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LOOK OUT FOR YOU

Looking after your own physical and emotional needs will put you in a better place to help others

If you've ever listened to a safety briefing on a plane, you may have noticed that the flight attendant instructs passengers, in the case of an emergency, to put their own oxygen masks on first, before helping others.

Does this sound selfish, or sensible? The reason this advice is given is because oxygen-deprived passengers will be less capable of giving assistance – so not only are they endangering themselves, but potentially others, too.

It's not just in emergencies that this thinking is valuable – it also applies to everyday life. As much as people want to be there for their friends and family, it's not easy to look after others if you're not looking after yourself.

What does looking after yourself entail?

Is it doing whatever you want, whenever you want to do it? Not exactly. There's a difference between self-care and self-indulgence – in fact, self-indulgence is often the exact opposite of being kind to yourself. Imagine, for example, you get a terrible cold before an important hockey game. The impulse might be to burrow under blankets and eat stodgy comfort food – but actually, the kind thing to do for yourself in this situation is to get some fresh air, blast the germs away and eat lots of nourishing fruits and

vegetables. Not only will you be better more quickly, but you'll also be in a much stronger position to play your best and support your team members in the match.

It's not just for the benefit of others that being kind to yourself matters. It's also important for your own mental health and sense of wellbeing. Sometimes it may even appear that self-care involves hurting someone else's feelings – saying 'no' to a request or declining an invitation, for instance. Yet it may be necessary to make sure you don't become overwhelmed or have too many commitments.

Being kind to yourself matters for physical wellbeing

Eating good food, drinking enough water, exercising, getting enough sleep: all of these are vital for health, which has a bearing on your mind. The fine line between self-care and self-indulgence is apparent here. After all, indulging your whims might feel kinder to yourself in the short term – like skipping training when you're not in the mood – but actually, the opposite is true. Sometimes the kindest thing you can do for yourself is to do the thing that you don't feel like doing, whether it's getting started on that assignment so you're spared the stress of trying to get it all done at the last minute or choosing an early night over a late film.

Consider how you'd support a friend

Often people tend to be far nicer to others than they are to themselves. The support, encouragement and kindness among friends would, in an ideal situation, be mirrored in the relationship that people have with themselves. Think about what you'd say to a friend in a certain situation – 'don't worry, it will be okay', for example, or 'it wasn't your fault' – and then give that advice to yourself.

This highlights one of the tricky things about kindness, and that's the fact that it's not always about actions, but about words. In terms of kindness to yourself, this can be overlooked. Neglecting your health, for example, might soon be noticed by a friend or adult. But what about the way you speak to yourself in your head?

It's important to practise kindness in terms of an inner voice, telling yourself that 'at least you tried' or 'you did your best' or 'you've got this'. Banish any negative internal noise and tell yourself you're great, just as you'd tell a friend, because how you speak to yourself has a huge effect on your confidence – and this can affect what you achieve (which, in turn, affects your confidence. It's a big loop).

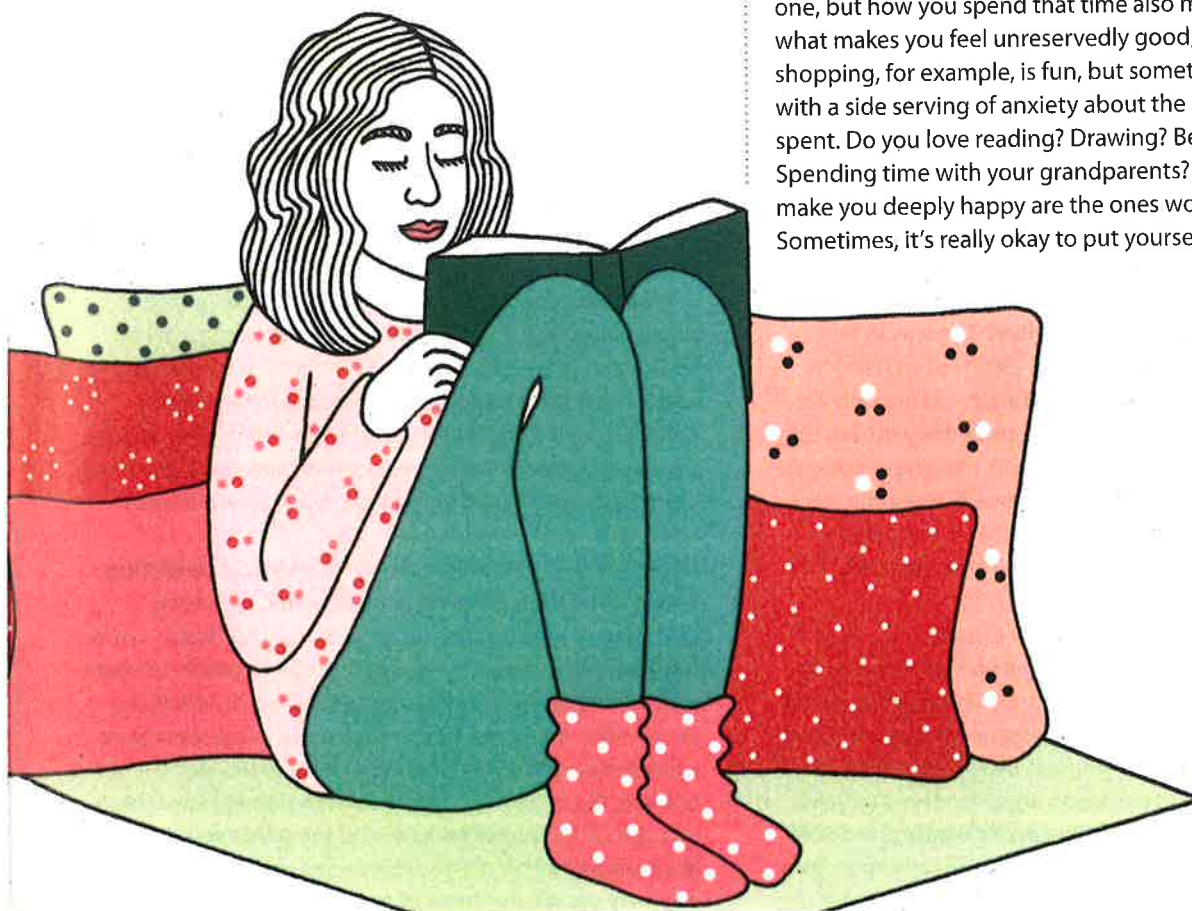
How does this play out in real life? Say you don't do as well as you'd hoped on a test, scoring a C rather than a B. If this happened to a friend, you'd most likely say: 'That was a tough test – you studied really hard and did your best. Getting a C is a great result, don't worry.'

Or how about if a friend missed a catch in a cricket match? Would you knock or reassure them? You'd encourage them. And it's these kind, supportive words you need to try to make sure you're saying to yourself as well.



How else can you practise self-care?

Making time for yourself in this busy life is definitely a big one, but how you spend that time also matters. Think about what makes you feel unreservedly good, without guilt: shopping, for example, is fun, but sometimes it comes with a side serving of anxiety about the money that's been spent. Do you love reading? Drawing? Being in nature? Spending time with your grandparents? The things that make you deeply happy are the ones worth prioritising. Sometimes, it's really okay to put yourself first.





FOOD FOR FITNESS



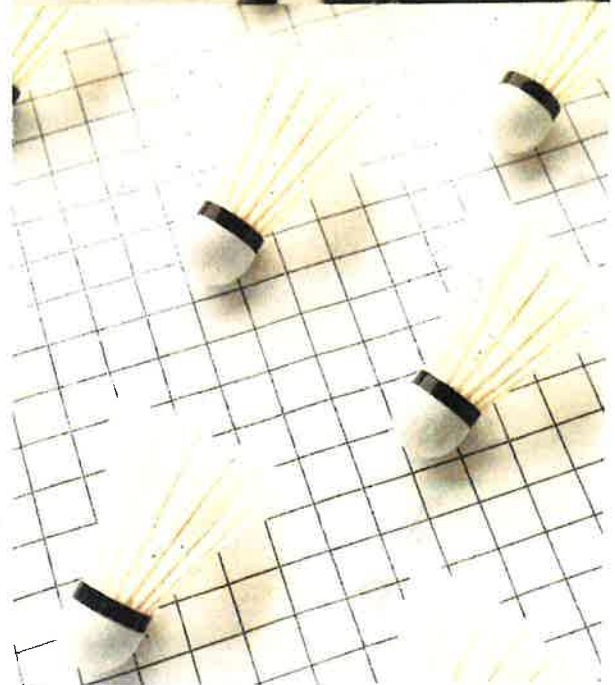
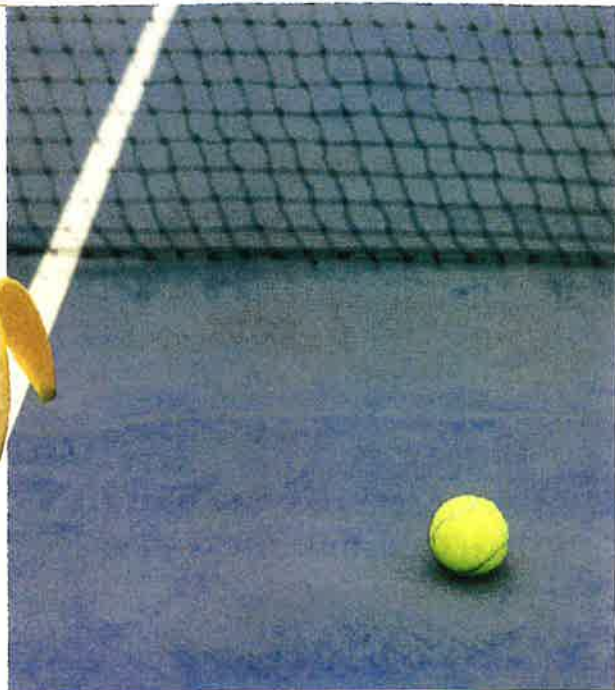
Whether it's yoga, swimming, canoeing or walking, if you're into fitness and sport you'll likely already have a good idea of how important food is when it comes to performing at your best. What a person eats and drinks affects how they're able to move their body and how efficiently they recover. Here are a few things to think about eating and drinking to stay on top of your game

A healthy and balanced diet* means eating a variety of different foods from the following food groups

- * Fruits and vegetables, such as bananas and apples, for vitamins and nutrients to stay healthy.
- * Starchy carbohydrates including cereals, bread, rice, pasta and potatoes for energy and fibre.
- * Dairy – and its fortified alternatives – such as milk, yoghurt and cheese for calcium and other essential minerals for healthy bones and teeth.
- * Meat, fish, beans, eggs, lentils and vegetarian and plant-based alternatives for protein, which helps to repair muscle tears.
- * Healthy fats, such as nuts, seeds, avocado, olive oil and vegetable-oil based spreads, for heart and skin.
- * Sugary and fatty foods such as crisps, doughnuts biscuits and chocolate can be enjoyed in moderation.

Eating a sufficient amount of food, in addition to drinking an adequate quantity of fluid, at the appropriate times will ultimately help to:

1. Improve strength, coordination and reaction time.
2. Reduce the risk of illness and injury.
3. Replenish energy stores.
4. Restore hydration levels.



What to eat **BEFORE** physical activity

Ideally, try to eat two to four hours before exercise, with the meal containing a slow-release carbohydrate, for example, wholegrain bread, wholegrain breakfast cereals and cereal bars (based around oats, dried fruit and nuts), basmati rice, pasta, potatoes and fruit. If you're pushed for time, have a snack at least 60 minutes before exercising so the body can digest and process the food.

Try these options before your next planned physical activity

Meals – two to four hours before exercise

Porridge with milk and banana (blueberries optional); tuna pasta in a tomato sauce; chicken with basmati rice and vegetables; or a jacket potato with cheese and beans.

Snacks – one to two hours before exercise

Banana and water; a glass of milk or a fruit-based milkshake; a jam sandwich and water; a cereal bar or banana energy ball (see page 37) and a small glass of fresh orange juice.

Turn the page for tips on what to eat during and post-exercise

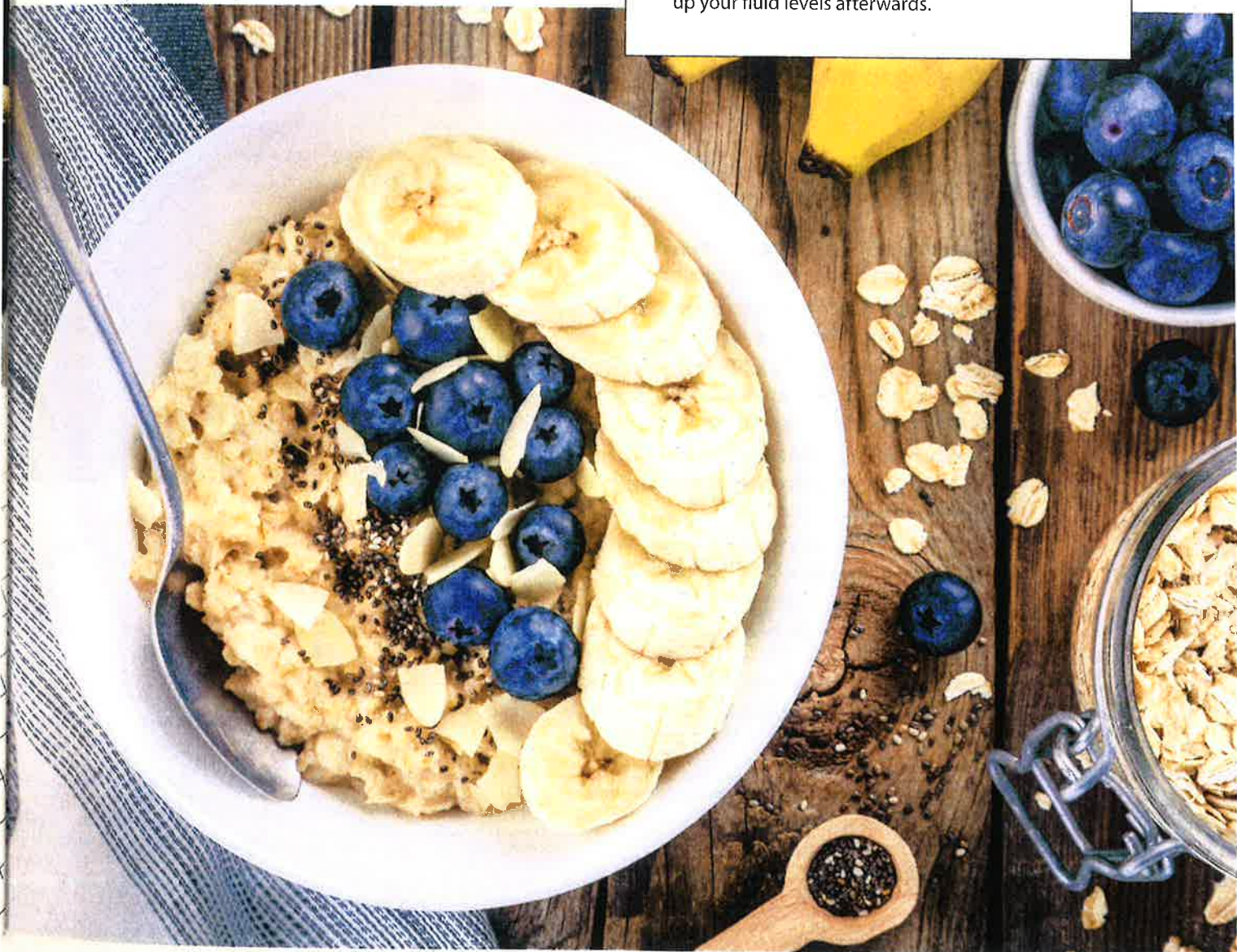
Hydration

It's generally recommended to drink around six to eight glasses of fluid a day – water, milk and no-added-sugar squash all count. This amount is, however, only an estimate and you'll need to drink more if you're active or if it's hot and you're sweating more.

An easy way to tell if you're drinking enough is to see if you're thirsty or not. A feeling of thirst though is, unfortunately, a sign that you're already dehydrated, which means you need to increase your fluid intake. Another way to check your hydration level is by checking the colour of your pee – the darker it is, the more dehydrated you are, so you need to drink more. Ideally, pee will be a pale-straw colour.

Other signs of dehydration include headaches, a lack of energy and feeling lightheaded.

Start your activity well hydrated, drink during the activity if you're thirsty, and be sure to top up your fluid levels afterwards.





What to eat **DURING** planned physical activity

If you're being active for more than an hour you should make sure to have something during a break such as diluted fruit juice, milk or a small banana. Try different snacks during your practice sessions to find out what works best for you and won't give you an upset stomach on competition day.

What to eat **AFTER** physical activity

Post-exercise, the muscles need food to replenish energy stores and to repair muscle tears. Aim for a mix of carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes; protein from beans, lentils, fish, tofu, eggs, chicken, meat, milk or yoghurt; plus vegetables or salad for nutrients.

Here are a few quick post-workout meals

1 Baked beans with egg on toast

Heat the baked beans in a microwave and cook your eggs in a pan (poached, fried or scrambled) before adding to two slices of buttered toast.

Tip: add a handful of chopped cherry tomatoes and sliced mushrooms to boost the nutrient content even more and use an olive or vegetable oil-based spread on the bread.

