linked to >>>

“
So many of us
let our lives
slip by without
celebration or
recognition



Buddhist beliefs surrounding mortality and mindfulness – the importance of living and celebrating what we have right now, no matter how long it might last. But, unlike the celebration of cherry blossoms, so many of us let our lives slip by without celebration or recognition.

Australian palliative nurse Bronnie Ware wrote the book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, inspired by her observations and conversations with the patients that she took care of. The five regrets she shares are: 'I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself,' 'I wish I hadn't worked so hard,' 'I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings,' 'I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends,' and 'I wish I let myself be happier.'

How many of those strike a chord? So often, we get bogged down in the everyday – be it through necessity or habit. A fulfilling and regretless life will look drastically different for each of us – but, perhaps if we took time to really focus on the limited but beautiful nature of life, we'd find ourselves connecting with the things that truly matter to us.

Building on the tradition of hanami, perhaps it's time to take a moment to ponder this topic a little more, and spring is the perfect time to do just that. The natural world around us is coming to life and filling with colour. The air feels fresh, and ripe for new beginnings.

Venturing out into nature with this new perspective to hand might prove fruitful. Although you probably won't be faced with miles of cherry blossom, here in the UK, we do have similar signs of the season. Think about the daffodils that bloom around this time of the year, and which have become so synonymous with

springtime – their sunny petals are just the thing we need after the dark winter. And there are other springtime bulbs, like crocuses and tulips, that can equally be a reminder of the passing of time, and the wonder to be found in momentary beauty.

And, let's not forget one of the most important aspects of hanami: togetherness. Spending time outside can offer mental health benefits for all of us, and there's something about walking and talking that can really help us get things off our chests. What's more, practising gratitude is a great exercise when reflecting on the things hanami prompts, and our relationships with others often top these lists.

So, as the cold weather finally begins to thaw, and the beauty of the natural world begins to blossom again, spend some time this year considering the lessons you can take from it. What does this time of the year naturally prompt you to think about? Are you looking for a fresh start, a new perspective, a new attitude? Now may be the time to release it. ■



Why pronouns matter in therapy

Creating a safe, inclusive environment for others should be of paramount importance to us all, especially in spaces where people already feel vulnerable – like the therapy room. The good news is there are several simple actions you can take, starting now

Writing | Daniel Browne

“Hello. I’m Dan, and my pronouns are he/him.” It’s a standard way of introducing myself these days; letting people know what my name is, but also how they can refer to me. But why is that important? And what is a pronoun?

Pronouns are all about how you refer to someone, and how they express their gender identity – such as ‘I/me’, ‘she/her’, ‘he/him’, ‘they/them’. While ‘she/her’ and ‘he/him’ are typically seen as gendered terms, those who are gender non-conforming, or some trans people, may prefer neutral pronouns such as ‘they/them’ (which can be used in the singular). And some people may prefer to be referred to by their name only, rather than using pronouns at all.

You may be used to referring to someone using gendered pronouns, but it’s vital to refer to people who use non-gendered pronouns in the correct way, too. Not everyone resonates with the binary definitions of gender, and it’s important that this is respected.

Indeed, every single person is worthy of dignity and respect, including in the therapy room. Using someone’s correct pronouns, and making an effort to get it right, is a small thing that makes a huge difference. It will reassure LGBTQIA+ people, and trans people in particular, that they are welcome, and in general life, that you are an ally. And this is something that everybody deserves to feel.

Now, it’s OK to feel confused or not quite get it if this is

all new to you. However, it’s certainly essential to take the time required to understand this concept and get it right, as a simple way we can all show each other respect and take a step towards making a more inclusive society. And, from a professional perspective, it’s all part of working in an empathetic way while utilising congruence and unconditional positive regard, which is how all therapists should work (whether they are person-centred or not).

Names and pronouns are a personal thing, and the therapy room is a safe space to build rapport and help people to feel at ease. Using the incorrect name or misgendering can genuinely be upsetting or even distressing for a trans person, so getting it right from the outset matters. >>>



This means not making any assumptions – a lesson that applies in all walks of life – and asking the correct questions during the initial consultation.

I always recommend that therapists have a question about pronouns and chosen names on their consultation forms. While I've been accused of pushing my ideology on to people, that's not the case. It's simply about respecting my clients, and anyone who does not feel able to give that respect to their clients

should explore why that is. And for those in other workplaces, it could be worth including in introductory HR forms, or encouraging people to add pronouns in email signatures, to allow for clarity and to avoid assumptions.

Having worked with many trans people over the years, I'm all too aware of the challenges they face – including when accessing therapeutic services. Sadly, judgemental and discriminatory people exist, even in medical

professions. Some people might have not been referred to using their chosen name, and incorrect pronouns have been used. Some people's identities have been dismissed, and some therapists have even made it very clear they do not accept trans people. This is obviously completely unacceptable, and unlawful too, and the damage it does can mean some people don't seek further support for years if at all. But be aware that all therapists should be guided by the Equality Act

“

Introduce yourself by your name and pronouns. Immediately you will be promoting an inclusive, accessible environment

2010, which protects trans people and others from discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, religion, sex, age, disability, etc.

It can therefore mean that some trans people are very apprehensive when reaching out for support, or attending a consultation with a new therapist. It can be nerve-racking enough without throwing in some of these additional worries. Ultimately, that is why this stuff really matters, and is so important.

So, how do you find out what someone's pronouns are? The simple thing is to ask, and for therapists, to ask every client. Some people won't know what you are talking about, but that's an opportunity to explain it to them. If you provide an intake form that clients complete before seeing you, include the question on your form. You might also want to include a 'prefer not to say' option, as of course people have a right to not disclose

certain information. Also, some people may not be sure what their pronouns are.

Something else you can do to make others comfortable, and that applies in all aspects of life, is what I did at the start of this article. Introduce yourself by your name and pronouns. Immediately you will be promoting an inclusive, accessible environment.

Whether it's in the therapy room or beyond, the rule still applies: if you are not sure what someone's pronouns are, it's best not to make assumptions. Instead, use the gender-neutral pronouns they/them. They can be used in the singular, and you can't go wrong by using them.

Taking this further, you may also want to look at how you write letters. If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, instead of writing "Dear Sir/Madam", use "Dear Client" or "To whom it may concern".

MEET THE EXPERTS



*Daniel Browne is a counsellor, psychotherapist, and hypnotherapist helping people get to where they want to be in life. Find out more on his profile on the **Counselling Directory**.*

If you have policies, it can also be a good idea to review them, and remove any gendered pronouns, as more often than not, it's not necessary to use them.

I understand that this feels like a minefield for some people, and mistakes may happen. However, if you make a mistake, own it, apologise, and commit to getting it right next time. Most people will be forgiving to begin with, but do work on getting it right next time. And for therapists, remember that you are responsible for getting it right, not your client.

You should always be guided by the desire to treat others with respect and dignity. All clients deserve that. All humans deserve that. And therapists have a large part to play in delivering that. **■**

Fives tips for re-establishing a comfortable routine

For neurodivergent people, routines can bring relief and help tackle feelings of anxiety. Here, we explore five things to consider when you need to re-establish them in the face of change

Writing | Rosemary Richings | Illustrating | Rosan Magar

I'm a Canadian dyspraxic with sensory processing issues. One of the frustrating aspects of how my brain works is the danger of absorbing too much information – sensory overload creeps in if I try to do too much at once. Last year, I moved to Marrakech, Morocco, a city with sensory sledgehammer characteristics. But routine has always been an important coping mechanism for me, and the glue to my focus and productivity.

When you move somewhere new, you must re-learn all your routine preferences, and not everything in your life will be the same. Here are a few solutions I found for that exact problem.

1. Don't overlook the comfort of familiar things

When I first moved abroad, many of my belongings gathered

dust in boxes tucked away in storage. Looking back, I wish I had brought over many of my most familiar things much sooner. I was very aware of this when I started to miss an item of immense sentimental value – a stuffed animal version of Simba from *The Lion King* I have had since I was five.

No matter how different your life becomes from the one you left behind, items of sentimental value could help you hold on to an element of the familiar. I know that, personally, everything seems far less overwhelming with my Simba stuffed animal in my home. Simba was a trusted companion during my first hospitalisation experience, and I'm proud to say that he still lives beside my bedroom lamp, there for hugs whenever I need him.

2. Rest when you need to

When my husband and I started the apartment-hunting process, I didn't have a predictable routine to cling to, apart from my freelance work. I had no clear expectations of my environment and routine, which can trigger sensory overload.

I had to plan extra rest to protect myself from this. There was a lot I had to do, but I could get away with not saying 'yes' to every opportunity to talk to people. Not listening to my body when I am close to sensory overload is dangerous; my brain goes into full fog mode. When the overload is at its worst, I am dizzy, unfocused, and anxiety clouds my judgement. Before we decided on an apartment, I coped by sleeping, shutting doors, and not speaking to people for extended periods more than usual.



3. Give yourself time to explore

Often, your limits will surprise you. What helped me a lot when I first moved was going for walks on my own, to get to know how my body reacts to my environment. I also make time to test-drive different routines until something works. As soon as I find that something, I cannot let it go.

4. Keep doing things you have always enjoyed

I have always enjoyed reading, listening to music, and jogging. I always make time for these things when adapting to an unfamiliar environment. Continuing to do activities you enjoy will often energise you and keep you motivated. If you're unsure what that looks like, think of this in the context of your most portable hobbies that you're self-motivated to do on your own.

5. Be open when you're struggling

"I'm OK," is what those who care about you want to hear, and that can make admitting what isn't working feel so painful. But it can also be freeing. People who have known you the longest can fill in the blanks about why you behave in a certain way. That perspective can help.

When even that doesn't work, and you think this could be a much deeper issue than being

“I make time to test-drive different routines until something works”

overwhelmed by a lack of comfortable routine, consider looking into your options for professional counselling. Help is out there, and there's no shame in seeking it. [📌](#)

Rosemary Richings is a freelance writer specialising in neurodiversity and disability-related issues. Her debut book, 'Stumbling Through Space and Time: Living Life with Dyspraxia', is out now.

ENERGISING DISCOVERIES

Revolutionising the way we source energy is of paramount importance in the fight to address climate change, and a recent breakthrough has everyone talking about the power of nuclear fusion...

Writing | Rebecca Thair



With the climate crisis ever-present in the news, and regular promises from the people in charge about cutting carbon emissions – such as the UK's pledge, set into law in 2021, to slash emissions 78% by 2035 – you might be wondering what action is *actually* being taken. How can these emissions targets realistically be achieved?

A new hope for net zero came at the end of 2022, with environmentalists around the world rejoicing at news that had been 60 years in the making. What got everyone so excited? The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's National Ignition Facility, in California, announced a huge breakthrough in the development of nuclear fusion, revealing it had achieved

“ignition”. This meant that, for the first time, scientists used nuclear fusion to create more energy than was required to produce it. So, why is this such a big deal?

What is nuclear fusion?

Initially discovered in the 1930s, nuclear fusion mimics the process that powers stars – including our sun. In a controlled space, at extreme temperatures and pressure, atoms are forced together. This causes them to form heavier atoms, releasing significant amounts of energy as they do so.

The goal is about achieving ‘net energy gain’, or ‘scientific breakeven’, by creating more energy through a process than it requires to make it, with the US Energy Secretary, Jennifer Granholm, calling this milestone moment “one of the most

impressive scientific feats of the 21st century”.

How can nuclear fusion help the environment?

It might sound very space age, and, honestly, as much as I've simplified the explanation, it's all incredibly complicated to do, which is why people are getting excited about the possibilities this breakthrough holds for sustainable energy.

In essence, not only could a nuclear fusion reactor create more energy than it consumes, it creates no greenhouse gases or carbon in the process. This means that, if harnessed correctly, nuclear fusion could provide us with a clean, limitless energy source – eradicating the need for fossil fuels. Plus, it has no risk of a meltdown, as with nuclear fission which involves splitting atoms.

NUCLEAR FUSION COULD PROVIDE US WITH A CLEAN, LIMITLESS ENERGY SOURCE

What does this mean for the future of energy?

Firstly, we can't get too ahead of ourselves. While this is a big milestone, there is a long way to go before nuclear fusion can be effectively used around the world, and plugged into the power grid. For one thing, this test saw scientists have 50% more energy output than consumed, but the power generated was still minimal – about 0.9 kilowatt-hours, AKA the energy it takes to power a microwave (based on EDF Energy usage estimates).

Given the temperatures required are astronomical, literally that of the stars but in this case created by lasers, it's understandable that it's tricky to control, and will require a much bigger reactor to increase output

Reaching net zero

What else could help?

- Investing in low-cost solar, battery, and wind power could contribute to halving emissions produced from creating electricity by 2030, according to the World Wildlife Fund.
- Government policies pushing support towards electric cars and other vehicles, would help to drastically cut fuel requirements and emissions. In a positive outlook, electric car sales increased 41% in 2020, noted in the Global EV Outlook 2021.
- Rewilding projects help to redress the balance with nature, by increasing plantlife that will help to take CO² from the air.

levels. The good news is that the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor is already under construction in France, and is due to be operational in 2025.

The future is looking bright for this exciting scientific revelation, with hopes that nuclear fusion could be producing electricity by 2030, and helping to address the UK's aim to be three-quarters of the way to net zero by 2050. However, the intention is not to replace renewable sources such as wind and solar power, but to supplement them. To address the climate crisis will require many elements to come together, not a single moonshot, but the possibilities of nuclear fusion have certainly put a twinkle in the eye of scientists, and sparked a continuing drive to fuel our world better. **■**

**“Even the darkest
night will end and
the sun will rise”**

LES MISÉRABLES, VICTOR HUGO



Should you be career cushioning?

The relationship technique that's made its way into the workplace, and how it could bring you some comfort in uncertain times

Writing | **Fiona Thomas**

If there's one thing we all want from work, it's a sense of security. If you've experienced a ripple of unease within your organisation as the cost of living crisis dominates headlines, you're not the only one. Global HR experts at Remote recently shared that nearly half (44%) of employees are worried about job security. No one wants to sit in that discomfort for long, so with the threat of a global recession looming, you might be tempted to try 'career cushioning' as a way to future-proof your employment status.

What is career cushioning?

The term has been adapted from the world of dating, where people in relationships have been known

to sneakily scout out potential love interests to serve as a back-up plan. Romantically speaking, it's not the classiest of moves. But in an employment context, career cushioning is designed to break your fall should you find yourself facing job cuts. Simply put, career cushioning is all about preparing to change jobs without actually leaving your current employer, putting you in the best possible position for job-hunting if or when the time comes.

