

SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

# Fabulous

**GRIN & BARE IT**  
WHAT REALLY  
GOES ON AT  
A NUDIST  
FESTIVAL

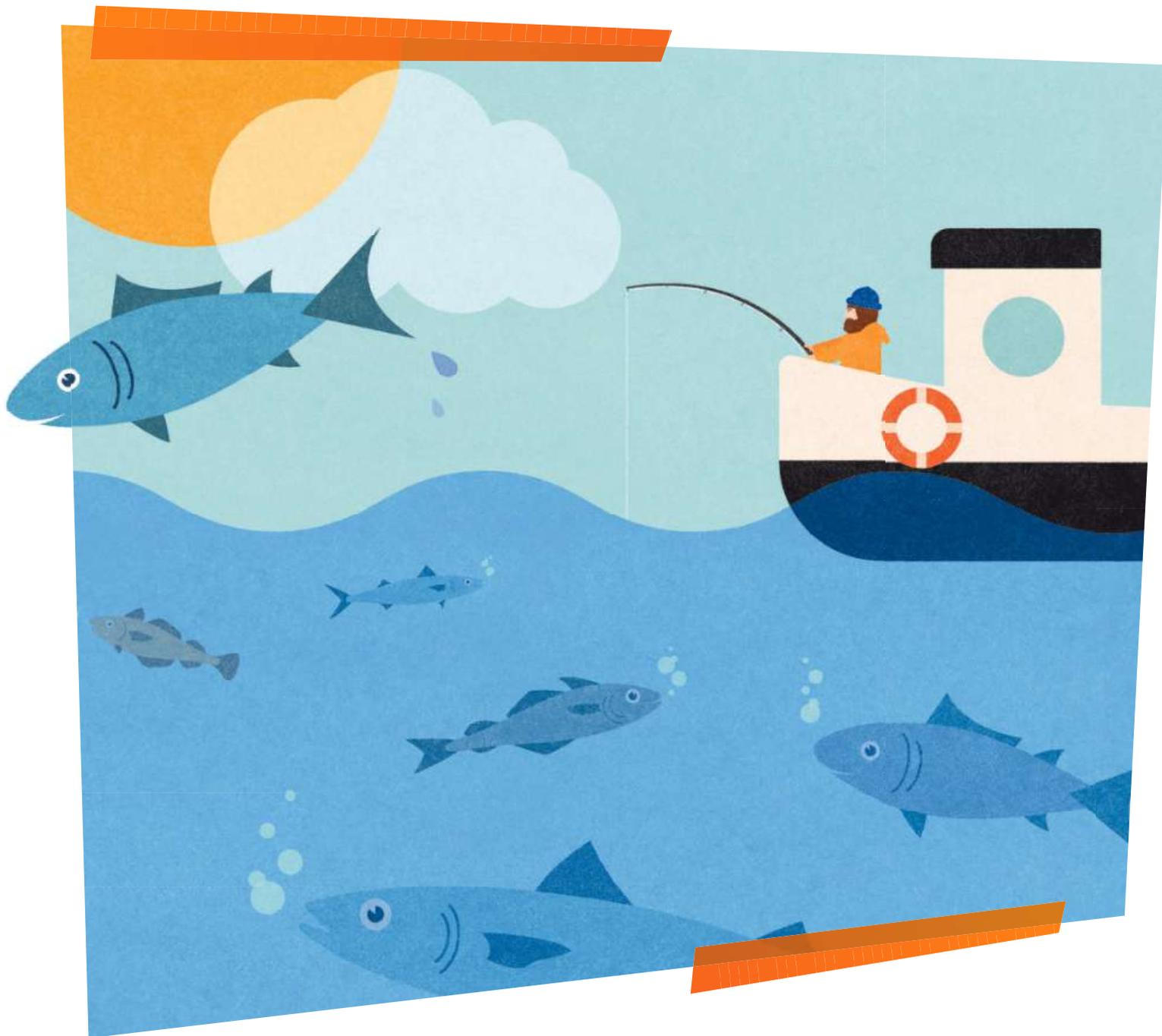
THE HUMBLE  
INGREDIENT  
THAT WILL  
TRANSFORM  
YOUR SKIN

## GOING FOR GOLD

Love Islander  
**TASHA**  
**GHOURI** on the  
Strictly scandal  
and her secret  
weapon for  
winning the  
Glitterball

PHOTOGRAPHED  
FOR FABULOUS BY  
SIMON SONGHURST

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**W**hat a build-up it's been to the launch of this year's *Strictly Come Dancing*. Instead of getting ready to celebrate its 20th year, the BBC's flagship show has been mired in controversy amid allegations of bullying and bad behaviour by professional dancers Giovanni Pernice and Graziano Di Prima. While both have now left, there is a marked absence of female celebrity contestants on this year's *Strictly*.

However, our cover star Tasha Ghouri is one of six women who will be taking to the dance floor next weekend. On p8, Tasha insists she was not put off by the bullying allegations, and reveals how she's been in contact with *Strictly's* first deaf contestant - Rose Ayling-Ellis, who went on to win the show (with Giovanni). Our bets are on Tasha to do the same!

Meanwhile, have you ever wanted to let it all hang out? With the launch of new show *Dating Naked UK*, going completely starkers has never been more popular. But could *you* do it? And does it make you more body confident? Our brave writer Donna Smiley decided to rid herself of all inhibitions and go to a naked festival, where she tried out everything, from yoga to a waterpark. Turn to p16 to find out what it was *really* like.

Plus, mushrooms are the new ingredient causing a stir in the beauty world - we reveal why on p26. Enjoy!

*Sinead*



**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
**SINEAD McINTYRE**  
**@MCINTYRE2**

On the cover: Tasha wears: playsuit, Syra J

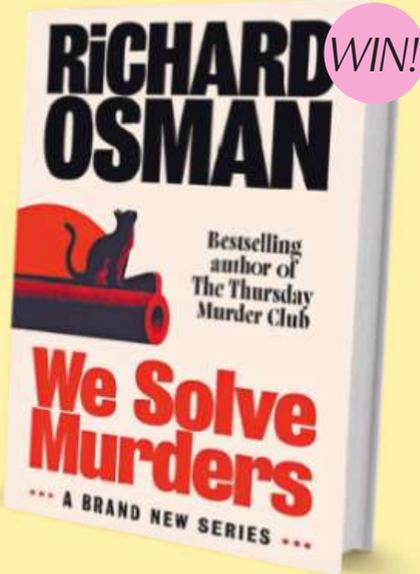
**We Solve Murders** by Richard Osman

The *Thursday Murder Club* author is back with the first read in a brand-new series - and we think it's even better than *TTMCI*. Private security expert Amy loves the adrenalin of protecting high-worth clients from people trying to kill them. But when her own life is in danger, she must call upon her quiet, routine-loving father-in-law Steve for help. To win, visit [Fabulousmag.co.uk](http://Fabulousmag.co.uk). \* Out Thursday (£22, Viking)



**Speak No Evil**

When Americans Ben (Scoot McNairy), Louise (Mackenzie Davis) and daughter Agnes meet charming Brit couple Paddy (James McAvoy) and Ciara (*The Fall's* Aisling Franciosi) and their mute son Ant on holiday, the two families click and agree to meet again at Paddy and Ciara's home in the West Country. But what starts as an idyllic break soon descends into terror, as the hosts test their guests' boundaries - to the point of no return. This psychological thriller is brilliant and terrifying. In cinemas Friday



**In Vogue: The 90s**

Big sunglasses at the ready for a juicy BTS look at the world's most iconic style mag during the decade that changed fashion forever. Told through the eyes of legendary *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour, as well as her successor Edward Enninful, along with A-listers Victoria Beckham, Naomi Campbell and Gwyneth Paltrow, the six-part retrospective - released in two parts - charts the era's most defining moments. Obsessed! Vol. 1 (episodes 1-3), from Friday, Disney+

**Fabulist**

Relive '90s fashion with Anna Wintour, be terrified by James McAvoy and see *War Horse* on stage again



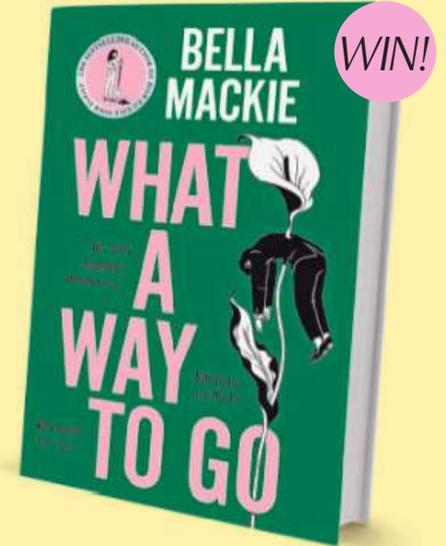
**Origins With Cush Jumbo**

Think you know your celebs? You might want to reconsider, as these fascinating origin stories from the biggest stars of the entertainment biz will flip your preconceptions on their head! Hosted by Brit actress Cush Jumbo - star of *The Good Wife* and all-round cool girl - these chats give listeners a look at the lives of our favourite stars before they hit the big-time. From childhood memories to teen awkwardness, it's all here. Our Cush crush just got serious! On all podcast providers now



**War Horse**

If you missed the National Theatre show the first time, this is your chance to see Michael Morpurgo's WWI novel brought to life with stunning staging and puppetry. Albert's horse Joey is sold into the cavalry, but Albert is determined to save his four-legged friend. Until November 8, 2025, [Warhorseonstage.com](http://Warhorseonstage.com)



**What A Way To Go** by Bella Mackie

*How To Kill Your Family* was a huge bestseller, and we're betting the author's second novel is going to be just as big, as it's brilliant! When super-wealthy Anthony Wistern dies at his lavish 60th birthday party, his family immediately start to lie - to the police and each other. But who is hiding what, and who will get Anthony's fortune? To win, visit [Fabulousmag.co.uk](http://Fabulousmag.co.uk). \* Out Thursday (£20, HarperCollins)

# SHOPPING



Shoes, £14, Primark



Stackable cookware, £79 for three pieces, ProCook



Bag, £49, French Connection



Floral Street Hand Creams ✓, £12 each

## Lustlist

Have a kitchen disco with hot headphones, gorge glasses and the perfect foodie print



Glasses, £6 for two, Nutmeg at Morrisons



Marshall Major V Headphones, £129.99



It Cosmetics CC+ Natural Matte SPF40, £38



Cardigan, £25, Gap



Valentino Colorgraph Eye Pencils, £29 each



Unframed print, from £19.95, Stephie Cardona at East End Prints



Plur Missing Person Body Oil, £45

Compiled by: Catherine Benning-Pedley, Emily Regan & Mia Lyndon Photography: Sophia Alexander Stockists: East End Prints (Eastendprints.co.uk), Floral Street (floralstreet.com), French Connection (frenchconnection.com), Gap (gap.co.uk), It Cosmetics (elidresses.com), Marshall (marshall.com), Nutmeg at Morrisons (nutmegmorrison.com), Primark (primark.com), ProCook (procook.co.uk), Valentino (valentino-beauty.co.uk)

# Kate Wills

Our columnist on the delicate balance of defining wine o'clock

**O**ne Friday, I found myself in the pub with some friends. Our kids were playing happily, chips had been ordered. Normally, we'd split a bottle of wine, but someone suggested cocktails. It sounded like the end-of-a-long-week treat I needed.

But not all cocktails are created equal. I thought I'd ordered a long, spritz type, but what I got was essentially straight spirits. As I left to go home with my three-year-old daughter Blake, I was shocked to realise I was too drunk to drive. So was I also too drunk to parent?

Recently, the actress Emily Atack posted a picture of herself with her two-month-old son strapped to her chest, glass of wine in hand. "How are you drinking with a baby?" someone commented. "She's holding a newborn baby. Alcohol should be the last thing in her hand," wrote another.

Drinking seems to be a rite of passage for mothers these days. A whole industry has sprung up, with books such as *Why Mummy Drinks* and magnets that say: "You're not really drinking alone if your kids are home". A glass of wine - usually once your children are in bed, but not always - is a way of releasing the pressure and carving out "me time". But is it damaging to drink in front of your kids?

I've never been a big drinker, but I think that a small tittle might actually make me a better parent. It certainly takes the edge off the boredom of another bath and bedtime routine. With a slight buzz, I can read *Fox In Socks* with a gusto I couldn't summon stone-cold sober. That cocktail incident aside, I'd never drink more than one glass of wine, because I would hate to not feel in control enough to keep my daughter safe (and, also, hangovers with kids are brutal).