2 Strawberry, banana and yoghurt smoothie

In a blender, combine 200ml of natural yoghurt, a handful of strawberries, a small banana and some ice.

Tip: use frozen fruit for a super-thick smoothie or add milk or water for a thinner consistency.

3 Superfood porridge

Mix together 50g or more of oats with 250ml of milk and heat in the microwave or on the hob until cooked. Add a sprinkling of cinnamon (optional), flaked almonds or chopped walnuts, raspberries and sliced banana.

Tip: for a creamier porridge, stir in some yoghurt after cooking.

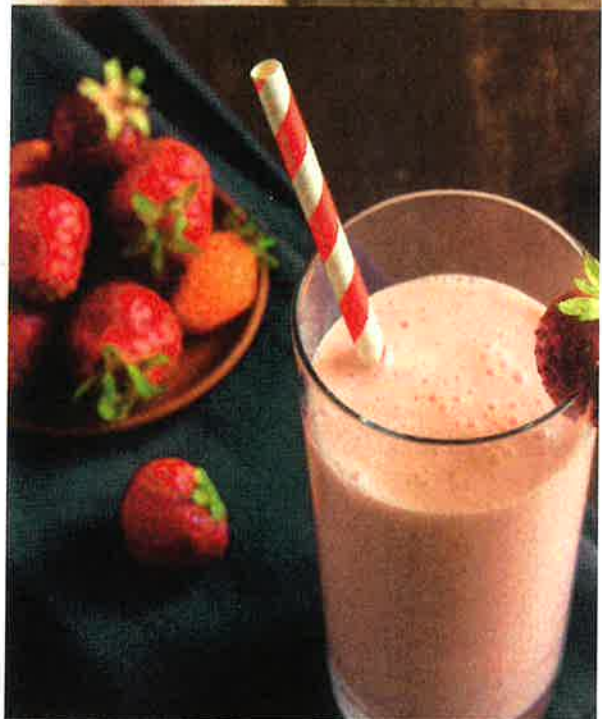
4 Chicken and cream cheese wrap

Spread a wholegrain wrap with cream cheese before adding pre-cooked and sliced chicken breast, some spinach and cucumber slices. Wrap up and enjoy.

Tip: for more flavour, use a cream cheese with garlic or herbs.

For more information on what to eat before and after sport, visit [nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/Sport.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/Sport.aspx). For details about hydration, go to [nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/hydration/hydration-for-children](https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/hydration/hydration-for-children)

* The word 'diet' refers to foods eaten on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, not a means to control or lose weight.



BANANA BREAD ENERGY BALLS

These banana balls are no-bake and simple to prepare. The oats and cinnamon give a delicious banana-bread taste.

Ingredients

- * 110g cashew nuts
- * 150g rolled oats
- * 2 medium-ripe bananas
- * 50g ground almonds
- * 3 tbsp dark chocolate chips
- * ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- * ¼ tsp cinnamon
- * ¼ tsp salt
- * 6 tbsp unsweetened finely shredded coconut
- * 1 tbsp chia seeds



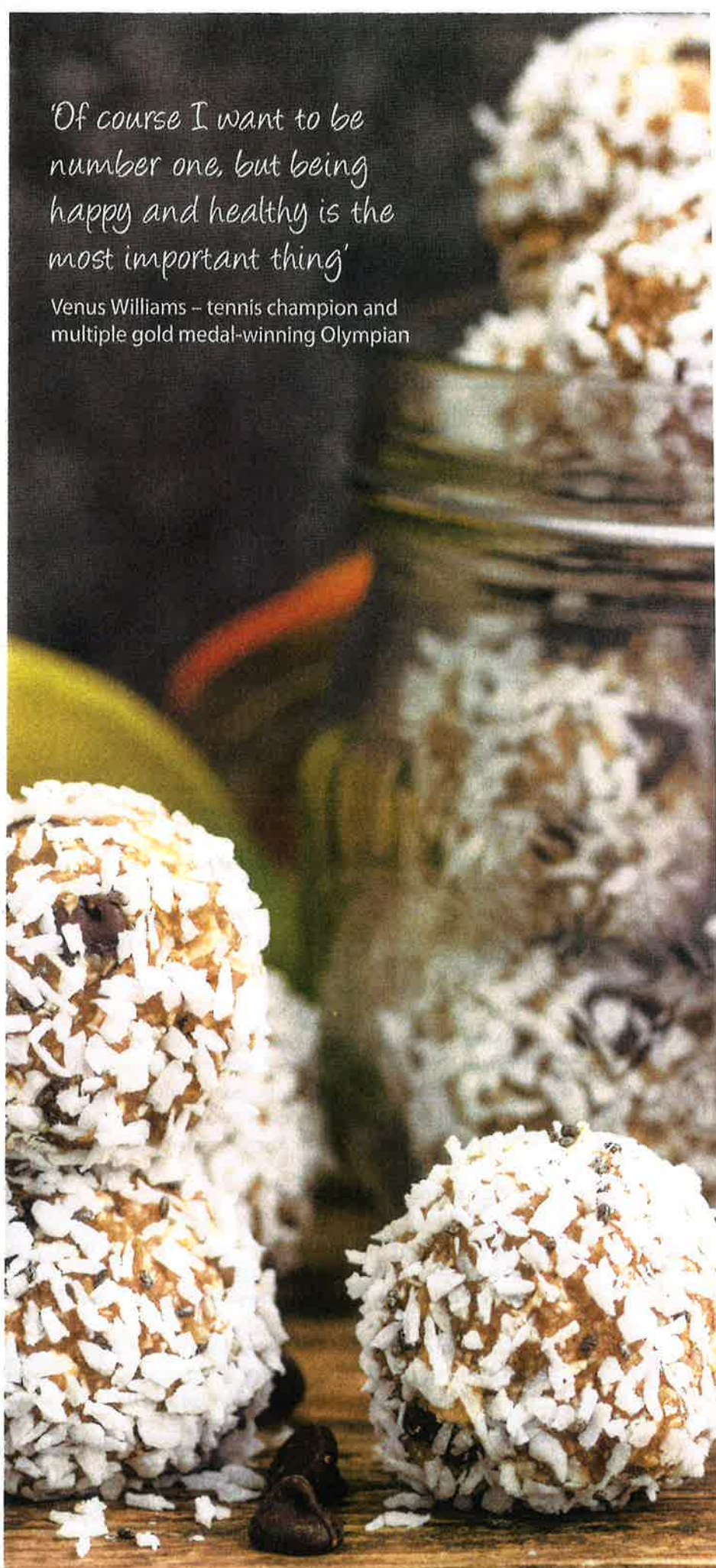
Makes: 25 balls

Prep time: 20 minutes

1. Place the cashew nuts into a food processor and pulse until it turns to a grainy paste.
2. Add the rolled oats and pulse again for a few seconds to break up the oats a bit. Add the bananas, and pulse again until fully combined.
3. Stir in the ground almonds, then add the chocolate chips, vanilla extract, cinnamon and salt. Stir again until combined. You should have a thick, sticky paste that can be rolled into balls. If the mixture is too loose, stir in an extra spoonful of oats.
4. Place the shredded coconut and chia seeds into a shallow bowl and mix together. The chia seeds will sink to the bottom, which is fine.
5. Scoop a heaped teaspoon of the mixture into your hand, then roll into a ball. Roll around in the coconut mixture, pressing down a little so the coconut sticks and a few chia seeds also stick. Place on a plate or tray.
6. Repeat until all of the mixture is used. Eat immediately, or store in an airtight container at room temperature. The banana balls should keep for 2-3 days.

'Of course I want to be number one, but being happy and healthy is the most important thing'

Venus Williams – tennis champion and multiple gold medal-winning Olympian



RIGHT TO REPLY

How to become more self-assured and exercise assertiveness

A friend wrongly blames you for starting a rumour about them. How do you react? Say nothing to avoid a confrontation but later wish you'd stood up for yourself? Or do you get angry, shout and insult them to anyone who'll listen? You can respond to situations in different ways. But is it possible to react in a way that gets your opinion across while not offending others? Learning how to respond more assertively could be the solution.

People generally respond to others in one of three ways – passively, aggressively or assertively.

1 Passive
A passive response often involves saying or doing nothing. It lacks confidence and avoids the problem. People who respond passively might:

- * Not say what they want or believe.
- * Keep their thoughts and feelings to themselves.
- * Go along with things they're uncomfortable with.
- * Act as if they're not as important as other people.
- * Feel guilty, helpless or resentful.
- * Have low self-respect.

Example: You're in a meeting with a careers advisor who is helping you to decide which optional subjects to take. Your favourite subjects are French and art and you'd like to do these. The advisor suggests that you take history and geography as you scored highly on your last assessments in those subjects. You don't like to disagree, so you nod and write those subjects on the options form.





2

Aggressive

An aggressive response can involve anger, violence and physical or verbal attacks. People who respond aggressively might:

- Interrupt or shout over others.
- Intimidate, threaten, dismiss or insult.
- Consider only their own feelings and not those of others.
- Leave others feeling bad.
- Feel angry.
- Think others' opinions are silly, stupid or worthless.
- Try to control what others think, say or do.

Example: You're working with a small group of other students on a task in class. You think your idea is the best and become fed up with others giving their suggestions. You interrupt them and tell them their ideas won't work. You start to talk more and more loudly about your plan, ignoring what they say. When the teacher approaches your table to discuss progress you tell her the group's going with your idea and don't let the others speak.

3

Assertive

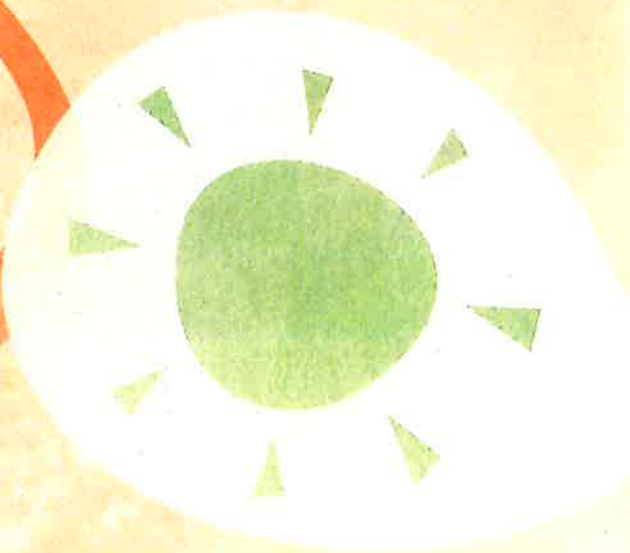
An assertive response is somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. It involves expressing your thoughts and feelings honestly and openly. It respects both you and the other person. You exercise your personal rights without denying the rights of others.

Individuals who are assertive are generally more able to resolve conflict, feel more confident, make more positive choices and are more able to say 'no' to peer pressure. Being assertive is a sought-after skill which many people continue to develop throughout their lives.

Example: Your friends like to go to the cinema at the weekend but you really don't enjoy it and it's expensive. You'd rather use your pocket money for something else. When you've hinted you don't want to go, you feel they're trying to talk you into joining them.

An assertive response might be to say: 'I won't come to the cinema as it's really not my thing and I'm trying to save money. I feel pressured when you try to persuade me to come as I don't want to lose our friendship. I hope you all have a good time. Maybe I could meet you all for a hot chocolate sometime next week to catch up?'

This type of response expresses your needs while respecting that others might have different opinions and priorities. You're honest about what you want without trying to force others to behave differently.



**DO YOU THINK YOU TEND TO RESPOND PASSIVELY,
AGGRESSIVELY OR ASSERTIVELY?**

Your friends make unkind comments about a classmate who you get on well with. How would you respond?

A substitute teacher gives you a sanction for forgetting homework three times, when you know she's mixing you up with another student. How do you react?

Your sibling is playing loud music which means you can't concentrate on studying. What would you do?





NOTE YOUR RESPONSES

Situations I've responded to passively

Situations I've responded to aggressively

BEING ASSERTIVE

How to do it

Being assertive takes practice but it's a useful skill to work on. Here are a few tips that can help you to appear more assertive

- * Keep calm and use a low, clear and steady voice.
- * Stand up tall and try not to fidget, as this can make you appear nervous.
- * Look at the other person to show that you're listening to their point of view.
- * Express your needs and opinions clearly, honestly and openly.
- * Allow others to give their opinions even if you disagree.
- * Use 'I' statements to describe how you feel ('I feel... when you... because... I would like...')
- * Do not feel you have to keep justifying your reasons, just remain polite and firm.

More assertive responses could be



#PHUBBED OFF!

Your phone is your connection to everyone. It lets you contact who you want, when you want, but is it damaging your face-to-face friendships?

Imagine you're with a friend, having a real heart-to-heart, telling them something personal or emotional, when their phone suddenly beeps. They stop listening to you and turn towards the device, reading the message and immediately responding with their own. You're just stood there, feeling as if you're not as important as the message they've received and wondering what just happened.

You've been 'phubbed' – or snubbed – in favour of a phone. This kind of behaviour is so common now that it feels normal. And it's not just about being on the receiving end of the 'phubbing', you might be doing it yourself without even noticing. Yet this behaviour could end up affecting your friendships as well as your happiness. So why do you, or your friends, do it?

It's an impulse

It may seem like an odd comparison, but the way you use your phone is like a bird pecking at a bird feeder. The bird doesn't know if the food will come out or not so it will keep pecking to increase the chances of it happening. It has a natural impulse to chase food. So each time you pick up your phone to check social media or your text messages, you might be chasing something too – inclusion or acceptance, for example, which are as essential to your wellbeing as feed is to a bird.

Maybe you've received a message from someone you like or your latest Instagram post is getting lots of attention. These online rewards can feel important, but what about the friends you're with in person, can't they give you something valuable too?

It feels safe

It takes more thought, energy, even courage, to connect with people offline since you can't really control what happens. Unlike Instagram, where you can unfollow someone who makes you feel uncomfortable, you can't switch off a friend who says something upsetting to your face. They're not an app that can be opened and closed.

Plus, it's easier to present your 'best self' online and hide behind the screen, whereas you can feel much more exposed when you're with friends in person and can't hide your emotions or real self.

Brain drain

If you're constantly scrolling on your phone while you're with friends, you might be giving yourself too much to think about. If you try to focus on too many things at once – like a conversation with your friend, a WhatsApp chat with another friend, and a Facebook thread – you're not giving your brain a rest. Yet you need to recharge as often as you plug in your phone.

Grow your awareness

If you've noticed that you give more attention to your device than anything else, try this exercise.

Make a note of the apps you use the most. Now, turn your phone off (it won't be for too long) and spend some quiet time by yourself. Try to answer the following questions:

- * What am I hoping to find when I open the app?
- * How will this make me feel?
- * How will I feel if I can't find what I'm looking for?
- * How can my friends give me the same feeling instead?
- * What else can I do to feel this way without my phone?

Practise empathy

If you, or your friends, repeatedly interrupt a conversation in the real world to text someone on your phone, it can undermine the trust that exists between you. This action sends a signal that the connection you share isn't that important – it comes second to whatever's going on on your phone. It is possible, though, to send more positive signals and you can do this together. If you've taken time to understand why you use your phone so much, it can help you to empathise with your friends when they do the same.



Now you can create some new habits and invite your friends to do the same. Try some of the following suggestions and make notes about your experiences afterwards. Focus on the benefits (it doesn't matter how small they might seem, they all count).

1 Commit to one hour of phone-free activity by yourself. This could be taking a short walk, reading a book or listening to music. How did it make you feel to spend time away from your phone? What did you learn about yourself?

2 Ask a friend to join you for one hour of phone-free activity. Take a walk together, play cards or create vision boards. Did you sense a difference in the way that you communicated with each other? What else did you notice?

3 Invite a group of friends to join the phone-free hour. Explore activities that don't involve technology. Play a game or start a group discussion – it could be about music, fashion, the environment, literature. You choose. What did you learn about each other that you didn't know before?

Build up your phone-free sessions gradually. Over time you might schedule regular phone-free dates with friends – it doesn't mean ditching your devices, but you might begin to use them in a way that doesn't disconnect you from the people in front of you. What's more, as your friendships go from strength to strength, real-life connections could make you happier than hundreds of likes on Instagram.

JULIE'S
BIRTHDAY
FRIDAY

BRING
TRAINERS
TO
PRACTICE

RETURN
LIBRARY
BOOK

MISSION: GET ORGANISED

You arrive at volleyball practice to find you've left your trainers at home. You turn up at school one day and realise you'd forgotten it was a good friend's birthday. You find yourself stressing on a Sunday night to complete three assignments due the next day. You want to return a library book but just can't remember where you last saw it. You'd love to be more organised but just don't know where to start? *Teen Breathe* brings you top tips to super-charge your organisational skills

What does being organised mean?

Think of somebody you know who is super organised. Make a list of reasons you consider them to be so. What did you include? Any of the following?

- They know where their belongings are
- They rarely lose things
- They always have with them what they need
- They remember important dates and events
- They don't forget to do what they said they would
- They finish projects before deadlines
- They rarely stress about completing tasks at the last minute

Why is being organised important?

Being more organised reduces stress and worry, saves time and enables you to prioritise what's important to you. People who are disorganised often leave tasks unfinished, miss deadlines, arrive late, fail to demonstrate their potential and miss out on opportunities they'd enjoy.