Even if you consider yourself somehow immune in your current role, there is always that sense of unease that the rug could be pulled from under you if the economy takes a hit. Let's be honest, nothing in this life is certain, so setting up your career

cushion is a way to keep your options open without jumping ship unnecessarily.

Consider purpose

Working within an organisation whose purpose aligns with yours has the potential to boost your motivation, which could theoretically make your job more secure as you perform at your best. Having a sense of purpose in life has been said to promote healthy behaviour habits, improve sleep, help with depression, and even have a positive impact on physical health. Try out the following journal prompts below to do some self-investigation, and get one step closer to finding your calling.

Spend some time reflecting on these points to connect >>>



44%

**of employees are
worried about
job security**

with your passions. If you can't seem to pinpoint your 'thing', talk to friends and family to see what they have observed. Sometimes outsiders can pick up on our habits and interests more accurately and, if nothing else, it might give you some food for thought.

1. If you won the lottery, what job would you do just for enjoyment?
2. Are you known in your friendship group for being fanatical about something in particular?
3. What similar themes crop up in the books you read or podcasts you listen to?
4. What activity makes you feel like the best version of yourself?
5. How do you want your work to impact others?

Define your values

Thinking about the long-term shape of your career can be daunting, but I encourage you to imagine a world where



Fiona Thomas is a freelance writer and author, whose new book, 'Work It Out' is available now (Welbeck Balance, £9.99). Visit fionalikestoblog.com for more.

employment ticks all the boxes you require, exceeds your expectations, and offers a sense of fulfilment. Start by reflecting on your work history: was it the paid sick leave at a particular job that helped your wellbeing? Perhaps it was the social aspect of being in an office that put a smile on your face? At the other end of the spectrum, maybe being in a management role pays well, but you'd prefer to make money in a creative industry. Make a list of exactly what you want your work future to look and feel like, and keep this in mind as you create your career cushion.

Upgrade your skills

Based on the list you just formulated, pinpoint any gaps in your training that need attention. Do a little research into what employers are looking for, and find ways to brush up your skills while in your current role. You could take a younger staff member under your wing and add mentorship to your CV,

or seek permission to write an internal newsletter to show off your communication skills. For more technical training such as web development, software and graphic design, check out your local college or search the Open University website. Your employer may already offer free access to an online learning platform such as Udemy for Business, so make use of these courses if they're available.

Update your CV

There's nothing worse than seeing a job vacancy with a same-day deadline, and then rewriting your CV and social media bios in a panic. Take advantage of the time you have at your disposal and update your job history, skills, and personal statement with precision. Make sure to include your current job title in the heading, and pepper relevant soft and hard skills throughout, as many employers now use software to filter out applicants who don't meet all the specifications.

Utilise LinkedIn

According to LinkedIn's website, eight people are hired on the platform every minute. Set aside some time to update your profile, and engage with people in your industry. Keeping your profile up to date, and talking to peers, allows you to showcase your skills and experience, while building authority in your chosen field. Instead of 'liking' someone's post, genuinely respond with insights from your own lived experience, point them in the direction of another interesting article, or tag others who may have something unique to add to the conversation.

Above all, rest in the knowledge that having an unpredictable career path needn't be a bad thing. Open yourself up to the possibility that although looking for a new job can be tiresome, doing this prep work ahead of time will stand you in good stead to thrive in the future, no matter what direction you take. **■**



A rustic retreat

Cultivating positive mental wellbeing takes on a whole new meaning when you visit a care farm

Writing | Erica Crompton

It's a late Tuesday morning as I pull into the gravelly path that leads to Lower Drayton Farm. "Where's the care farm?" I ask, a little lost, and the local farmer, Ray Bowers, gives a few directions, enthusiastically adding, "Enjoy!"

A short drive on and, tucked behind some brambles, I spot the sign. Up ahead, to the left of some tractors, a pheasant passes by. My guide for the day, Carol Parkes, who runs care here, is in the greenhouse, and a well-fed lavender bush frames the entrance to this small farm within a farm. The setting could easily be described as idyllic.

"It's getting a bit wild, the lavender!" muses Jack*, who volunteers here, tending to the plants and animals to improve his wellbeing, while learning new skills and making friends. "We've got pumpkins over there, and loads of chickens!" he adds as he shows me into a small cabin for a cup of tea – the central hub of this sanctuary.

Care farms are not a new concept, and each one dotted around the UK is different, but they share a few common threads; they are set in rural farm locations, offering opportunities for people to learn, grow, and develop their sense of wellbeing and self-esteem. Here, at Chase Aqua Rural Enterprise (CARE), holistic day opportunities such as art therapy and wreath-making are offered in a peaceful, farmland setting. Carol Parkes welcomes me, before finding seating under a canopy of flowers, and begins to tell me more in her suitably calming voice.

"Our team teaches people lots of transferable skills on our courses, and we're starting to teach about the mental wellbeing, not just physical wellbeing, of the animals they care for," Carol says. "The animals we home are helping people all the time, not just young people but their families, too. We give people a real sense of peace here, and everyone who comes looks

forward to the cuddle time with the chickens, guinea pigs, and rabbits. We've recently started fundraising activities to help families fleeing war in Ukraine, and are welcoming Ukrainian families on to the farm for support and nurturing, too."

It's a wellness formula that works, and there's science to support Carol's work at the care farm. At nearby Staffordshire University, emeritus professor of psychology, David Clark-Carter agrees that caring for animals and plants can offer a remedy to some of the factors that contribute to poor wellbeing.

"Loneliness, isolation, the behaviour of others on social media, a feeling of lack of worth and purpose in life, lack of physical exercise, and living in an overly built-up environment, can all impact and create poor mental health," David says. "One way to counteract this is to have the opportunity to look after an animal or a plant. This can give a structure to life, as there



**Names have been changed*

are specific times when plants, and even more so animals, need to be tended. That dependence on you provides a feeling of responsibility for more than just yourself in a non-threatening and non-judgemental setting.

“There are added benefits to mental wellbeing from taking physical exercise and having physical contact. It also helps if you found the activity so absorbing that, for a while, you did not feel drawn to your phone. All these benefits could be gained from visiting a care farm where there’s a physical and psychological boost, which research shows comes from a greener environment. With sensitive management, it could be a chance to make friends, too,” says David.

Back on the farm, it’s certainly friendly.

Jane*, another volunteer, takes me to meet Daisy, a large white rabbit who lives in a pen with several young, grey chicks. Jane offers a chick for me to hold, and I’m surprised by how light they are, and so very soft. Next, I hold Daisy the rabbit, and am smitten – it’s easy to see how the cuddle time with the animals is so popular with guests.

“Holding a chick will help children settle and stay still, they’ll be more aware of their movements when they’re holding a small bird. It creates a real sense of calm, stillness, and warmth for children,” Carol explains.

As a person with lived experience of psychosis, and all

Care farms are set in rural locations, offering opportunities for people to learn, grow, and develop their sense of wellbeing and self-esteem

the stress and anxiety that comes with it, I hope to visit the care farm at Lower Drayton Farm more. One of the things Carol mentions is how it’s helpful for people to see the life cycle of the animals, especially the chickens laying eggs and giving birth.

I’ve learnt that life is done best when care, respect, and non-judgemental attitudes are employed, just like they are here. As I stroke Daisy one last time, I notice her snow-white coat is just as wholesome, and lovely as the care farm itself. ■

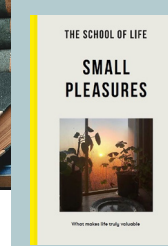
For more information visit ChaseAquaRuralEnterprise.com

Happiful reads...

From a book about life's little pleasures to a guidebook that will nurture your creative nature, here are four reads we think will be right up your street

Writing | **Lauren Bromley-Bird**

When life is chaotic and busy, it can be difficult to see the good in the everyday. It's only when we stop for a moment to notice, that we begin to really appreciate life's little pleasures. For those of you who need a little bit of encouragement to press pause and find a moment for appreciation, The



Small Pleasures – What Makes Life Truly Valuable by The School of Life (Out now)

School of Life's insightful read is here to enlighten you.

From driving on the motorway at night, to soaking in a warm bath, this delightful read sums up the most ordinary, everyday pleasures that can bring momentary joy to us, and delves

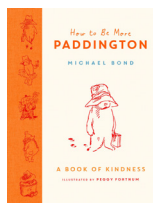
into why these events may be as wonderful as they are. And what part do we have to play in this? All we have to do is to make sure the small pleasures in life don't go by unnoticed.

Must reads



Start Painting Now: Discover Your Artistic Potential by Emily Powell and Sarah Moore (Out now)

Artist Emily Powell and doctor Sarah Moore are here to show you that you don't have to be an experienced artist to enjoy art and reap the wellbeing benefits that come with it. Backed by the latest research, find out how to nurture your creative nature, and get the most out of picking up a paintbrush.



How To Be More Paddington by Michael Bond (Out now)

To be friendly, well-meaning, and wise are just a few of the lessons we can take from the nation's much-loved bear, Paddington. This beautifully illustrated book captures what it means to be kind in this collection of inspirational quotes, as Paddington travels life's journey.



The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Transform Your Life by David Robson (Out now)

Award-winning science writer David Robson is on a mission to expose the powerful connection that exists between our mindset and the outcome of our experiences, known as the 'expectation effect'. He provides easy-to-use skills to help us harness this effect, so that we can lead a happier and healthier life. **11**

You're *never* too old

From pressures to conform to a certain aesthetic, to diet culture and ageism, the fitness space isn't always a welcoming and inclusive one. But, shaking up stereotypes and flying the flag for health and fitness for all ages, Jacqueline Hooton is the inspiring health advocate we all need

Writing | **Jacqueline Hooton**

“Careful old lady, you’ll break a hip dancing.” Just one example of the many ageist comments I’ve received online.

But at 60 years old, I’d hardly describe myself as an ‘old lady’, and it would take a lot more than a few online comments to stop me from dancing and enjoying myself. I know I am very unlikely to break a hip dancing (or otherwise), because I understand how women can support bone health and avoid fractures during menopause and beyond.

I’m a personal trainer, specialising in helping women in their 50s and 60s get strong, fit, and healthy, avoid physical decline, and enjoy optimal ageing. Like many fitness professionals, I utilise social media to share health and fitness advice, exercises, and workouts. But I didn’t fully appreciate how widespread ageism is until one of my Instagram reels went viral,

reaching more than 10 million people. Since then, my Instagram reels regularly reach over a million people, and in total, my most popular reels have been seen by more than 50 million people worldwide.

While I have grown a sizable, and mostly appreciative, audience, I attract a fair amount of judgement and negativity as well. I’ve been told I should dye my grey hair to look younger. I frequently receive comments referring to me as ‘granny’. Some have said my children must be embarrassed by my online presence. I’ve been criticised for wearing shorts, told to ‘stop dancing’, and I need to ‘act my age’.

But I don’t let these personal attacks deter me, because I aim to encourage other women to embrace physical activity at any age, and part of this means challenging negative age stereotypes and ageism.

I’m a mum of five grown-up children, and a grandmother. My youngest son is at university, my parents are in their 80s, and I’m a business owner. I’m typical of the women I work with, who are often the filler sandwiched between older but dependent children, and ageing parents or relatives in need of support. They may have demanding careers, businesses, and jobs. Many may be struggling with menopause symptoms, and other health issues. Having time to address their own needs can be challenging.

These practical barriers to exercise are often combined with perceived barriers; some women worry they’ve left it too late, imagine they need lots of time to exercise, or feel anxious about being judged for their body size or shape. It’s no wonder that one in two women in the UK does not exercise, according to a survey by Nuffield Health. >>>



up bone loss, it is also vital for mid-life women to engage in strengthening activities twice a week. Strengthening exercises promote healthier bones, reduce the risk of injury, and help support functional ability for daily activities, and can be achieved with bodyweight exercises, hand-held weights, resistance bands, and gym machines. And I'm also aware that not everyone is comfortable in a gym environment, so, my online workouts focus on showing women how they can still do strengthening activities at home.

Challenging age stereotypes is essential

This is a huge inspiration for me, as I aim to make exercise feel accessible and achievable to mid-life women through my online content. At the same time, I think it's important to inform and inspire women to take action. Every morning I walk, run, or cycle on the beach where I live, and I share these updates on my Instagram stories. I want to encourage women to get outside every day, like I do, for their physical and mental health. I frequently receive messages to

say they've seen my morning activity update, and it encourages them to go for a walk as well. This is wonderful because a brisk 20-minute walk each day makes a significant contribution to the UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines, which recommends adults accumulate 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (like walking) a week.

Given that post-menopausal women are at an increased risk of bone fracture, as hormonal changes significantly speed

But if you're wondering why all of this is so important, take note. In the UK, the ONS has revealed that the average life expectancy for women is 83 years old, but healthy life expectancy is 64 years. This means women spend the last 20 years of their life in poor and deteriorating health. But it is possible to close this gap, and slow down the rate of physical deterioration by engaging in physical activity.

This is why challenging age stereotypes is essential. We are bombarded with negative ideas about growing older, which makes people fearful. Marketing messages focusing on 'anti-ageing' reinforce the idea that age is a bad



For more from Jacqueline
follow her on Instagram
@hergardengym

thing, and encourages women to focus on a youthful appearance. Fitness marketing to younger women is often centred around aesthetics, such as 'drop a dress size' and 'get your body back after pregnancy', and in recent years 'grow your glutes' and 'booty band workouts' have become all the rage. As women enter mid-life, the emphasis on aesthetics continues with exercises to target 'meno belly' and 'bingo wings'. Throughout her lifetime, a woman is constantly subjected to the idea that her body needs fixing, and younger is better than older. As a result, many women have a poor relationship with exercise and food, and feel like they are locked

in a battle with their bodies, which simply amplifies with age.

Consequently, I like to shift the focus to health, getting stronger, and exploring all forms of movement. And I find when women prioritise these things, they start to enjoy physical activity and what their body is capable of. I take the view that if we see it, we can be it, so it's essential that women see other mid-life women thriving, with a positive attitude to ageing, and engaging in activities that support health. It's one of the reasons I am very visible and vocal on social media, and tackle ageism.