But I know for some parents, drinking anything at all is irresponsible. Anne Hathaway recently revealed she's decided to be sober for 18 years because she doesn't want her son to see her drunk or to do the nursery drop-off hungover. Then there's Kelly Clarkson, who says: "Children are challenging. Wine is necessary."

Recently, a friend confided that instead of her usual wine o'clock, she'd started

## 'Is it ever OK to drink while you're on parent duty?'



microdosing magic mushrooms. Initially, I was shocked, as the idea of taking hallucinogenic drugs while looking after a child seemed like it had a call from social services written all over it. But once she explained that she was actually more alert than after having a glass of wine, I stopped being so judgemental. Legalities aside, is it really that different?

There was a sobering report a few years ago that found that half of parents had been tipsy in front of their child, while nearly a third said they had been drunk, and almost one in five children were embarrassed by their parents' drinking.\*

I would hate for Blake to feel embarrassed of my drinking or - even worse - to feel unsafe. But I wonder if it's also important to show kids that alcohol can be enjoyed responsibly, that real life doesn't have to be lived in absolute extremes of sobriety or a total skinful.

Like most things to do with parenting, I have no idea. But I do know we need to call time on shaming new mums like Emily Atack for having a glass of wine. You can nurse a rosé and still nurse. You don't have to give up every part of yourself when you become a mother. **F**

● Follow Kate on Instagram @katewillswrites.

### THIS WEEK I'M...

#### Watching... *Kaos*

Jeff Goldblum is on top form playing Zeus in this modern-day reworking of the Greek myths on Netflix.



#### Loving... Hello Sunday

The brand has made sun protection fun this year - The Shimmer One gives a gorge glow.



#### Listening to... *The Curious History Of Your Home*

This delves into the fascinating story of household items.





# 5 mins with...



Comedian **RUSSELL KANE**, 49

**What is your biggest life achievement?**

It's finding my life partner, Lindsey [37]. That's probably the best gig I ever had - she was sitting front row, wearing this fake-fur coat. I snatched it off her and threw it around on stage going: "Ooh, my minky!" Two weeks later, I tweeted "minky" on Twitter thinking: "I wonder if this girl will see it." And she did! We got married a year later. On my wedding ring, it says: "You had me at minky."

**Tell us a random fact about you that no one else knows...**

I've been doing biohacking, where you slow down your biological ageing. I take care of my skin, too and do Prophilu injections. I'm not against Botox, but with stand-up comedians, we need lines on our faces.

**When are you at your happiest?**

When I'm at home with my family or on stage. Before a show, I have to get my heart rate up. If you look backstage, I'm skipping or shadow boxing. My worst gig was when I was very new, still working as an advertising copywriter. It was going badly. Then, the pub's dog wandered on to the stage and sniffed me in the nuts! I couldn't come back from that.

**Does anything scare you?**

The thought of me not being there for my daughter [Mina, eight]. I love being a dad. Beforehand I wasn't really bothered if I had kids. It was Lindsey that said: "You need to tell me, because I want children." I'd love to have loads, actually.

**If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?**

Height - I'm 5ft 10in, so 6ft will do. I once dated this model who was the same height, so I was straight into Buffalo shoes!

● Pet Selector! by Russell Kane is out now (£14.99, Quarto). His HyperActive tour runs until December 6, 2025 (Russellkane.co.uk).

FABULOUS

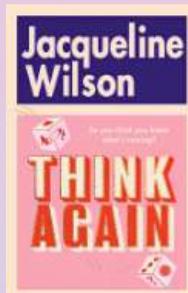
**RUTH WILSON**

She kept us spellbound as haunted Lorna Brady in last year's *Woman In The Wall* and now the actress is taking on *Newsnight's* Emily Maitlis in *A Very Royal Scandal*, out September 19 on Prime Video. If you enjoyed *Scoop*, you'll love this!



**ASTROLOGY**

Looks like we're still getting all starry-eyed, because a new study has found 63% of Gen Z and millennials believe astrology has improved their career.\* Around 62% even take extra precautions - like backing up docs and setting flexible deadlines - when Mercury is in retrograde. Now that deserves a promotion...



**JACQUELINE WILSON**

We can all finally stop obsessing over exactly what happened to the *Girls* gang Ellie, Magda and Nadine, as *Think Again* - the sequel to Jacqueline Wilson's book quartet - is out Thursday.



**THE LAGREE METHOD**

It sent Michelle Obama and Hollywood A-listers including Jennifer Aniston into a sweaty tailspin, and now the Pilates-esque exercise is blowing up over here, too. Try London's Studio Fix or South Wales' Studio Love Lagree for your next sesh.



**BOUJEE MINI BARS**

Gone are the days of the poorly stocked hotel room mini bar, filled with bottled water and a few KitKats. Now, you can tuck into seaweed capsules at Glasgow's Kimpton Blythswood Square, cocktails at QT Sydney and stock up on mini beauty products at New York's Equinox Hotel instead, according to Hotels.com. Fancy.

# Fabometer

What's fabulous and what's *fabules* this week

**HEELED TRAINERS**

They're back with a vengeance, thanks to Spanx founder Sara Blakely. The 53-year-old entrepreneur is trying her darnedest to make "Sneex" happen. Don't all run at once. Or at all.



**SLANG SPEAK**

If you don't know your "pookie" from your "rizz", you're not alone, as online casino JeffBet has revealed how we're all clueless when it comes to deciphering Gen Alpha's slang. "GYATT" is the most confusing of the lot, attracting a whopping 31,625 Google queries a month. Do you feel old yet?

FABULESS



Words: Anna Clarke. Photography: Getty Images, Kirsty Anderson, Shutterstock Editorial, Sneex.com. Source: \*Ecolibri. Think Again by Jacqueline Wilson (E2Z, Transworld) is out Thursday. Visit StudioFix.co.uk, LoveLagree.com

PHOTOGRAPHED  
FOR FABULOUS  
BY SIMON  
SONGHURST

**“The Strictly Curse is laughable.  
That’s not on my mind at all!”**

Love Island’s **TASHA GHOURI** on why she’s not fazed by either the Strictly controversy or Curse – and the previous winner who’s been her secret weapon

**T**here's no denying *Strictly Come Dancing* has been weathering the toughest challenge of its 20-year existence. The much-loved BBC1 show has been thrown into turmoil over the controversy surrounding the behaviour of some of its professional dancers, including Giovanni Pernice, who denies any wrong doing, as well as Graziano Di Prima, who has been sacked and is said to be suing the channel for unfair dismissal.

Insiders have claimed that the ripple effect of the scandal meant female celebrities were reluctant to sign up for this year's show, with only six women in the line-up - its lowest number ever. But despite counting Giovanni as an ex, *Love Island*'s Tasha Ghouri says she jumped at the chance to be involved in this year's series. In fact, the 26 year old has been "manifesting" a spot on the show since leaving the villa in 2022, even writing numerous times in her notes app on her phone: "I will be on *Strictly Come Dancing* in 2024 or 2025."

"I am very excited," she says, unable to wipe the smile off her face. "I broke down when my management told me. I actually cried, I didn't believe it at first. I said: 'No, you're pranking me!' I was sitting next to Andrew [Le Page, 29, her boyfriend and fellow *Love Islander*] in the living room with our dog Luna on the sofa. It was the perfect moment to find out. I was just so happy and speechless.

"It is definitely something I've dreamed of, so to actually be doing it is mind-blowing. I feel like it's not fully kicked in yet.

"I've been [writing the notes] since February 2023 as a manifestation, and it must have worked!"

*'Me and Giovanni – it's ancient history. I'm so happy with Andrew'*

**W**as she not at all worried about the previous reports of bullying and abusive behaviour by professional dancers towards their celebrity partners?

"I wasn't there - I'm here for my own experience on the show. So I'm focusing on myself to just really enjoy it," she says.

Tasha, who was born completely deaf and, aged five, received a cochlear implant to help her hear, has her own secret weapon to help her progress on the show - she's been getting tips from 2021 winner Rose Ayling-Ellis, who was *Strictly*'s first deaf contestant.

"Rose reached out with some great advice, which I was really appreciative of,"



## THE KELLY ALLEN INTERVIEW

she explains. "As a Glitterball winner, her support gave me a huge confidence boost. Even though our hearing experiences differ, she totally gets where I might face challenges and shared some valuable tips. I watched Rose and she was absolutely incredible on the show. She inspired me to put myself out there and go on *Love Island*."

"I will always be massively thankful to Rose, because she really opened the door for me, for all of us. So, hopefully, I do well on the show, follow in her footsteps and make people in the deaf community proud as well."

Rose was, of course, partnered with Giovanni, 33, who slid into Tasha's DMs about six months before her stint on the eighth series of *Love Island*. The pair dated briefly, and she's understandably reluctant to talk about their short romance today.

"I've met up with him a few times," Tasha admits. "But that was years ago. We are not in touch now, this is like ancient history. I'm so happy with Andrew, and he's my future, so I don't want to talk about the past. It's not my place to comment on [the allegations against Giovanni]. I'm here for my own experiences. I'm here just for me."

Tasha, 26, also has the backing of her *Love Island* friend Zara McDermott, who competed in *Strictly* last year with Graziano. He was sacked after BBC bosses were shown shocking videos, including one of him allegedly kicking her.

She explains: "Zara reached out and said 'well done'. She's been super-supportive. I supported her when she was on the show. She was incredible."



Tasha was pictured with *Strictly*'s Johannes at an event in February; with Andrew and dog Luna

To be fair, there's not much that would shake Tasha. After all, she's had to overcome more than most in her life.

Unable to speak until she was fitted with her cochlear implant, she struggled at school, because as soon as teachers turned their backs to write on the blackboard, she couldn't lip read. She went on to forge a successful career as a model, becoming *Love Island*'s first deaf contestant in 2022, but even then was targeted by trolls who mocked her voice.

*'I won't always know what's being said, but I'm excited to be challenged'*

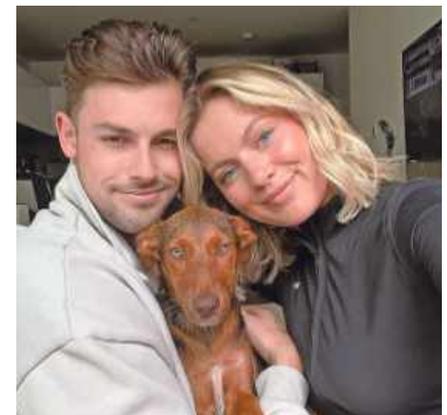
**N**ow, she's ready to tackle the challenges of competing on *Strictly* with hearing difficulties head on.

"*Strictly* has been so supportive and said whatever I need, to let them know," Tasha explains. "I'll need to be able to lip read and people will need to be on my right side [where she has her implant]."

"There are going to be times when I won't know what is being said. It's just something I have to try and adapt to. I don't know how it's going to be with the live shows until I do them, but I'm super-excited to challenge myself.

"I've never danced to a live band before, so that will be an interesting experience, as I hear music by vibration. The band will be so loud, I'll definitely be able to feel it. But in terms of lyrics, I don't really hear them, so I have to Google them. Half the time, I'm singing the words wrong," she says.

"I want to use my time on the show to share my story and let people know what it's like growing up with a disability. I want to be a voice for people because I didn't have that growing up. I want them to feel like they can be confident wearing their hair up and showing off their implant. When people tell me things like that, I feel like I've done my purpose of raising →



awareness. I call it my superpower, because it's something I'm really passionate about."

Tasha trained as a professional dancer and has even appeared in a MNEK music video, as well as being pictured with *Strictly* pro Johannes Radebe at a community dance workshop in front of Queen Camilla earlier this year - so how will she cope with criticism that it might give her an unfair advantage?

"I've had commercial dance training, but I've never trained in Latin or ballroom. Commercial is very different - it's what you see backing dancers do behind pop stars. You are very grounded to the floor and you are very in yourself, whereas ballroom is completely the opposite of that. I've never danced with a partner, either. We did a chemistry day with the [*Strictly*] professionals, and even holding that form felt so odd to me. It's something I'm not used to and will be a whole new challenge.

"Obviously, with my dance experience, there will be some elements that will help me, like picking up choreography, but it's not going to be the same. Even in my audition for *Strictly* I struggled a bit as my brain was like: 'Oh, this is a whole new dance style,' and there are so many steps and so many counts. There might be some habits that I'm going to have to unlearn and relearn, too. It's a whole different ball game, but I'm excited just to give it a go. I might not be good at it - you never know!"

*'Give me everything! The feathers, the sequins, the glitter - I want it all!'*

Tasha admits she's incredibly competitive, so does that mean she has got her eyes on the Glitterball trophy?