Consider this scenario:

Lena would like a lead role in the community drama production. She keeps forgetting to collect an information pack. She finally does – just two days before the audition. Without time to learn the lines properly, she decides she'll practise the evening before – that'll be enough. That evening Lena looks for the script but can't find it. She turns up at the audition anyway but isn't successful. A few months later she sits in the audience knowing that she could have performed just as well and that it would have been a great experience for her.



HOW TO BE MORE ORGANISED

1 Clear the clutter
If your bedroom storage units are overflowing, your bag barely clasps shut and you can't see the back of your locker, it will be more time-consuming to find what you're looking for. Have a sort out – you might even discover things you'd forgotten about. Throw out any unnecessary clutter and donate items you no longer use to a younger sibling, good cause or charity shop.

2 Give your belongings a home
Keep everything in a set place to locate things quickly. Get creative and make labels for drawers and cupboards, or decorate boxes to keep similar items together (toiletries, accessories, stationery...)

3 Have a digi-declutter
Photos, school assignments, projects... the likelihood is, most are stored electronically. Get into the habit of creating folders for each subject area. Save and back-up regularly to avoid unnecessary work.

4 Write it down
Relying on memory alone has drawbacks. Write things to do or remember on a sticky note, a notepad or a wipe-clean board. Keep it somewhere visible so it jogs your memory each time you walk past.

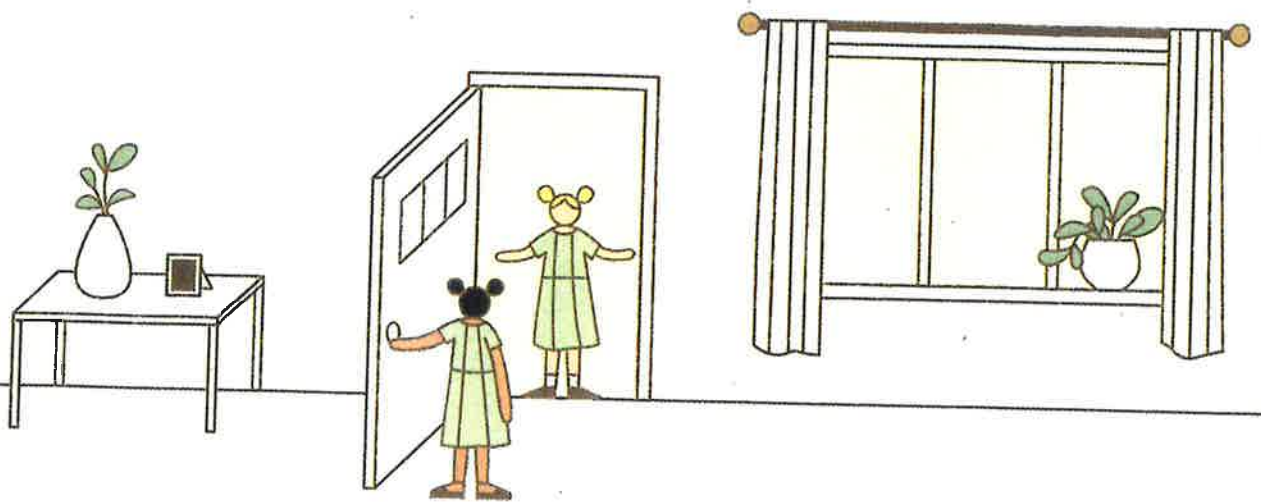
5 Use a diary or calendar – and look at it often
Whether paper or digital, using a diary or calendar helps you remember what you need to do and what to prioritise. Write down what's happening, your plans, deadlines, birthdays and anything else. Look at it regularly – perhaps first thing each morning – to help plan your day and the week ahead.

6 Build in some routines
Routines become habits and good organisational habits help keep you on top of things and remain stress-free. You might, for example, have a set routine each evening of preparing your clothes, bag and lunch for the next day. Setting reminders or alarms can help you to do things at certain times if you tend to forget.

7 Break down larger tasks into more manageable chunks
Disorganised people often leave tasks until the last minute, when they stress over having too much to do in too short a time. Break down any bigger task into the smaller steps you need to take to reach your overall goal. Write each of these smaller tasks in your diary or calendar and tick them off once done. You'll be finished before you know it.

Make it easy for yourself. Find out what works for you and develop your own ways of organisation. If you tend to lose bits of paper, take a photo of them so you have a digital copy. If you never remember birthdays, make a set of birthday cards in advance so you always have some to hand. If you regularly forget your trainers for PE lessons, try keeping them in your locker so you don't have to take them home. If you split your time between parents, have two sets of toiletries/nightwear/essentials so that you don't have to remember to take everything from one house to another.





SEEING DOUBLE

Have you ever looked at your friend and seen... yourself? Same hairstyle, clothes, even mannerisms and quirks of speech? If so, you probably have a copycat friend, and while this is essentially harmless – they're probably not trying to take over your life – it can still be unsettling and leave you wondering what you can do about it. Here are some ways you might consider to address the issue or to curb your own copycat behaviour

Copycat friends can sometimes be difficult to cope with – so much so that you might be considering breaking off your friendship. Before you do that, however, it might help you to know that imitation is something most people do to some degree throughout their lives.

It can be a particularly common habit in teenage years, a crucial stepping stone in establishing identity and personal taste, but sometimes continues into adulthood. Your parents' friends probably don't dress like them, but they might, for instance, decide to decorate their homes similarly or book a holiday to the same destination.

At its core, emulation is a way of establishing a sense of belonging. It's almost like a glue that bonds friends together, helping them recognise each other as part of the same group. The message copycats are sending, even if they don't realise it, is that they share your tastes and interests and want to be part of your set.

As child psychologist Amanda Gummer, founder of Fundamentally Children, explains: 'We are all social beings, with a powerful desire to fit in. When children start becoming independent from their families, they search for other groups to belong to and friends are an obvious focus. Teenagers will often go through a phase of copying

someone they like or admire, primarily as a means of being accepted by that person.'

Even though there may not be anything sinister or scary in copycat behaviour – in fact it's actually a compliment, since your friend is only imitating you because they think you're amazing – it can cause tension in friendships.

Individuality is important, so when a friend tries to be like you, it's understandable that you might feel they're compromising the qualities that make you unique. It may get to a point where you want to confront them about their copycat behaviour, but bear in mind that they might be acting like this because of their own insecurities and lack of self-confidence. If you're going to broach the subject with them, you should try to do it with some sensitivity.

On the flip side, you might be reading this and thinking about your own behaviour. It could be that you feel you're struggling to find your voice and define your tastes, and you're therefore adopting someone else's. If this sounds like you, try to take steps to develop your own way of dressing and behaving and think about what you like doing, watching and reading. It might be hard to begin with, but the only person you can most successfully be is you – special, unique, individual you.

HOW TO COPE WITH A COPYCAT FRIEND

1 Before making any accusations, consider the situation from different angles, and seek the opinion of someone you trust – a parent, an older sibling or, if your friend is copying your ideas at school, a teacher. Try not to involve a group of your classmates, since this is likely to make the situation worse.

Could it be that your friend isn't really copying you? It might be that you both like the same clothes, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're copying your style. They might be following the trends of the day, as you are. It may be no more than coincidence that they've bought some of the same things as you. Make sure you're interpreting the situation correctly before talking to them.

2 If you're convinced you're being copied and feel you have to question them on their behaviour, be tactful. Bear in mind that the root cause could be insecurity, so don't belittle or humiliate them and don't call them out in public. Instead, try to boost their confidence. Amanda says the best remedy for anxiety and low self-esteem is to 'help the person feel secure and well-attached'. So, don't lose your temper with them.

You could say that you'd noticed they'd bought some of the same clothes as you, but that they might look even nicer in a different colour or style. You could even suggest you go shopping together and help them choose items different to your own but that still suit them.

Your friend might be copying some of the things you post on social media without giving you credit. You could explain to them, calmly, that you put a lot of thought into your posts and you don't feel it's fair that they're passing them off as their own.

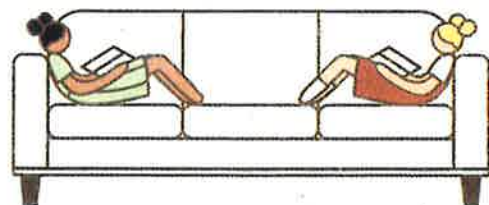
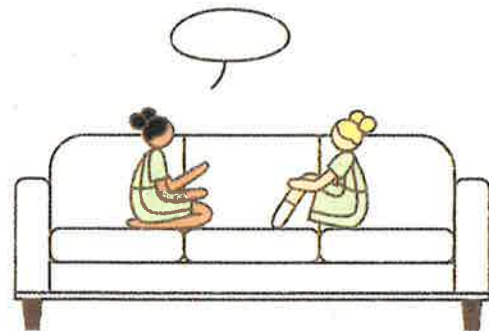
3 Be prepared for your friend to carry on copying you even after you've spoken to them. If it just so happens that they like the same things as you do, it's unlikely talking to them about their behaviour will change anything. In some cases, then, it might be better to accept being copied as part of growing up. Sooner or later your friend will find their own identity (or perhaps even someone else to copy). Until that happens, you can rest assured that no one can really be you but you. You are more than your clothes and hairstyle, more than your taste in music or films. In other words, you are more than the sum of your parts, and that's the bit no one can copy.

HOW TO STOP BEING A COPYCAT

Developing a sense of self is an important milestone and part of that is establishing your own likes and dislikes. But if you're constantly borrowing your friends' preferences, you might struggle to establish your own distinct identity.

When you're next out clothes shopping, take a step back before you buy something your friend has already. Ask yourself first if you really do like it, and second, if it's a style that genuinely suits you. You may then be left asking yourself why you feel the need to copy that person. Does it make you feel more confident or closer to them?

In time, most young people grow out of mirroring, and begin to trust their own judgments and tastes. When this doesn't happen, the reason might be low self-esteem – and then it's a case of taking the steps necessary to boost that sense of self-belief. Always be the best version of you.







HOW TO BE A GOOD CONFIDANTE

Trust between friends takes time to build, but once it's there you can become each other's confidantes. You'll feel safe talking to each other about anything. You'll keep each other's secrets, cheer each other on and pick each other up when you're down. Who wouldn't want a friendship like that?

Being able to share your feelings and concerns with someone, knowing they won't judge you, is really important. When you keep your emotions hidden away inside, unexpressed, they can become bigger than they actually are. Equally, if you have a great idea about something you really want to do, talking about it with someone can help you find a way to make it real, which might not happen if you kept it to yourself.





LOYALTY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND THE ABILITY TO LISTEN

You'll know your friend is your confidante when...

1 They hear you

They listen to you intently, making you feel both safe and valued. When you're sharing something personal, they will give you their full attention, just like Benjamin listens to and respects his cousin Peter in the film *Peter Rabbit*, no matter how outlandish Peter's ideas seem.

2 They see you

They're able to look at life from your perspective and identify with the way you're feeling, even if they've never experienced it. Lottie's character in hit film *The Greatest Showman* is a good example as she sees and embraces her fellow performers and their differences.

3 They cheer you on

They respond positively to you without judgment, and celebrate your achievements without being jealous. They also offer words of encouragement when you're feeling low or upset, maintaining their enthusiasm for your success in the same way Ariadne supports Scarlet in the *Scarlet and Ivy: The Lost Twin* series of novels.

4 They stand by you

They're loyal no matter what happens. If you've been left out of a group activity or circle of friends, for example, they will be prepared to stand up for you and stand by your side. When Auggie is challenged by his peers in the film *Wonder*, his friend Summer defends him consistently and without question.

5 Beware the fake confidante

Watch out for friends who share other people's secrets easily and spread gossip, especially if they ask you to divulge your personal information too. A true and trustworthy friend knows you only need to share what you want to share, unlike Tina Walters who loves to start rumours in *The Gallagher Girls* series.

CAN YOU BECOME A CONFIDANTE?

Becoming a confidante is a core life skill even if it does involve making some tough decisions. It won't just be your friendships that benefit, however, since you'll also get better at communicating and connecting with everyone.

Listen with your eyes and ears

Focus all your attention on the person speaking. Maintain eye contact as much as possible, but also look for clues that give an idea of how they're really feeling. If their breath is fast or shallow they could be upset. If their body language seems defensive (for instance, if their arms are crossed) they might be feeling vulnerable. If they're speaking quickly they might be excited as they're telling you something important.

Let them finish before you speak

It's tempting to interrupt someone when they're sharing a story. You want to tell them about your own experiences and let them know they're not alone, but it's likely your friend just wants you to be present for them while they speak. Use brief words of encouragement instead and let them tell you everything before you jump in with your own stories. Allow them this opportunity to open up.

Respond with open-ended questions

You don't always have to agree with your friends. Instead you can try responding with questions that need more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. This will help them to better understand their feelings. For example, instead of asking 'does that make you feel sad?' you could ask 'why does it make you feel sad?'

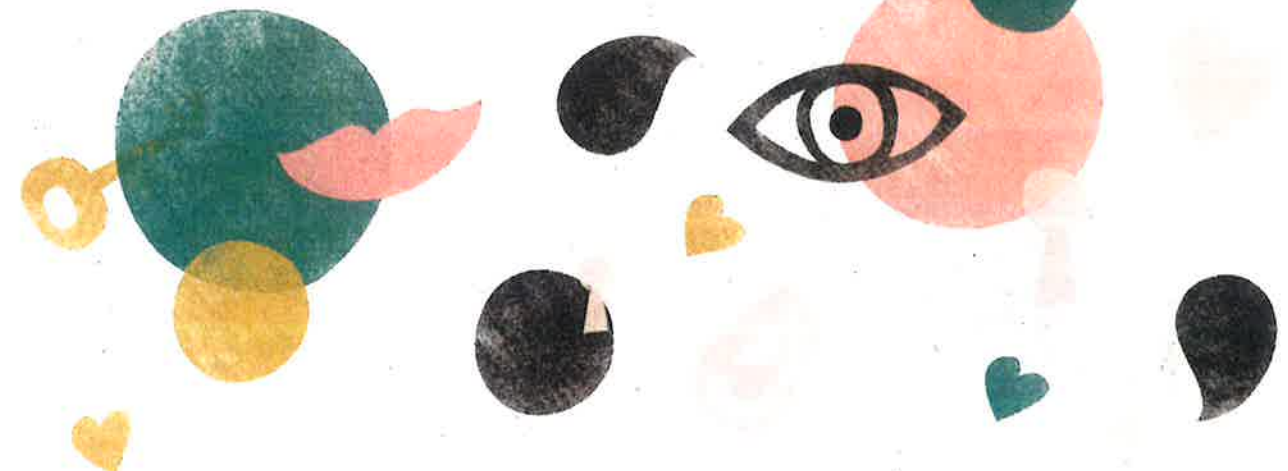
Have empathy, not sympathy

Sympathy means you feel bad about a situation, which could make your friend uncomfortable. Empathy means you identify with the situation, which puts them at ease. Try asking questions to help you see things from their perspective rather than turning the conversation around to talk about your point of view.

Know when a problem isn't yours to solve

You don't always have to offer advice or solutions. You're not responsible for helping your friends do something they could do for themselves, but you can support them in finding a solution and taking responsibility for their actions.

If a friend tells you something upsetting that a teacher, parent or guardian should know, ask them how they feel about passing on this information. If you think they are in any danger, talk to a trusted adult or call Childline on 0800 1111 for advice.



BUILDING TRUST

Think about your close friends, how they behave around you, how they make you feel and why. Now grab something to write with and take some time to answer the following questions:

Who do you trust and why?

Who do you not trust and why?

What makes you think your friends trust you?

How could you become a better confidante?



make your own FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS

Few things can beat the feeling of giving – or receiving – a handmade present, especially when it's for someone who's always there for you with a hug and a smile. These friendship bracelets are colourful, easy and all you need to make them is embroidery thread and a pair of scissors.

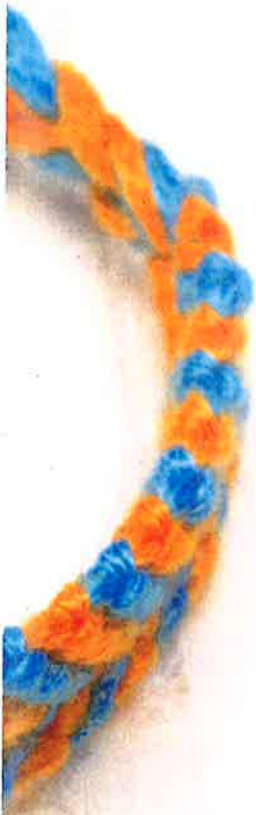
Friendship bracelets have been around for centuries and were first made by Central American Indians. Simple yet striking, strands of thread are woven together with macramé knots to form pretty patterns. Most are based on the same simple half-hitch knot. The smallest pattern, a double chain knot, requires two strings, while the candy stripe can have three or more. There are hundreds of possible designs and they can be fun to personalise with beads, jewels or metallic thread.

Each colour has its own special meaning when used in a friendship bracelet. If you like, you could select colours that reflect the character traits of the person you're making it for (see *The Colour of You* on page 50).

According to tradition, you tie the handmade bracelet onto the wrist of a friend, who can then make a wish. They need to wear the bracelet until it falls off naturally, at which point the wish comes true.