Women often ask me how to get started in fitness, as it can feel

quite overwhelming if you haven't exercised for a while, or are new to it. I like to keep it simple and suggest starting with a daily walk, because this is the most accessible but often underrated form of low intensity cardiovascular exercise. Adding some bodyweight strength exercises will be beneficial as well, like a stand-sit-stand to a chair 10 times in a row. Worktop push-ups, while you're waiting for the kettle to boil, are another way to incorporate some upper body strengthening exercises. Plus, balance can become harder as we get older, so exercises that challenge balance are important too, such as trying to stand on one leg while brushing your teeth.

Women nowadays will live a third of their lives post-menopause. We need to challenge the idea that our best years are behind us, and everything is downhill. We are free to wear whatever we like, can carry on dancing, and should refuse to conform to ageist stereotypes. I want women to know it's never too late, and you're not too old! ■

Is it a *food allergy* or a *food intolerance*?

How to recognise the key differences between the two, and get the right support for you

Writing | **Ellen Lees**

Whether it's a celebratory meal out or a hearty, home-cooked dinner with friends, being able to relax and enjoy a good meal with good company is one of life's little pleasures. But, what if eating out fills you with anxiety due to the onset of digestive issues, feeling nauseous, and potentially even swelling facial features – and you don't know the cause?

There are a few names used to describe the body's adverse reaction to food, including allergy, intolerance, and hypersensitivity. And while you may have heard of these, or know someone who experiences this, what is less common knowledge is that it's actually possible to develop an allergy or intolerance later in life – even if you didn't struggle with certain foods growing up. So, if you haven't previously experienced an adverse reaction, how do you tell the difference and what do you do if symptoms arise?

The key difference

Food allergy

A food allergy is when your body's immune system has an unusual

reaction to a particular type of food or ingredient. In some cases, symptoms can be mild, but in others, symptoms can be very serious, and potentially even life-threatening.

There are 14 foods that, legally, food businesses must declare as allergens. And believe it or not, eight of those are responsible for causing 90% of reactions. These include cow's milk, eggs, fish, peanuts, shellfish, tree nuts, soya, and wheat. Of course, it's possible that any food type has the potential to have an adverse effect on the body, so keeping a food diary can be helpful to pinpoint any triggers if you're unsure.

Food intolerance

A food intolerance, despite being highly common, can be more difficult to diagnose. Unlike a food allergy, symptoms of an intolerance aren't considered life-threatening, but may leave you feeling very unwell for a few hours and impact your daily life. We don't know what causes food intolerances, however, they are believed to be prompted by certain lifestyles, such as a diet with erratic food intake.

The signs and symptoms

Food allergy

According to the NHS, common symptoms of a food allergy can occur immediately, or up to 48 hours after eating, and include: feeling dizzy or lightheaded, itchy skin, swelling of the lips, face or eyes, coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath, feeling nauseous or being sick, stomach pains, and diarrhoea.

Food intolerance

The most common symptoms of a food intolerance typically involve the gut, such as bloating, wind, stomach pain, and diarrhoea. However, an intolerance can also cause plenty of other symptoms, including feelings of tiredness, nausea, constipation, joint pain, or headaches. These symptoms, while generally mild, can last from a few hours to a couple of days sometimes.

What to do next

Food allergy

If you think you or someone you know is having an allergic reaction, it's important you call



According to the FSA (Food Standards Authority) an estimated 2 million people in the UK are living with a diagnosed food allergy.

to try to avoid eating the food completely, or at least, reduce how much and how often you eat it. But, please seek advice from your GP or a nutrition specialist (e.g. a dietitian) before making any changes to your diet, to ensure you aren't missing out on essential nutrients that could be vital for your overall health and wellbeing. This is particularly important for children's growth and development.

Working with a dietitian

Discovering you have a food allergy, intolerance, or hypersensitivity can be incredibly frustrating – particularly if it's related to a type of food you enjoy. But working with a nutritional specialist can be helpful as you get to grips with this new information. They can help you to better understand your trigger foods, and how to adapt your diet to suit your lifestyle. A dietitian can help you with the implementation of an exclusion diet if required, and the reintroduction of foods in future. They can also offer valuable advice on how to avoid the allergen, while still maintaining a healthy, balanced diet that meets your personal needs. ■

To find a nutrition specialist and for more information, visit the [Nutritionist Resource](#).

999 immediately. If no urgent treatment is required, you may be referred to your GP for testing.

These tests may include a skin-prick test, blood tests, or following a particular diet (e.g. avoiding the suspected food to see if your symptoms improve). You may also be asked to keep a food and symptom diary to help identify potential trigger foods.

If you have a food allergy, it's important you:

- Check food labels and restaurant menus
- Alert your family, friends, colleagues etc. about your allergy

- If needed, carry at least two adrenaline auto-injectors (e.g. an EpiPen*) with you at all times.
- Tell staff at food places, airlines, and cabin crew about your allergy.
- Wipe down surfaces before eating in public.

**EpiPens and other auto-injectors have the instructions on the side, so don't worry if you forget or if someone else has to do it for you. Always call 999 after using the injector, even if symptoms ease.*

Food intolerance

When managing a food intolerance, the best thing is

Ask the experts

How can I move past shame?



Resilience coach **Alex Pett** answers your questions on how we can cope with, and overcome, feelings of shame

Learn more on the [Life Coach Directory](#).



Can you tell us why shame can be so detrimental to our wellbeing?

A Shame makes us feel unworthy, unlovable, and broken – and silently destroys our ability to love and accept ourselves as we are. So, it's like a knife in the heart of wellbeing,

and drains resilience. It's there in any moment where we don't feel able to be who we really are, but like we have to hide, disguise, or improve ourselves. Not because we want to, but to be more acceptable to others/the world.

Shame is so harmful because it hides, often behind behaviours we think are signs of success – something like perfectionism is not high standards, for example,

but shame in disguise. If you don't tackle it, shame can trigger self-sabotage, stuckness, and limiting patterns. It stops us from being ourselves and frequently hides behind anger and resentment, which damages relationships. If it's triggering anxiety or dread that is continuously tipping you into fight, flight, or freeze, it can affect you physically, too.



What is the difference between guilt and shame?

A Guilt comes with its own discomfort, but it's a feeling we can learn from. It's the sense that you've said or done something wrong, that your behaviours/actions caused a problem. Shame is feeling that you are the problem. It feels so

paralysing because there is no separation of you, the person, from what you've done. So, rather than feeling like a 'good' human who did something 'bad', you just feel like a bad person.

Because shame is an inward-facing emotion that reflects how you feel about yourself, it can trigger constant self-punishment, and fear of others' judgement that

leaves no space for happiness or growth. It often sounds like: "You/I should look different/want less/be more accomplished/in a relationship/not so sensitive" etc. Any kind of 'should' is a sign.

Guilt: I have done something wrong. I said something that caused a problem.

Shame: I am wrong. I am the problem.



Q

How can coaching help us overcome shame?

A We often don't realise when we're shaming ourselves – or allowing others to shame us. It might feel like we are just trying to be the best version of ourselves, more organised, disciplined etc. A coach holds a mirror up to where this is happening in your life in a destructive way, so you can recognise the signs, and find ways to stop keeping yourself small and stuck.

Coaching is also a safe space – shame can be painful to unpick and work through, so this is very necessary. Resilience coaching supports you to uncover your own solutions through new perspectives, powerful questioning, and establishing new tools and strategies. Most of us already have what we need to be resilient (to shame and in life), it's just about uncovering the right habits and perspectives, and making them stick. Solutions that are self-discovered like this are sustainable – the mindset shift and tools fuel ongoing growth.

Alex's top three tips for moving past shame:

Because we often don't realise how much shame we have, the first tip is to start noticing when it's there – that burning feeling, being obsessed with what other people think about you (paralysed by the idea of it being negative), numbing behaviours (e.g. five hours of Netflix disguised as 'rest'), being horrified at the thought of just being yourself, physically or emotionally – or regularly feeling a lot of anger and low self-esteem.

Secondly, talk to someone you trust. Shame thrives in silence and fear, but can't survive empathy. And it rarely survives being shared, because when we are honest about our shame most people respond to that with positive affirmation or kindness.

And finally, dial up the self-compassion. This is not about letting yourself off the hook, it's about empowerment. A self-compassionate inner world is the fertile soil for action, growth, resilience, and connection. Shame is barren ground and poisons your internal ecosystem. **■**



Autism eating disorders

what's the link?

We take a closer look at eating disorders and how they can affect autistic people differently

Writing | Kat Nicholls

I must admit, my interest in the topic of eating disorders is slightly selfish. I had anorexia in my teens and, since recovery, I've been on a mission to learn more, understand what happened, and support the fight in reducing their impact.

The more I learn, the more I realise how nuanced they are, and how they affect everyone differently. Recently, I've been hearing more from the autistic community, and how eating disorders affect them. It's an area lacking in research, and my hope is that by exploring it here, I can do my part in shedding light and awareness.

Firstly, let's look at some of the commonalities between eating

disorders and autism. Umairah Malik, Clinical Advice Coordinator at Beat (the UK's eating disorder charity) tells us there are certain traits that can overlap between autism and an eating disorder, such as rigid thinking styles, decreased social circles, or emotional dysregulation.

"This means it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between what is part of being autistic, and what is the eating disorder," Umairah explains.

The main difference, Umairah says, is that eating disorders are mental illnesses that can be recovered from. While the National Autistic Society (NAS) describes autism as a "lifelong developmental disability which affects how people

communicate and interact with the world".

Which eating disorders most commonly affect autistic people?

While autistic people can experience any type of eating disorder, most of the research centres around anorexia and avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID). According to the NAS, research suggests between 4% and 23% of those with an eating disorder are also autistic.

In terms of what's most common, Umairah notes that there's research that proposes it's anorexia, while some clinicians suggest it may be ARFID – but more investigation is needed.



Something that may be holding us back from knowing the number affected is that many people (women especially) are undiagnosed as autistic. Being diagnosed with an eating disorder can help some uncover autistic traits, while being diagnosed as autistic paves the way to understanding an eating disorder for others.

“I always thought I was just a ‘picky eater’ growing up,” *Happiful* writer Bonnie Evie Gifford tells us. “For as long as I can remember, I’ve struggled with food textures, sounds, and anxiety around new foods or food-based situations. It wasn’t until I was diagnosed officially as on the spectrum in my 20s that I first came across ARFID.”

Bonnie explains that this discovery helped her realise she wasn’t alone, and could start looking for support.

Are the causes of eating disorders different for autistic people?

“For autistic people, the reason they develop an eating disorder may be different to those who aren’t autistic, such as sensory differences, a need for >>>

control or familiarity, or being misunderstood by non-autistic people,” Umairah says.

Autistic people can often have sensory sensitivities around what they see, hear, smell, touch or taste, and this, in turn, can affect how they eat.

“Even the slightest unexpected squeak of onion or crunch of a firmer-than-expected veggie, and I can’t continue eating something, even if it’s on my ‘safe’ foods list,” Bonnie says. “It’s made eating challenging, as my ‘safe’ foods consist of only around a dozen vegetables, and no fruits at all unless completely smooth as part of a juice or smoothie.”

The desire for routine is also something Bonnie relates to.

“I like to have set routines, and once a plan or routine is fixed in my mind, any changes or disruptions around this can be extremely challenging – including unexpected changes to meals, what type of food I had planned to eat, or what is available.”

Being misunderstood can be another source of anxiety, often leading to a sense of social isolation. Some autistic people may even feel that focusing

on weight helps them fit in after being exposed to societal messaging.

Interception difficulties can also play a role, as some neurodiverse people struggle to recognise when they are hungry, thirsty, or full. Alongside this, alexithymia (a difficulty in identifying and describing emotions) can lead to some using eating disorder behaviours as a way of coping.

Perhaps the most striking difference is that autistic people with eating disorders are often less concerned about weight or body shape. Their behaviours don’t tend to be driven by a desire to ‘lose weight’, but instead by other causes mentioned here.

Why can treatment be difficult for autistic people?

Unfortunately, it’s been noted that autistic people with eating disorders tend to have worse outcomes than non-autistic people, as reported in a study in the journal *Molecular Autism*. There are many reasons why this could be, but a likely factor is that treatment isn’t catered to autistic people.

“There currently aren’t any clinical guidelines or official



Between 4% and 23% of those with an eating disorder are also autistic

treatment adaptations to support autistic people with eating disorders, and more research in a diverse range of people is needed,” Umairah explains.

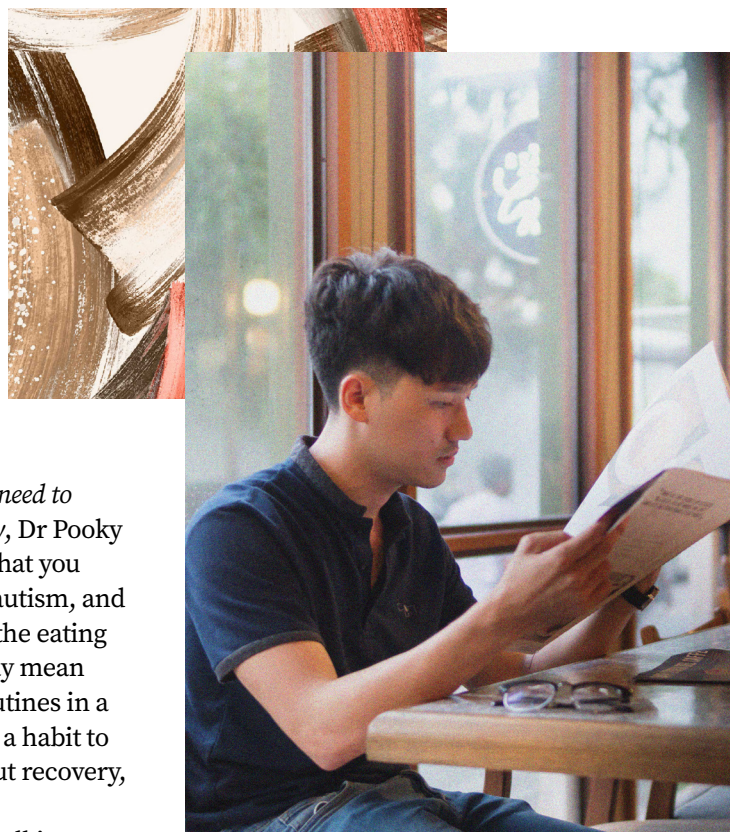
As noted, those on the spectrum are likely dealing with different causes than neurotypical people. If these aren’t considered during treatment, recovery can be an even more difficult process.