"I'd be happy if I even lasted a week - winning would be an absolute bonus. I'd love to do Musicals Week then I'd like to make it to Blackpool because of that incredible ballroom..."

"OK, I do want to make it to the end," she laughs. "Being in the final would be an absolute dream, but there are some dark horses for sure. I'm taking each week as it comes. I don't want to look back and think: 'I wish I had enjoyed this more.' I've had quite a few [costume] fittings, which is exciting. It's a complete transformation and I feel very *Strictly*. I said



In the villa with fellow Love Islander Indiyah Polack

### IN THE MAKE-UP CHAIR WITH TASHA

#### What are your skincare heroes?

I don't like to over-complicate it.

Cleanser, serum and moisturiser.

I like to use

Caudalie Vinopure Serum and the Elemis Cleansing Balm is so good.



#### What are your make-up bag essentials?

L'Oréal Paris Glotion Medium Glow, Charlotte Tilbury Nude Lip Liner and Fenty Beauty Gloss Bomb.



#### Any budget buys?

Maybelline lip glosses are really nice and stay on all day.

#### What do you splurge on?

Any Mugler perfume. Angel is my all-time favourite, so I always stock up at the airport.



#### Who is your celebrity beauty icon?

Hailey Bieber. She is so cool and she always looks so glowy and sun-kissed.

#### Describe your beauty evolution.

I've always been a natural make-up girl, even when I was on *Love Island*.

to the costume team: 'Give me everything! The feathers, the diamonds, the sequins, the glitter. I want it all!' The costume team is insane.

"I've never used fake tan before. But I want the full experience, so whack it on me! Go for it, get me *Strictified*. No regrets," she laughs.

*'Getting the Glitterball and an engagement ring would be iconic'*

Then there's the dreaded *Strictly* Curse, which has caused more than 20 relationships to break up - something she and Andrew are not worried about in the slightest.

"No, it's actually quite laughable, the whole 'Strictly Curse'," she rolls her eyes. "I'm professional, I'm here to do a job, to provide entertainment, to dance, and so that's not on my mind at all. Andrew was so happy for me.

"He said: 'I always believed that you would do it.' It's so exciting, because we're both on this journey together and seeing what the future will hold for both of us after this."

And he has no concerns at all about Tasha getting up close with those hot pro dancers?

"No," she shakes her head. "He knows that is something that comes with dance training. There are no feelings or romance behind it, it's purely just two people enjoying dancing together. Andrew is going to come down to the show, and I got him a T-shirt to wear that says 'Team Tasha' on it with my face. I think he was a bit embarrassed, but hopefully he will wear it!"

There are not many *Love Island* couples that go the distance, with even much-loved Molly-Mae Hague and Tommy Fury recently splitting. As one of the few success stories, what is Tasha and Andrew's secret?

"I don't know Molly or Tommy personally, but I wish them both the best. I hope they're both OK. You know, break-ups are not nice, especially in the public eye.

"I always tell *Love Islanders* that after you leave the show, it's all about communication. When you come out of the villa, it's quite an overload. There's a lot going on, but the key thing is actually talking. There were times when me and Andrew wouldn't really see each other for a few weeks, but we always communicated and supported each other. We also make time for each other, too. It's about having that balance.

"We moved into our new house in February - it's a renovation project. There are no kids any time soon. We just want to enjoy our time together and make memories."

And what about a proposal - could she be finishing the year with both the Glitterball and a ring on her finger?

"Well, that would be iconic," she laughs. "It's up to Andrew, isn't it? I want to be completely surprised when it happens. I don't even want to know anything. So I've no idea - it's in his hands." **F**

● The new series of *Strictly* Come Dancing starts on Saturday, on BBC1 and iPlayer.



**WATCH IT!**  
Go behind the scenes with Tasha on our website or scan the QR code.



# The mistake that changed our lives forever

From missing a flight to messing up at work – when something goes wrong, it can feel like a disaster. Here, three women share how a misstep led them to money, happiness and love

BY KATE GRAHAM

**'GETTING FIRED PUSHED ME TO SET UP MY DREAM CAREER'**

**Kerri Watt, 39, a PR consultant, lives in the New Forest, Hampshire.**

"Spotting the stack of papers on my boss' desk, my heart sank. Before he'd even said a word, I knew I was about to be sacked - and it was all because of my own stupid mistake.

In early 2014, aged 29, I'd started my job in a corporate sales team on a high. I was recruited because of how well I'd done in a previous role and I was super-confident - even a bit cocky.

At first, everything went brilliantly. Beth\* joined the team a few weeks later and we immediately bonded. She had the same energy levels and ambition as I did.

Then we got a new boss, and it was immediately clear he didn't like either of us. We felt frustrated and unappreciated, and that's when the emails started. I'd moan to Beth about a pointless task I'd been set or rant when my great idea was overlooked. She'd do the same. It was childish, rather than malicious. I'd feel better when Beth read them, and we'd share a smile across our desks.

Even though I was using the company's internal email system, I never thought anyone would see them.

Then, eight months into working there, I walked into the office one day and felt the strangest atmosphere. Everyone fell silent and just stared at their desks. Beth looked as confused as I felt.

When my boss asked to see me, I felt sick walking over to his office. As he went to sit down, I saw a pile of paper on his desk. My heart almost stopped when I realised he'd printed out my emails.

My face burned as I frantically tried to remember what I'd written. How bad was it? I gripped my hands together tightly to stop them shaking as I waited for him to speak.



Kerri was fired but found success

When he began to read them out, I actually thought I might die. I listened to my childish remarks about his clothes, and my complaining about how he'd just spoken to me. It was absolutely horrendous.

I didn't know what to do. Some small part of me thought that I'd be told off and sent back to my desk. Then he said the words 'gross misconduct' and I knew it was over.

Walking back through the office, everything was a blur. Somehow, I kept a smile on my face until I got into my car. Then I broke down and cried.

I knew my boss had gone looking for an excuse to fire me. But, still, I never should have given him the ammunition he needed. How could I have been so stupid?

Beth texted a few hours later and when I told her why I'd been fired, she was really upset.

She decided to hand in her notice, knowing that she'd be next.

With no savings, I was petrified about how I was going to survive, and was so humiliated that I couldn't tell friends and family the truth. I wanted to crawl into a hole, hide away and wallow, but I didn't have that luxury. I needed to make money.

While I pretended to my mum that I was still at my job, I pitched myself out as a freelance consultant for sales and events. To my amazement, work took off.

It took months for me to realise that being fired was actually a blessing. I was making more money than ever before and loved what I did. I'd never have been brave enough to jump - I needed to be pushed.

Now I have my own PR consultancy, and when I make a mistake, I own it and move on. I learned the hard way that missteps really can lead somewhere wonderful."

● Visit [Kerrilwatt.co.uk](http://Kerrilwatt.co.uk).

**'I MET MY HUSBAND BECAUSE OF A HUGE TRAVEL MISTAKE'**

**Portia Jones, 39, a travel podcaster, lives in Cardiff with husband Luke, 43, a music and podcast producer.**

"I blame the coffee. If I hadn't been concentrating on my drink, I'd have typed in the correct date and made it to New York for my big adventure. Then again, if I had, I'd never have met the love of my life!

Back in June 2014, I was having the adventure of a lifetime. After travelling solo across Canada for three months, I had just a few weeks left to go, so hit on a change of plan. I decided I'd push back my return flight, spend time in Quebec and then go to New York for a week. What better way to end my trip than some time in the Big Apple?

Best of all, my ticket allowed me to make one change for free, which I did on my computer as I drank a cup of coffee and thought about all the things I'd do in the city. But when I went to book my bus ticket to NYC a few days later, I realised I'd made a huge mistake. Somehow, I'd typed in the wrong date - and I was now due to fly home in just a few days. I was gutted, but didn't have the money to change it again. Everything became a huge, stressful rush. I had to ditch my Quebec plan, race to NYC and catch my flight home to the UK.

I was still feeling down about it when I got back to Cardiff. My trip had ended with a whimper instead of a bang.



The couple on their wedding day; they met by chance in a Cardiff bar

My friends did their best to cheer me up, and a few days later they took me out to a hipster wine bar. It wasn't Manhattan, but it gave me a boost.

Then a guy came and sat next to me. His name was Luke and he had lovely blue eyes. As he chatted, he explained that he should really be in Portugal right now. But he'd accidentally left his passport in his shorts and washed them, destroying the passport in the process.

I laughed and told him about my own travel blunder. I couldn't believe that we were both supposed to be in other countries at that exact moment, but instead we were in a bar in Cardiff, together. ➔

\*Name has been changed. Illustration: Yordania Poleganova/illustrationX. Photography: Jamie Allen, Misha Haq



Recording their podcast in Cairo

Luke was very handsome, but I definitely wasn't looking for a relationship. My plan was to head to Australia in a few months' time and carry on my travel adventures.

But when Luke got my number from a friend and texted me the following day, I felt a connection. He was so funny and nice that I agreed to go out for dinner with him. I immediately knew that we had something special.

Our relationship was a whirlwind. We fell in love within weeks and my plans to go to Australia vanished overnight. We got engaged just five months later.

I wanted to share my love of travel with Luke, and we had some amazing trips to Croatia, Portugal and Bosnia together. He had the travel bug, too. After our wedding in April 2016, we honeymooned by backpacking across Central America for a month.

Then, in January 2020, we started The Travel Goals Podcast and have since recorded episodes everywhere from the Sahara Desert to St Lucia. The money we make from sponsors pays for our travels, along with Luke's work as a music and audio producer. Some people may think being with your partner 24/7 might be too much, but we are best friends and love spending time together.

If I hadn't typed in the wrong date that day, and Luke hadn't washed his passport, I wouldn't have met my amazing husband. I've realised that in life, mistakes happen, but they can lead you somewhere amazing. Our travel blunders changed our lives in the best possible way."

● Listen to Portia and Luke's podcast at [pipandthecity.com/travel-goals-podcast](https://www.pipandthecity.com/travel-goals-podcast).

## 'I GOT PREGNANT AFTER A ONE-NIGHT STAND'

**Victoria Wade, 29, is a services sales advisor and lives in Northamptonshire with daughter Arabella, eight.**

"Watching my daughter blow out her eight birthday candles, I felt two overwhelming emotions - love for this sassy mini-me, and gratitude for the huge mistake I'd made. Without it, this beautiful girl would never have been born.

Growing up, I saw myself as a mum one day, but only in the distant future. My focus was working hard at school and studying law at university. I started my degree at Hull in 2014 when I was 20 and loved it. It felt like adult life was really beginning.

At the end of my first year in June 2015, I returned to my hometown on a high. On a drunken night out with people from my holiday job, I ended up in bed with a colleague. We were both young and having fun, so I didn't think too much about it.

I went back to uni, but in late November I started to feel a bit sick. My mind flashed back to the one-night stand - we hadn't used contraception, which I knew was reckless, but my periods hadn't stopped and my size-8 body hadn't changed.

Then I realised that my periods had recently been really light and irregular. With a sinking heart I took a pregnancy test, and saw it turn positive. My whole world fell apart. 'This is an absolute disaster,' I thought, in shock. 'How could I have been so stupid?'

I didn't tell anyone. With just two weeks left of term, I kept taking tests, swinging from denial to panic. It was a scary, lonely time. Finally, at home for the Christmas holidays, I had a scan. I couldn't deny it any longer - I was six months pregnant, with a daughter on the way. Thankfully, after the shock, my parents were both supportive. 'We'll make



With her newborn daughter Arabella



Victoria now can't imagine life without Arabella

it work together,' they said. 'Everything will be OK.'

I thought about postponing my third year, but my parents argued that if I did, I might never finish my degree. I realised they were right. We needed a new plan.

My due date was April, when I'd be home for the Easter holidays. So we decided that I'd go back to uni for my one exam at the end of May, as, thankfully, the rest of my second-year assessment was coursework. Then, when the baby was five months old, I'd return to university and my parents would look after her. It was overwhelming to try to picture my life as a mum, but having a plan made me feel calmer.

Being back at university was hard. Self-conscious, I'd hide my bump under baggy jumpers, but my friends were really supportive, especially my housemates.

In April 2016, Mum was by my side when Arabella was born weighing 7lb 8oz. The next five months were exhausting but amazing, full of the love and worry of new motherhood.

Returning to university in September was tough. I had so much guilt, despite knowing Arabella was safe with my parents. But with video calls, photos, and visits whenever we could, we made it work. Those first hugs with her after being apart were amazing.