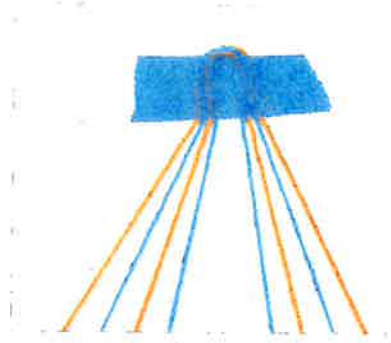
When you've had a full day or spent a lot of time looking at a screen it's nice to relax and make something. And doing an activity with your hands helps to slow your brain and lets you concentrate on the task in front of you. There's so much going on in everyone's lives that it's often hard to shut it all out and be still, but working on a friendship bracelet will give you that space while also allowing you to be creative and produce something beautiful.

If you love this project, try checking out all the amazing designs that others are doing online. It's inspiring to see all the intricate patterns out there.



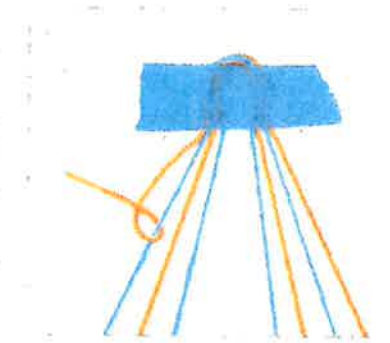
ALL YOU NEED TO CREATE YOUR OWN BRACELETS...

Two colours of embroidery thread (also called floss), scissors and a small piece of tape



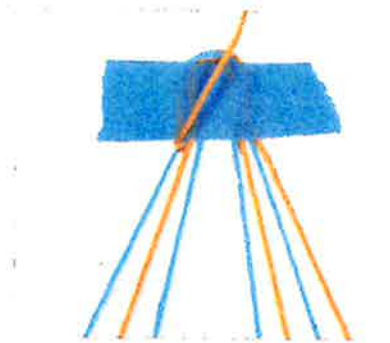
STEP 1

Cut two 120cm pieces of thread from each colour (we've chosen orange and blue), place all four pieces together and fold them in half. Tape the folded end to your chosen work surface. A stiff board that you can move around would work well. Separate the threads so they are alternating colours with the same colour on the outside on the left and right. The two threads in the middle should be the same colour. We'll now call all the threads strands.



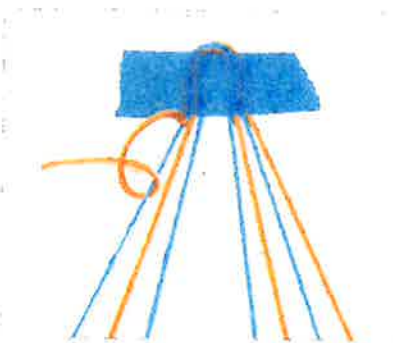
STEP 2

Starting on the left, take the outside orange strand and bring it across the blue strand to the right. Take it under the blue strand and over itself to make a knot.



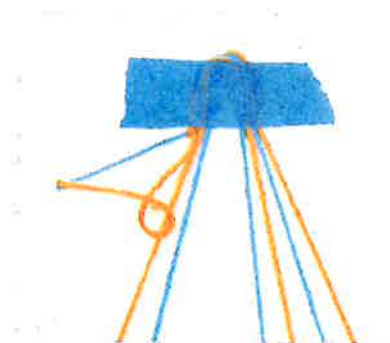
STEP 3

Pull the orange strand tight up to the tape. Hold onto the blue strand so it stays tight.



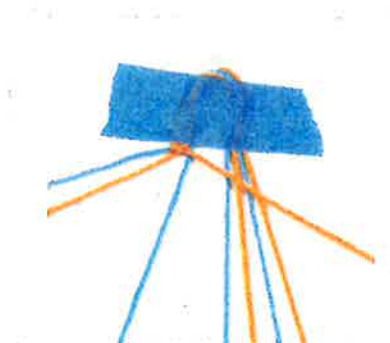
STEP 4

Repeat Steps 2 and 3 to make a second knot on the same strand. This is a complete knot (you always knot twice).



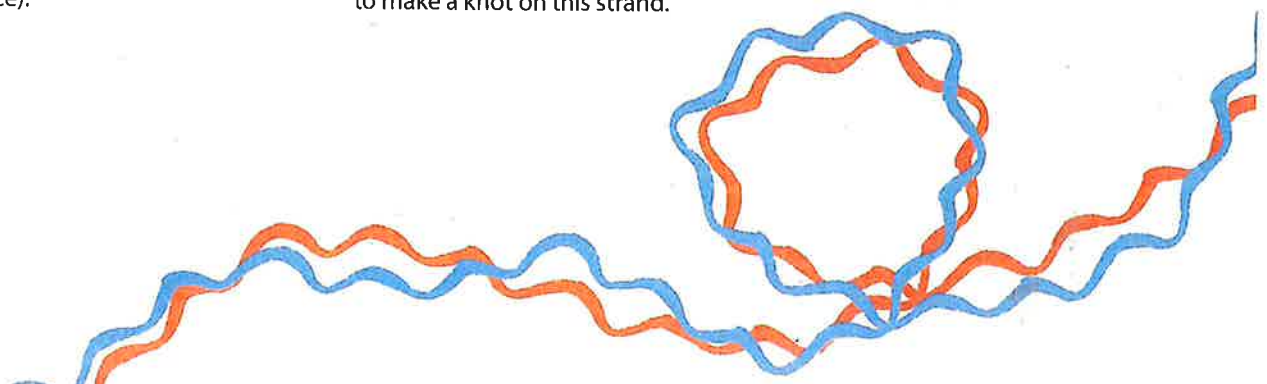
STEP 5

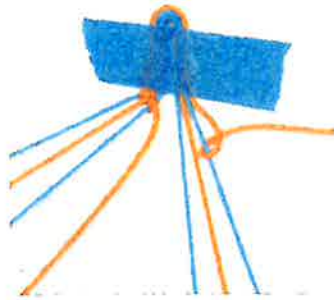
Bring the orange strand across to the next one on the right. This should be an orange strand. Follow Steps 2 and 3 to make a knot on this strand.



STEP 6

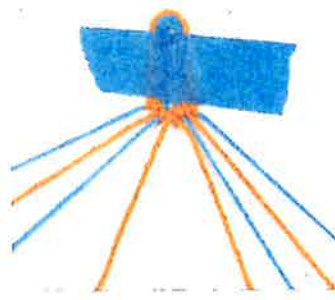
Repeat Step 4 to make the second knot on this strand. Make sure you pull the knots tight.





STEP 7

Make two knots on the next strand and stop in the middle. Pick up the outside orange strand on the right side and repeat the knots. You will reverse the direction here, take the orange strand over the blue one and bring the orange strand underneath the blue and over itself. Pull the knot tight and repeat with a second knot. It's exactly the same as you have done on the other side.



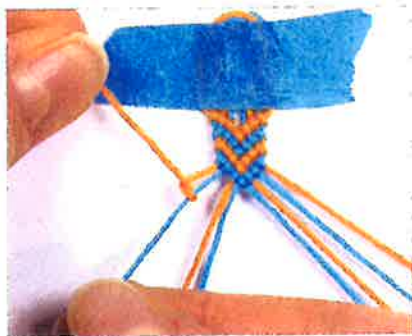
STEP 8

Repeat to make two knots on each strand. When you get to the middle you will meet the orange strand from the other side. Make two knots on this strand too. That's the first row complete.



STEP 9

Repeat Steps 2 to 8 to make the next row that will be blue, as the outside strand is a blue one. The colour of the knots will always be the colour of the outside strand as you start the row.



STEP 10

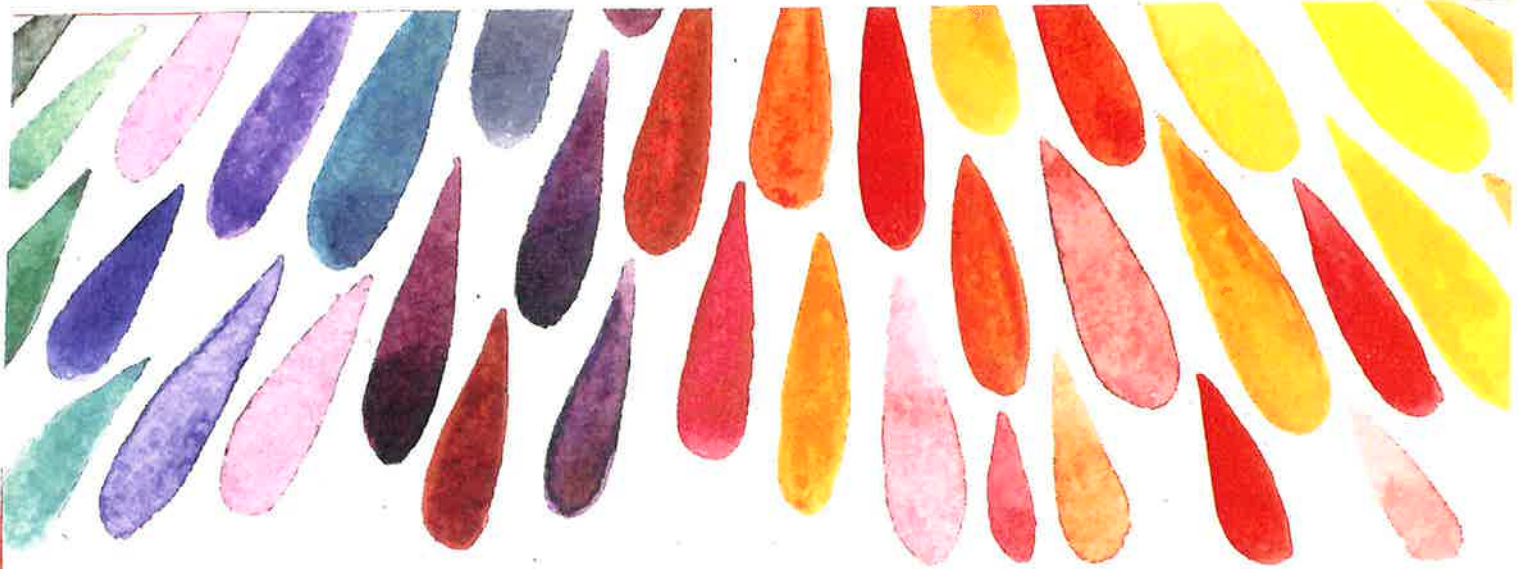
There are a couple of things to remember when knotting; always do one knot at a time and pull it tight before making the second knot on the same strand. Always hold onto the strand that you are creating the knot on to keep it tight. If the knots are done correctly the strand you are using to make the knots will end up facing the next strand along. You'll see the pattern start to appear as you create more rows.



STEP 11

Make the braid long enough to fit around your wrist. When it's long enough split all the strands into three and plait to the end. Make a big knot in the very end. The plaited bit will go through the loop on the other end and you can tie the bracelet on to your friend's wrist with a single knot.





THE COLOUR OF YOU

Discover how you can use colour to improve mood and outlook

Life is incredibly colourful, offering all manner of tones, shades and hues to brighten up the day, but there's more to colour than meets the eye. Did you know that light, and the ability to decode it through the senses, is the reason you see colour?

The science of colour, known as chromatics, is fascinating but the psychology behind colour, especially in relation to how it affects emotions and outlook on life, is intriguing.

In their book, *Colour Your Life*, Howard and Dorothy Sun explore how understanding colour can add a new dimension to your perception of your environment.

This hasn't gone unnoticed in the business world where warm colours such as red, orange and yellow are used to create a sense of warmth (handy for keeping down the heating bills) while green is believed to spark creativity and increase productivity.

Put aside the debate as to whether or not white is a colour and you're still left with the perception that it represents modernity – bring to mind a certain technology giant? Choosing the right colour scheme matters.

Applied colour psychologist Karen Haller is a leading international authority in the field: 'Colour is this amazing phenomena that can influence how we think, feel and behave. When we see a colour we instantly feel its effect, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.'

Each colour has its own energetic wavelength and, on a subtle level, this can affect mood. By understanding these energetic qualities, you can choose colours to suit your needs and bring out the best of your personality.

SHADES OF MINDFULNESS

Look around you. What are the dominant colours in your life? Have you inherited and grown up with them? Do you always choose the same shades for your clothes, room and accessories? Are you attracted to some colours and do you avoid others?

Being mindful about how certain colours make you feel and discovering which ones resonate with you can have a positive impact on your everyday life.

Devon-based artist Anita Nowinska, who is best known for her sensuous flower paintings, landscapes and images of nature, is convinced colour in art can enhance mood.

'Colour affects the way we feel so powerfully, it influences mood, atmosphere and wellbeing. They have a massive impact on feelings and emotions. They can lift and energise you or relax and soothe you.'

PAINT YOUR MOOD

If you can, set aside some time to paint and experiment with colour. Mix and blend different paints to achieve different shades and then consider how each colour makes you feel.

It might be that you have a favourite (the most often cited favourite around the world is blue, with brown being the least liked), but if you try to embrace the full spectrum, you can tap into the distinct energy of each colour (take a look at our chart, right) whenever you need it. Feeling you could do with a lift? Try pink. Want to relax? Go green. Whatever your mood, let colours help you on life's journey.

Make a friend smile with a handmade bracelet spun in their favourite colours (see overleaf)

WHAT'S YOUR COLOUR?

RED

Passionate, bold, adventurous, confident, exuberant, successful, motivated, energetic and optimistic.

Red is stimulating and dynamic, but too much can be considered fiery and aggressive.

Add a touch of red to boost your confidence and shake off laziness.



BLUE

Creative, expressive, communicative, inspiring, truthful, composed, loyal and sensitive.

Blue is calming and encourages tranquillity, but can sometimes increase feelings of sadness or indifference.

Tune into blue when you need to feel peaceful and calm.



SILVER

Artistic, inspiring, elegant, spiritual, intuitive and graceful.

Silver is feminine, imaginative and illuminating, but can also be moody.

Add a touch of silver to tune into your intuition.



ORANGE

Flamboyant, enthusiastic, determined, sociable, lively, instinctive, risk-taking and competitive.

Orange is warm, vibrant and uninhibited, but can also convey self-indulgence and insincerity.

Use orange to boost your enthusiasm and stimulate creative thinking.



PURPLE

Spiritual, empathic, magical, imaginative, intuitive, regal, visionary and free-spirited.

Purple symbolises nobility, wisdom and luxury, but can sometimes be considered indulgent and pompous.

Meditate with purple to soothe mind and emotions.



GOLD

Charismatic, successful, prosperous, generous and extravagant.

Gold is masculine, dynamic and eye-catching, but can also relate to anxiety, misery and egotism.

Add a touch of gold to inspire abundance and success.



YELLOW

Happy, active, humorous, independent, friendly, spontaneous and bright.

Yellow has a sunny, joyful disposition, but too much can over stimulate, irritate or even cause nausea and anxiety.

Add a touch of yellow to give you a lift when you're feeling down.



PINK

Tender, loving, innocent, sweet, frivolous, gentle, calming and luxurious.

Pink is pretty and feminine, but overuse can convey fluffiness and irritation.

Add a little pink to perk you up after a disappointment.



BLACK

Independent, strong-willed, serious, dignified, cool, sophisticated, intriguing, mysterious.

Black is formal and refined, but too much can be oppressive and pessimistic.

Use black sparingly or with other colours to add depth, elegance and mystery.



GREEN

Affectionate, kind, considerate, practical, nurturing, emotionally intelligent, gentle, loving, down-to-earth and nature-loving.

Green is a healing, safe and harmonious colour, but can make you feel complacent or laidback.

Use green to help you relax and rebalance.



BROWN

Earthy, dependable, rooted, secure, reliable, conservative, wholesome and honest.

Brown is a grounding, sensible autumnal colour, but can also be considered boring.

Use brown as an earthy contrast with muted yellow, orange or purple.



WHITE

Peaceful, tolerant, balanced, sensible, pure, wise, hopeful, angelic.

White represents purity, integrity and perfection, but can feel cold, empty and isolating.

Focus on white to bring peace and comfort. Use it to complement other colours.

DECLUTTER YOUR **BEDROOM**

Have you tidied your bedroom lately? You're probably thinking you have better things to do – and you're most likely right – but a few minutes each day will go a long way to making your private space a great place to be



Your bedroom is your personal space, a safe haven where you can be yourself, relax, learn, daydream and sleep. It's also a space where you keep everything you own and that might include stuff accumulated over many years. If you walk into your room and think, 'there's a bed in there somewhere', and you can't remember what your floor looks like, it's probably a sign you need to declutter.

Sifting through everything you have and deciding what you need to keep, bin, recycle or give away sounds like a chore, but it's easier than you think and there are plenty of advantages. When you clear out the things you no longer need, you create more space and improve the energy in your room. Having less stuff will make it simple to find what you do have, and tidying your room will take less effort.

So, how do you declutter your room (particularly if it's the messiest it's ever been) and ensure it stays tidy?

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the task, focus on clearing and cleaning one drawer, box or corner of the room at a time and work your way round. You don't have to do it all in one go. Decluttering can be tiring and intense, particularly on an emotional level. Do a little every day. Take your time, especially when it comes to deciding whether you need to keep sentimental items or not. Letting go of things you no longer need is refreshing and worth the effort. Once your room is clean and free of clutter, it will feel fresh, cosy and inviting.