Hospitals and in-patient units can be tough environments for autistic patients, with bright lights, noise, and group therapy sessions all triggering anxiety. Some of the therapeutic approaches, like cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), include metaphors and open-ended questions, which can be challenging to those on the spectrum. The dietary plans may also not take sensory issues into account, with practitioners expecting more than is reasonable.

All of this can lead to autistic patients feeling more

Helpful resources:

- PEACE Pathway website: peacepathway.org
- Beat helpline: 0808 801 0677 (England)
- Beat's website: beateatingdisorders.org.uk



misunderstood, and drive them deeper into eating disorder behaviours.

What can help?

One of the most important actions that can help is individualising eating disorder treatment, and making adaptations. This may include offering more consistency with appointments, giving clients more time to process information, doing sensory checks of environments, and not expecting such varied food reintroduction.

“One of the most well-known pieces done in this area is the PEACE (Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism developed from Clinical Experience) Pathway, which produced an autism-specific clinical pathway that aims to improve treatment outcomes for autistic people with eating disorders,” Umairah says. “It has resources for autistic people with eating disorders, carers, and clinicians on its website.”

For autistic people, it can be helpful to identify what behaviours are linked to your autism, and what may be driven by the eating disorder. In a video on YouTube, called *Autism &*

Anorexia | 5 Things you need to know about the interplay, Dr Pooky Knightsmith explains that you want to befriend your autism, and work together to push the eating disorder away. This may mean taking advantage of routines in a positive way, making it a habit to eat regularly throughout recovery, for example.

Bonnie explains that talking to professionals and the autistic community helped, along with more experimental cooking for her partner and son.

“I’ve slowly begun expanding the foods I feel comfortable eating. Through being exposed to more of these different textures and smells, these foods are no longer causing me the same levels of anxiety and discomfort as before.”

If you’re struggling...

Umairah stresses that speaking to your GP to ask for a referral to an eating disorder service is a great first step, or you can see if your local service accepts self-referrals.

“You can also ask for reasonable adjustments, which the NHS has a duty to provide,” Umairah adds. “This might be asking for information on what to expect and what the environment is like,

asking for a longer appointment, asking for a summary of appointments, or requesting short breaks during appointments if needed. Carers can also request support and information, and might find it useful to discuss treatment adaptations with the team as appropriate.”

You can also reach out to Beat 365 days a year on its helpline (0808 801 0677) or via its website. It also offers various services to those with eating disorders and carers. “One group that people might find helpful is Endeavour, our carer support group for parents or carers of young people aged 5–15 with ARFID,” Umairah shares.

Hopefully, with more awareness comes more understanding, as we come together to fight a common enemy. **■**

Happiful recommends

From a nature-inspired journaling workbook to an activity that will help you rediscover your inner-child nature, try something new with our enriching suggestions

Writing | Lauren Bromley-Bird

1



PAGE-TURNERS

***The Wildflower's Workbook: A Journal for Self-Discovery in Nature* by Katie Daisy**

If you're someone who loves to journal equally as much as spending time outdoors, this wonderful workbook is for you. Immerse yourself in the natural world and go on a journey of self-discovery with these nature-inspired journaling prompts and activities, created by artist, author, and 'wildflower' Katie Daisy. (Out now, Chronicle Books, £14.99)

2

OUT AND ABOUT

Try beachcombing

As a child, how often did you scan the beach for hidden treasures? For adults and kids alike, discovering the hidden treasures of the beach is a fun outdoor activity that we can all enjoy. Whether it's sea glass, shells, fossils, or animal footprints, tap back into your curiosity and search for objects washed ashore on the coastline. The beach is your oyster... (Visit countryfile.com for their beachcombing guide)

3

ACT OF KINDNESS

Become a Green Aiders volunteer

If you're someone who enjoys gardening and would like to put your skills to good use, the Green Aiders programme is always on the look-out for volunteers to help support older or disabled adults care for their overgrown gardens. You'll be helping someone to reclaim their garden and reap the benefits of the outdoors again, while pursuing your passion at the same time. (Visit groundwork.org.uk)

4

LEND US YOUR EARS

'Nothing Much Happens'

If you have children, you might know the trick of reading them story after story to help them sleep. But what happens if you're an adult who can't sleep? Yoga and meditation teacher Kathryn Nicolai is here to help adults find some shut-eye with this series of bedtime stories. So if counting



sheep doesn't work for you, listen to this podcast! (Available on all podcast platforms)

5

PLUGGED-IN

Sam Bentley

Whether you're an eco enthusiast or you want to mix up your feed, environmentalist Sam Bentley posts regular news round-ups from the sustainability world. From a company making mushrooms from old coffee grounds to an underwater forest helping to restore coral reefs, you don't want to miss these stories. (Follow [@sambentley](https://www.tiktok.com/@sambentley) on TikTok)



6 LESSON LEARNED

Learn to do CPR

If someone in the street suffered a cardiac arrest, would you know how to assist them? The British Heart Foundation is calling for more people to undergo CPR training so that everyone has the potential to save lives. Sign up today for a free 15-minute course, delivered straight to your phone. (Visit [bhf.org.uk](https://www.bhf.org.uk) for more information)

9 SQUARE EYES

Hold Your Breath: The Ice Dive

If you find it motivating to watch documentaries about resilience and determination, follow freediver Johanna Nordblad as she documents her journey to break the women's world record for freediving below the ice, in one single breath. If there's one lesson you can take from this film, it's that we are capable of more than we think. (Available to watch on Netflix)

10 TREAT YOURSELF

Linen lavender bags embroidery kit from Corinne Lapierre

Are you a craft lover, searching for a new challenge? This wonderful craft kit contains everything you need to hand-stitch four scented lavender bags, and embroider with unique spring designs. Craft kits from Cosy Craft Club are available to buy singly, or can be purchased as a subscription, so you can enjoy a new crafting activity every month. (£19 at [cosycraft.club](https://www.cosycraft.club))

7 TECH TIP-OFFS

Perfectly Happy Vision Board

Stepping towards your dreams has never been made so easy than with this friendly, goal-setting app. With the option to create a vision board, utilise affirmations, and keep a gratitude journal, these tools will help you to become the best version of yourself, and help you to discover what you want to achieve. (Available on all platforms)

8 GET GOING

Exercise snacking

No, we're not talking about snacking during exercise (sorry!). It's a work-out plan that sees you taking on short 60-second to 10-minute bouts of exercise across the day, and it's here to stay in 2023. Perfect for those experiencing fatigue or busy parents who are spinning different plates at once, you'll be reclaiming your fitness in no time.



WIN A LINEN LAVENDER EMBROIDERY KIT

For your chance to win, simply email your answer to the following question to competitions@happiful.com

Which of these is not a type of embroidery?

- a) Whitework
- b) Basket-weaving
- c) Free-style

*Competition closes 31 April 2023. UK mainland and Northern Ireland only. T&Cs apply. Good luck!

What people *think* anxiety is...

Nervous energy

Excessive worrying

What anxiety *actually* is...

Brain fog

Guilt

Restlessness

Fatigue

Dizziness

Racing heart

Sensory overload

Feeling on edge

Trouble sleeping

Intrusive thoughts

Overwhelm

Shame



Living seasonally: spring

In the second instalment of our series exploring our relationship with the world around us, we step into spring, considering the ways that walking through this budding environment can refresh our minds

Writing | **Caroline Butterwick**

In the bright crisp morning light, the four of us are studying the signposts at the start of our route, deciding which way to walk. It's one of those early spring days when you aren't quite sure whether to bring a coat. There's still a chill in the breeze but, as the hours pass, the day becomes warmer, and you remember that winter is over.

I'm at Dovedale, a picturesque valley in the Peak District, where the River Dove runs through a wooded limestone ravine. I often go walking with my husband, who is here too, but today we're also joined by two close friends. >>>



I've known them for more than a decade, and while we regularly meet up for dinner, this is the first time we've headed for a hike.

Most of us are familiar with the benefits of going out for a walk, from how it helps our wellbeing to the physical health boost. I was curious about how walking with friends can bring more benefits too, so I asked counsellor Carley Symes for her thoughts.

"Connection to the world around us allows us to de-stress, and connecting with people we value reinforces our sense of belonging in the world," Carley tells me. "Combining the two with a walk outside with friends gives us both of those benefits!"

Spring feels like a particularly good time to head outdoors, celebrating the longer days and warmer weather. "Walks in nature can increase mindfulness, and as the days get brighter, we have the added bonus of soaking up vitamin D to support our health," says Carley.

The four of us walk alongside the flowing River Dove. This is a place I've meant to visit for years, but it's my first time here today. Getting to explore somewhere new with people I care about makes it even more special.

As I try to live more seasonally, I'm aiming to get out more for walks with people I care about. It's a great way to not only appreciate the spring, but to spend time with those I'm close to, and deepen our connection.

Walking and talking

Walking with friends isn't just a lovely way of enjoying each other's company and making memories together – it can also help you have meaningful or difficult conversations.

"It's helpful to regulate our nervous systems – connecting with nature soothes us, and walking helps our bodies get rid of those anxiety hormones as our heart rate rises but doesn't become overwhelming," explains Carley. "This means we might feel less nervous having difficult conversations, and stay less nervous as the conversation develops. Looking ahead and focusing on the areas around you helps to lessen the intensity of your conversation, so you can talk honestly, rather than overthinking what your friend is thinking or saying."

My husband and I work from home, and often go for a lunchtime walk together. I sometimes find that this amble around the

neighbourhood gives us a chance to talk about what's bothering us, or have deeper conversations. And wandering through Dovedale with my friends, I find we talk about important things in a way that's perhaps harder when you're sitting opposite each other in a restaurant.

How to plan a walk with friends

Think about the kind of place you'd like to walk, and what suits you all – hiking up a mountain isn't for everyone, so ask your friends what kind of terrain they are comfortable with. For those with access requirements, Miles Without Stiles are walking routes that are suitable for wheelchair users and others who find uneven ground inaccessible. There are Miles Without Stiles routes across the country – simply Google, say, 'New Forest Miles Without Stiles' and you'll find some.

And of course, make sure you're prepared for the walk, especially if venturing into the countryside or unfamiliar territory. Do you need a map and compass for the route? Do you have appropriate boots and clothing? It's worth researching potential routes and thinking about how manageable they will be for you and your friends.





“
**Connection to the
 world around us allows
 us to de-stress**

Soaking up the springtime

The day warms up, and after a couple of hours, we find a clearing in the woodland to picnic. We settle down on the grass, laying out our jackets as rugs. We share sandwiches and biscuits, and sit eating together.

There is the rushing sound of the nearby river, and the chatter and laughter of groups of walkers passing, children calling to their parents as they run along the path. I breathe in the smell of damp earth and the sweet floral scent of nearby wildflowers.

As I nibble on a cake, I think of how beautiful a moment this is, soaking up the springtime here in Dovedale, and the joy of sharing it with people I care about. ■

MEET THE EXPERT



*Carley Symes is a humanistic integrative counsellor who specialises in self-esteem. Find her on the **Counselling Directory**.*



Chocolate cake, with a twist

Surprise the whole family with this delicious, brain-boosting snack

Writing | Angelika Cutuk-Short

Are you craving a sweet treat after your lunch or dinner? Perhaps you have an event coming up and you'd like to prepare a celebratory dessert to enjoy with friends. This super tasty, five-minute-to-prepare chocolate cake is a healthier choice for those sweet tooth cravings.

5-MINUTE (PREP) CHOCOLATE AND AVOCADO CAKE

Serves 12

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 200g baking chocolate (70% or 85% cocoa)
- 200g pitted dates, (about 10 Medjool dates)
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 60g almond flour
- 1 whole avocado
- 1 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1-2 tsp vanilla extract

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- In a food processor, pulse the chocolate first then continue to add all of the other ingredients, pulsing in between.
- Transfer the batter into an 8x8 inch (20x20cm) baking dish.
- Bake for approximately 25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.
- Allow to cool completely before cutting into 12 squares. Best served warm.

Optional: Add a handful of fresh berries with a dollop of Greek yoghurt for a probiotic kick!



The healthy bit

Dark chocolate is a source of magnesium, and a lack of this might well be the reason you're craving a sugary kick after dinner. Magnesium is responsible for 300+ enzymatic processes that help keep you energised and healthy. So, if you're deficient in magnesium, that's more than 300 processes your body can't effectively do! The end result is you feeling totally wiped. By adding dark chocolate with over 70% cocoa, you are increasing the cake's magnesium content.

While the main source of energy in our cells is called adenosine triphosphate, or ATP, magnesium is vital in ATP doing its thing (ATP is essentially the currency that runs your body's economy, but it can't make any real transactions without the banker – magnesium!). ATP must be bound to a magnesium ion (Mg) to be biologically active. So, ATP is really Mg-ATP when it comes to making the magic happen in your body.

Additional foods containing magnesium include legumes, tofu, and fatty fish.

Never considered adding avocado to a cake? Well, I'm here to change your mind. They offer nearly 20 vitamins and minerals in every serving, including potassium (helps control blood pressure), lutein (good for your eyes), and folate (crucial for cell repair). They are a good source of B vitamins, which help you fight off disease and infection, and they also give you vitamins C and E, plus natural plant chemicals good for the whole body.

Avocados are low in sugar, and contain fibre, which helps you feel fuller for longer. Avocados are also high in monounsaturated fat, a 'good' fat that helps lower bad cholesterol, so long as you eat them in moderation! **h**

Angelika Cutuk-Short is a nutritionist, menopause specialist, and weight loss coach, supporting clients to make long-term change. Find out more on her profile on the [Nutritionist Resource](#).



17

unusual ways to boost your motivation

Struggling to find your drive? We all hit stumbling blocks from time to time, whether professional or personal, but here we're sharing 17 effective, and unexpected, ways to reignite your spark and get you back on the motivation track

Writing | Bonnie Evie Gifford

Motivation isn't something others can give us – it comes from within ourselves. At its core, our motivation is our purpose or reason for doing something. Whether that's why we want to be inspired to make healthier choices, launch a business, make a career change, or do something to unleash our creative side.

Our values and beliefs are the basis from which our motivation grows. So the stronger these are, theoretically, the more we should become motivated. Motivation drives us forward towards our goals, helping us to feel energised and excited while we make progress and achieve our dreams. But what if we're struggling to get started? Or what if a lack of progress, unexpected setbacks, or overall exhaustion prompt procrastination, and, in turn, hold us back?