In July 2017, Arabella watched as I graduated with a 2:1 - I was so proud she could see my achievement.

We still live with my parents and it's been incredible to watch her grow. She's so feisty and funny, and I can't imagine my life without her. When I held that pregnancy test, I thought my life was over. In fact, it was only just the beginning.

Becoming a mum has changed me. Before, I was really career-driven, but now what's important is sharing my life with my daughter. I really believe that everything - however scary - happens for a reason." **F**

STYLE **not a**

# Wheel of fortune

Whatever your budget, these beauts are the perfect pick-me-ups

Shorts, £35.99, Zara

Bag, £35.99, Mango



£40 Clock, £30, Acctim



Makeup Revolution Artist Collection Reflective Face & Body Gel, £5.99

£10

Napkin rings, £9.99 for two, H&M

Earrings, £8, River Island

Hair clip, £8, Claire's



Fenty Beauty Diamond Bomb All-Over Diamond Veil, £32

UNDER

Picture frame, £22 for six, Habitat

£30 Zoeva Velvet Love Eyeshadow Quad Palette, £26.50



Stila Stay All Day ArtStix Graphic Liner in Disco, £19

£20

T-shirt, £15, M&S Collection at Marks & Spencer

Shoes, £13, Primark

Living Proof Full Volume and Root-Lifting Spray ✓, £27

Jeans ✓, £29.99, H&M

Table runner, £11, Onlinehomeshop.com

Compiled by: Catherine Bennion-Pedley, Emily Regan & Mia Lyndon. Stockists: Acctim (acctim.com), Claire's (Claire's.com), Habitat (Habitat.co.uk), Living Proof (LivingProof.co.uk), Makeup Revolution (RevolutionBeauty.com), Mango (Mango.com), Marks & Spencer (MarksandSpencer.com), Primark (Primark.com), River Island (RiverIsland.com), Stila (LookFantastic.com), Zara (Zara.com), Zoya (Zoecosmetics.co.uk)

# 'Everywhere I look, there's a willie'

Horny swingers or wholesome fun? Fabulous' Senior Writer **DONNA SMILEY**, 43, lets it all hang out at a naked festival to find out why naturism is booming in the UK



**T**hrowing my arms in the air on the packed dance floor, I sing along at the top of my voice to the '70s classic YMCA. I'm not in a nightclub or at a house party, though - I'm at a naked disco and, bar a thong to protect my modesty, I'm completely starkers. Around me, boobs and willies of all shapes and sizes bounce around to the beat of the music.

It sounds like one of those nightmares where you look down at yourself at an important event and realise to your horror that you're naked. But I'm actually at the EveryBody Festival, an initiative held by British Naturism, which celebrates all things naked. Held annually in a



Revellers flash their moves on the dance floor

beautiful, secluded, woodland in Dorset, the festival has been running for two years and is part of British Naturism's action-packed calendar of nudist events around the UK. Four nights long, its daily activities range from yoga, gong baths and rounders, through to a nightly disco and acoustic music tent for up to 500 of the UK's 6.75 million (and growing) naturists.

When I'd shared my plans with friends, reactions veered towards the "are you crazy?" end of the spectrum. One mate told me I should definitely keep my pants on so strangers didn't see my genitals, while another asked if I was worried people might start having sex all around me.

I actually felt relaxed about what I'd signed up for - I sunbathe topless on holiday and love the occasional skinny dip. Still, as the train pulls into the station and I pick up my small bag containing three pairs of pants, a towel and some toiletries, the nerves hit. Am I supposed to just whip off my dress on arrival? Are knickers OK if I don't feel quite ready to go the full monty?

After dropping off my bag at my glamping tent, I head to the firepit wearing the dress I've arrived in, where I find a group of naked people of all ages chatting. A couple in their 20s explain they attended the event last year and had such a great time, they decided to come again.

The woman tells me she attends naturist events because they make her feel at ease in her own body, and less judged than when she's wearing clothes. I can soon see exactly what she means. No one is looking anyone else up or down, or judging their body - they all seem too swept up in the euphoria of being naked themselves.

Next up, a welcome quiz in the indoor bar. By now around half of the 200 attendees are completely bare, and with more men than women by around 10 to one, everywhere I look, there's a willy.

Heading to the bar, I order and swiftly drink two double gin and tonics for courage. Over the next hour, more people begin to take off their clothes. When a woman on my quiz team, Rachel\*, 43, a civil servant, strips off her top, I tell myself to just get on with it and step out of my dress, leaving my knickers on. A handful of others, all women, have also kept their shorts or pants on, too.

I expect people to stare, but nobody even notices, which is incredibly liberating. After the quiz, we all hit the dance floor. I'm amazed how natural it feels to be surrounded by jiggling bits and bare bums and feel swept up in the joy of the moment.

*'I feel safe even though there are naked men everywhere'*

The next day, I stroll around the festival - still in just my pants - and watch people play dodgeball, sunbathe and do yoga in the buff. Just as I'm contemplating how wholesome it all is - and how unfair that naturism gets slated for having sleazy, sexual undertones - I'm approached by two 40-something couples I'd met at the disco.

"I knew you were a swinger," says one of the women to my shock. It turns out my towel, which I'm carrying around to lie on for sunbathing, has upside-down pineapples on it and unbeknown to me, they're a sign used in the swinging community to denote you're "up for it". Who knew?



Donna takes a cheeky ride down the rapids



Clay modelling in the buff



Donna enjoys a calming sound bath

The couples are very understanding when I break the news that I am, in fact, not there to swing, and say they're surprised the atmosphere isn't more sexually charged - like me, they're nudist festival virgins. In fact, there are strict rules in place to ensure people's safety. General photography is not allowed and there is a 24/7 Safe Space tent. That one blip aside, I feel totally safe even though I'm sleeping alone in a tent, in a dark wood surrounded by naked men.

Mostly in their 50s and 60s, they are far more interested in talking about their kids, jobs and sharing food and drink.

Over lunch, I chat to Helen Berriman, 49, British Naturism's women's executive officer, who made headlines after appearing fully nude on *Good Morning Britain* last May, and asked her why there are so many more men than women.

"It's a work in progress," she says. "Traditionally, women have been concerned with being objectified or too self-conscious about revealing their bodies." But that is changing. She explains that she started running women-only events, including naturist holidays, which are so popular they've already sold out for next year.

*'I realise my bikini bottoms have untied at the side and vanished'*

Meanwhile, content creators Nick and Lins, who travel around the world documenting their lives as naturists and have 80,000 YouTube followers (follow them @n\_wanderings), tell me they started posting to dispel the myth that it's all middle-aged white men. "I love it. It's a simple way of life. You don't have to think about anything except where your towel is," says Lins.

As the weekend goes on, I'm inclined to see her POV. The finale of my trip is a visit to Splashdown Water Park in Poole, a 20-minute drive from the camp, which is booked out for a larger British Naturism event. Lowering myself into a rubber ring, I launch into the lazy river ride but when I feel a cold blast of water on my cheeks, I realise my bikini bottoms have untied at the side and vanished.

For the first time since I arrived, I am completely naked. "My pants are gone!" I shout to the man next to me. We both burst out laughing as he replies: "It's not as though you need them, is it?"

A woman whirling past tells me she's handed them to the lifeguard. "Sod it," I say, "it's time to go the whole hog!" Part of me can't believe I'm doing it, the other part thinks it's brilliant.

Boarding the train home, I feel sad to be leaving the non-judgemental atmosphere behind. No one's asked me what I do for a living, if I'm married, where I live, or if I have children - and that's a refreshing change.

Being around so many types of bodies has boosted my own confidence and given me an insight into why naturism is such a growing trend. There's something so freeing, so joyous, about stripping off. My advice? Don't knock it until you've tried it. **F** ● For more info, visit [Thisiseverybody.co.uk/everybody-festival](https://thisiseverybody.co.uk/everybody-festival).

# 'We fell in love in the Queue'

**JESSICA STEVENS, 25, IS A TEACHING ASSISTANT AND LIVES IN KENT WITH HER PARTNER AIDEN O'NEILL, 28, AN ELECTRICIAN.**

"Picking up the keys to our first home together last month, my boyfriend Aiden and I couldn't help but reflect on the unusual circumstances in which we met, and how close we came to never falling in love.

Two years on from the death of the late Queen Elizabeth II, I can still remember the sadness I felt hearing she'd passed away. I had no idea that out of that deeply emotional time in history, I'd find The One.

I'm a royalist, as are all my family. We loved the Queen and so, when it was announced that the public would be able to see her coffin lying in state, my mum Janine and her twin sister Louise, 50, decided they wanted to pay their respects.

They invited me to join them, but as I'm a teaching assistant and couldn't take time off, I reluctantly told them to go without me. Mum said I'd regret it, and I knew she was right. It's hard to explain, but I was hit by this powerful feeling that for some reason I didn't understand yet, I was meant to be there.

So we decided to queue through the night, in the hope I'd get to the front and see the coffin before I had to go to work, but I knew there was a chance I'd need to leave ahead of getting inside Westminster Hall.

Mum, my aunt Louise and I caught the train from Ashford, Kent, to London's St Pancras station late in the afternoon on September 15, and joined the end of the Queue. The atmosphere was respectful, emotional and calm, with people from all over the world sharing their feelings about the Queen's death. It felt like we were a part of something special - but it was about to become even more memorable.

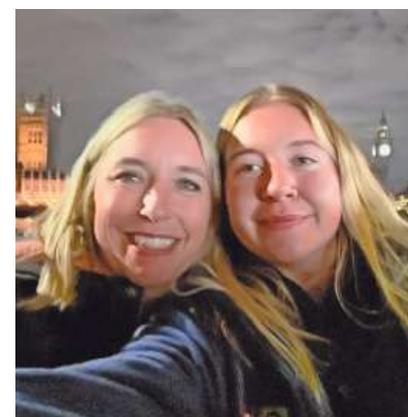
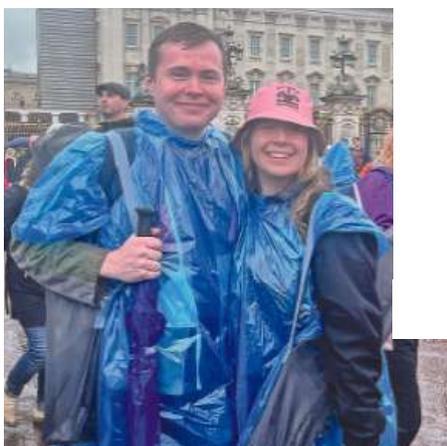
We'd come well prepared with snacks and warm clothes, but Mum noticed the two guys in front of us had no bags or coats. She offered them a KitKat, and that was how it all began.

They told us their names were Aiden and Harry, and that they lived in Somerset but were working in London and staying in a hotel, so had decided to come and pay their respects. They were great company and I was immediately attracted to Aiden.

He seemed kind and funny, and he was good-looking. It must have been very obvious I liked him, because when my aunt and I left the queue briefly to get some drinks, she asked me if I fancied him - and I said yes. She knew I'd be too shy to get his number, so she added him and Harry on Facebook. Around 4am, we reached the front of the Queue and filed past the



Jessica and Aiden have just bought their first home together; Jessica with her mum Janine in the Queue; the couple at the Coronation



Queen's coffin. For those few moments, I forgot all about Aiden as I silently thanked the Queen for her years of service.

When we emerged into the early dawn feeling

emotional, there was nothing to do but say goodbye to the boys. I had to catch a train back to Kent, and Aiden had to return to his hotel to get ready for work. Walking away, I felt frustrated that I'd met this great guy and now we had to go our separate ways.

However, I knew that, thanks to my aunt, there was a social media connection and, sure enough, the next morning Aiden sent me a friend request on Facebook. I was thrilled. We began chatting over messages, then phone calls, and soon we were FaceTiming several times a day. We had our first date - a meal in Kent - three weeks after we met, and we quickly fell in love.

I'd had relationships before, but I knew early on we had something special, and that he was the reason I'd felt compelled to join the Queue. With me living in Kent and Aiden in Somerset, we could only see each other at weekends and in school holidays, but it was always worth the effort.

Since then, we've been on holiday to Paris and Canada together, but our most memorable trip was back in London to be part of King Charles' Coronation celebrations in May 2023. We went with my family and managed to get a spot with a view of the balcony to see the King and Queen Camilla waving to the crowds. It was an incredible day and, not for the first time, I couldn't believe that it was my love of the royals that led me to Aiden.

We've just bought our first home in Kent and it's wonderful to be together all the time. I love to share the story of how we met, and am so grateful to my mum and aunt for insisting I joined the Queue. Without them, I wouldn't have met the man I hope to spend my life with." **F**

## BTW

At its longest, the Queue wait time was more than 24 hours.