TIPS FOR A CLUTTER-FREE ROOM

- ▶ Designate a place for everything you have so that it's easy to find. Use a keepsake box for precious things; box files for homework and notes; storage boxes for games or sports equipment; shelves for books; drawers and wardrobe for storing clean clothes; and a laundry bag for your washing.
- ▶ Have a small bin near your bedroom door and instantly dispose of whatever can't be reused.
- ▶ Do you have a drawer full of electronic gadgets, earphones, cables and chargers? Look through them and let go of what you no longer use.
- ▶ Go through your stuff and declutter every few months. You'll be surprised by what you accumulate in such a short time and the clothes you've outgrown or no longer wear.
- ▶ Wherever you can, recycle or gift anything you no longer need. It's better for you and the environment.
- ▶ Lisa Cole of less-stuff.co.uk suggests keeping a decluttering box ready at all times. Put it somewhere you can't miss it and get rid of it as soon as it's full. Aim to put a few things in it each day and you will start to see a difference soon.
- ▶ And remember. Don't let anyone talk you into getting rid of something if you're not sure. It's okay to have stuff as long as it makes you happy. You're the best judge of that.

WORDS: CAROLANNE STRANGE, PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



STAY OR GO?

If you can't decide whether to keep, bin, recycle or donate an item to charity, ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ What am I saving it for?
- ▶ Do I need it?
- ▶ Do I actually like it?
- ▶ Is it something I still use?
- ▶ When am I likely to use it again?
- ▶ Does it still fit?
- ▶ When did I last wear it?
- ▶ Is it broken?
- ▶ Can it be repaired?
- ▶ How does it make me feel?
- ▶ Does it have sentimental value?
- ▶ Why do I feel attached to it?
- ▶ Will I miss it if I let it go?
- ▶ Does it remind me of good or bad times?
- ▶ Do I really need seven (or whatever the number) of these?
- ▶ Can I recycle it or give it to someone who needs it?



FREE FROM FEAR

Everyone feels worried from time to time, but have you ever felt so anxious in a situation that you just wanted to run and get of there? If the answer is yes, you may have experienced a panic attack. They're more common than many people think but there are ways you can overcome them

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a primitive and essential emotion. Also known as the fight-or-flight response, it is the body's reaction to something it sees as a threat. When our prehistoric ancestors were tackling or escaping from a mammoth, it was invaluable as it prepared the body to defend itself – for example, the heart beats faster to pump blood to the muscles, providing energy to run away or fight off danger.

When does it become a problem?

Sometimes when the body senses you are afraid, rather than wait to find out whether there is a real danger, it sets off the fight-or-flight response – occasionally this can be so powerful it triggers a panic attack. Any situation you are excessively worried about, for example, performing in front of others, being away from home or sitting an exam, can trigger a panic attack. Sometimes they develop after distressing events like family break-ups or bereavements, or incidents

including house fires and car accidents. They can also come out of the blue. Whenever they develop, panic attacks are frightening. They can begin to affect your behaviour and experiences if you live in fear of one happening or worry that something bad will happen because of an attack.

How does it feel?

Imagine you're out with friends and they decide to go to a funfair. You can't explain why, but you just don't feel like going. A sense of unease follows and begins to increase as you approach the crowded fair. Once there, the noise and lights become overwhelming, you begin to sweat, feel sick, start shaking and you desperately want – need – to run away from that scary place. This is one example of how you might feel. Other reactions include breathlessness, chest pains, a racing heart or pins and needles. You're also likely to feel out of breath and panicky, and because you don't know what's happening, it can feel terrifying.

STEPS TO MANAGE PANIC ATTACKS



Understanding your fear is the first step to conquering it. It's important to know anxiety is common (and it doesn't mean you're crazy) and that you can overcome it – no matter how out of control it feels

FACE YOUR FEARS

When it comes to conquering anxiety, facing your fears is the key. Avoiding them may make you feel better in the short-term, but only if you stand firm will you give yourself a chance to discover that nothing bad is going to happen.

Take it step by step

Start by trying to identify feared situations or places. They could be visiting places alone, entering crowded stores or riding the bus. Begin by putting yourself in the least scary situation, let's say it's the bus, for a short amount of time. If possible, take an understanding friend or relative with you for support. Once you feel able to board and stay on the bus for a short time without experiencing too much anxiety, try to move onto the next step. To do this, slightly increase the time you remain on the vehicle. Go at a pace you feel comfortable with and continue adding time in small steps. If you stick with it, the anxiety will fade. The fear of using a bus or train is one of the most common sources of anxiety. Here are some tips to help you if you're facing your fears on public transport:

- * **Distraction:** listening to music or reading a book or magazine can help to take your mind off where you are.
- * **Google Maps:** just the simple action of watching the blue dot showing where you're travelling can be a comfort.
- * **Mindfulness:** concentrate on your breathing or look out of the window and take in the landscape around you.
- * **Preparation:** work out beforehand which bus or train you need to catch and the stop where you're getting off.

THE FACTS ABOUT PANIC ATTACKS

- 1 Panic attacks are the body's fight-or-flight response kicking in. However, sometimes our body reacts when there is no real danger.
- 2 Panic attacks are harmless, although they can feel uncomfortable or scary.
- 3 Panic attacks are brief (typically lasting only 10 to 15 minutes), although they sometimes feel like they go on forever.
- 4 Others (except those very close to you) usually can't tell that you are having a panic attack.

IF YOU START TO FEEL OVERWHELMED...

It's natural to feel scared or anxious as you face your fear, but if you start to feel overwhelmed, stop and try to practise a breathing exercise like the one here.

1 Calm breathing

People tend to breathe faster when they're anxious. This can make them dizzy and lightheaded, which often increases feelings of anxiety. Calm breathing involves taking slow, regular breaths through the nose. If you find yourself breathing quickly during a panic attack, calming the breath can help you to feel better.

Try this:

- * Breathe in as slowly, deeply and gently as you can, through your nose.
- * Breathe out slowly, deeply and gently through your mouth.
- * Some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five on each in-breath and each out-breath.
- * Close your eyes and focus on your breathing.
- * You should start to feel better in a few minutes.

2 Stamp on the spot

Sounds weird, but it works. March on the spot, stamp your feet and release those stress hormones.

3 Focus on your senses

For example, taste mint-flavoured sweets, or touch or cuddle something soft.

4 Look around

Try to name five things you can see near you, this can help to distract you and take your thoughts to calmer places.

AFTER A PANIC ATTACK

Think about self-care. It's important to pay attention to what your body needs after you've had a panic attack. For example, you might need to rest somewhere quietly, to eat or drink something. And don't suffer alone – those close to you need to know what you're going through so they can be supportive when you need it.

If you're experiencing anxiety or panic attacks, there are many experts who can help you to overcome these fears. Talk to someone you trust and see your doctor for advice.

GUESS WHAT...

Focusing your attention on the present moment rather than always anticipating what's going to happen next can help to ease worries and encourage you to reassess what's happening around you at any given time. Try asking yourself two questions:

WHAT DO I NOTICE?

What is here, right now?

What can I see, smell, feel, taste and hear?

Are there any differences between my perception of what's going on around me and what is actually happening?

Just notice any differences.

Now move on.





This second question can help you to discover a few things...

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Asking this encourages you back to the now. It's difficult to ask 'What happens next?' if your mind is re-running a squabble with a friend that happened a year ago or has leapt forward four months and is viewing an online set of exam results.

» **It's impossible to be absolutely certain of what will happen next in life**
Many students think they're pretty good at second-guessing what's coming, be that exactly what their parents will say when they wear a new outfit, how a teacher will react to a rushed homework assignment or the expressions friends will use to describe a new haircut.

They find themselves imagining the worst and dreading the terrible thing they just know is around the corner, even though it hasn't actually happened and there's nothing that says it will. If this sounds like you, at some point today try this exercise:

- * Stop what you're doing
- * Stand or sit still
- * Notice what's happening around you
- * Ask yourself, 'What happens next?'

This is about being **curious, pausing, breathing** and **observing what's going on around you**. In a strange way, asking, 'What happens next?' can help you to focus on the present moment.

» **This moment is constantly changing**
The more you notice the here and now, the more likely you'll understand that feelings and experiences last for only a fleeting time. In the next moment, the thought you'd just been fretting about will have already changed. The sensations you'd just been noticing will shift and ebb and flow.

Asking, 'What happens next?' is a reminder that the present moment will end and a new one will quickly arrive. Suddenly it feels easier to be present in this moment and, even if it's scary or uncomfortable, to face it. Why? Because it will soon be gone. It's not permanent.

» **You play a big role in what happens next**

When you pause and give yourself space to notice fully what's going on around you, a world of options opens up. You don't have to react in your automatic, predictable way. You can respond to your parents, a teacher or a group of friends on this day, in this moment, in a different, fresh way.

So, by pausing, breathing and noticing the world around you it becomes easier to see that you have a say in what happens next. *Over to you...*

OH, GO ON THEN!

Say yes to new things and shake up your routine. By pushing past your comfort zone you can open up a world of possibilities



Sometimes it's easier to stick to the things you're comfortable and familiar with and avoid trying new things. After all, what if you fail? Or make a fool of yourself? But there's a lot to be said for saying yes to opportunities. You may learn a new skill, develop a hobby, make friends or even pave the way to an exciting career.

Usually people imagine something to be a lot scarier than it actually is, which makes pushing through your initial fear the hardest part. Have you ever worried about something only to find there was no reason to? Fear of the unknown can prevent you from stepping forward. Often the trickiest bit is saying yes in the first place.

There are many ways you can shake up your routine. These can range from gentle changes, such as joining a friend at an after-school class, to big and exciting adventures where you enrol on a course or try a challenging sport. Opening doors to fresh experiences makes life exciting and when you embrace the new, you free your heart and mind, which could potentially lead to somewhere amazing. If you're looking for motivation to try something new, here are a few things to think about...

1 Be brave

Trying new things increases confidence and builds self-esteem. Saying yes to one opportunity usually motivates you to say yes more often, opening your life to people and adventures. Courage and confidence are wonderful attributes to nurture. They inspire others and make you feel good. Even if you try something and it's not your cup of tea, at least you tried. After all, you can take something from everything – even failure.

2 Live in the here and now

Opening up to challenges and experiences provides a heightened awareness and a greater sense of being present. This means you're less likely to be thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Sometimes all it takes is a small sidestep to break bad habits and see everything more clearly. It's like having a little space to recharge and refocus and, who knows, it may even help you face the more challenging areas of your life.

3 Make new friends

If you consider where you met your friends it was probably over a shared experience. Seeking out activities is a great way to meet new people, and it's wonderful to learn and share experiences with friends, especially if you can motivate each other along the way.

4 Be happy

Probably the best thing about trying new things is finding you enjoy them. Life is a joy if you spend it doing the things you love with the people who lift you. So why not seek challenges and seize opportunities when they arise?

5 Move on

Throughout your life, you may say no to something and later regret your decision. Missing opportunities can feel like you've let yourself down. You may also wish you had more courage and motivation to take yourself forward, especially if you see others thrive on an experience you'd

previously declined. Remember it's rarely too late to learn something new and rather than dwelling on a past decision, why not make a promise to say yes the next time an exciting opportunity comes your way?

6 Who am I?

You learn a lot when you challenge yourself. Trying new things is a good way to better understand who you are and to unlock skills you perhaps didn't know you had. So, whether you've always wanted to try floral styling or harbour a secret desire to skate well, open up to a new experience and realise your full potential.



10 NEW THINGS TO TRY TODAY

It's fun to try something different, but it can be easy to fall into the trap of doing the same old things. Need some fresh ideas? Here are 10 new things you could do this weekend, or even today. Why not pick one and see where it takes you?

- * Visit somewhere in your town or city you've never been to
- * Learn 10 phrases in a new language
- * Listen to a genre of music you haven't tried before – blues, reggae, classical?
- * Start writing a diary
- * Try a new food or cuisine – Korean, perhaps, or Polish?
- * Plant some flowers in your garden or start an indoor terrarium
- * Say hello to a neighbour you don't usually talk to
- * Learn how to cook a new dish for dinner
- * Go for a bike ride around your neighbourhood
- * Volunteer with your local conservation society and help to plant some trees



I WANT TO TRY...

1 make a cheesecake

2 go on a walk

3 arrange to meet up with someone

4 write cards

5 make a plan to grow sunflowers

6 tell someone about diagnosis

7 meditation

8 create a mind world ♥

9 order a book on synchronicities / Spirituality

10 research Durham

JOURNALING

You could start by reflecting on the past year. See if some of the questions here help to explore the people, events and places that turned out to be important

1 What were you grateful for in 2019?

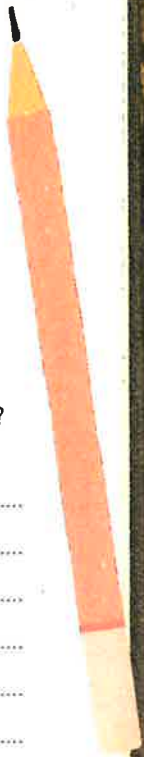
2 What was your biggest achievement?

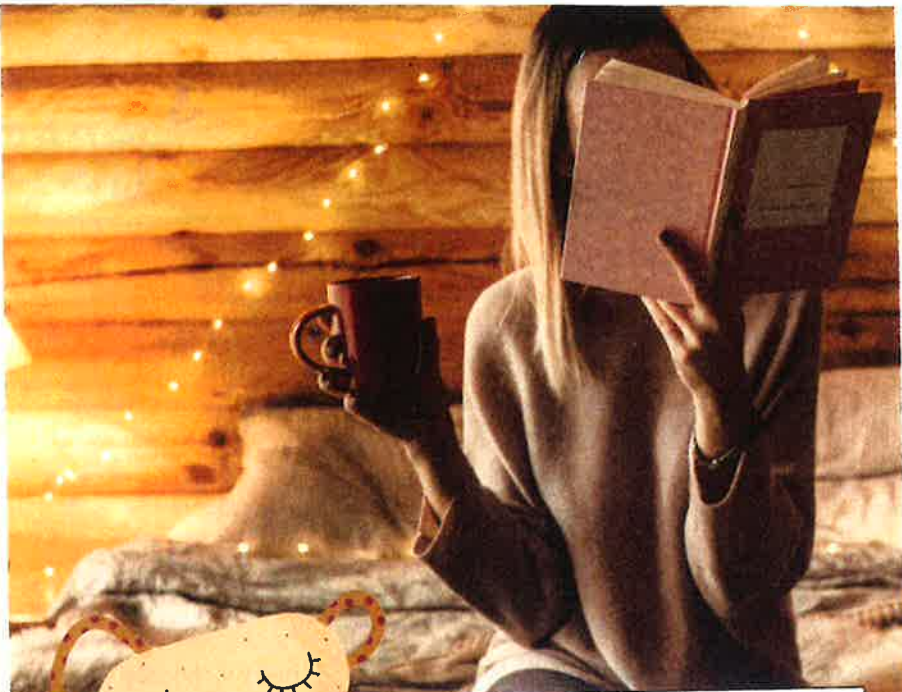
3 What was your biggest challenge?

4 Which friend supported you the most?

5 What was your happiest moment?

6 How did you change and grow as a person this year?





Be mindful of screen time

The online world can be appealing when life outside seems to have ground to a halt, but be mindful of time spent on screens in the evening. The blue light emitted from phones and computers can trick your brain into thinking it's daytime and play havoc with your sleep. This can be more of a problem in winter when you've been cooped up inside and haven't had much natural light. So reserve evening time for books, journaling, board games or a good conversation. They might help you get to sleep more easily and to wake in the morning feeling energised.

JUST IMAGINE

In a separate journaling session, you might want to think about some of your hopes, ambitions and dreams for the future. Imagine that it's 12 months from now, and you're sitting with a warm cup of tea, looking back on the year. Now, let your imagination run wild and, in the panel below, answer the questions on the page opposite again, but this time as you hope events might turn out in 2020:

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Enjoy a warm bath

Research has shown that a bath can help both your emotional and physical wellbeing. A steaming tub is the perfect place to rest, dream and reflect, without any pressure to actually do anything. Bliss.





START BELIEVING...

... and stop putting yourself down. If you refuse to listen to your inner doubts and try even when you know you might fail, you give yourself the chance to fulfil your potential

Beating yourself up with negative thoughts and feelings can get in the way of reaching what you really want. It's called self-sabotage. There are lots of ways you might be doing it. You might think too much – or put off doing things. You plan to act, but get lost when you have to make a decision and drag your heels. You may turn down trying something new even though deep down you think it could be fun, or act out and refuse to finish homework, when actually you'd love to get good grades.

So, how do you know your inner saboteur is at work? One tell-tale sign is that when there's something you know you want, for some reason you seem to do everything in your power to make sure you don't get it.

Let's take my inner saboteur. It developed when I was 18 years old. At the time I wanted to be a doctor, so I sent off my university application form and anxiously waited for the offers to come in. As I opened the replies, one by one, the realisation hit me like a punch in the stomach. Not one university had invited me to attend an interview.

I felt pain and shame for being the only one in my year group who didn't get a single offer. I had worked solidly day-in, day-out to get the grades required, yet still I had been rejected. I could only see the negative side of what had happened. I said to myself that no matter how hard I worked, I would never be good enough.

Looking back I now know this wasn't true, but I told

myself it was a fact, and it wasn't long before I believed it.

Instead of understanding that sometimes it's okay to fail, I started to act in a way that would prove my worst fears to be true. I threw myself into my studies: first I got a degree, then a masters, followed by several diplomas. When it came time to look for a job, I had all the qualifications under the sun and ticked all the boxes. But I held back from applying for the positions I really wanted because part of me felt I wasn't good enough to even be considered. This was my inner saboteur at work.