If you're unsure how to regain your spark, or feel like you've tried all the classic options, we've got you covered. Here are 17 unusual ways to help rediscover your motivation and get back on track.

1. Find your why

So you have a goal in mind, but do you know what prompted you to want to work towards that? Maybe you're aiming for a promotion because you feel like you should be climbing the career ladder. But is this really what you want deep down? When we don't define our why, we can struggle to find the motivation to do what we *think* we should be doing, instead of focusing on what we actually want to achieve. Find that thing that excites you, and turn it into your why.

2. Look after your physical health

Regular exercise doesn't just have physical benefits, it can help our mental health and overall wellbeing, too. Exercising releases endorphins, which interact with the parts of your brain that produce positive thoughts and boost mood, making it easier to get in the right mindset to tackle trickier tasks, and feel energised to push forward.



Find that thing that excites you, and turn it into your why

3. Challenge self-limiting beliefs

When we think badly about ourselves, our skills, or our abilities, we risk limiting what we can achieve. If you tell yourself ‘I’m not good with numbers,’ chances are, you’re going to dread working with them, and may feel anxious, nervous, or overwhelmed when required to do so.

Reframing these thoughts in a more positive light can help tasks to feel more manageable, e.g. you could tell yourself ‘This isn’t my speciality, but I have many strengths that will help me handle this challenge.’

4. Healthy competition

A little healthy competition can act as a motivational spark by helping increase your drive, giving you another person (or people) to challenge yourself against, and creating a sense of urgency and accountability.

5. Refuel

Sleep and food aren’t just afterthoughts – they’re the cornerstones of a healthy mind and body. Without good quality sleep and adequate nutrition, you risk low energy levels and lagging motivation due to lethargy. If you’re struggling, put a line under the day and get an early night followed by a nutritious breakfast. Tackling that tricky task may seem easier in the morning.

6. Push past procrastination

Even when our motivation is strong, procrastination can stand in the way of progress. That’s because it often comes from a place of fear. The more we want to achieve something, the more invested we feel, and the more scared we become of getting it wrong – or being judged for failing. We even worry about succeeding and what comes next. Take time to reflect, consider why you’re procrastinating, and what you can do to move forward.

Sometimes when we just can’t push past a task, it’s a sign that it’s something we don’t want to do. Ask: is this task necessary? Why am I doing it? What can it help me achieve? Depending on your answers, you may find the motivation to move forward – or to leave that task in the past, and do something more productive. >>>

7. Declutter your space (and improve your organisation)

The space we live and work in has a surprising impact on our mood. If things are messy, cluttered, or disorganised, it can be trickier to stay focused. Keeping a clear desk, tracking your to-do list digitally, and decluttering (physically and digitally – do you really need those hundreds of emails or untitled files?) can help to open up valuable mental bandwidth.

8. Practice affirmations

Daily affirmations can help to reinforce positive beliefs, boost confidence, help motivate us, and keep us on track.

9. Commit to 10 minutes

Have you tried the 10-minute rule? Give yourself just 10 minutes to work on a task that you're stuck on. Give it your full focus. After the time is up, step back and reevaluate if you want to continue or not. Usually, motivation will kick in and help take care of the rest! But if you're still not feeling it, at least you've made a little progress and can come back to try this again later.

10. Get connected

The people around us can have a big impact on our motivation and how we see ourselves. If those around you don't believe in you, it's easy for your confidence to be shaken. Make sure you have a good support system. Surround yourself with people who want you to succeed and will celebrate with you when you do!



11. Harness your inner child

To stay motivated, give yourself something fun, new, and exciting to look forward to. Schedule something that gets you excited and energised, even if it's just once a month. You'll be amazed at how much it can help your mood.

12. Take stock of your mental health

How are you feeling right now? When we push ourselves too hard for too long, we risk burnout – meaning everything feels like too much. Other mental health conditions can leave you feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Look after your wellbeing first; motivation can follow.

13. Strike a power pose

Our body language affects how others see us, and how we feel about ourselves. Nonverbal communication can make us feel more confident, prepared, and powerful. So why not strike a power pose to help you get in the right mindset?

14. Work with a motivation coach

A coach can help introduce you to new strategies and tools to achieve your goals, assess your current situation, and help hold you accountable. Find out more about motivation coaching on the Happiful family's Life Coach Directory.

15. Celebrate your progress

Give yourself the recognition you deserve. It's easy to forget how far we have come. Take time to be your own biggest cheerleader, and celebrate your wins.

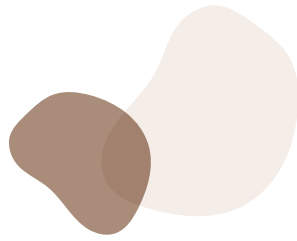
16. Start habit stacking

Habit stacking works by building on our existing routines, and adding in new layers. This can help us improve, or fix, our current habits, find ways to build in, and push past, tasks that hold us back, and work towards achieving our goals.

17. Take time out to rest, recharge, and relax

You can't keep pouring from an empty cup. Sometimes, the more you push, the harder things get. Be kind to yourself. Take a break, allow yourself time to relax, and forget about the big thing you're trying to achieve. Once you're rested, you can take another look at your to-do list with fresh eyes, and a new sense of motivation. **h**





5 ways to support a friend who has had an infertility diagnosis

Sometimes, it can be hard to find the right words. But there are so many ways that you can show your support for a friend going through a tough time

Writing | Laura Cooke

While some people may have always dreamed of having a family, the journey of falling pregnant is not always straightforward or easy, and infertility – defined as when a couple cannot conceive, despite having regular, unprotected sex – can be extremely distressing. This could be due to a number of factors including, but not limited to, sporadic ovulation, endometriosis, or low-quality semen.

With around one in seven couples in the UK having difficulty conceiving, anyone going through this is most certainly not alone, and the likelihood is that either you may have some personal experience, or know someone who has had an infertility diagnosis. For some, this can be an incredibly difficult thing to talk about – so if a friend finds the strength and courage to open up to you, how can you best support them?

Just listen

It may have taken a great deal of strength for your friend to start a conversation about their infertility diagnosis. The best thing you can do is to just listen to them, without interjecting or voicing your own opinions. Actively listening to your friend will help them to feel that they are not alone.

Counsellor Karen Schumann says: “Your friend has just received devastating news, and could be feeling sad, vulnerable, and experiencing a huge sense of loss.

“There is no need for suggestions, or a ‘fix it’ approach, even though it may feel like you want to. Listening with kindness, openness, and understanding is the best thing you can offer.”

Offer words of comfort

Rather than providing opinions and ‘solutions’, stick to offering words of support.

Karen says: “Offer them words of comfort, such as acknowledging their pain, the fact they are grieving, and that nothing is their fault. You could also advise them to try to take each day as it comes, so that they do not become too overwhelmed.”

Acknowledge their grief

Your friend will be experiencing a maelstrom of emotions – anger, depression, shock, denial, all stages of grief. An infertility diagnosis can trigger grief, as hopes and plans for the future are suddenly thrown into doubt.

Karen says: “Acknowledge that what they’re experiencing is grief. It might be helpful to share the stages of grief with them, so they know what to expect, and can understand what they are feeling.”

Remember grief is non-linear, and there is no ‘right’ way to grieve. The process can’t be hurried, but letting your friend know you are there can help.



Avoid unhelpful comments

When speaking to your friend about their diagnosis, consider your words carefully. An unhelpful comment can add to someone's pain, even if there are good intentions behind it.

Karen says: "From my experience, saying such things as 'Try to be positive' or 'It might happen for you' can be really unhelpful. As much as they are not meant with any ill intent, they

can make someone feel unheard and dismissed.

"Try to avoid making any positive suggestions too soon, such as getting a pet, or adopting. Your friend needs time to process.

"Also be mindful of making flippant comments about having children – 'You're better off without kids anyway, they're too much hard work/mine are a nightmare!' These sorts of comments could be hugely painful for your friend to hear."

MEET THE EXPERT



Karen Schumann is a person-centred counsellor and EFT practitioner.

To find out more visit the [Counselling Directory](#).

Offer practical help (if wanted)

"If there is anything that they don't understand from the diagnosis, you might offer to find some information out for them, but only if this is something they would like," says Karen. "When they are ready, you could suggest thinking of the things they can do in terms of fulfilling that need for nurture. This could be helping them through the adoption process or supporting them to be around other children – nieces, nephews, godchildren, and family friends.

"It's important to note that this should come from your friend, when they are ready, not as a suggestion, as they need time to come to terms with their news," says Karen.

Your friend may face some tough choices further down the line, e.g. whether to undergo IVF, use an egg or sperm donor, seek the services of a surrogate, adopt, or decide to remain childless – all of which can be difficult choices if this is not the future they had originally envisioned for themselves. Whatever they choose, it is important to respect their decision, regardless of your personal views. **■**

**“All we have to decide
is *what to do with the
time* that is given us**

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, JRR TOLKIEN



Is taking down barriers to men's health the good news we were hoping for?

Psychotherapist Jeremy Sachs weighs up the pros and cons of a shift to easily accessible healthcare options

Writing | Jeremy Sachs

Pfizer has been in the media a lot in recent times, as one of the giant pharmaceutical companies that produced the Covid-19 vaccine. However, it is not the first time the company has made headlines. In March 2018, it announced that, for the first time, Viagra would be available as an over-the-counter drug, rather than on prescription. This meant any adult male in the UK could walk into a chemist, go to the counter, and – provided they answered basic health questions (disease history, blood pressure, history of fainting, etc.) – they could walk out with Viagra.

For those not familiar with it, Viagra is the name of a drug that treats erectile dysfunction (ED) – the inability to get and/or retain an erection firm enough for sex with another person, or by oneself.

Roughly a year after this over-the-counter Viagra became available, I was killing time on social media, and I noticed a shift in advertising algorithms. One ad, in particular, was especially

aggressive, flashing images edited together with bright, jazzy music. It featured a man holding a huge fishing rod at 45 degrees, with an ecstatic facial expression. The following image was a large cactus, then a hand holding a corn cob, next it was the Shard in London, which cut to black and the words: “Order clinically proven ED treatments online, no need to leave your home.” More images followed: a lighthouse, a train entering a tunnel, “Discreetly delivered the next day,” fireman up a ladder spraying a hose... it goes on. “What did I Google?” I asked myself.

That same week, a bus drove past me. The ad said, “Is stress getting you down?” The word ‘down’ was curved downward. It was an ad for an online private company selling Viagra. Suddenly, my digital and physical world wanted me to know that I could get Viagra without having to speak to another living being. But is that the good news it's sold as?

Men's health: a snapshot

In the UK, men aged 20–40 go to the doctor or pharmacy half as much as women, as reported by the charity Men's Health Forum. Men across all socioeconomic groups demonstrate unhealthier smoking practices, unhealthier dietary patterns, higher alcohol consumption levels, and higher rates of injuries, according to the World Health Organization, and one in five men die before collecting their pension at 65. This is not to mention mental health, where the Office for National Statistics states that males aged 45–49 continue to have the highest suicide rate. Yet only 36% of referrals to NHS Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) are men.

There are complex and societal reasons why men's health is so bad. Well-known contributors tend to include low health literacy, toxic ideas of masculinity, and social stigma around mental, sexual, and intimate health. >>>

So, surely, buying ‘embarrassing’ medication online helps men get treatment? On one hand, making pathways to healthcare accessible and shame-free is essential. However, a significant part of healthcare is not simply access to drugs. It’s access to a healthcare professional who can assess the cause of symptoms a patient is suffering from.

There can be many reasons for ED. Some are:

- The narrowing of blood vessels in the penis
- High blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Unbalanced hormones
- Side effects from medications
- Lifestyle influences (heavy use of drugs or alcohol)
- Depression and anxiety

- Parkinson’s disease
- Multiple sclerosis

While access to Viagra online may address a symptom (the inability to get or sustain an erect penis), it also increases the potential for men to go on living with undiagnosed and untreated illnesses. By removing a medical consultation, we remove the chance for other health conditions to be identified and addressed.

Beyond erections

This quickly becomes a far broader problem when we consider men’s health in a wider sense. Men are not good at seeking medical help, and the results of this are bleak. Online medication is a way for men to

further isolate themselves from a health system, and set a precedent for men to continue ignoring their health and secretly treat symptoms in private. It de-skills a group of people who are already under-prepared to have difficult conversations about wellbeing, and themselves.

Some suppliers of online Viagra throw in the odd blog on men’s mental health, suicide rates, or depression written by someone in the comms team. This tokenistic nod barely scratches the surface of what society needs if we want men to stop dying of suicide and preventable diseases.

We need to create spaces for men that help develop health literacy, and conversations about awkward and stigmatised topics.

Taking action

Here are some resources aimed to support people with some of the issues raised in this article:

Sexual dysfunctions or sexuality:

- ***Love Worth Making: How to Have Ridiculously Great Sex in a Long-Lasting Relationship* by Stephen Snyder.** Yes the title is very sensationalist, but it is accessible, knowledgeable, and recommended by lots of psychosexual therapists.
- ***The New Male Sexuality* by Bernie Zilbergeld.** This book is 20 years old, and very heteronormative, however, it’s still a good book detailing men’s experiences of sex, relationships, and sexual problems, along with how to overcome them.

Social/support groups for men:

- **Andy’s Man Club**
A men’s mental health charity offering free-to-attend talking groups for men, and challenging the stigmas around male mental health, with 69 groups across the UK (andysmanclub.co.uk).
- **The Man Kind Project**
A charity for men that hosts different types of events, from drop-ins to training days (mankindprojectuki.org)
- **Misery Club**
A mental health harm reduction collective, and sober club night centring on healing for queer/trans/nb people and BPOC. *Follow @miseryparty*

“ Making pathways to healthcare accessible and shame-free is essential

MEET THE EXPERT



*Jeremy Sachs is an integrated psychotherapist who specialises in working with trauma recovery, long-term conditions, adolescents, and young people. Find out more by visiting the **Counselling Directory**.*

We need accessible pathways to healthcare professionals who are socially aware. We need to have conversations in our communities. We can't rely on pharmaceutical companies with trendy marketing teams to offer quick fixes at the cost of further isolation. **■**

Psychological support:

- **My website.**
Find lots of podcasts, sheets, and articles on trauma and health at jeremysachs.com
- **SurvivorsUK**
This charity helps male victims of sexual abuse, as well as their friends and family, no matter when the abuse happened (survivorsuk.org).
- NHS urgent mental health care finder (www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline)

My five greatest career lessons

It's often when things don't go to plan that we learn the most about ourselves and our needs. So, rather than looking at mistakes as failures, it's time to turn them into the valuable lessons they are. Here, columnist **Michelle Elman** reveals the greatest lessons she's learned about her career, all of which stemmed from an initial error...