37.5 million watched the Queen's funeral on UK TV - more than half the population.

# The Edit

FASHION / BEAUTY / LIFESTYLE

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Blazer, £89.99, Reserved

Styling: Emily Regan Photography: Piveleysphotography.co.uk Stockist: Reserved (Reserved.com) \*T&Cs apply. Enter by 11.59pm on September 21, 2024

### **CROC STAR**

Jacket, £60, River Island;  
top, £24, ASOS Design  
at Asos.com; jeans,  
£18, Primark; bag,  
£35, M&S Collection  
at Marks & Spencer;  
shoes, £12, Primark

### **BOOT CAMP**

Gilet, £59, dress, £39.50,  
both M&S Collection at  
Marks & Spencer; boots,  
£59.99, New Look

# *The new-season* **SWITCH-UP**

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STYLING BY EMILY REGAN

**CAPED CRUSADER**

Cape, £55, John Lewis & Partners; trousers, £29.99, Stradivarius; bag, £48, River Island; shoes, £46, Next



**TRAIL BLAZER**

Blazer, £119, blouse, £69, both And/Or at John Lewis & Partners; jeans, £14, Primark; boots, £44, River Island



**TRENCH MARK**

Coat, £99, Per Una at Marks & Spencer; dress, £48, ASOS Design at Asos.com; shoes, £39.50, M&S Collection at Marks & Spencer

### EMILY IN PARIS

Cardigan, £19, Primark; trousers, £40, River Island; earrings, £2.50, Primark; scarf, £12.99, Mango; bag, £29.50, M&S Collection at Marks & Spencer; shoes, £13, Primark

### HELL FOR PLEATHER

Jacket, £69.99, Reserved; jumper, £19, Primark; shirt, £17.99, New Look; skirt, £29.99, Reserved; earrings, £6, bag, £22, both ASOS Design at Asos.com; shoes, £27.99, New Look

### COSY CLUB

Coat, £89, Anyday at John Lewis & Partners; shirt, £24.99, New Look; trousers ✓, £119, Aligne; scarf, £25, M&S Collection at Marks & Spencer; shoes, £25, New Look

**ANIMAL INSTINCT**

Dress, £69, Topshop at Asos.com; T-shirt, £29.50, Autograph at Marks & Spencer; shoes, £29.99, Bershka



**TANK-TOP GIRL**

Vest, £27.50, M&S Collection at Marks & Spencer; shirt, £25.99, Reserved; trousers (with belt), £55, earrings, £8, both River Island; bag, £29.99, Mango; shoes, £32.99, New Look

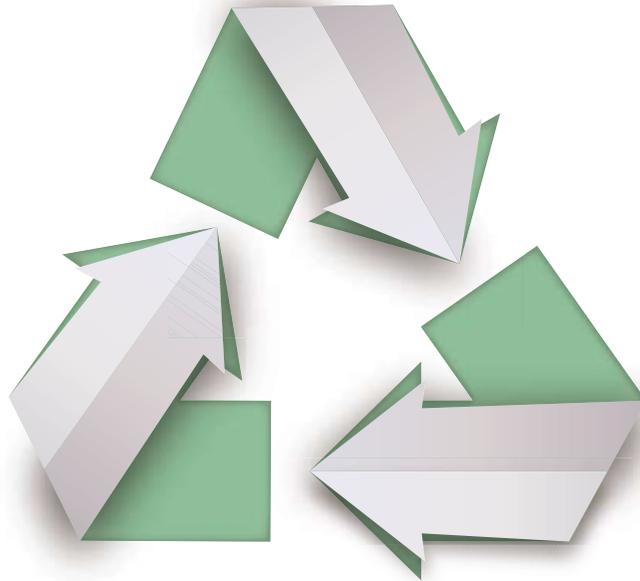


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Make-up **Bethan Owens**  
using Sculpted By Aimee  
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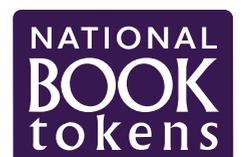
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## CLEAN SLATE

The start of the new school year is a chance to reassess your routine, says Beauty Editor **TARA LEDDEN**

**T**his is a claim I could live to regret, but I think September is my favourite month of the year. Yes, it was my birthday yesterday, but that's actually not why. The main reason I like it so much stems way back to my childhood, and the excitement of a new school year. Despite not having been to school in over a decade, I still get that feeling as we hit mid-August. While everyone else is mourning the last of summer, I'm thinking about the chance to start over. It's like a mini New Year, but without the bleak January weather. So, in that vein (and while I wait for the Christmas 24 channel to return, airing cheesy festive movies all day long from the end of October), I've got some mid-year beauty resolutions you may want to adopt, too.

**1. Stay consistent.** Given my job, it will come as no surprise that I don't have a set skincare routine. But over the last few months I've really been paying the price. Itchy, red, hot, spotty, dry, oily – you name it, my skin has gone through it, so I'm going back to basics and keeping it simple for at least a month until my skin is feeling more normal. Less is more, so I'll be using **Monday Muse The Cleanser, £28**, and **Skin Diligent Regulation Serum, £35**, which targets pigmentation, acne and redness. Plus, my favourite moisturiser that I know my skin loves although it is very pricey, **Tatcha The Silk Cream ✓, £123**, and my current go-to SPF, **Paula's Choice 5% Vitamin C Sheer Moisturizer SPF50, £46**.

**2. Don't get stuck in a rut.** I can see how this sounds contradictory to the above, but it's my vow to stop using products that I don't love – particularly when it comes to shampoo and conditioner. Once they're in my shower, you'd think there was some kind of magnetic force field that meant I couldn't throw them away until I've used every last drop – even when I hate them. So I need to learn to let things go and try something new – and if that's not a motto for life, I don't know what is.

**3. Do at-home manicures.** This one is very specific, and the reason it's on my list

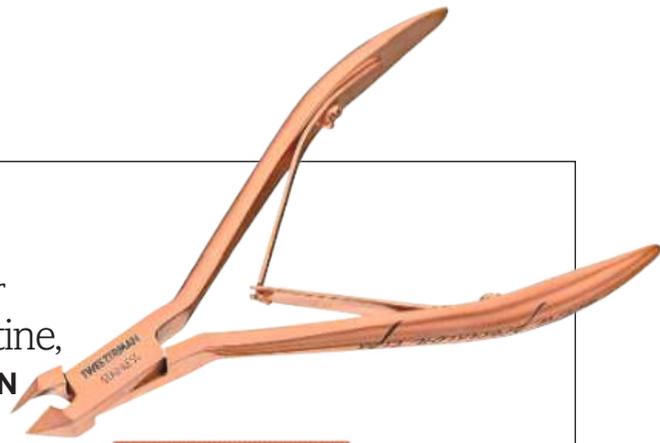
is because I took a long break from gel nails over the summer, and the state of my cuticles was criminal. (If you don't want or need to do your own nails, I'm sure there's another beauty service you could probably do yourself with a little time and patience.) I want to learn how to take care of my nails properly so I'm less reliant on salon manicures. I've invested in **Tweezerman Ultra Precision Cuticle Nipper, £35**, and while it resembles something akin to a medieval torture device at first glance, I'm determined to get comfortable using it.

**4. Take care of my neck.** This realisation was prompted by the launch of **Trinny London The Elevator, £68**, at the start of summer, which came with some impressive before-and-after photos (you can find them on the Trinny London website). The ingredients

## 'It's my vow to stop using products that I don't love'

list boasts peptides, vitamin E, alpha arbutin, and glycerin, which helps fade pigmentation, smooth fine lines and firm sagging skin. Now, I can't guarantee that I'll continue to use a dedicated neck cream – as you can absolutely just apply the same skincare you're using on your face and it will be effective – but having a separate product does serve as a daily reminder to treat the area of my body.

**5. Stop saving things for best.** Again, this could be life advice, not just beauty, but I have shelves full of "special occasion" products, and it was only when I went to dig out my glitter bag (it's as ridiculous as it sounds) when I was getting ready to attend Taylor Swift's *The Eras Tour* last month that it dawned on me how much I'd been squirrelling away for a rainy day. Granted, the rhinestones won't be something I wear weekly, but it's time to seize the day and burn my fancy candles and wear the posh perfumes – and you should, too! **F**



# WHY ALL THE FUSS ABOUT FUNGI?

Magic mushrooms are rising in popularity, but not in the way you might think – they're coming for your beauty stash **BY TARA LEDDEN**



**A**lmost anything goes in the beauty industry. Yoni eggs? Sure! Vampire facials? We're in! However, unlike many recent trends, mushrooms are far more than a modern fad. In fact, they've been used in beauty and wellness practices for thousands of years. And now, research is showing just how magic they can be when it comes to treating beauty woes. So it's no surprise that many well-known brands are buying into the shroom boom.

**GROWTH FACTORS**

"The use of mushrooms in skincare isn't a new thing. However, there's no doubt that there's a boom in shroom products now, and not just in beauty - we've seen it in homeware, art, fashion and design, too," explains Tiffany Salmon, founder of beauty brand Glow Hub.

Dr Andrew Weil, a pioneer in the field of integrative medicine - who created a mushroom-based skincare range in collaboration with Origins - agrees. "With the surge in mushroom-based products, we're seeing more scientific research highlighting their benefits, while increased popularity in medicine and world cuisine has also raised the profile of mushrooms," he says. Consultant dermatologist Dr Alexis Granite agrees, saying: "Given the popularity of adaptogens - plants that counteract the impact of stress - and the adaptogenic properties of some mushrooms, attention on these botanical wonders has increased in recent years." Tiffany also points to the pandemic hangover as a factor behind this. "We're still seeing the impact of that elevated anxiety and the need for a more holistic approach to health trickling down from the wellness industry, so this desire for adaptogenic skincare is only going to grow," she says.

Finally, as with most trending ingredients, sustainability and ease of access is a big factor, explains Dr Weil. He says: "With more mushroom varieties being cultivated in Western countries, they're becoming more accessible and cost-effective, which is driving the trend even further."

**BREAKING THE MOULD**

Dr Weil began working with Origins on his skincare range, Dr Andrew Weil For Origins Mega-Mushroom Relief & Resilience, almost 20 years ago - it's now the brand's bestselling line, with one bottle of **Origins Mega Mushroom Soothing Treatment Lotion** ✓, £30, bought every eight seconds. "At that time, no one was using mushrooms in skincare products, and I knew a lot about the medicinal properties of them. I gave Origins a list of a dozen species to test and some proved very beneficial - and that was the beginning of the Mega Mushroom line," he says.

Fast-forward to 2024, and fungi are springing up everywhere. Most recently, tech giant Dyson has harnessed the power of mushrooms to create the brand's first styling product range, **Dyson Chitosan** ✓, from £44. "In haircare, we see less use of mushrooms as an ingredient in comparison to skincare, but some areas that have been investigated include hair strength," explains Natalie Coleman, head of product development at Dyson. "Our hair formulas contain a polymer derived from oyster mushrooms - chitosan, our hero ingredient - which is known for its structural properties. When used in haircare, it can provide soft style hold."

Tiffany explains the **Glow Hub Super Shroom range** ✓, from £12, came from the skincare benefits of fungi. "We wanted to create anti-stress formulas to relax the skin, fighting to protect it

from stress damage, which causes all sorts of problems, including dryness, dark spots, dullness, loss of volume, irritation and wrinkles. We discovered a variety of clinically tested mushrooms counteract those." If you need further proof of the trend, Harry Styles' Pleasing brand launched the mushroom-inspired Shroom Bloom range nearly two years ago, while in 2021 Miranda Kerr released **Kora Organics Milks Mushroom Gentle Cleansing Oil** ✓, £16, and *Queer Eye's* Jonathan Van Ness uses tremella mushroom in **JVN Complete Conditioning Hair Mist** ✓, £12.

**FUNGI WORTH FORAGING**

If you thought pronouncing "hyaluronic" was hard, try giving "cordyceps" and "tremella fuciformis" a go. If that still boggles your brain, you can call them "caterpillar fungus" and "snow mushroom", respectively. There are an estimated 4 million types of mushrooms in existence, but only a few have proved their beauty prowess - and you're unlikely to find them in the fruit and veg aisle.

**REISHI** "Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, this is perfect for calming sensitive skin," says Dr Weil. "It can also improve hyperpigmentation and protect skin against pollution," adds Dr Granite.