WHY DO PEOPLE SELF-SABOTAGE?

As strange as it may sound, the reason you self-sabotage is to protect yourself. If you don't put yourself into a position where you might fail, you won't experience the thing you fear might happen. But on the flip side, you also won't achieve what you really want.

The reason for self-sabotage is fear, one of your natural survival instincts. Think back to what happened when I didn't get offered a place at university – it instilled a fear in me that if I applied for jobs that were hard to get, I risked feeling rejected all over again, just like I did when I was 18. It was fear of the same thing happening that guided my thoughts. It was fear that held me back.

BRAIN POWER

Unless you face your anxieties, you risk letting your inner saboteur stand in the way of your successes. But to do this, you have to step out of your familiar comfort zone and try something different, which is harder than it sounds.

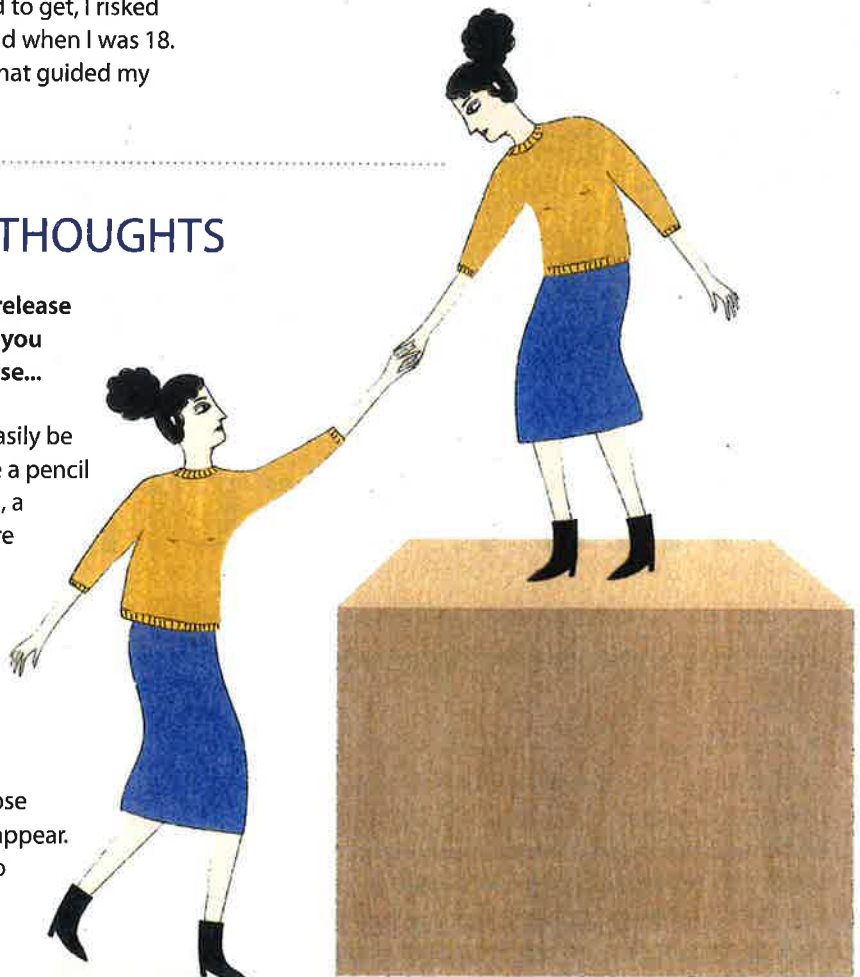
You see, there's a part of the brain that doesn't like change, registering it as unfamiliar, risky and unsafe: It tries to stop you in your tracks by building up resistance – telling you all the reasons you shouldn't do it.

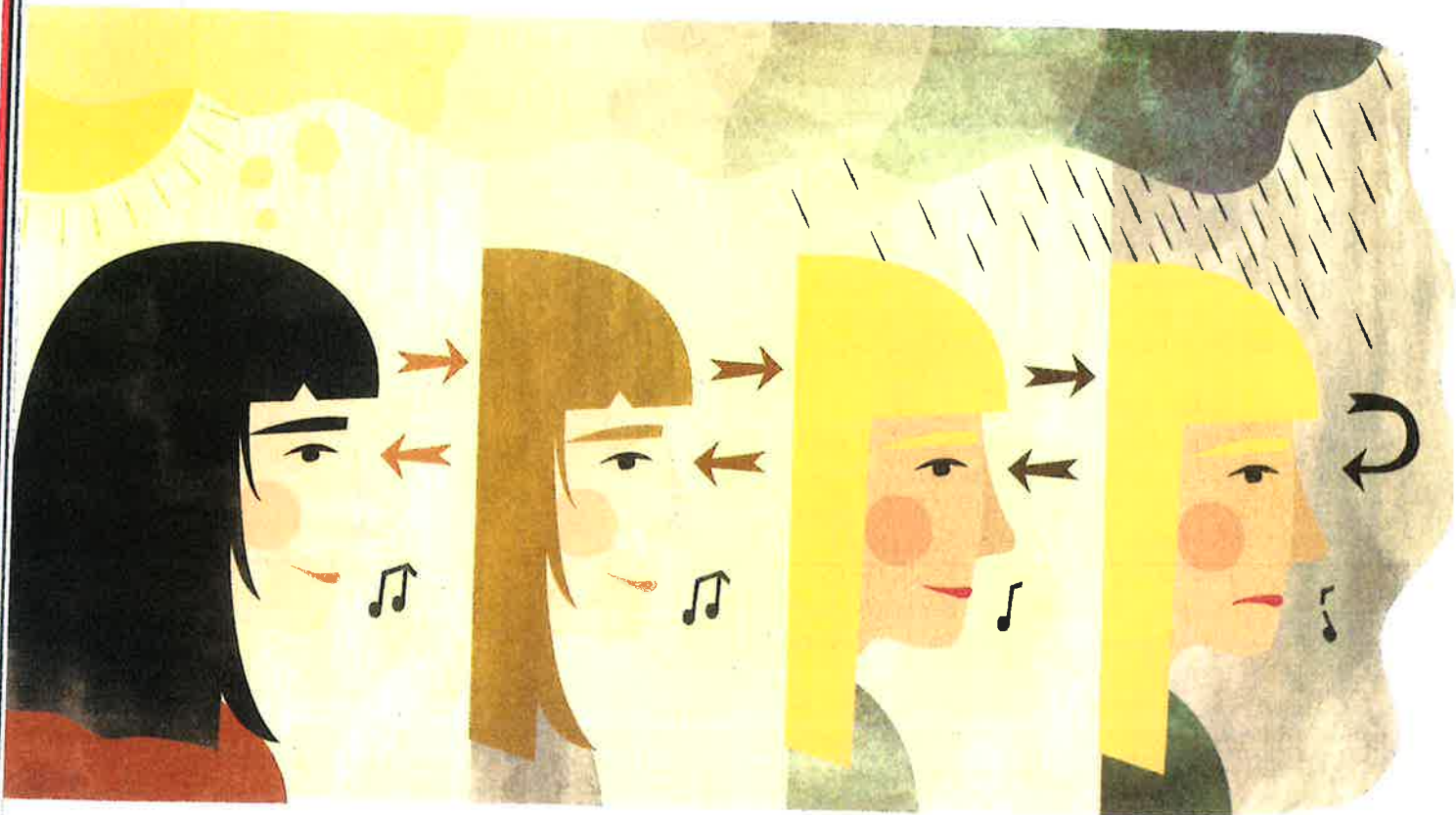
Think of it as though you were skydiving. As you're about to jump out of the plane your brain senses a threat to your survival. It reacts by building up resistance as it tries to stop you from making the leap in order to keep you safe. You have to push through this resistance, face your fears and have the courage to jump, so that you can spread your wings and fulfil your true potential.

LET GO OF NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Sometimes physical actions can help to release feelings you'd like to let go of. Next time you notice a negative thought, try this exercise...

- * Find something to write with that can easily be rubbed out or washed away. This could be a pencil on paper, a piece of chalk on a blackboard, a washable pen on a tile or mirror (make sure it isn't permanent!), or even a paintbrush dipped in water to use on a stone.
- * Take the pencil, pen or brush and draw, write or doodle whatever thoughts you want to release.
- * Now take a cloth or rubber and wipe those thoughts away. Notice how the words disappear. Sometimes it may take a little scrubbing to get all of them, but watch the thoughts being washed away along with any bad feelings you've picked up over the day.





BE THE REAL DEAL

'Just be yourself.' You've probably heard the expression many times, but what does it really mean? And how can you truly be yourself when you're still not sure of who you are?

Why authenticity matters

For as long as you can remember, you've tried to fit in, be liked and do what others expect of you. That's what most people do, after all. So why would you take the risk of revealing your true, inner self (whoever that is) to your peers? Well, maybe because that's what life is about – making sense of the world around you – and to do so, it's first necessary to understand yourself.

While it's comforting to belong and feel 'normal', it's also rewarding to discover your authentic self, the one-of-a-kind you. Maintaining a *façade* is tiring – uncovering your true nature is liberating. You don't need to hide behind others or pretend to be somebody else, you can take control, saying what you think and doing what you feel is right for you. Never mind if it shows your weaknesses – whatever they are, they're part of who you are and feeling OK about them is a positive thing. Be real, not perfect.

Don't be a fake

It's human nature to compare yourself to others and notice your differences, your faults and other people's qualities.

But first, let's be honest, perfection is unattainable – so why waste time aiming for it? Think about choosing the opposite approach. Try to welcome your imperfections and view them as a gift that makes you interesting and unique.

Second, see if you can tone down comparisons such as: 'If only I were as good at maths as they are,' or 'If only I looked like she does.' Thinking this way might accidentally motivate you to be the person you'd like to be 'on the surface' and could even bring you down.

After all, this photoshopped 'you' won't always bring happiness and, more importantly, it might make you lose focus of what matters deep down – exploring your true identity. So, how do you do this?

Becoming yourself

Everyone's a work in progress, so don't expect to find yourself overnight. You might not know who you want to be yet and that's natural. It takes time and patience, observation and listening skills, experience and mistakes, as well as courage and a willingness to confront adversity. Admittedly, the quest can sometimes be lonely, but life

is a journey and everyone's on their own path. When you explore and accept your true personality, you gain more confidence and self-worth, so express yourself rather than holding back. If your viewpoint differs from that of your friends, they're likely to respect your honesty. In a similar way, if you reveal your vulnerabilities, it allows people to feel more connected to you. It has nothing to do with weakness. On the contrary, it highlights inner strength.

You are good enough

Sometimes, the hardest part of the journey is believing that you're worthy of the trip. You can't always avoid doubts creeping in and negative self-talk when you feel judged, ashamed or not good enough. Everyone has bad days, so be kind to yourself and choose self-empowering language: 'I am good enough.' Period. Give new things a go, and when you make a mistake, don't feel disappointed or lost – treat it as a learning opportunity.

If you ever feel pressure from peers, friends or family, remember you don't need everyone's approval. Discovering who you are is down to you. Give yourself a chance and embark on an exciting journey of self-discovery.



YOUR 10-STEP GUIDE TO AUTHENTICITY

- ✦ **Don't compare yourself with others.** They're no better than you – they're different, with their own imperfections.
- ✦ **Accept yourself.** Knowing who you are starts by recognising your qualities and flaws and embracing them equally.
- ✦ **Ask yourself the right questions.** What you believe in and the values you live by will guide you in the right direction.
- ✦ **Examine your insecurities.** Doubting yourself can hold you back, but it can also help you overcome fears.
- ✦ **Trust your gut.** Your absolute guide is your intuition and its power to increase your self-esteem.
- ✦ **Be patient.** Personal growth takes time and effort to build, so try to stay motivated and be proud of every step along the way.
- ✦ **Be kind.** Don't be too harsh on yourself, no matter your mistakes or what other people might say.
- ✦ **Don't hide away.** When you understand yourself better, you'll know how to bring out the best in yourself and dare to shine.
- ✦ **Reveal yourself.** Having a voice is empowering, so stand up for everything that matters to you.
- ✦ **Remain authentic.** As your values change over time, so will your identity – being who you are involves constant change. Good luck.

Jot down here areas where you feel comfortable. It could be reading in class, meeting new people or tackling algebra – anything where you're in your element

IN THE zone

Sticking with what's familiar can feel like the safest or easiest option, but never challenging yourself might mean you limit future opportunities or stay in unhelpful situations. With practice and patience however, it's possible to feel more confident when stepping out of your comfort zone



The comfort zone

Have you ever heard people talk about being in their 'comfort zone' and wondered what it meant? It describes times when you're doing things that are familiar and comfortable, tasks or activities that you've done many times before and feel competent and confident about. Things that might be inside your comfort zone could be outside somebody else's. You might, for instance, love rock climbing, while a friend thinks it's terrifying.

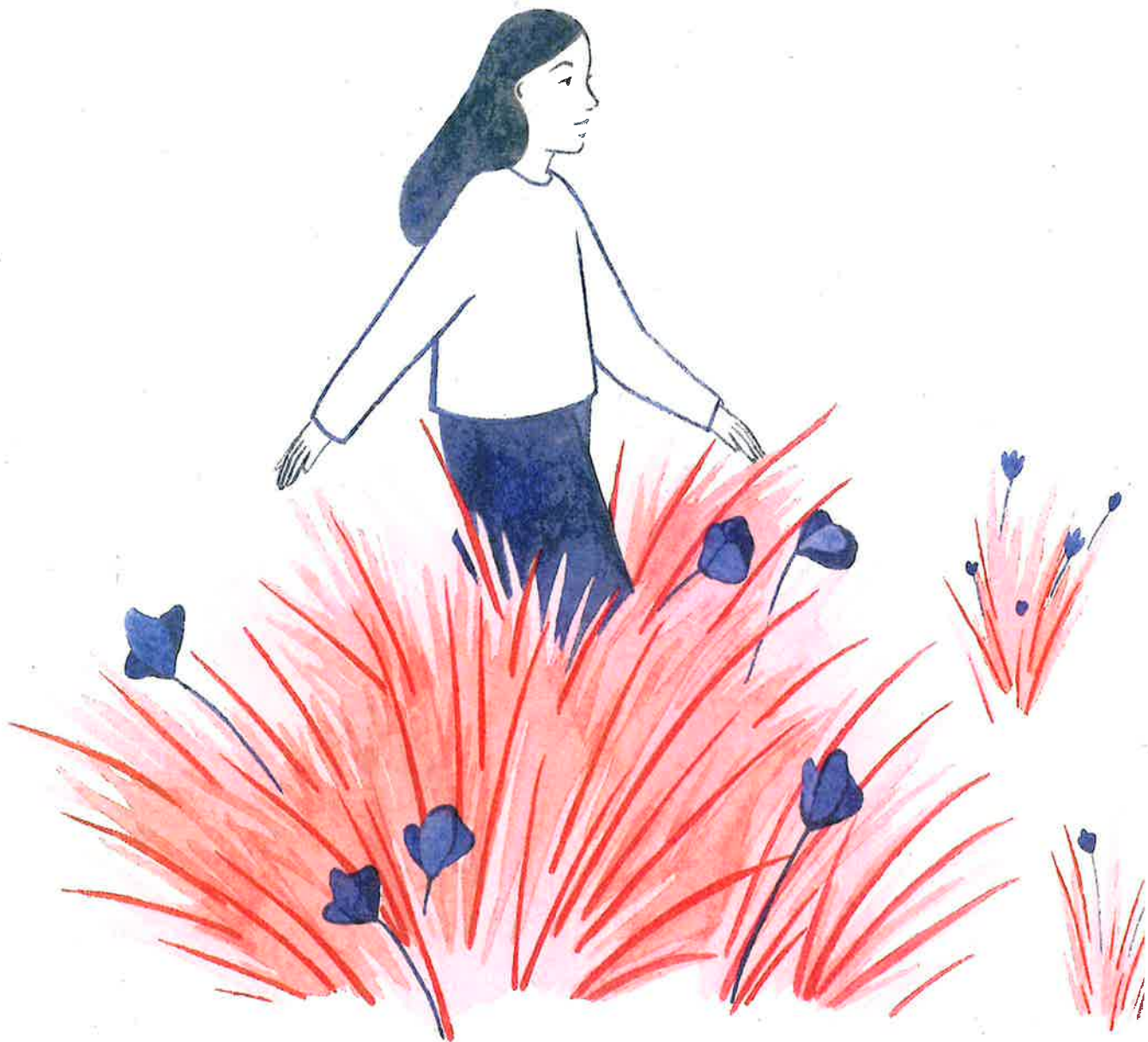
Staying inside your comfort zone is necessary and sensible at times. If you're not a confident baker, using a tried-and-tested recipe to make a friend's birthday cake during a week when you also have a swimming gala and mock exams, for example, would probably be less stressful than trying to create an original three-tiered showstopper.

But defaulting to your comfort zone can be limiting. By avoiding new activities or different ways of doing things, you'll never discover what you might be capable of or enjoy. Stepping out of it brings the chance to develop strengths and confidence. Many people stay in situations that don't make them happy because they're afraid to try things they might find difficult. Take a look at this example:

Ali feels out of her comfort zone attending events by herself. She thinks hobbies such as dancing, tai chi and choir all sound fun but never goes along as her friends aren't interested. She never finds out if she'd have enjoyed, learned or developed new strengths from these activities.