Whether it's in your love life or in your career, I truly believe the ones who succeed aren't the ones who make the least mistakes. They are the people who are able to reflect, learn from their 'failures', and evaluate how to do things differently.

Within my career, I wear many hats. Whenever I hand out my bio, it sounds like someone who can't make a decision. "Hi, I'm Michelle Elman and I'm an author, life coach, public speaker, and influencer," but I like it that way. I love that I can wake up in the morning and be doing something completely different to what I did yesterday, and while those are the good things, of course, being eight years in, there are many things I had to learn the hard way.

1. You won't know you are undercharging if you don't ask around.

The first lesson came about three years into being an influencer,

when brands became interested in working with us. My first brand deal came in and, having no idea what number to say and really wanting the job, I said £100. They said yes, instantly. What I now know is that is a red flag; if a brand says yes immediately without any negotiation, you are charging too little.

Over the years, I slowly increased my rate, but the actual lesson only came when one day I got asked to do a public speaking talk. These consume a lot of energy, and I was already quite busy, so I didn't want to do it. Instead of saying no though, I asked for triple what I would normally. And they said yes! It was a wake-up call for me, emphasised again when the following month, an influencer on the same campaign as me, with half the following I had, mentioned their rate. It was double mine. This is when the lesson truly cemented itself. The only way to know you are charging at the right rate is to be

transparent with your colleagues. Now, if anyone asks about my fees, whether I know them well or not, I tell them, because it benefits us all to know how much to charge and ensure we get paid what we're worth.

2. 'Following up' is not nagging.

When I started out I was 21, and the moment I would feel most nervous in the work day was when someone hadn't replied to me. I was worried that if I sent a follow up email I would be considered nagging and, worse, 'difficult to work with'. But the switch flipped when I realised that 'nagging' is such a gendered word. Have you ever heard of a man accused of 'nagging'? Once I learned boundaries, I realised that their perception of me is none of my business. If they think I'm a nag, let them, but I'm still going to follow up if I need an answer. Most of the time it isn't personal if you haven't received a reply.



off approach that I actually didn't know much of my own business. I let things slip, I wouldn't follow up, thinking all was in hand at my agency, and all the energy I used to put into getting jobs and maintaining relationships disappeared. What I realised is no one is going to care about your career as much as you. So, yes, get a team to support you, but you need to be in the driver's seat still. You need to know what direction you are going, and you are the one who needs to drive forward!

5. Take a moment to celebrate!

One of the lessons I am still learning to this day, is to take time to celebrate the small wins. I learned the term 'destination addiction' a few years ago, and that's exactly what I do. I have an 'on to the next one' mentality, but the danger of this is that there will always be a 'next one', and you will never feel like it's enough. To combat that, this year I have chosen three words I want to focus on, one of them being 'contentment'. Being particularly ambitious, I am always aiming and striving for more, but this year, I actually just want to take time to be content with what I have. And you should, too! 📌



Michelle Elman is an author, TEDx speaker, and five-board accredited life coach. Follow her on Instagram @michelleelman

Photography | Brett Cove

3. You don't need to be friends with your colleagues.

I'm naturally quite a sociable person, so anytime I found myself at a work event, I would view the room as full of potential new friends. As a result, I did make some wonderful friends, but there were a few harsh realisations along the way, when it occurred to me that people I was viewing as friends, and confiding in as such, only viewed me as a colleague. I hadn't yet learned the boundaries, to understand you can be civil, and

even friendly, while maintaining a level of distance, in order to be professional.

4. You need to be in the driver's seat of your own career.

Four years into being an influencer, I landed an agent. As a result, all those nerves I used to get around emails were resolved. I could hand over the admin, the negotiation, the conversations with brands, and focus on the creative side of things. The problem was I took such a hands

The ADHD-friendly diet

With evidence linking diet and ADHD only growing, and a rise in the number of people seeking a diagnosis, our expert nutritionist, Claudine, reveals eight effective ways to shake up your eating habits that can help



CLAUDINE THORNHILL

NT (Dip CNM) mANP

Claudine is a naturopathic nutritionist and health coach. Find out more by visiting [*the Nutritionist Resource*](#).

Our attention is a valuable commodity in the age of social media and digital communications. While we live more and more of our lives online – from managing our personal finances, relationships, and our health, to how we work and entertain ourselves – our attention has taken an unfortunate dip.

While studies are ongoing, public perception certainly seems to agree. King's College London reports that 49% of the public believe their attention span has declined over time, and 66% perceive the attention span of young people to be worse at present. At the same time, figures released by the ADHD Foundation suggest a 400% increase in the number of adults looking for a diagnosis of ADHD since 2020, and while not all people will use medication as part of their treatment, the NHS Business Services Authority still saw a 20.4% increase in patients being prescribed at least one ADHD drug between July and September 2022.

ADHD in adults can be characterised by:

- Difficulty maintaining focus and concentration.
- A lack of attention to detail, disorganisation, and forgetfulness.
- Fidgeting or restlessness.
- Impatience, excessive talking, interrupting and finishing other people's sentences.
- Struggling to complete tasks, and procrastination.

There are also emotional aspects, including irritability, mood swings, and potential feelings of imposter syndrome due to the challenges that people with ADHD can face in completing seemingly simple day-to-day or work tasks.

ADHD medication works by balancing neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, in the brain. These neurotransmitters are involved in pleasure, reward, memory, motivation, mood, and attention. And while this is an effective solution, research shows that diet also has an important place in supporting people with ADHD.

● EAT FAT

With scientists reporting that nearly 60% of the brain is made

of fat, it is unsurprising that this element is essential to its health. Omega 3 fats, found in oily fish such as salmon and sardines, and walnuts, chia seeds, and flaxseeds, increase our dopamine production and the number of receptors that can receive dopamine.

● LEAN MEAT AND PLANT PROTEINS

Protein is key for the production of neurotransmitters like dopamine and norepinephrine, which play a role in mood and concentration, and have been linked to ADHD. Protein also helps to balance blood sugar levels, helping to reduce the hyperactivity and impulsiveness linked to ADHD. Lean chicken, turkey, fish, chickpeas, lentils, hemp seeds, and eggs are all great sources of protein.



● MINERALS: IRON, ZINC AND MAGNESIUM

Numerous studies, including one in the journal *Annals of Medical & Health Sciences Research*, found that iron levels have been shown to be lower in people with ADHD. Improving levels by including foods like liver, red meat, kidney beans, spinach, and broccoli, will help to give levels a boost. Iron, zinc, and magnesium are needed to produce the neurotransmitters linked to inattention and focus. Magnesium also has an additional calming effect, which is helpful for hyperactivity. Magnesium foods include dark green leafy vegetables, almonds, pumpkin and chia seeds. Plus, seafood is particularly high in zinc, as are avocados, so would be good to include in your diet.

● B VITAMINS

B vitamins help to support memory, focus, and mental clarity. B6 from tuna, chickpeas, and bananas is required for the production of the neurotransmitter, serotonin, which in low levels can increase ADHD symptoms. B12, found in eggs, chicken, and fish, and B9 from Brussels sprouts, sunflower seeds, and whole grains such as brown rice, are recommended for people with ADHD to address the genetic component.

● WATER

There's not a lot that a glass of water can't solve. We can all lose focus and feel fatigued when we're dehydrated. Maintaining a good level of hydration helps to improve memory, critical thinking, and cognitive function.

● GUT HEALTH

It's important that people with ADHD avoid foods that they may be sensitive or intolerant to. Some common food sensitivities include gluten and conventional dairy. These have been shown to worsen ADHD symptoms where people have existing sensitivities. Having said that, pre and probiotic foods like apples, garlic, leeks, kefir, yoghurt, and kimchi support a healthy gut, and contribute to reducing symptoms.

● AVOID PROCESSED FOODS

Food additives including food colourings, HVP (hydrolyzed vegetable protein and a type of MSG), yeast extract, and MSG are typically found in processed foods and snacks. As well as affecting gut health and people's portion control, they have been shown in some studies to reduce dopamine levels.

● WATCH OUT FOR STIMULANTS

Sugar is known to cause hyperactivity, particularly in children. Meanwhile, caffeine, which for many gets the day started, can be problematic for people with ADHD. Away from ADHD, caffeine is associated with insomnia and anxiety, as well as increased hyperactivity and impulsivity for people with ADHD.

The evidence linking diet and ADHD symptoms is growing. For people with ADHD, turning their focus towards food and how they're fueling their body, may be a key way to improve attention in day-to-day life. **■**

SUBSCRIBER OFFER!

Subscribe today to get your book of positivity delivered each month



FREE
self-reflection guide
for all new subscribers
who purchase a
6 or 12-month
subscription*



**6 months
of Happiful**

Exclusive journal section

Only £32.50 (RRP £40.93)

**Includes UK postage
& packaging***



Delivering on our mission
to create a happier,
healthier, and more
sustainable society.

**UK mainland and NI only. Booklet will automatically be added to your basket when selecting a new 6 or 12-month subscription, no code required. Whilst stocks last. Additional charges may apply for postage elsewhere. For orders to the EU please visit happiful.newstand.co.uk. Prices and benefits are correct at the time of printing. For full terms and conditions, please visit happiful.com*

A world of good

Amongst all the bad news, kindness, togetherness, and community still flourish. Here, we share four stories of people building a better world

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler

Why do we focus on bad news? It might be a question you've asked yourself – when working your way through the morning headlines, faced with yet another tragedy, and a downward spiral – and there are actually some theories out there that can give us an answer.

One is that, as human beings, we've developed an innate ability to scout out threats, so that we can protect ourselves from any potential danger. This has led us to develop what psychologists call a 'negativity bias' – a cognitive bias that means that, even when we're faced with things of equal intensity, the one that is more 'negative' will have a greater effect on us than the neutral, or even positive, thing. Think about it, you might receive five pieces of great feedback on a project you've worked on, but if you receive just one negative remark, that's likely to be the thing that plays on your mind



the most. The way this negativity bias comes into play when we're thinking about the news is that, often, negative stories attract the most readers, and journalists themselves aren't free from the same psychological tendency.

Of course, good news is out there, you may just have to look for it. But, here, we've done the work for you, and discovered stories about people who are building a better world, to both inspire you, and lift your spirits.



Band of Builders

Tradespeople charity takes care of their own

In 2016, Lincolnshire landscaper Addam Smith received some devastating news: his friend, Keith Ellick, had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Wanting to do something that would make >>>

“

I've never seen a sea of tomatoes before – the children from the group loved it!

Keith's life a little easier, Addam set about a plan to landscape his garden, and soon, joined by his fellow tradespeople, the project grew into a complete renovation of Keith's home.

Three years later, in 2019, Band of Builders (affectionately known as BoB) became a registered charity – a fleet of volunteers delivering support to fellow tradespeople living with illness or injury, completing adaptations, repairs, and renovations on their homes during times that they need it the most.

With projects ranging from repairing leaking roofs to transforming spaces to become accessible, to date, 772 volunteers have taken on free projects, and it's estimated that they have reached the £1 million mark in project delivery value – an incredible feat that represents the many lives changed in countless ways.

To get involved, support, or donate, visit bandofbuilders.org

New skills bloom during the cost of living crisis

It won't come as news to anyone that things are tough right now, and, consequently, money is tight. But one community, in Pangbourne, Berkshire, has come

together in a unique, yet natural, way.

A couple of years ago, Gillian Erskine and her sister began hosting informal exercise groups in the woods near their homes – which later evolved into organised group exercise classes, WildStrong – and a community began to

flourish. So, when news of rising food prices began, the group – made of 10 families – decided to try something wonderful: growing their own food together.

“The landlord who owns the estate that we use for the WildStrong sessions allowed us access to a plot of land that wasn't being used,” Gillian tells us. “We can access it whenever we like during the day time.”

Since spring 2022, they have grown a variety of food fit for any harvest table, including runner beans, artichokes, lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, potatoes, beetroot, blackcurrants, raspberries, and courgettes.

“None of us are gardeners, and we bit off more than we could chew and overplanted,” Gillian shares. “But, actually, in the end

Community garden



– while we didn't manage to keep on top of the weeds at all – we did manage to either eat, give away, or freeze everything we grew. And I've never seen a sea of tomatoes before – the children from the group loved it!”

Although this time around they're scaling down to a more manageable plot, the group have been prepping the soil in anticipation for the 2023 growing season, and their achievements so far are evidence of the good that can blossom in the face of challenges.

Friends of Isaac's Food Bank is there in hard times

When Isaac Winfield, from Redditch, Worcestershire, turned 11 years old, there was just one thing he wanted: donations to his foodbank. Starting in 2020, today



**Friends of
Isaac's Food
Bank**

Isaac and his family stock a shed full of donated groceries and other necessities, available to anyone who needs them.

“It has been wonderful to watch Isaac and the project grow over the years, and he is certainly a huge asset to our community!” Claire, Isaac’s mum, says. “It is amazing to see a young man of his age help so many people, and he shows no sign of stopping! His beginnings were quite humble, just a few items of food on our driveway, but he now has two sites, and a third due to open later this month!”

“The cost of living crisis has hit hard in our town, and we are seeing around 150 visitors a week, with numbers only increasing. The feedback I have had from the community is lovely; they are so incredibly grateful for the support he offers, open 24/7 with no referral needed. We operate on trust.”

Cherry Hinton Community



“The Cherry Hinton Community Benefit Society (CHCBS)

was set up to work

specifically on the hub,” director Kate Jones explains. “It will represent the community during the development phase. And, once the building work is completed, we will manage the hub on behalf of the community.”

The process all began 10 years ago but, finally, in March 2023, the build will begin.

“I would have loved a local cafe to go to when I had young children at home. Getting out of the house for a bit cannot be underestimated! And I think there is a greater appreciation of this after the pandemic lockdowns. The Cherry Hinton Hub will support community resilience, helping residents build friendships, and reduce social isolation.”

A project created by volunteer residents, run by residents, is tapping into that key human need to feel a sense of belonging.