**FIND IT IN Shiseido Ultimune Power Infusing Concentrate** ✓, £37

**SNOW MUSHROOM** "A hydration hero, this mushroom will help maintain your skin's barrier and keep it moisturised," says Dr Weil. "It also has antimicrobial properties and can improve healing, plus it's rich in polysaccharides for hydration, which are smaller in size than hyaluronic acid, so may be better absorbed by skin," adds Dr Granite. And it's much cheaper.

**FIND IT IN Botanics Pure Botanicals Snow Mushroom Concentrated Serum** ✓, £7.99

**CHAGA** "One of the mushrooms used most in skincare, it's rich in antioxidants, boosting skin health," explains Tiffany. "It also contains betulinic acid to boost collagen and elastin production, for firmer, plumper skin," adds Dr Granite. Dr Weil says: "Mushrooms like chaga can help to even out skin tone and reduce oxidative stress."

**FIND IT IN Pai Labs #Boosters Tri-Mushroom 10% Super-Soothing Booster** ✓, £19

**SONGYI** "This supports collagen production, contains kojic acid for brightening, and boasts anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties" says Dr Granite.

**FIND IT IN Joonbyrd Daydreamer Firming Body Serum** ✓, £90

**SHIITAKE** "Not only effective, this mushroom is also widely available. It's often used for its brightening benefits, thanks to compounds like kojic acid," explains Dr Weil. Dr Granite adds: "It also contains selenium, vitamins D and B, and has anti-inflammatory properties."

**FIND IT IN Glow Hub Skin Trip Treatment Lotion** ✓, £12

**CORDYCEPS** "This contains polysaccharides for skin hydration, antioxidants to counteract pollution and anti-inflammatory properties, and it boosts collagen production," says Dr Granite. It's also great for scalp and hair. "Traditionally, this has been used in supplements for its energising properties. But when applied topically, it helps boost radiance, hydrate and sooth skin," adds Tiffany.

**FIND IT IN Ouai Scalp Serum** ✓, £48

The best news is, mushroom extracts are well-tolerated and beneficial to all skin and hair types (unless you're allergic, then steer clear!). Magic, indeed. **F**



Illustrations Getty Images. Stockists: Botanics (Botanics (Boots.com), Dyson (Dyson.co.uk), Glow Hub (Glowhub.com), JVN (Jvnhair.com), Kora Organics (Spacenk.com), Origins (Origins.co.uk), Ouai (Spacenk.com), Pleasing (Pleasing.com), Shiseido (Boots.com)



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# How to get what you want at work when you're a parent

With the number of employed parents growing, the pressures they're under are increasing, too – but there are ways to lighten the load. **CATHERINE OLIVER**, author of *Working Parents-To-Be* gets you clued up about your rights **BY VANESSA CHALMERS**

**A**s parents and employees, we all tend to have similar worries. I work with mums and dads every day, and concerns about progressing in a job, how to approach difficult conversations with an employer, and feelings of guilt or a drop in confidence are probably the three most talked-about topics. With the number of employed parents - and working mothers, in particular - increasing, these challenges are affecting more people. In fact, more than 75% of mums in the UK were employed in 2021, up from 66% in 2002, according to the Office for National Statistics. More often now, both parents work full-time, while more than half of working lone parents are in a full-time job. The ways families operate are changing, and both government and employers are recognising the need for change and to provide more support. Here's how to get up to speed with what help is available, so you can cope with being both a worker *and* a parent.

**UNPAID LEAVE**  
Did you know you can take unpaid parental leave? It entitles you to up to 18 weeks off per child, until they are 18. You have to take it in whole-week blocks and you can only take up to four weeks per year.

## NEW PARENTS

About to become a parent for the first time in the near future? There are five key pay options from the government. Statutory Maternity Pay and Statutory Paternity Pay are the two main types. There is also Maternity Allowance for the self-employed (the amount you receive depends on factors such as whether you've made enough NI contributions), and Statutory Adoption Pay, which may apply if you were employed for 26 weeks prior to the date you were matched with the child. There is Statutory Shared Parental Pay, which can benefit couples opting to take Shared Parental Leave. You can potentially share up to 50 weeks off, either at the same time (a maximum of 25 weeks) or in separate blocks. Couples can share up to 37 weeks of government pay between them and it's important to check if employers offer enhanced pay on top. Keeping In Touch days are optional - up to 10 days paid - and are usually used towards the end of parental leave as a way for parents to reconnect with the business and colleagues. What's less well-known is that you accrue annual leave while you're on parental leave - and this can add up to a lot - but it can only be used before or after your mat leave. My top tip is to consider using both of these to help you "ramp down" before you go on leave and/or "ramp up" as you return.

## RETURNING TO WORK

Some employers run sessions to help make the return to your job easier. I've seen people gain more confidence from these, and feel equipped to deal with the challenges ahead. If you've had a longer career break, it can be daunting, so look out for "returner" initiatives, designed to help get people back into work with a mini-induction. Consider the skills you have developed since becoming a parent that are beneficial to work. Are you more focused? More empathetic? Have a better perspective? It's probably all three.

## FLEXIBLE WORKING

If you're looking for more adaptable working hours to fit around your family's lives, there is a growing onus on employers to make it work. It's now a "day one" right for employees to request a flexible working arrangement (you used to have to be employed for 26 weeks before you could apply for this). You can ask at any time, though officially only twice in 12 months. The trap a lot of people fall into is starting by submitting paperwork to HR, which sets an official timeline to reach a decision. It's far better to use this

as a formality once you've had an informal chat with your manager and agreed a new arrangement in principle. Spend time thinking about what you want, why, what problems might arise and the solutions. If you can't reach an agreement, ask for a trial.

## NURSERY AND SCHOOL

You're likely to run into childcare problems at some point. All employees (not just parents) are entitled to emergency time off involving someone who depends on them for care. In my experience it usually is paid, especially if it's a one-off, but it depends on your employer. For example, say you get a call from the nursery to say your child is sick, you can use emergency leave to look after them for a day or two while you come up with a plan for the time they'll need to be at home. Starting school brings more challenges because of the shorter hours and the holidays. Anecdotally, I find parents, especially mothers, often feel like their only option is to look for jobs that fit around their families. But many couples find planning the week ahead and figuring out who can be flexible on which day if something goes wrong helps take off some of that "mental load" - so you don't always need to be the one to drop everything for your child. It can also help to have a list of people you can call on if you need to, so don't be afraid to ask for and accept support.

## IF YOU'RE NOT COPING...

Being a working parent, especially a new or solo one, can feel overwhelming. There is growing acknowledgement of the "midlife collision", too, a term coined by Dr Lucy Ryan. It describes the time when women find themselves with children, elder-care responsibilities and battling menopause. If you feel like you are not coping, try not to make any snap decisions, and instead talk to your partner, friends and manager. They might have been unaware that a weekly deadline, for example, is tipping you over the edge. Small changes can make a difference, such as changing a meeting time or asking a friend to share the school run with you.

## BUILDING IN TRANSITION TIME

A common daily pressure for mums and dads is that they are late to work due to problems at school drop-off, or late to pick-up because a meeting has overrun. Building in some "transition time" can relieve this pressure. Try to take 30 minutes at the beginning and end of your day to get prepared and create a buffer, so you're not against the clock, as it can help you decompress. If that sounds impossible, perhaps have the courage to mention you need to leave on time ahead of a meeting. Or, if you are running late to work, remind yourself that an extra minute settling your child before you leave them so you're both happy will probably make the difference to you being totally present in your job.

## REBALANCE WORKLOAD

Another way to tackle the mental load of being a working parent is to rebalance the workload at home. Write a list of all the jobs you need to do as a family and who currently does them, then use it as a basis for a conversation. Include everything from taking out the bins to who is around for bathtime or dinner, who looks after bills and so on. My book comes with a workbook that includes tables, checklists and other exercises to help address these issues. **F**

● Working Parents-To-Be by Catherine Oliver (£16.99, Practical Inspiration Publishing) is out now.

# Bossing it

Apprentice star and West Ham United vice-chair **KARREN BRADY** answers your careers questions, plus try our money-saving tips

**I'm 36 and have 15 years' experience in the construction industry, so when I joined a small firm as an executive assistant, I had high hopes. At first it was great, but recently I've experienced some unsettling comments in the office, such as being told that I am "too direct as a woman," and that "men won't take kindly to that." I have been advised to "come across as ditsy so men warm to you." These remarks have been repeated multiple times to me and female colleagues. My attempts to address the issue have been met with resistance, and given the lack of an HR department in our small company, I feel quite isolated. What strategies would you recommend? Jess, via email**

It's shocking to hear of a company sharing such blatantly sexist comments. Being told to change your behaviour based on outdated gender stereotypes is really unfair. With 15 years' experience in the industry, you know what you're doing and your professionalism and directness are strengths, not weaknesses. Start by talking to your female colleagues. See if there's a shared interest in addressing the problem, as it could be more effective as a united front. If you feel comfortable, talk about the issue with the people involved, reminding them that men and women should not be treated differently at work. Calmly suggest solutions to your manager, such as implementing training to better educate employees. Working for a small company has its advantages, but the absence of an HR team can make situations like this challenging. Stay strong and maintain your professionalism while advocating for a respectful workplace.

● Got a careers question for Karren? Email [bossingit@fabulousmag.co.uk](mailto:bossingit@fabulousmag.co.uk).



## 5 ways to save on... **Transport**



**Travel costs can rack up fast, but there are ways to scrimp, says The Sun's Consumer Reporter Sam Walker.**

### ■ BE RAILCARD SAVVY

With nine different types of railcard available, there should be one that works for you. The Family & Friends Railcard offers up to 60% off, while the 26-30 and Senior (over-60) option give 33% off - apply via [Railcard.co.uk](http://Railcard.co.uk). If you live in England, you can also enjoy £2 capped bus fares on thousands of single journeys until December 31. The fare will be capped automatically, but not all routes are included. Find a full list at [Gov.uk/guidance/2-bus-fare-cap](http://Gov.uk/guidance/2-bus-fare-cap).

■ **CHOOSE THE RIGHT TICKET**  
Season tickets can be cost-effective,

if used correctly. For example, for those who go to work five days a week, a pass for Monday-Friday travel from Bromley South to London Victoria costs £2,120 for a year, while paying each day would come to £428 more. Also, instead of buying tickets for your complete journey, splitting it into multiple tickets can save cash, even though you stay on the same train. Use apps like TrainPal and Trainline to split tickets for you.

### ■ TRAVEL FOR FREE

Lots of cities, including Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, offer free bus services between major stations and the city centre. State pensioners can also apply for a Freedom Pass for free transport in London and buses across the rest of England via [Londoncouncils.gov.uk](http://Londoncouncils.gov.uk). Plus, if you live in England, you may be eligible for a disabled person's bus pass if you're registered blind,

struggle to move around or have a severe learning disability. Visit [Gov.uk/apply-for-disabled-bus-pass](http://Gov.uk/apply-for-disabled-bus-pass).

### ■ GET ON YOUR BIKE

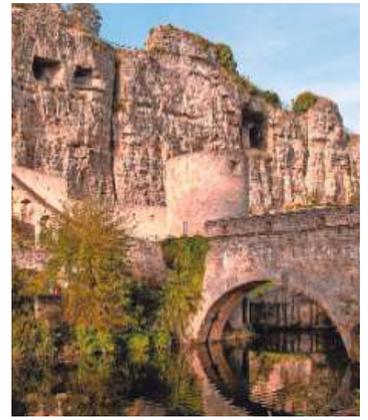
If you live close enough to work and are a regular commuter, buying a road bike for £600-£800 will save you money in the long-term. You could use a cycle to work scheme, which lets you buy a bike through your employer tax-free and spread the cost over a number of months.

### ■ GO IN A GROUP

Friends or family travelling together via train should book using the GroupSave offer on the National Rail website. You can get up to 34% off for a party of three to nine adults when travelling on an off-peak or super-off-peak ticket. In London, groups of 10 or more can buy a Group Day Travelcard and get unlimited travel in Zones 1-6 on bus, Tube and National Rail, saving around 30%.

# Weekend away LUXEMBOURG

Stunning vistas, brilliant boutiques and fab bars make this tiny country a winner, says writer **JANICE HOPPER**



## GET A GRUND VIEW

Luxembourg City is built around huge valleys and rocky ledges, so the split-level city's array of walkways, funiculars and elevators are attractions in their own right. First, catch the free 71m-high Pfaffenthal Elevator to get views from its stunning glass cabin. The bravest can even stand on the glass-bottomed viewpoint! Next, check out Chemin de la Corniche, a pathway along the city's 17th-century ramparts, nicknamed "the most beautiful balcony in Europe" for its sweeping vistas over the characterful Grund district. Once there, track down the Melusina Mermaid, a vivid-pink statue created by artist Serge Ecker using 3D printing.