Think you might like to step out of the comfort zone? Turn the page to find out how





The stretch zone

It can be scary to do things differently or accept tasks you know you'll find more challenging. So how can you go about taking those first steps to trying something new?

It's helpful to differentiate between your comfort, stretch and panic zones. You might, for example, be a keen dancer but terrified of performing in public. In your weekly class you feel confident – you're in your comfort zone. Dancing on a stage in front of hundreds of people however, might put you straight into your panic zone, where you'll likely feel too stressed to perform well or learn from mistakes.

Between the comfort and panic zones, you have your stretch zone – a place where you'll have to do something differently but it's not totally impossible or overwhelming. You'll feel slightly uncomfortable or nervous but these feelings will be manageable. If we take the dance example above, you might begin by challenging yourself to show a

few non-dancing friends one of your routines or give a short demonstration to some younger dance students.

Once you've entered your stretch zone, you become more and more comfortable with these new experiences. Tasks you might once have avoided start to feel easier. Each time you extend your comfort zone, your self-confidence grows, helping you to achieve your goals and do things you never believed possible. Take a look at this example:

For Deepak, talking to people at school is outside his comfort zone. He never answers or asks questions in class and tries to avoid lessons in which he'll have to give presentations. He first challenges himself to ask teachers questions when speaking to them on a one-to-one basis. He then challenges himself to give his opinion when working in a small group. He begins to feel more confident doing these things. What was once in his stretch zone is now part of his comfort zone.

Ask yourself:

- * **When do you tend to stay inside your comfort zone?**
For example, *I avoid all sports.*
- * **How could this be restricting you?**
For example, *I'd like to get fitter and feel healthier.*
- * **Why do you believe you can't step out of your comfort zone?**
For example, *I'm no good at sports. I hate PE lessons.*
- * **What evidence is there that these beliefs might not actually be true?**
For example, *I did enjoy going to a yoga class and for a run with my sister.*
- * **Can you reformulate your beliefs?**
For example, *Maybe I'm more suited to individual exercise than team sports.*
- * **What small steps could you take to enter your stretch zone?**
For example, *I could go running with my sister more often. I could try out exercise classes at the local sports centre.*

Try it out:

- * Seek out opportunities to stretch yourself and take on things that will challenge you. Start small.
- * Expect to make mistakes when doing new things. What did you learn? What could you do differently next time?
- * Remember to record and celebrate your successes. Keep a scrapbook, memory box or journal celebrating each time you challenged yourself.

Jot down here areas where you'd like to feel more comfortable and ways that you might approach them differently



Drink to your health



Blitzing spices into smoothies is a deliciously easy way of adding variety to your diet

Smoothies are a great way of getting lots of fibre, vitamins and minerals in a single serving – adding a little spice can give a them a real boost. Flavours such as cinnamon, ginger and cardamom enhance the main ingredient of your drink and make it even more delicious.

Spices lend well-rounded, warm and aromatic flavours to your smoothie – and you're also benefitting from some extra nutrition. Turn back a page to remind yourself of what some of your favourite spices can do for your health.

To make the smoothies

Place all the ingredients into a blender and blitz until smooth. If you need to heat it up, transfer to a small pan and gently warm on the stove or put in a microwaveable mug and heat on a medium setting. Make sure the mixture doesn't boil.

Try to keep the liquid closest to the blade, whether that's adding it first with a regular jug-style blender or last with one that screws the blade on top, for a smoother blend.



Warm Spicy Coco

Creamy, slightly chocolatey, quite spicy but not too sweet

- * ½ avocado
- * 1 tbsp cacao or cocoa powder
- * 1 tsp allspice (or your favourite spice) powder
- * 1 tsp maple syrup or honey
- * 400ml milk or non-dairy alternative

Note: Warm gently to release the spice's flavour, but do not boil.

Sweet & Citrus

Orange and cinnamon – with hidden vegetable power

- * 400g sweet potato (cooked and chilled)
- * ½ frozen banana
- * handful of spinach
- * 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- * 150ml orange juice
- * 150ml cold water

Masala Banana Mix

Thick and creamy mango, with a hint of spice

- * 1 frozen banana
- * 100g mango (fresh or canned)
- * 1 tsp garam masala
- * 1 tsp almond butter
- * 150ml coconut milk

Gingerbread Warmer

Ginger, cinnamon and almond gives a lovely biscuity flavour

- * 1 room-temperature banana
- * 1 tsp ginger powder
- * ½ tsp cinnamon powder
- * 1 tsp almond butter
- * 400ml almond milk

Note: Warm gently to release the spice's flavour, but do not boil.

Orange & Cinnamon

A thinner consistency – great for cooling down with

- * 1 orange (peeled, with pith removed)
- * 2 heaped tbsp vanilla yoghurt
- * 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- * Handful of ice cubes
- * 150ml orange juice

Spicy Nutty Potatoes

Mild, creamy, and sweet with a hint of spice

- * 100g sweet potato (cooked and chilled)
- * ½ frozen banana
- * 1 tsp allspice (or your favourite spice) powder
- * 1 tsp almond butter
- * 250ml almond milk

Each recipe makes a single serving





GOLDEN seams

The Japanese art of Kintsugi reflects how we can learn to love our broken lines, imperfections and vulnerabilities

Have you ever broken something that was really precious to you? When something gets broken, we often feel sad or disappointed. It can seem like it's completely spoiled. And, often, our own brokenness can make us feel as though we are somehow worth less than before.

The ancient Japanese art of Kintsugi involves taking broken objects and mending them with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold (or sometimes silver, or platinum). The golden seams follow the broken lines of the object, highlighting and embellishing them rather than hiding them away. Something that's been mended in this way becomes more valuable, not less.

It takes bravery to share our imperfections, vulnerability and mistakes with the world, but it makes no sense to hide them. The cracks and chips on a piece of pottery are signs of its usefulness and value, just as our imperfections, vulnerabilities and mistakes are signs of our experience, humanity and learning. When you take the damaged or difficult parts of yourself and repair them with love and compassion, those cracks become stronger and more beautiful than before. They become beacons of hope for others.

Continuously striving for perfection – in school or college work, friendships, appearance, possessions, or even the quest for the perfect selfie – can leave you feeling pretty bad. What if, instead of working so hard to hide your imperfections, you embraced them and let them shimmer with gold?

HOW TO BRING THE ESSENCE OF KINTSUGI INTO YOUR LIFE

1 Be kind and compassionate to yourself and others

On being asked how he felt about his failures, before finally inventing the light bulb, Thomas Edison said: 'I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.'

Chips, cracks and general wear and tear are part of life. Be patient with yourself and others when mistakes are made, learn from them and move on. Since few people would claim to be perfect, it seems unnecessary to pretend that we never make mistakes. Greeting mistakes and imperfections with kindness and compassion provides more nurturing conditions for growth.

When you feel broken on the inside, take the time to figure out what you need to heal. Ask for help, if you need it – even if that's just someone to eat ice cream and watch movies with.

2 Accept that you are a work in progress

Wanting to improve and grow is an admirable trait, but take time to look at how far you've already come.

Kintsugi is all about learning and problem-solving. It has no place in a perfect world. It maps the struggles, the hurts and the losses – the tough stuff – and in doing so, it gilds the healing, the learning and the triumphs along the way. Kintsugi is a continual process of observing the chips and cracks as they occur and lovingly healing and restoring them. Mending, healing and improving who you are, without trying to change yourself completely, results in a wonderful and constantly evolving you.



3 Be brave enough to expose your seams

Being honest about your flaws could mean anything from posting (in trusted circles) the selfie that didn't make the cut to admitting insecurities to a friend.

Most people have experienced the relief of someone saying 'Me too!' in response to an embarrassing revelation. Our cracks give us character. Some of the Earth's most stunning landscapes were the result of natural disasters such as volcanoes and earthquakes. Each of us is a walking map of our experiences, the good and the bad, and our responses to those experiences. Like the seams of a Kintsugi pot, your unique and beautiful self will shine through those areas where you struggled. When we let our own truth shine, we invite others to do the same.

4 Change the way that you view experiences

Next time you're faced with a difficult situation, try asking yourself 'What can I learn from this?'

When you begin to change your perception and see life's challenges as opportunities to evolve and heal, it can help you to feel more powerful. By embracing all your experiences, the positive and the negative, you can grow. It's through this process that fault lines achieve their Kintsugi golden glow.

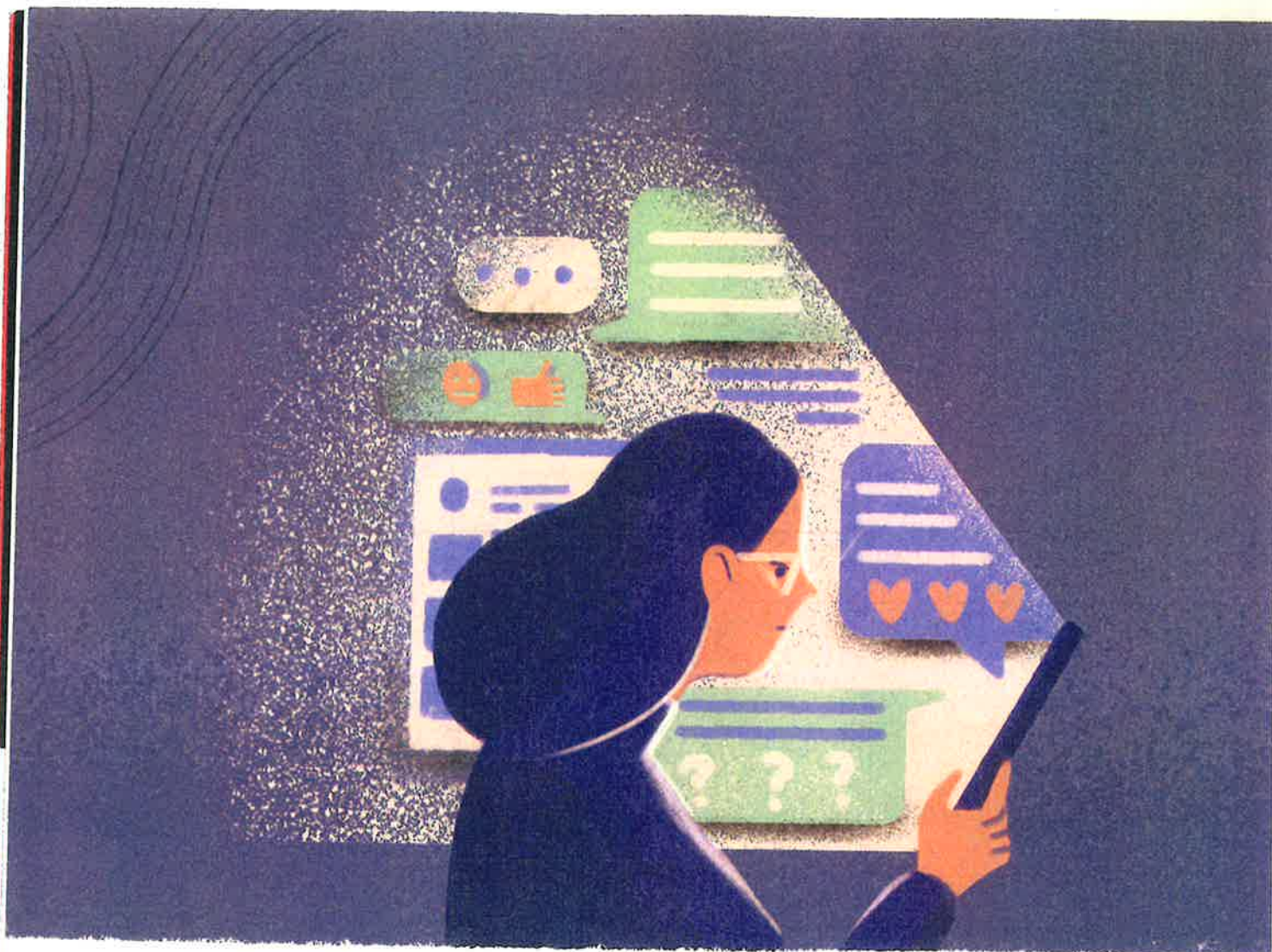
5 All the very best craftspeople need help sometimes

You can't always fix your cracks alone, and part of the kindness and compassion of Kintsugi is asking for help when you need it. If you need help to heal, talk to a trusted friend or adult. Alternatively, contact one of these organisations:

Childline provides a 24-hour free and confidential telephone, email and chat service for children and young people on 0800 1111 or at childline.org.uk.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has tip sheets, guides and videos on dealing with a traumatic event. See nctsn.org.





STAYING SAFE ONLINE

Social media platforms are a great way to make new friends, but it's important to keep your wits about you and be careful what you share

Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, online gaming sites, chatrooms – the internet presents an endless choice of platforms through which to communicate with existing friends and make new ones. Your phone, computer or tablet enables you to travel to other countries, find people with similar interests, play Overwatch, share style tips and do much of what you would do with the pals you socialise with in person.

The fact you can always find someone to talk to is one of the huge benefits of having internet access. When you're feeling a little low or have fallen out with family or immediate friendship groups, escaping into a virtual existence can make you feel less lonely.

Right there on-screen are infinite forums and chatrooms filled with children or young adults having the same

experiences. Instantly, there seems to be someone who understands you and knows exactly what you're going through, while offering a metaphoric shoulder to cry on.

That's brilliant – it's so important to find support and companionship and an online community can offer that and much more. But there are also dangers involved because not everyone who uses the internet to make friends has good intentions or is who they say they are.

The World Wide Web is just that – a web where unkind and sometimes even dangerous people set traps for those unlucky enough to fall into them. Some might be planning to steal money by pretending to be from a bank, some might be trying to sell things that don't belong to them, and others might be looking for people they can harm in



another way – by persuading, bullying or forcing them to do things that aren't right.

Author and former teacher Miriam Halahmy has met many teenagers who've had unpleasant experiences online and often gives talks in schools advising pupils on how to protect themselves. She says sometimes young people feel embarrassed or worry about getting into trouble, so they don't tell their parents about the chats they're having online, even when those conversations are inappropriate.

Honesty is the best policy

'Falling into that spider's web doesn't mean you're stupid and though you may struggle to tell your parents, teachers or the police what's been happening, that really is the best course of action. My two takeaway messages are that anyone, however smart, old or tech savvy, can be targeted and there is *always* a way out of these situations, no matter how desperate they might appear.

'Young people mustn't feel too scared, ashamed or silly to tell an adult that someone they've been chatting to is now behaving inappropriately towards them. Keeping the situation a secret is potentially dangerous.'

In her latest novel *Always Here For You*, Miriam shows how 14-year-old Holly is lured into a harmful friendship by Jay, a 26-year-old man who pretends to be a teenager so he can chat to schoolchildren.

'It's fiction, but the methods Jay uses to manipulate Holly are standard tactics used by online predators. For example, he pretends to like everything Holly does as a way of making her think they have things in common, he tries to isolate her by telling her that her other friends don't like her or understand her as much as he does and that their friendship is special and something they should keep secret.'

Belinda Winder, professor in forensic psychology and co-founder of the Safer Living Foundation, adds: 'These people become [the young person's] confidante and threaten them with the loss of their friendship if they tell their families. In fact, informing a trusted adult is precisely what they should do.'

The internet is an amazing resource. It can supplement real-world friendships and enhance life. But it's essential to have your wits about you and take care to protect yourself against harm (see overleaf). Do that and it's possible to enjoy (in safety) the wonders of the online world.



TOP TIPS TO STAY SAFE

- 1** Never give out personal information. Using an avatar and an on-screen name is a good first step, but once you start chatting to someone new, it's easy to let your guard down and start giving away details such as your real name, where you go to school, hang out and live. Don't make it easy for people to find you.
- 2** Your classmates might do a shout-out to introduce you to someone they know. Be wary. Does your classmate know them personally? Try to find out as much as you can about anyone new who wants to be friends. Remember to apply the same rules to your online life as you do to your real one. You probably wouldn't start chatting to someone who approached you on the street, so keep that in mind when a person you don't know wants to contact you through social media. Even if they're a cousin or sibling of someone you know, check them out – particularly if they're older than you. Ask yourself why someone who is several years above you in school or working wants to be friends with younger kids.
- 3** Ask questions. Of course your new friend may be genuine and is being vague about personal details to protect themselves, but if all they do is mirror your answers while telling you nothing at all about themselves, it might be a sign they're not genuine.
- 4** If your gut tells you something is inappropriate, listen to it. It's often difficult to tell your parents about conversations you've been having online, but this is a vital first step in keeping yourself and others safe. Of course, you can block someone and move on, but they're likely to go and target another young person. If you report them, you might prevent them from being able to do that.
- 5** Never agree to meet anyone you've been chatting to online. Never do that.
- 6** Don't do anything or send any photos you wouldn't want to share with the whole world, including your parents, grandparents and friends' parents. Always tell an adult you trust if someone you've been talking to online sends you inappropriate images or asks you for photos.
- 7** Report any creepy behaviour. Tell the website moderator, your friends and above all, an adult you trust. The best way to stop bad people from hurting others is to report them. However far things have gone, even if you've been persuaded to say or do things you wish you hadn't, please remember, you've done nothing wrong. The person who has persuaded you to do this is the one who is behaving badly, not you.

Always Here for You by Miriam Halahmy is available now. Published by ZunTold, £8.99.