We can become overwhelmed by the world’s problems, and they’re not going away any time soon. But, all around us, people are there for one another, doing the right thing. And that’s a sentiment we can all take to heart. ■

Unsurprisingly, Isaac’s mission has attracted interest, and sponsors like Morrisons, a local charity, and YouTuber

Mark McCann, have all shown support.

“It is amazing how one young man with significant additional needs can inspire adults to make this incredible project happen, and address food insecurity for so many,” Claire continues. “I am incredibly proud of him. Isaac works tirelessly outside of school, collecting donations, attending meetings, talking with the media, and spreading good cheer wherever he goes. Nobody ever leaves without one of his hugs!”

To support Isaac, visit teamisaac.co.uk where you can donate money, or food items via Amazon.

Community pitches in to create social hub

Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, is home to nearly 10,000 people, but, surprisingly, the suburb is without a cafe – a space to catch up with friends, and interact with the community. So, residents decided to do something about it.



4 self-care rituals we learn from the Wheel of the Year

Be inspired by the changing of the seasons, and discover a new sense of wellbeing with these rituals

Writing | Rebecca Beattie Illustrating | Rosan Mgar

The Wheel of the Year is a series of eight festivals that mark the changing seasons. Rooted in an appreciation of nature, every six weeks the Wheel allows us to pause and find stillness in the throng of modern life.

On 21 March, we stop to mark the festival of the Vernal Equinox.

As the daylight hours reach a balance with the night, we celebrate the arrival of spring. Plants have pushed their way up through the earth, and nature is coming alive with the signs of birds and animals. The trees may not yet have a canopy of green leaves to welcome

back the warmer weather, but spring flowers console us with their burst of fresh colours. This is the time to think about balance, equilibrium, and the freshness of new ideas as inspiration. This is the time to connect to the energy of spring where you are, and to introduce

some new self-care rituals, inspired by nature.

TAKING TIME OUT IN NATURE

Spring equinox invites us to pause in our work-oriented endeavours, and focus on the tiny miracles that are unfolding in the natural world. While you may struggle to take time for yourself in your busy schedule, investing some time in solitude, and watching the signs of nature unfurling will help you to reconnect to your inner wisdom.

Go to find a deciduous tree that you can spend a few minutes with, and really take in the detail. What shape do its limbs hold, what texture is its bark, does it stand alone, or in company? Does its location indicate anything about its lifespan? Does it make you think of any themes in your own personal life? For example, are you feeling alone and isolated? Are you feeling overcrowded? Are you feeling a little vulnerable?

JOURNALING TO FIND YOUR BALANCE

This turn of the Wheel of the Year gives us an opportunity to think about where you find your equilibrium – what are the things that give you a sense of steadiness and balance? Journaling can give you a chance to reconnect to yourself and express your inner voice. Perhaps you might sit with a notebook, and allow yourself to write freely for a few moments,

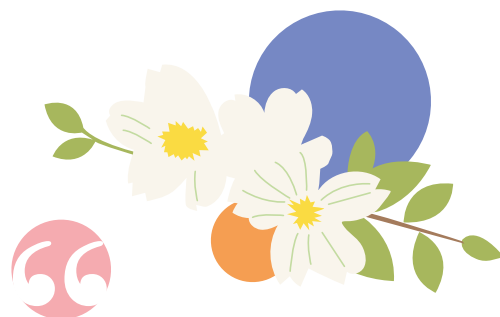
prompted by the following questions:

- Where do you need more steadiness in your life?
- What are the patches of shadow and light in your life?
- If you had a magic wand and could miraculously fix the balance in your life, what would that look, sound, smell, taste, and feel like?
- If you could name one thing that you might do today to move in that direction, what would it be?

SPRING CLEANING

When we feel a little overwhelmed or stuck in the busyness of life, it can be very easy to forget those fundamental self-care routines, such as creating a nourishing and nurturing living space.

At this time of year, our rural ancestors would have been clearing and cleaning out their home spaces following the long winter, and preparing the space for the coming warmer seasons. It can be a supremely nurturing thing to do this in your space. Perhaps now is the time to do a little decluttering, and clearing out of the dust bunnies. If a large session feels overwhelming, break it down into smaller sections of just eight minutes at a time. Our living space can be a powerful metaphor for our bodies, so releasing them from the burden of ‘stuff’ can allow our inspiration and energy to flow once more.



On 21 March, we stop to mark the festival of the vernal equinox

DECORATE YOUR HOME WITH SEASONAL GREENERY

Another way to celebrate the Wheel is to decorate your newly cleaned living space with some seasonally appropriate greenery. If you can go out and gather in nature, make sure you do so ecologically – only take a small amount, and leave a little offering to the natural world – maybe a handful of bird seed, or take away a bag of litter.

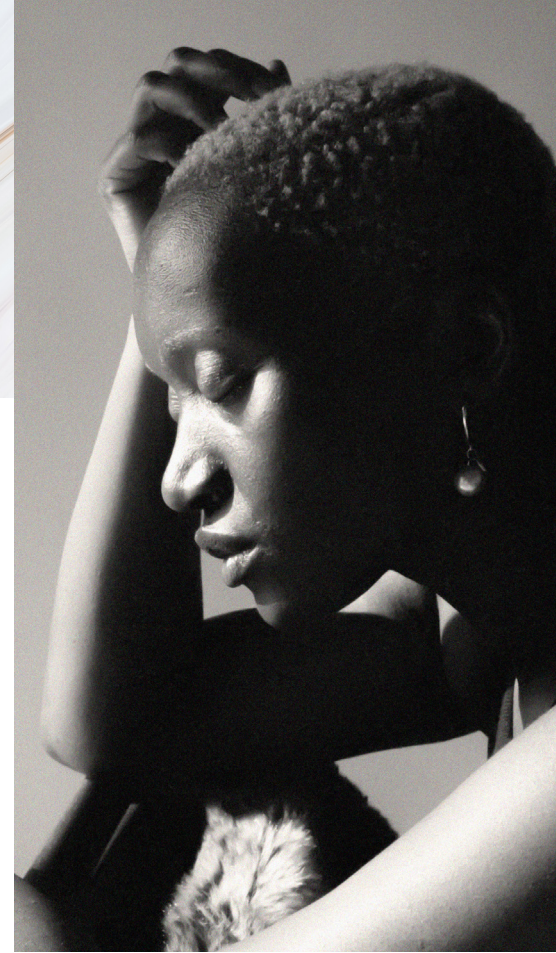
You don't need to turn your home into a forest, but placing a vase of seasonal greenery on your desk to remind you of the great outdoors, or a new lush green houseplant to prompt you that we all have a responsibility to live in harmony with the natural world, can also help you to feel balanced, rooted in your living space, and remind you that your own wellbeing is paramount. ■

Rebecca Beattie is the author of 'The Wheel of the Year: Your nurturing guide to rediscovering nature's cycles and seasons' (Elliott & Thompson), out now in hardback.

How to say *no* to your friends

As much as you care about loved ones, sometimes you just need a bit of space. You might need to recharge your mental batteries, or money might be tight as you watch the clock until payday. So how do you set a boundary, without offending anyone?

If you struggle to express the need for some social downtime, here are some handy prompts to help you say no, kindly. And, as a general rule, keep in mind three main elements: you appreciate them asking/something nice to show you value them; the polite but clear ‘no’ response; openness to catching up another time. This route ensures your friend feels heard, and your needs are met, but the door is open still for future fun together.



Declining due to energy

- Thanks so much for asking, but it's not great timing for me. I could do next week?
- I'm having a chilled one this weekend, but hope you have a lovely time! Can't wait to hear all about it.
- I need a bit of me-time this week, but really appreciate you thinking of me. Let's catch-up soon.
- I'd love to hang out, but I've had a really long day. Another time?
- I'd usually be so up for this, but in all honesty I'm exhausted. Mind if we reschedule?

Declining due to cost

- I'm on a bit of a budget right now, so won't be able to join. But hope to see you soon.
- Thanks for the invite, but I'm trying to be more careful with my spending. Perhaps we could catch-up on a [insert free/low-cost activity] instead some time?
- I'd love to see you, but this is a bit out of my price range at the moment. Would you be up for [X] next week instead?
- That sounds great – maybe next time! I've maxed out my budget this month.

General decline

- This sounds lovely, but it's not a good time for me at the moment. I'll check in soon!
- Sorry I can't make that, but I hope you have the best night. I'll call you tomorrow to hear how it went.
- Thank you for thinking of me, but it's not really my thing. I hope you have a good time though! Fancy a [insert suggestion] soon?
- I can't, I'm afraid, but thanks for asking. Are you going to [future event]? Looking forward to catching up then. **h**

Spotlight on: cortisol hormone imbalance

We've all heard of fight-or-flight, but did you know about the importance of the hormone behind it? Cortisol impacts every organ in the body, so when this hormone is out of whack, it's no wonder we struggle. It's time to investigate the cause of cortisol hormone imbalance, along with the essential ways we can address it

Writing | Jenna Farmer

Ever feel like you have a bunch of different health issues that neither you nor your GP can put your finger on? It might be that you find it really hard to stop your mind racing, your menstrual cycle is all over the place, and you can't stop thinking about certain cravings (like salty or sweet foods). Perhaps you feel super tired, but can't actually get a good night's sleep, and find yourself wide awake at midnight. These all could be signs that your cortisol levels aren't balanced.

What is cortisol hormone imbalance?

So what is cortisol? Often referred to as our body's inner alarm, it's a key hormone that kicks in to help our body deal with stressful situations. When we're in a state of panic, cortisol is released by our adrenal glands

to increase the sugar in our bloodstream. Perfect to give you an energy boost if you're being chased by a tiger, but less so if you're staring at your laptop with 1,000 emails to answer. It can also impair non-essential functions that could stop the fight-or-flight response, like your digestion (hence why stress is able to play havoc with your gut).

Cortisol is essential, but if we keep going through this process over and over, so we're in a constant state of alert, we can end up with a cortisol hormone imbalance. One study found that when observing medical students, their cortisol rose nine times in stressful periods.

"Cortisol is one of our stress hormones produced by the adrenal glands, and it can become imbalanced when we experience too much stress

for too long," says nutritional therapist Jo Rowkins. "Today, our stressors are continuous, and may overwhelm us as it can be relentless. We often have too many stressors for the body to comfortably deal with and, as a result, the body gets stuck in 'fight-or-flight' mode. While cortisol has many beneficial effects in the body for the short-term, chronic stress hormone output can become detrimental to health."

How do I know if I have cortisol hormone imbalance?

Cortisol imbalance can lead us to have either lower or higher levels of the stress hormone than usual. When we're in a constant state of stress, our cortisol levels stay high, and don't get a chance to return to normal. Eventually, this could have the opposite effect >>>



and cause levels to plummet. “Cortisol may stay high for too long, and can eventually lead to a state of depletion, known as adrenal fatigue,” explains Jo Rowkins.

The symptoms you’ll experience depend on whether your levels are high or low. “If cortisol is low, you may experience exhaustion, feelings of overwhelm, thyroid imbalances, difficulty losing weight, dysregulation of the circadian rhythm (such as fatigue upon waking, with a second wind

in the evening), salt cravings, and reliance on stimulants like sugar and caffeine,” says Jo.

While if your cortisol levels are too high, other symptoms occur. “Symptoms such as anxiety, racing mind, insomnia, menstrual and ovulatory irregularities, digestive complaints, headaches, increased blood pressure, and inability to relax,” says Jo. This cortisol imbalance can lead to serious health complications, with Diabetes UK revealing that having

too much cortisol is linked to a higher risk of type 2 diabetes.

There could be all sorts of reasons for these symptoms, but if they occur after a stressful period, and other conditions have been ruled out by your GP, it could be worth investigating your cortisol levels. “A nutritional therapist may recommend functional testing to look at your cortisol levels across the day, which can be done using saliva or urine,” explains Jo Rowkins.

“

Research found that spending just 20 minutes in nature helped drop cortisol levels

How can we deal with cortisol imbalance?

First up, it's important to recognise why our cortisol is out of balance. For many of us, this will be due to ongoing stress. While we can't necessarily banish all stress from our lives, finding ways to manage it is one of the best things you can do.

“Chronic stress is in fact the driver behind many common health conditions. Finding a balance between these two systems is crucial in the prevention of disease,” says Jo.

Research has found that when patients undertake measures to reduce stress, their cortisol levels naturally reduce. This could take many forms, for example, one study from the journal *Art Therapy* discovered that cortisol levels significantly lowered in participants after an art class. However, you don't have to be Picasso to feel the benefit; if art is not your thing, how about getting outside instead? Research in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* found that spending just 20 minutes in nature helped drop cortisol levels.

“In my clinic, I often recommend lifestyle interventions such as Epsom salt baths, which are a way of absorbing magnesium,” says Jo. “Magnesium is ‘nature’s tranquilliser’, helping to balance the effects of stress by regulating the body’s stress response.”

If you have low levels of cortisol, it's important to get to the bottom of why this may be. For example, Addison's disease occurs when the adrenal gland is damaged and can not produce enough cortisol.

If this is the case, your GP will need to do blood tests to determine this. You'll need to take medication for life to help regulate your cortisol levels, as this can be a serious medical problem. However, if this isn't the cause, then there are some things you can do to help.

“Low cortisol levels (that aren't due to Addison's disease) may be helped by following a blood sugar-balancing diet. Cortisol plays a significant role in balancing blood glucose levels, and levels may be depleted further if a sugary, starchy diet is

MEET THE EXPERT



*Jo Rowkins is a nutritional therapist with more than 10 years' experience. Find out more on Jo's profile on the **Nutritionist Resource**.*

consumed. Nutrients to support your adrenal function include vitamin B5, magnesium, vitamin C, and tyrosine (an amino acid from protein),” explains Jo.

While we all get stressed from time to time, understanding our cortisol levels is vital to ensure it doesn't impact our health. If you have any concerns about your health and stress levels, it's important to speak to your GP. **■**

Jenna Farmer is a journalist who specialises in writing about gut health. She has Crohn's disease, and blogs at abalancedbelly.co.uk



Scrapbooking:

a journey through your life

From our pages to yours, we explore five ways to scrapbook

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler

We humans have been keeping track of the past since time began. In the 1400s, people began annotating Bibles with family trees, and important dates, closing the pages on a lock of hair, or tucking marriage records, death certificates, and other documents in between the pages. Later on, some Bibles came printed with extra pages designed for this kind of record-keeping, and in the late-1800s, it wasn't uncommon to find space for storing family photos, and newspaper clippings. Today, we might consider these early forms of collecting personal memorabilia as a type of what we now call 'scrapbooking'.