## CHIC SUPERMARKET EATS

For hearty, local specialities, two restaurants are a must. The traditional Um Dierfgen serves the national dish, judd mat Gaardebounen - smoked pork neck with broad beans and potatoes, £24 (Umdierfgen.lu). Or head to the stylish Brasserie du Cercle and tuck into a crispy tarte flambée, topped with crème fraîche, onions and lardons, £14 (Brasserie-du-cercle.lu). After a cheap eat? You can't beat European supermarket chain Monoprix's branch on the elegant Place Guillaume II. Lounge at pastel-pink tables on its terrace, tucking into a DIY ham and cheese baguette - it's cafe culture dining at supermarket prices (Monoprix.fr).

Bells are ringing at the Church of Saint-Jean-du-Grund; polish up your jewellery at Devi; snap up a ticket to the National Museum of Natural History; the Pfaffenthal Elevator offers uplifting views; Grund district house looking pretty in pink; brave the crypts of Bock Casemates

## GO UNDERGROUND

Head deep into the rocks at the Bock Casemates, a series of 14 miles of tunnels built into the soaring Bock Promontory. These eerie maze-like defence tunnels date back to the 17th century and 35,000 civilians sheltered here during WW2. Entry costs £9 per adult (Luxembourg-city.com).

Follow the Museumsmile - we're talking one mile, seven museums - including modern art at Mudam. Its permanent collection is 700 pieces strong, but artists are encouraged to "take over" the space, so you never know what you will find. Entry costs £7 per person, free on Wednesdays 6pm-9pm (Mudam.com). At The National Museum of Natural History families will love learning about space, wildlife and genetics almost as much as riding the giant slide. Entry costs £4.50 per adult, and free for under-21s, or free for all on Tuesdays 5.30pm-8pm (Mnhn.lu).

## FASHION AND FIZZ

For carefully collated fashion, including gorgeous knits, head to Muse By on Grand Rue

(Muse-by.com). Then dip into Devi on Rue Aldringen for holiday dresses and sustainable accessories (Devi-clothing.com). Reward yourself with a rich hot chocolate, £5, in the duck-egg-blue interiors of Genaveh (Chocolaterie-genaveh.com) or pop a cork at champagne bar Flûte Alors!, where the waiters carry maps to explain where your fizz is from. A glass of delicate Rosé Marc Hébrart will set you back £12 (Flutealors.lu).

## NOVEL NIGHTCAPS

Kick back at the oldest bar in town, Ennert de Steiler, for a glass of Luxembourg pinot gris, £7.50 (Facebook.com/ennerdesteiler). For velvet armchairs, walls awash with vibrant artworks and total living-room vibes, drop by Kaale Kaffi, for an Aperol spritz, £10.50. Meanwhile, centrally located Hotel Vauban has a buzzing outdoor terrace - a perfect spot after a day's sightseeing - and upstairs you will find simple but smart lodgings. Double rooms cost from £140 B&B (Hotelvauban.lu). **F**

## BTW

Luxembourg has won the Eurovision Song Contest five times.

All public transport is free. Flights from the UK to Luxembourg cost from £29 return.

Plan your trip at [Visitluxembourg.com](http://Visitluxembourg.com).

Notebook ✓, £25, Papier.com



Wipeable memo board, £6, Flying Tiger

# WORKING

...what a way to make over your home office!

BY CATHERINE BENNION-PEDLEY

# 9-5



Magazine rack, £35, Garden Trading



Bin, £29.95, Victorianplumbing.co.uk

Photo frame, £27.50, Oliver Bonas



Scissors, £3, Flying Tiger



Desk, £275, Laredoute.co.uk



Desk clock, £17, Freemans.com



Wall light, £168, Pooky

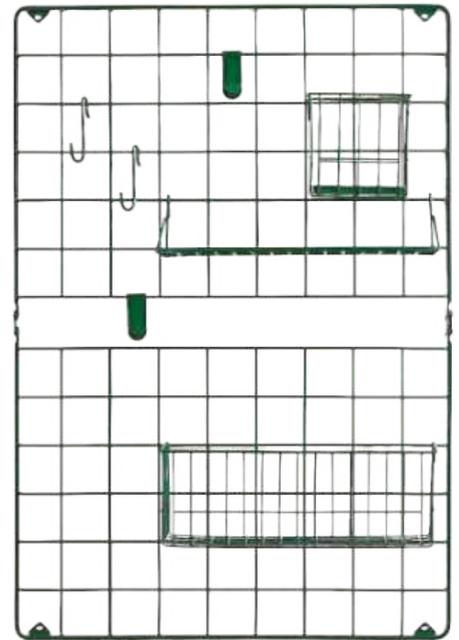
# HOMES



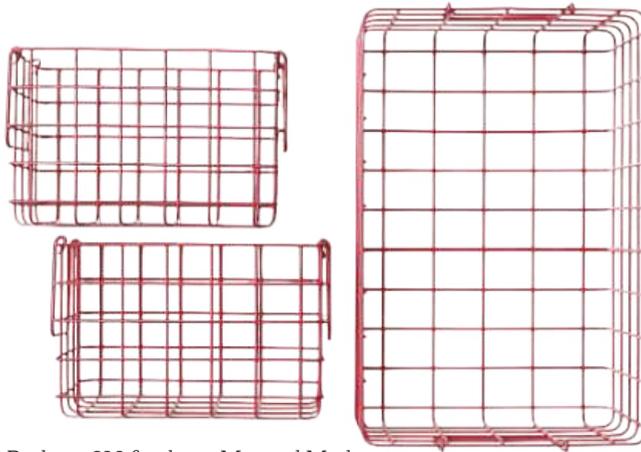
Lamp, £69.99, Kreafunk at Husandhem.co.uk

*Psst! This sleek lamp is also a speaker and charger.*

Storage boxes, £30 for set, Laredoute.co.uk



Wall organiser, £20, Dunelm



Baskets, £39 for three, Mustard Made

**BTW**  
Get heaps of inspo to pimp up charity-shop finds with fab guide *Better Than New: Tips For Upcycling And Refinishing Furniture* by Chloe Kempster (£20, Herbert Press), out Thursday.



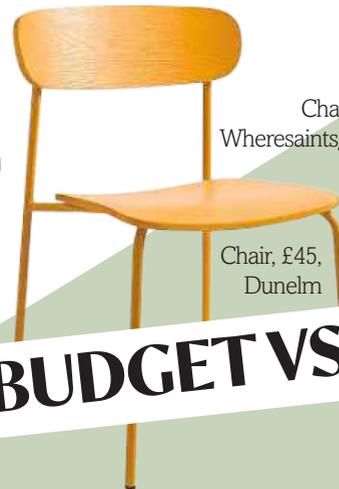
Desk organiser, £12, Laredoute.co.uk



Sticky notes, £3, Flying Tiger



Mug, £14.50, Oliver Bonas



Chair, £189, Wheresaintsgo.co.uk



Chair, £45, Dunelm



Unframed print, £19.95, East End Prints



Pencil case, £7, Dunelm

**BUDGET VS BLOWOUT**

Stockists: Dunelm (Dunelm.com), East End Prints (eastendprints.co.uk), Flying Tiger (Flyingtiger.com), Garden Trading (gardentrading.co.uk), Herbert Press (Herbertpress.com), Mustard Made (ukmustardmade.com), Oliver Bonas (Oliverbonas.com), Pooky (Pooky.com)

# MENO MEALS

Feeling the midlife slog? These brekkies are packed with a punch to get you going in the morning

## BANG BANG BEANS

**SERVES 2**

**Prep time** 5 mins

**Cooking time** 22 mins

**Cals** 362

**Sat fat** 2g

\*2tbsp olive oil  
\*2 sprigs fresh oregano, leaves stripped, or ½tsp dried  
\*150g cherry tomatoes  
\*1tbsp tomato paste  
\*400g tin cannellini beans, drained and rinsed  
\*1tsp hot smoked paprika  
\*2tsp soft dark brown sugar  
\*2tsp apple cider vinegar  
\*2 slices seeded or sourdough toast, to serve

**1** Heat the oil in a pan over a high heat. Add the oregano and cherry tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes until they start to blister and burst. At this point, add 100ml water and the tomato paste, and press down on the tomatoes with your spoon to make a lovely sauce.

**2** Add the beans, paprika, sugar and vinegar, and season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Simmer for 12-15 minutes.

**3** Serve with seeded or sourdough toast.



**BOOST FIBRE**  
Experts agree peri and menopausal women should eat more fibre. It keeps you fuller for longer and feeds gut bacteria, which is key in regulating oestrogen. Beans are a top source.

**DRINK ME!**

Peach Bellini, £3.49, Aldi





**BRAIN GAINS**  
Eggs are a great source of choline - a nutrient our bodies don't produce enough of, especially in menopause - which is linked to cognitive function, memory and attention.

## FETA FRIED EGGS

**SERVES 2**

**Prep time** 5 mins

**Cooking time** 15 mins

**Cals** 367

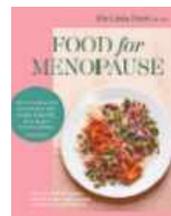
**Sat fat** 8g

- \*2tbsp olive oil
- \*1-2tsp chipotle paste
- \*4 spring onions, finely sliced
- \*60g feta, crumbled
- \*2 medium eggs
- \*2 small seeded flour tortillas, warmed
- \*Large handful fresh coriander leaves (optional)

**1** Heat half the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat and fry ½-tbsp of the chipotle paste and half of the spring onion with a pinch of sea salt for 1-2 minutes, until softened.

**2** Add half the feta and let it cook, undisturbed, for 2 minutes, then crack one egg on top. Cook for another 2 minutes until the white is slightly crispy and the yolk starts to set, then season with a little sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Remove, drain briefly on a kitchen towel, slide on to a tortilla and garnish with coriander, if using.

**3** Repeat with the other half of the ingredients and serve. **F**



Food For Menopause by Dr Linia Patel (£20, Murdoch Books) is out Thursday.

## 3 OF THE BEST...

**NEW RESTAURANTS WITH ROOMS**

This is your sign to book a foodie weekend!



### The Millbrook Inn, Devon

Sandwiched between land and sea in South Pool, this cute pub serves seasonal dishes, bio wines and local ales. There are two beautifully restored cottages to stay in, too.



### Moor Hall, Lancashire

Seven chic new garden rooms have launched at the two-Michelin-starred spot. With a glorious garden, greenhouse and elegant dishes, it's giving Noma vibes.



### Tewinbury, Hertfordshire

Thirty minutes from London, this farm-to-fork escape is a hotel, restaurant, working farm and wellness location, complete with alfresco dining experiences through the year.