Where to find support

Many organisations can help or offer advice, especially if you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation. Here are a few you can check out:

- ☞ saferkidsonline.eset.com/uk/kids-zone
- * nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety
- * childline.org.uk or call 0800 1111
- ☞ themix.org.uk or call 0808 808 4994 or text 80849

If you're worried about the way someone has been communicating with you online, you can report them to officers at the Child Exploitation and Online Protection command, ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.





ALL OR NOTHING

Seeing life in extremes is natural, but it's a bit like wearing blinkers and could mean you miss out on all the wonderful colours and complexities life has to offer

Good or bad, love or hate, friend or enemy, success or failure – many of the expressions that pop up in daily conversation seem to categorise situations and people in one of only two ways. Despite the fact that every single event, action and person is complex and impossible to sum up in one word, human beings sometimes reduce their analyses of experiences as being either completely wonderful or totally awful.

Usually, this is just shorthand – a quick way of communicating how you feel when you don't have the time or inclination to go into more detail. After all, it's much easier to answer good or bad when someone asks you how your day went than to consider if it was varied and give a more accurate description of the way it really played out.

Everyone does this and generally it doesn't cause any problems. Occasionally though, seeing the world and everything in it as either black or white can become a habit – one that can be limiting and might affect your wellbeing.

Black and white

Having an all-or-nothing mindset, also called splitting or dichotomous thinking by experts, can prevent you from appreciating the world's – and people's – riches and layers. Once the brain gets used to thinking in these binary terms, it's almost as if it becomes encased in a tunnel. Rather than

being able to look around and view a situation from many angles, it sees only the two ends of the tunnel – one leading to positive interpretations, the other to negative ones.

You might think: 'Well, what's so wrong with that?' but this kind of thinking can give you a distorted image of yourself, your friends and your life. For instance, if you do badly in one exam, your mind might quickly get sucked along that tunnel to the failure end. Instead of being able to assess your result in context, you might be hindered by the thought you're no good at that subject and there's no point in working harder to improve.

Similarly, if you fall out with a friend or sibling, you might not stop to think if they had any grounds for being upset with you or to remember the many reasons why you enjoy being with them so much. Instead, you could race quickly towards branding them as your enemy.

At the other end, believing your friends are perfect, that you're brilliant at games or always going to get up at 6.30am to go for a pre-school run can put unrealistic expectations on both you and your friends – ultimately setting you up for disappointment.

Your friends, being human, will do something you won't like, one day someone will beat you at your favourite sport and at some point you'll be too tired or not well enough to go for that run. Viewing each of these normal occurrences



through an all-or-nothing lens could lead you to think badly of your friends or yourself and undermine your self-confidence and relationships.

Having a balanced approach allows you to appreciate that while there'll be times when you do have extreme emotions or experiences, they'll be relatively few and far between. There will be highs and lows for certain, but most of life actually plays out on a more even playing field – one that's multicoloured, multidimensional and full of possibilities.

Watch what you tell yourself

Try not to use absolutes such as everyone, no one, never or always. First, they're rarely accurate and second, they can knock self-esteem and distort thought patterns.

Say, for instance, you've fallen out with your friendship group. There's no doubt this is upsetting, yet it's not true that no one likes you and you'll never have such good friends again or that your ex-pals have ruined your life. Whenever you find yourself slipping into this way

of thinking, take a moment to reflect on the situation and consider the full picture. You may have enjoyed the company of someone in a sports class, at a Saturday drama group or on an online game. Reminding yourself of the overall picture will help keep that black-and-white mindset in check.

Keep learning

Whenever you find yourself assessing someone or something as either/or, try thinking of them as this and that. So instead of attempting to make up your mind whether the new person in your music class is good or bad, consider that they might be both.

Do your best to keep your mind and heart open. You could exchange ideas and opinions with friends and family, keep learning and allow yourself to be surprised – not only by others but also by yourself.

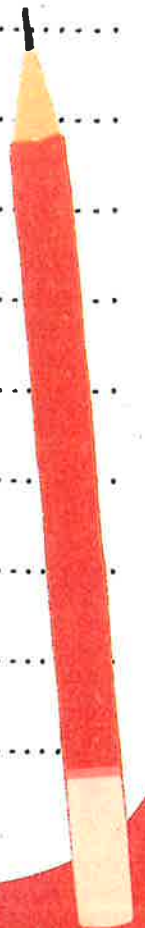
Life is fluid and change can bring opportunities. Try not to close yourself off from them by seeing everything in black and white. Embrace the colour.

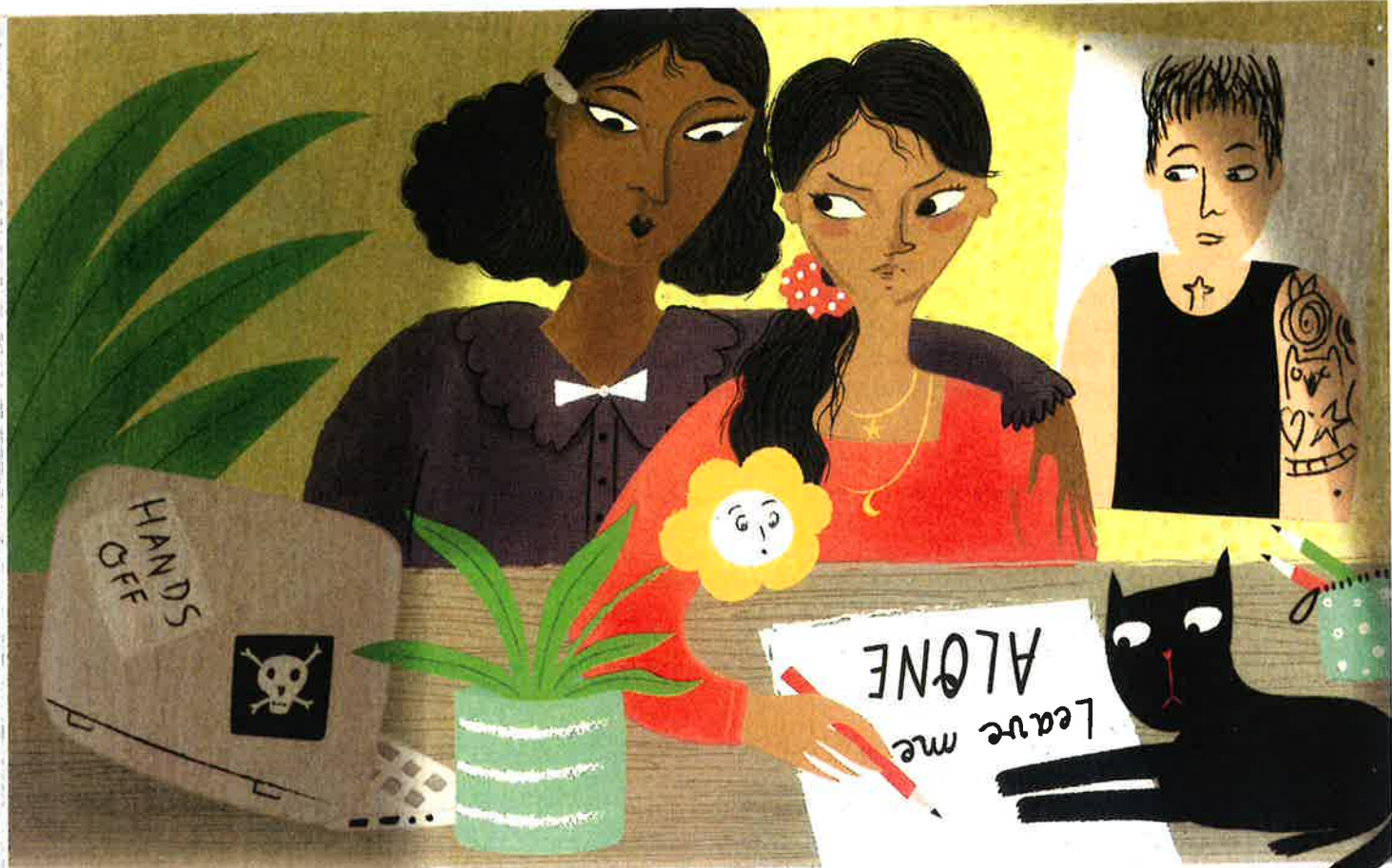
Take another look

Think of times when you approached an event with a mindset of 'either this'll be great or it'll be a stinker' – maybe when a new teacher took over a class, when you went to see a film adaptation of a book you love or when you tried a different recipe for chocolate-chip cookies. It could be anything. Now ask yourself if the experience was all good or all bad. Use this space to explore it in detail and note down areas that fell in the middle, those that weren't really so bad and others that didn't wow you as much.



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LEAVE ME ALONE

They may mean well, but sometimes people can unintentionally intrude upon your personal space. Here are a few ways to reclaim your zone

Enough is enough. There are times when you can't bear hearing the same questions again and again – 'How was your day?', 'What's wrong?', 'Did you get on all right at school?' – and deem them to be worthy of only a minimal 'good', 'nothing' and 'fine'. Finally, however, when they seem not to work any more, your response extends to three words – 'Leave me alone'. You know it might hurt, but sometimes it seems that's the only way people get it and often it does the trick (for a while). But there are nicer ways to say you need space (honestly).

Space invaders

What is personal space and why is it so important to protect it? Take a common situation. Have you ever had someone leaning over your shoulder to read something you've just written? It can be annoying, but did it also leave a feeling of discomfort?

This is what happens if a person intrudes on your personal space without being invited. You could think of it as your comfort zone or an invisible bubble, the important thing is that it's an area you need to maintain when interacting with others. The tricky bit is that everyone has

their own definition of 'personal space' and some people need more than others. For those who need a lot, it's helpful to let friends and family know this so that they don't unintentionally stray into your zone.

You can outline personal boundaries with subtle body language. You might, for example, slightly push your chair away or take a step back. Humour can also work. Phrases such as 'too close' and 'I'm going to squint' generally let a person know that they're encroaching on your space without making them feel bad.

Of course, there'll always be someone who doesn't take the hint. If this happens, try to stay calm but politely say that you need more space, otherwise they'll continue to upset you without even realising they're doing so. They might be surprised, but if you're polite, they're less likely to feel offended and will be better able to understand that everyone's personal space differs.

Delimiting your space

Setting your limits is one thing, but what if your personal space keeps growing, and you end up pushing others further away? Breathing space is necessary to take the

pressure out of any situation. However, fully embracing personal space can also have its downsides.

Everybody enjoys me-time (to write, draw, read, listen to music or play games) but be careful not to close yourself in or shut yourself off. Somewhat coincidentally (and, perhaps, annoyingly) one sign that me-time might be becoming too long is when those who care about you start asking even more frustrating questions.

Their constant interrogation may not be to your taste, but the chances are there's a good reason why they're right on your back. Try not to see them as space invaders and more as a trusted (if uninvited) helping hand and a good ear.

Opening your space

Growing older and gaining more independence can involve a degree of pushing away those you love and care about. Many parents, guardians and older family members find this difficult to understand and to cope with (witness all the questions mentioned previously).

It may seem like it's none of their business, but they are (mostly) well placed to help and support you as you go through the many changes – physical, emotional and practical – that come with growing older.

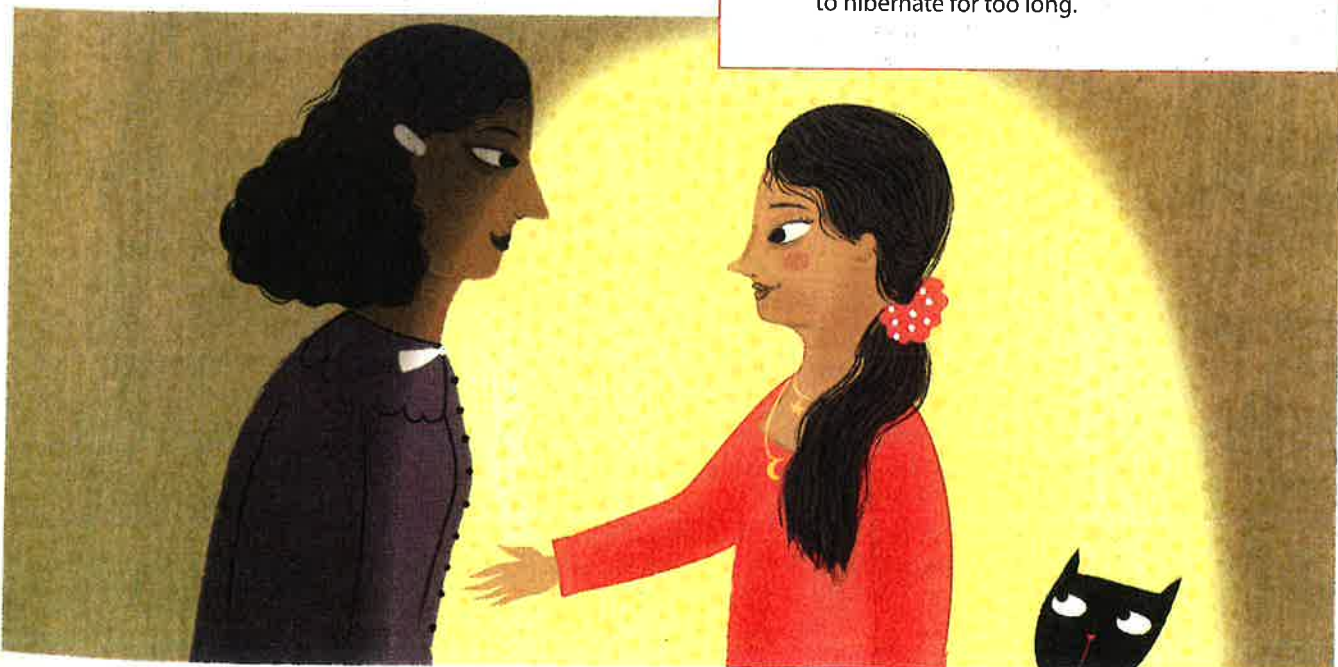
If it sometimes feels like they're invading your space, it's most likely because they care about you. If you really are fine and just fancy some me-time, let them know. Equally, however, if you do have worries, it might help to tell them you're not OK, so they can then try to work through any worries or concerns you might have.

Personal space is valuable – and it's possible to guard it politely without hurting anyone's feelings.

HOW TO BE LEFT ALONE

Ways to find personal space

- * Even if you're frustrated with a parent's endless questions, try to stay calm.
- * Take a moment, breathe and start by thanking them for their interest, concern or support.
- * If you need to open up, take the chance to explain what's on your mind or upsetting you.
- * If you're not ready or in the mood to talk, be polite but firm: 'I'm fine, really, but I just need a bit of space if that's OK with you.' This way, they're more likely to respect your decision and leave you in peace (or, at least, until they see you again).
- * If they keep asking the same questions, try being even clearer. You could start your response in a similar way but then expand it – 'I'm fine, really, but I need space if that's OK with you. I'm not having a great day and I'd prefer not to talk about it right now.'
- * Be kind. Try not to push away people who care about – and can help – you. If you can, find a minute the next day to tell them how you feel. It'll stop them worrying and they'll be less likely to continue asking questions.
- * Cherish space and time alone – it's like a cocoon (see *Teen Breathe*, issue 14) and an important part of growing older. No matter how comfortable it may be, however, try not to hibernate for too long.



ENERGY FLOWS WHERE ATTENTION GOES

In the last issue of *Teen Breathe* we explored a yoga posture called Warrior 1. Here, we're going to look at its second variation, Warrior II – *Virabhadrasana II* in Sanskrit. This is a powerful pose that strengthens the muscles of the thighs, buttocks, chest and arms. It also opens the chest and shoulders, which can help to increase breathing capacity and boost circulation.

Warrior II also supports the practitioner, the yogi, to connect with their inner-strength and wisdom and focus their intention and gaze on achieving their goals.

Here's how to get into the pose

1. Stand tall, with your feet hip-width apart and your arms dropping alongside your body. Take a few deep breaths here, bring your thoughts within and connect with your inner-strength and wisdom.
2. On an out-breath, step your feet wide apart (to a point that is comfortable). Raise your arms so they are stretched out from the shoulders parallel to the floor, palms facing downwards. A good distance for placing your feet apart is one where your ankles are below your wrists.
3. Take a few deep breaths here. Then turn your right foot out 90 degrees from your body and your left foot to an angle of around 45 degrees (it faces in the same direction as your right foot). The heels of the feet should be aligned.
4. On an out-breath, lower your hips, forming a right angle with your right leg – the right knee should be lined up above your ankle, but not beyond it. Your thigh is parallel to the floor and the shin is vertical to the floor.
5. Keep your left leg straight, pushing downwards.
6. Stretch your arms out wide to the side, opening your chest, lifting the front of your torso upwards.
7. Turn your head and upper torso to face the direction of your right leg, arm and hand. Stretch into your fingertips.
8. Focus your gaze in the direction of your right hand. Take a few deep breaths here, feeling strong in mind and body. You may also choose to focus your mind and intention on a goal you'd like to achieve.
9. On an in-breath, pushing down through your left leg, slowly straighten your right leg. Now, turn your feet, chest and hips back to a forward-facing position. Step your feet back together and lower your arms alongside your body, fingers flowing downwards, and take a few breaths in standing pose. Observe how you feel. When you are ready, repeat the above, leading with your left leg.

As with all physical activities, please do not attempt the posture if you have any medical or physical conditions that may be aggravated. If in doubt, always talk to your doctor first.