It was also in the 1800s, when printed books became more accessible, that the commercial

idea of 'scrapbooking' really took off, and you were able to purchase bound books designed specifically for the purpose of recreational record keeping. Today, you can walk into any craft store and pick a book from a multitude of options, along with stickers, washi tape, patterned card, and any number of other decorative materials to elevate your pages.

Of course, the act of scrapbooking is about so much more than just record-keeping, or making an impressive-looking spread. The process of putting together a scrapbook can be deeply cathartic, prompting us to reflect on the things we have experienced and, perhaps, the things we have to be grateful for.

Here, we're exploring five different ways to scrapbook, to inspire you on your creative journey.

Traditional scrapbooking

This is likely to be the first thing that comes to mind when you think about a 'scrapbook'. Traditionally, scrapbooks have been used to gather together all the little takeaways from our lives – things like concert tickets, photographs, cards, letters, receipts, sketches, dried flowers, invitations, or anything else that tells part of our story.

You might combine this with some writing as well, perhaps jotting down a sentence or two to give some context to the piece you've added to the pages. For example, you save the receipt from a birthday meal you had with a friend and write a line or two about the food, and the company. Or perhaps you snapped a photo of a beautiful sunset, and want to >>>

Scrapbooking is about so much more than just record-keeping





remember where you were, and what was on your mind, when you saw it.

There's plenty of room to get creative here, and adding decorative elements to express your creativity can lift your collection off the page. Paints, stamps, stickers, ribbons, dried flowers, envelopes, and any number of supplies are readily available in craft shops and online.

A shared scrapbook

Whether it's with a friend, a family member, or a partner, a shared scrapbook is a wonderful project to work on together, and the result is a book filled with special moments from your relationship. You might want to take it in turns to update the scrapbook, or work on it at the same time, but share each of your perspectives on each entry.

A scrapbook for a child, to gift when they grow up

For a child or a grandchild, collating a scrapbook of all their memories to give to them when they grow up is a wonderful way to document a life, and show

them just how treasured they are. Those early years are so precious, yet they slip by so quickly – and so a scrapbook could be the perfect way to trace both the big and small moments from a loved one's life.

Young children also collect a lot of stuff, from birthday cards to artwork, and so a scrapbook is a tidy way to keep hold of these kinds of things. What's more, digital scrapbooking could add a whole new level of organisation...

Digital scrapbooking

Bringing this antique art into the 21st century, these days, you can find many digital scrapbooking platforms and apps that are specifically designed to help you build something meaningful.

Project Life is an app available on Android, which offers you templates and pre-designed layouts to help you create photo collages, and add text and journal entries. Photo Collage Maker is a similar app for iOS, and you can add frames, stickers, and text to your photos. You could also create a digital scrapbook with a private Pinterest board – uploading your photos, and adding notes to each post.

If you're someone who doesn't like a lot of clutter around you, but who is still sentimental and wants to hold on to memories, digital scrapbooking might be the option you're looking for. You can snap a photo of the things you might normally want to add to a scrapbook, and upload it to one such platform – then feel free to let go of the physical copy.

Travel scrapbooking

Whether you're a regular globe-trotter or an occasional day-tripper, keeping a record of your travels is a handy way to hold on to the wonder and excitement that you experience at the time.

You can add bus, train, and plane tickets, or passes to exhibitions, historical sites, and cultural experiences. You might want to sketch beautiful architecture, or make a list of all the delicious food you've tried on your trip – ready to bring them into your own kitchen.

You can trace, or cut out and stick in, maps, highlighting the places that you've visited, and recreating the routes that you've taken. Or you could collect postcards, writing messages to yourself to return to years down the line.

However you do it, scrapbooking is about holding on to the meaningful moments in your life. There's no right or wrong way to do it. And, the great thing about scrapbooks is that this is a format that doesn't need to be 'picture perfect', follow trends, or appeal to other people. The only thing that matters is that you're capturing memories – the rest is led by your imagination. ■



Five ways to get a grip on *self-massage*

Master the techniques and rub the stress away

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler

Self-massage is all about giving your body a much-needed release, and, the good news is, all it requires is your hands and a bit of peace and quiet to get started. So, master these basic techniques, and give yourself some well-earned you-time.

Head

Place your thumbs on your temples, with your fingers spread out over your head. Begin by gently rubbing circles with your thumbs, and then try experimenting with the speed and pressure, until you find something that feels good. Once you've found a rhythm with your thumbs, it's time to bring in your fingers. Move them in a 'scrunching' motion in time with your thumbs. Again, play with the pressure and speed, and try moving your fingers around a bit – starting with the top of your head, and gradually moving back towards your neck.

Neck

With your thumbs facing in, place both of them on either side of your neck, just above your collarbone. Then, reach your fingers around the back of your neck, and start by running them up and down to locate any areas of tension. Gently, begin to rub any sore spots in a circular motion.

Shoulders

Begin on the right side. Take your right hand and place your thumb just above your collarbone, and your fingers on the other side of your shoulder, above your shoulder blades. Gently squeeze to see if you can find any areas that need particular attention, and gently start to move your thumb and fingers in circular motions. Repeat on the left side with your left hand.

Lower back

Lie down on a yoga mat or a blanket on the floor. Bring your knees up to your chest and wrap your arms around both legs, making yourself into a ball. Next, explore some movement by gently rocking yourself from side to side. Go with what feels good, perhaps pushing your legs away from your body slightly in order to massage different parts of your back.

Feet

Take a foot in your hands. Begin by rubbing your thumbs in circles around your heel, do this for as long as you like. Then, take your thumbs up in a straight line back and forth between your heel and the ball of your foot, massaging away any tension in your arches. Next, place your thumbs on the ball of your foot, and take them out towards the edges, repeating as you please. **■**

TOP TIP

There's nothing quite like a cold compress for a banging headache, or something warm for strained muscles – and you can bring this into self-massage by heating or cooling your palms and fingers. For cold, try running your hands under the cold water tap for a short while. And, for hot, do the same but with warm water.

*“And, now that you don’t have
to be perfect you can be good*

EAST OF EDEN, JOHN STEINBECK



THE POWER OF



Discover the five elements of the wonder cycle, and the awe-inspiring ways they could change how you see the world

Writing | **Monica Parker**

Everything is so fast these days. As a population, we are overwhelmed. Inundated by change, distracted by choice, polarised into ever-reductive tribes, we are chasing the manufactured instead of the meaningful. 'Wonder' can serve as an antidote to our move-fast-break-things world, but modern life, with its quick fixes and life hacks, is conditioning wonder proneness out of us.

So what exactly is wonder, and how can it help us?

Defining wonder can be a challenge as the very nature of the experience is ineffable, meaning it defies language. Wonder is both a journey and a destination. A verb and a noun. A process and an outcome. As I've defined it, five interlinking elements comprise the wonder cycle: watch, wander, whittle, wow, and whoa (or the psychological terms openness, curiosity, absorption, and the two elements of awe.)

Wonder offers a host of benefits, both psychologically

and physiologically. It makes us more creative, and more desirous of studying the world around us. It makes us more humble, less materialistic, more generous, and better community members. People who are higher in the composite wonder elements are more likely to perform better in school and work, and build healthier relationships. Wonder makes us less stressed, and feel like we have more time. Researchers have even found a link between >>>



WONDER IS AS
MUCH A MINDSET
AS IT IS A MOMENT

people who experience wonder and lower blood pressure, lower stress hormones, and decreased proinflammatory cytokines, the latter of which are the markers associated with a number of diseases, including cancer and cardiovascular disease.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE WONDER CYCLE

The first element in the wonder cycle is **'watching'** – being present and open. Watchers observe the world, taking nothing for granted, and try to see the familiar in unfamiliar ways. Openness to experience is one of the Big Five personality traits that we all possess to some degree, and it's what psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman describes as "the drive for cognitive exploration of inner experience". It's worth noting that openness in this context isn't about being a gregarious extrovert, rather it is about being open to the world, to new ideas, and to the views of other people. If we aren't watching, if our field of vision is too narrow, we become blind to the opportunities for wonder around us.

'Wander', our second element in the wonder cycle, is about eagerly engaging with the world, being comfortable with the twists and turns life brings, and always exploring, searching, questioning, challenging, discovering, discerning, and noodling. Wandering curiosity isn't the Google-search-to-settle-a-bet kind of curiosity, but rather the deep, inquisitive cognitive stroll that allows curiosity to

flourish – a meandering of the mind, and, in some cases, a meandering of the body and soul, too. We tend to become less deeply curious as we age, because we perceive there is less to be curious about, so training ourselves to see the world with a beginner’s mind, through the eyes of a child, is a lifelong skill.

‘Whittle’, or absorption, is the third element. Think of it as the runway before taking flight. This is the paring down of mental aperture from broad to focused. It can be the feeling of absorption in a new idea, or the purity of presence in a flow state. Someone high in absorption has big feelings; they are easily moved by a beautiful sunset or an evocative piece of music. They are creative and can craft entire worlds with striking mental imagery. At their core, whittlers are present. In this state of absorbed awareness, we are most prepared for what’s known as an ‘expectation violation’, where our anticipation of what’s next is interrupted, creating a cognitive gap. If that gap is big enough, or we are paying it enough open, present attention, it can act as the gateway to a self-transcendent experience.

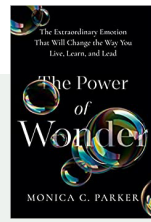
The final elements of wonder are **‘wow’** and **‘whoa’** – the breathtaking, mind-blowing transcendent experience of awe. First is the wow, where we are challenged by something so vast that our mind struggles to make sense of it. Then, the whoa. This final stage transforms us as our psyche acclimates to this new stimulus. This is the moment

when we let out a long sigh and say: “OMG – mind blown.” And that experience changes us, sometimes forever. Awe-prone people are open, curious, creative, and tolerant. They take pleasure in cognitive tasks, and are well-suited for a complex and enigmatic world. Always hungry for new experiences, awe-prone people like to think big ideas and feel big emotions. They naturally put themselves in physical and mental spaces where they are more likely to experience wonder.

WHAT BRINGS US WONDER AND HOW DO WE FIND MORE OF IT?

Wonderbringers are everywhere, and, as one might expect, they are very personal. There are, however, universal commonalities in the things that bring us wonder. Natural vistas, scientific discoveries, and musical masterpieces are all known wonderbringers. They can be conceptual or perceptual. They can also be natural, social, or cognitive. The question worth asking is ‘What is my wonderbringer?’ Then seek more of that.

Wonder is as much a mindset as it is a moment, however. If we prepare ourselves for a wonder experience, we are far more likely to recognise it. One way to cultivate this is through priming, such as writing down our goals. Why does goal priming work? If the outcome of the goal is rewarding, then our brain commits more cognitive energy toward achieving it. So, just setting an intention for wonder can be a powerful shift in our mindset.



‘The Power of Wonder: The Extraordinary Emotion That Will Change the Way You Live, Learn and Lead’ by Monica C. Parker (Hay House, £14.99).

An example of this is a wonder walk. What makes a wonder walk a wonder walk? You *decide* it! Researchers took two groups of people and had half take a regular walk, and the other were primed to find wonder on their walk. The wonder walkers, with just a simple one-sentence prime, were more likely to find wonder, and hence experience the benefits. Another benefit? Wonder walkers had bigger smiles!

A wonder mindset can also be found in slow-thought activities, such as meditation, a gratitude practice, or narrative journaling, which all serve to quiet a chattering mind and cultivate an awareness that encourages wonder. Another way to build a wonder mindset is through novelty, as our brain pays close attention to new things. Trying new experiences, taking new routes, and engaging with new ideas creates more opportunities for an expectation violation, and sets us up for awe.

Watch, wander, whittle, wow and whoa – each element of wonder has its own beauty, offering an opportunity for discovery about ourselves and how we see and move through the world. **■**

PLOGGON

The healthy trend that'll have you running on green energy

Writing | Rebecca Thair

In the ultimate exercise in environmental activity, the Swedish trend of 'plogging' sees runners take to the streets, collecting trash as they go. Merging the terms 'jogging' and 'plucking', plogging encourages people to enjoy the fresh air, and the benefits of some gentle exercise, while also improving and protecting the local area.

From empty coffee cups to cigarette butts, it's estimated that more than 2 million pieces of litter are dropped around the UK every single day. The amount of waste is staggering, and the impact on the environment, astronomical. Items such as banana peels, and cigarettes, can take two years to decompose, while the countless plastic bottles you spot strewn around can last for ever.

And, it's our wildlife that pays the price for littering laziness. The RSPCA reports receiving 10 calls a day, rising in the summer, regarding animals injured by rubbish – from the choking

hazards of balloons to possible suffocation with plastic bags, and potential cuts from the sharp edges of cans.

But we can all do better. The best option? Don't drop litter in the first place. Take your rubbish home, or dispose of it properly in public bins. Secondly, give plogging a go and set a precedent; if a space is clean, others might be less inclined to litter. And if they see you out and about with your bags, they might be inspired to join in, too!

Want to get involved? The good news is that you don't need to be a racing prodigy. All it takes is a trash bag, a decent pair of trainers, and a desire to do some good to get off the starting blocks. No one has a timer, you don't have to set a record pace, or reach a milestone distance. And if jogging doesn't appeal to you, a pleasant stroll will suffice – the main thing is to watch out for litter as you explore the outdoors, and leave your local community a little cleaner than you found it. ■



We recommend:

- A trash bag
- Comfy shoes
- Protective gloves
- Weather-appropriate clothing

Optional:

- Litter picker
- Hand sanitiser

Are you a wellbeing professional?

Whether you're a counsellor, life coach, nutritionist, hypnotherapist, or therapist, we appreciate just how much of a difference you can make to someone's life – which is why we want to help you to help others.

For 15 years, our family of directories has connected more than **4.6 million people** with mental health and wellbeing professionals like you. If you're a qualified therapist or coach, why not join Happiful to help make support more accessible to everyone?



Why you should join the Happiful family



Your own instant, dedicated web page to promote your services



Publish articles and access exclusive press and media opportunities



Tailored support from our award-winning membership team



Plus a free exclusive listing on our Happiful app

Register your interest at professionals.happiful.com



**only £5.99
per month**

Exclusive journaling section

Includes UK delivery

Cancel or pause at any time

Certified



Delivering on our mission to create a happier, healthier, and more sustainable society.

Download the free Happiful App