# PUZZLES

**PICTOGRAMS** Say what you see in the pictures to work out these school subjects (answers below right).



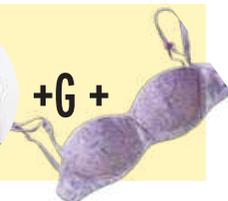
-N+



+Y



+G +

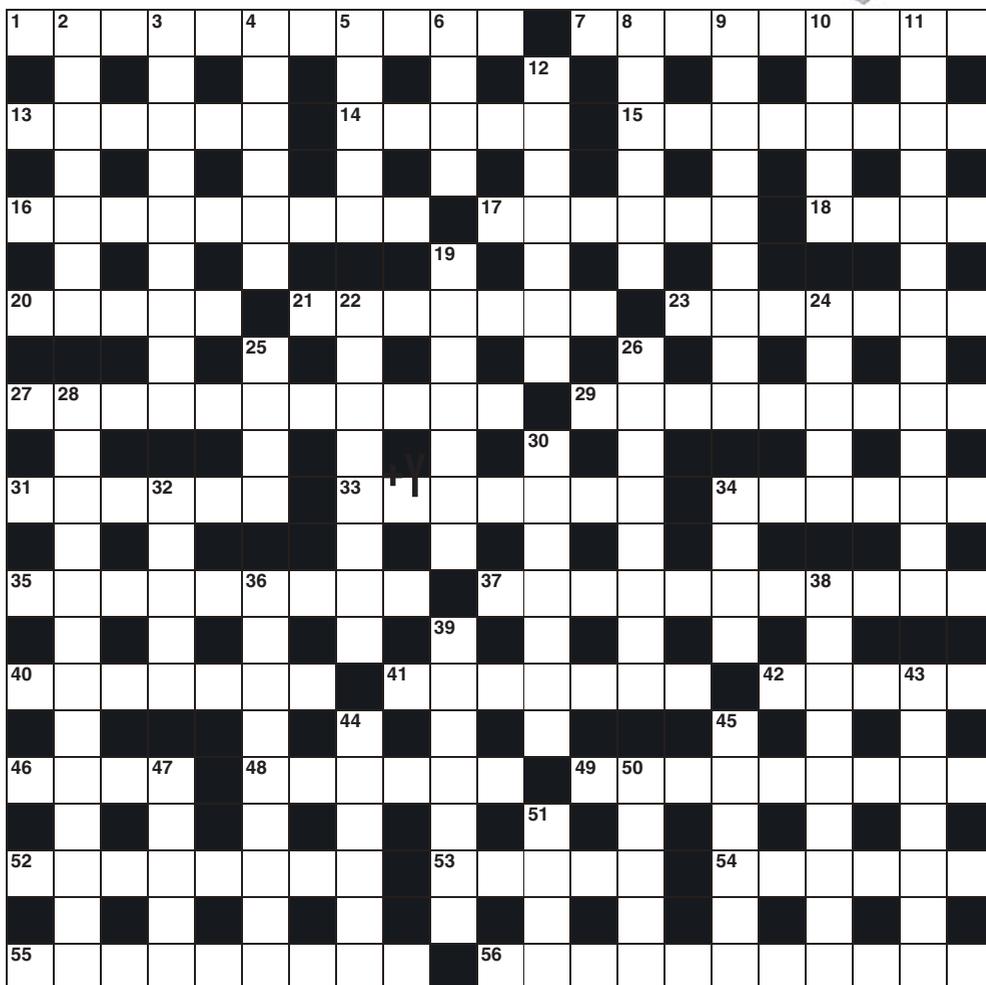


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 Best Campaign BSME 2022  
 Lifestyle Site of the Year The Drum Awards 2022  
 Highly commended - Newspaper Magazine  
 Editor of the Year BSME 2019  
 Best Stylist BSME 2018  
 Editor of the Year BSME 2017  
 Best Picture Editor BSME 2016  
 Best Original Feature Idea (Digital) BSME 2013  
 Editor of the Year BSME 2012  
 Interviewer of the Year (Popular) BPA 2011  
 New Editor of the Year BSME 2011  
 Art Director of the Year BSME 2011

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## ACROSS

- 1 Quality of being of use (11)
- 7 Weaving, pottery etc (9)
- 13 Tiny freshwater fish (6)
- 14 Go away, depart (5)
- 15 Beam between goalposts (8)
- 16 Topping up (9)
- 17 Means of getting to the next storey (6)
- 18 Three feet (4)
- 20 Make amends (5)
- 21 Point where sea meets river (7)
- 23 Male spouse (7)
- 27 Shortened (a word) (11)
- 29 Swine keeper (3,6)
- 31 Without success (2,4)
- 33 Flunking (an exam) (7)
- 34 \_\_\_ off, dozed (6)
- 35 Subject to torture to influence the mind (9)
- 37 Status of belonging to a particular country (11)
- 40 Cooking utensil with a

## DOWN

- 2 Notable, respected (7)
- 3 Person retired from work (9)
- 4 Ill, poorly (6)
- 5 Coleen \_\_, *Loose Women* regular (5)
- 6 Close a door forcefully (4)
- 8 Draw back in horror (6)
- 9 Substance for eating (9)
- 10 Thin strands of hair (5)
- 11 Move to a new position (13)
- 12 Instructional talk (7)
- 19 Niece of the King (7)
- 22 Five-pointed sea creature (8)
- 24 Uninterested (5)
- 25 Cooker compartment (4)
- 26 Something worn to conceal your identity (8)
- 28 Goods sold by a firm that has gone bust (8,5)
- 30 Very odd (7)
- 32 Belonging to the elite of celebrities (1-4)
- 34 Second to \_\_, the best (4)
- 36 Star of *Ali* and *Hitch* (4,5)
- 38 Rocket's take-off point (6,3)
- 39 Pear-shaped fruit with a leathery skin (7)
- 43 Arc of facial hair, often plucked (7)
- 44 Owen \_\_, *Wedding Crashers* star (6)
- 45 Gambling establishment (6)

## SOLUTIONS

**September 1, 2024 crossword**  
**ACROSS** 1 Breadcrumbs  
 7 Primroses 13 Gadget 14 Bootleg  
 15 Potter 16 Twee 17 Holiday  
 18 Trenches 19 Britton 21 Theron  
 23 Relate 25 Shop steward  
 26 Agitators 29 Straight  
 31 Outbreak 34 Betrothed  
 35 Underpriced 37 Diaper  
 39 Stag do 41 Tragedy 43 Sidestep  
 46 Snarl-up 47 Warn 48 Indian  
 49 Nurture 50 Refuel 51 Hysteries  
 52 Earth's crust  
**DOWN** 2 Roadworthy  
 3 Argue 4 Cut-throat 5 Unbolt  
 6 Bloodthirsty 8 Right 9 Maple  
 10 Optical 11 Elementary 12 Player  
 20 Tipster 22 Nighties 23 Rotor  
 24 Swaggers 27 Trading 28 Count  
 Dracula 30 Alter 32 Deficiency  
 33 Tenderness 36 Perspires  
 38 Predict 40 Assert 42 Client  
 44 Tuner 45 Panic 47 Wafer

**Pictograms**  
 1 Geography  
 2 IT  
 3 Algebra

# Mystic Meg

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**ARIES**

**MAR 21 - APR 20**

Now Mercury takes up a new position in your career zone, your work future can seem clearer and calmer - what may have felt like a step back, can seem a triumph. The key is your own attitude - believe in yourself. With Venus making marriage more likely and more lasting, couples find ways to reconnect. Single? Mars swaps a safe "P" bet for a sexy "R" challenge.



**GEMINI**

**MAY 22 - JUNE 21**

Unusual dreams plus the ability to face secret hopes and start making them happen, can all be the after-effects of Uranus' reversal. Your role here is to accept not every path may be simple - but can still be pretty perfect for you. You will know it the moment you see it. In love terms, Venus ups surprises and passion prizes, and a request for a selfie plays a part.



**LEO**

**JULY 23 - AUG 23**

As Pluto revisits your work zone for the last time, this is a strong signal of unfinished business. Even if it's difficult to ask, try to get a clearer picture of your future - personally and financially. You're more ready for a big move than you may think. Your cash zone is more logical than it's been for months, but leave room for a little impulse spending or lending.



**CAPRICORN**

**DEC 22 - JAN 20**

You can sense the outrageous input of Uranus in your creativity sector, and start getting your true ideas on to the table - instead of feeling you have to minimise them. This can break a deadlock at work or wow some VIP eyes at home. If you're in love, Venus takes one partner's dream and reworks it for two. Single? Mars seizes a passion opportunity.

You welcome prime planet Mercury into your sign, and things start falling into place, however muddled you may have felt. Your name can be climbing a list and this could lead to a special date. Trust yourself to make good money choices instead of relying on others. Unusual travel routes or destinations reflect Uranus' wild side.



**TAURUS**

**APR 21 - MAY 21**

Everything about you is so surprising, and you are ready to take a tricky situation by storm. Go with your Uranus instincts, and try not to let less adventurous signs drag you down. Words that may have slowed get going again and your personal creative store is in demand, as Mercury mixes business with pleasure. Your unique take on the world is so sought after.



**CANCER**

**JUNE 22 - JULY 22**

Mercury's new place in your communication sector is the signal you need that it's time to speak - even if you don't feel ready. At work, others need to know if you have doubts. While at home, letting things lie is leaving too much to chance. As for love, your Mars and Venus chart combo gives you hot passion underpinned by warm security - so do take charge.



**LIBRA**

**SEPT 23 - OCT 23**

As the host sign of Venus you can be a passion magnet this week, plus you have the drive of Mars to get what and who you want. So, this is not a time to settle - but to seize the day! A mystifying dream you have had more than once starts to make perfect sense with Mercury's move. Be mindful of other people's needs, but don't ignore your own.



**SCORPIO**

**OCT 24 - NOV 22**

Finding a public home for private words or wishes, is Mercury's mission for you now. So do apply yourself to saying or writing from the heart - but with the overview of your mind. With Uranus in retrograde, partnerships can work well even if they seem unlikely, or unusual. The final say must be down to you. Mars brings itchy feet - and a fresh sense of purpose.



**SAGITTARIUS**

**NOV 23 - DEC 21**

Deep inner changes can speed up as Mars gets established in your transformation zone - while Mercury helps you cut through the noise and find a quiet, simple solution. This can mean turning a team project into a solo goal. At home, you can keep repeating a request until it is heard. Your love style is breezy, but underneath are some strong feelings.



**AQUARIUS**

**JAN 21 - FEB 18**

Knowing, as well as understanding, your deepest self is easier with Mercury now on board - so you can find it simpler to show who you are. When you see the right thing to do, don't let others waver your resolve. Only you know the total truth. Love is moving on, but partners can relish this, and work with it well. Single? The One waits near a property display.



**PISCES**

**FEB 19 - MAR 20**

Now, with Uranus in retrograde, you say it as you see it - and live in ways that feel right for the person you are becoming. This can mean setting some tougher ground rules in romance - you have the strength for this. Mercury moves to your partnership zone and you work well with others, and see solutions to even the toughest problems. Luck wears dark blue.

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# Mental health ...and me

Designer **PEARL LOWE**, 54, on coming to terms with a later-life ADHD diagnosis after years of addiction

**I**t's been 20 months since my ADHD diagnosis. Having that knowledge now, in my 50s, has finally helped me make sense of a chaotic life.

I'd always had a niggling feeling that something wasn't right. I've booked hotels in the wrong country, turned up at airports on the wrong day and sat down at weddings in the wrong place because I struggle so much with small details. So, after doing an online quiz during lockdown - which returned the verdict: "You need to seek help" - I had a series of tests at the Charter Nightingale Hospital in London, which confirmed I had ADHD. Suddenly, things started to fall into place.

At school, I'd been top of the class in the subjects I loved, like English and history, but in the ones I hated, I was rock bottom. I just couldn't focus on lessons I didn't enjoy. It was the same with jobs. After three weeks of doing anything, I'd say: "This is awful, I can't work here," and I'd leave.

My two older brothers both became high-achieving lawyers, while I was the family's rebellious black sheep. I got into the music industry in my early 20s - and, consequently, drugs and shopping.

What I now understand is that adults with ADHD are almost three times more likely to have a substance abuse disorder than neurotypical people. And when you have ADHD, you have very low dopamine levels, which means you look for other ways to raise your levels.

**A**s a teenager, I stuffed my face with food, and later I filled that void with drugs and shopping. My life has always been chaotic, but never more so than in the '90s when I was in the band Powder. In those days, living in London and working in the music industry, you were considered weird if you didn't take drugs. I was the original wild child, but looking back, I was unhappy and depressed.

The combination of my ADHD and drug use meant that I made some terrible decisions, which now make me shudder. The worst one was when I was upstairs at home getting high on heroin and I left a load of sleeping pills around downstairs. My son Alfie, then three years old, took them. I happened to come downstairs just in time and fished them out of his mouth before he swallowed. That incident made me realise I had to go to rehab.

Around the same time, my husband Danny [Goffey, 50, Supergrass musician] said: "Right, either you clean up or I'm out of here. Enough is enough." I started to see a drug counsellor and



## 'I was high on heroin when my son took my sleeping tablets'

changed my phone number, cutting ties with the London party crowd. I also got pregnant with my daughter Betty, now 18, and moved to Hampshire, then three years later to Somerset, where we've lived ever since.

I changed my playground and my mental health improved. Instead of drugs, I started getting a dopamine hit from launching my design business. These days, the thing that brings me joy isn't a line of coke, it's swimming or picking roses from my garden. People ask me if my mental health issues have been caused by a childhood trauma, but I think I was just born with the chemical imbalance that ADHD brings.

Now I have the tools to bring calm to my mind. I've been sober for 18 years, and for the last year and a half I've had talking therapy and medication to help me focus. My eldest daughter, Daisy, now 35, is also an incredible support. And though she's got a baby, she's always at the end of the phone. I do still love an all-nighter, and I stayed up until 4.30am at Betty's 18th birthday party, but I'm never tempted by drugs, and I've never liked alcohol.

Life now is like being on a diet. Everyone might be enjoying cake and chocolate, but you can't. And, let's face it, I'm in my 50s now, it's not Camden in the '90s! If it means I'm not waking up the next day and feeling like I want to kill myself, then it's well worth saying no. **F**

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