

FEARNE COTTON

# CALM

Working through life's daily stresses  
to find a peaceful centre



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Your  
Reflection  
Ripples





These are your reflection ripples. As you are reading through the book, whenever you see this symbol:



refer back to this page and mark a dot in the ring that represents how you are feeling. You can then look back and see how you've been feeling over a period of time.

Before we properly begin, **take stock** of how you are feeling – circle the word that most closely answers the questions below. I find a little **self-diagnosis** is a helpful way of showing me what needs to change or what I need to work on.

HOW ARE YOUR STRESS LEVELS?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW WELL DID YOU SLEEP  
LAST NIGHT?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT SPENDING  
TIME OUTSIDE?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE  
AMOUNT OF TIME YOU SPEND  
ON SOCIAL MEDIA?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT ALLOWING  
YOURSELF 'ME' TIME?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW DO YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW  
ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE  
FUTURE?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW DOES YOUR CHEST FEEL RIGHT  
NOW?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW DOES YOUR BODY FEEL?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

HOW DOES YOUR MIND FEEL?      TERRIBLE    BAD    OK    GOOD    GREAT

## HELLO TO . . . GERAD

Gerad Kite is a dear friend of mine who I regularly talk to for pearls of wisdom and a springboard back to calm. It's dead handy having a mate who is also a 5-element acupuncturist! His connection to calm is crystal clear and his outlook on life is expansive yet grounded.

Acupuncture is very physical and allows the body to rebalance and flow smoothly. Gerad has studied acupuncture for 20 years and understands the balance of the body intricately. His knowledge of Eastern philosophy has always interested me greatly and we often talk about the rhythm of the body and how it relates to the seasons and the ticking of the clock. Here Gezza (as I like to call him) explains the importance of listening to our own bodies and honouring how they want to be treated throughout the day. Getting our bodies in balance is a great way of heading back to calm.



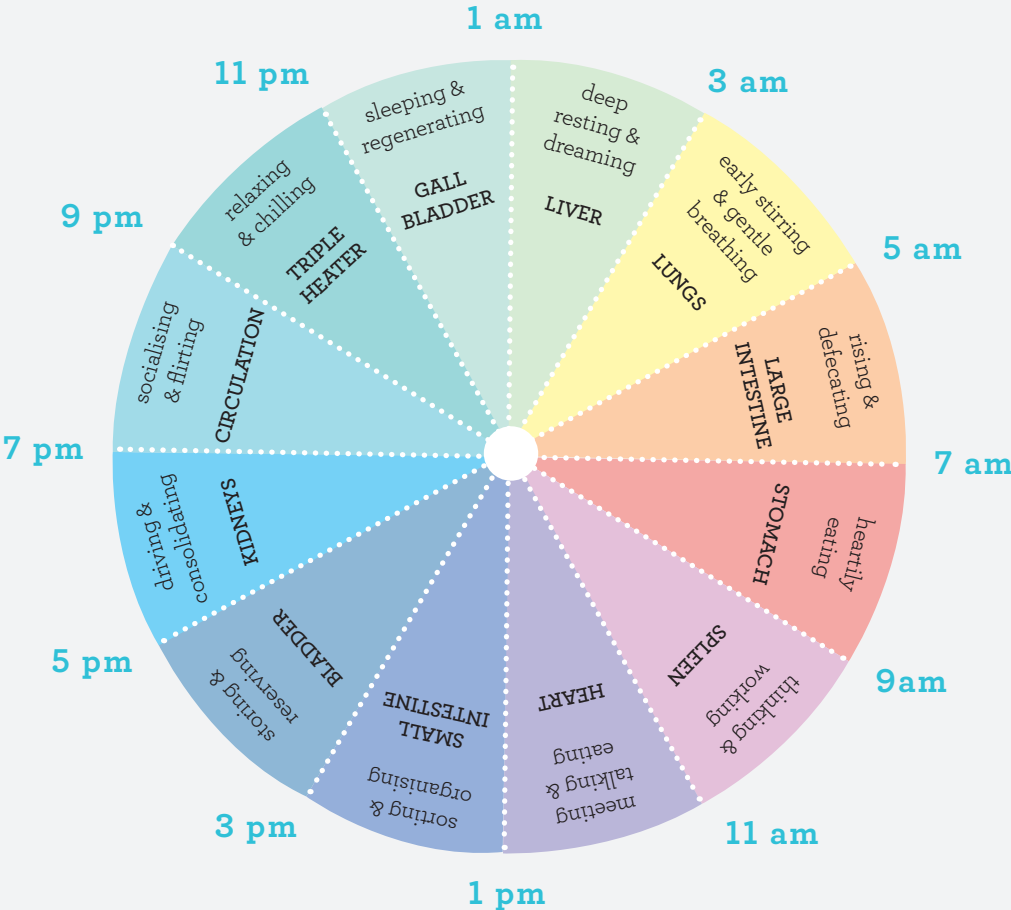
The ancient 'Chinese Clock' is based on an understanding of how the energy that fuels us travels around the body and mind over a 24-hour period. There is an amount of energy in every person which comes from the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. This energy (fuel) travels around the body (much like the blood floods through every cell), flowing in one continuous loop, serving all our organs and functions. Every part of the body and mind is served with this energy at all times, but each organ or function has a two-hour period where it is prioritised over any other and will receive a greater volume of energy during that period to emphasise its task. For example, between the hours of 5 and 7 a.m. the large intestine (colon) is flooded with energy, as this is the optimum time to get rid of the physical – and mental – waste from the previous day. This natural and essential excretion not only cleanses our body and mind but as the increased flow of energy transitions from the large intestine to the stomach, we get the impulse to eat a hearty breakfast and start the day renewed with energy. Conversely, there is a low time for each organ at the opposite side of the 24-hour cycle, and in this example the stomach rests. This is nature telling us to eat less and instead nourish ourselves with good company and fun – the peak time of the 'circulation/sex' function.

When adhered to, this inner intelligence is health-giving and promotes a great sense of calm in us – providing we pay attention and follow its guidance. Sadly, we tend to plan the activities

of our days and nights in our 'heads', making unnatural choices about when to eat, when to rest and when to work, and thus we go against this natural flow. The outcome is a reduction in energy, a disturbance to the natural cycles of sleep, digestion and reproduction and a general sense of malaise – of being out of whack with no apparent cause.

The Chinese Clock is based on the movement of our planet in relation to the sun. It is based on the premise that we have evolved as a species as a direct outcome of this 24-hour cycle. By changing your daily and nightly routine to work with nature rather than against it, you will begin to feel at one with yourself and the world around you and you will enjoy a deep sense of calm.

### THE CHINESE CLOCK



Let's take a closer look at what the clock means for each part of our bodies:

**3-5am:** your lungs appreciate a surge of energy that awakens all the cells in your body and refreshes your mind.

**5-7am:** the flow of energy moves to the large intestine, making it the ideal time to wake up and have that bowel movement. This clears out, not just the physical, but also the mental waste leftover from yesterday.

**7-9am:** During these two hours, the prioritisation moves to our stomachs. Always keep the phrase 'nature abhors a vacuum' in your mind: you've emptied the lower part of your digestive system and now you need to refill so that you have enough energy to get you through the day.

**9-11am:** The spleen is the focus during these two hours and it transforms what you've taken in and delivers that energy to nourish and move your body and your mind.

**11am-1pm:** Your heart benefits from a surge in energy during these two hours, so take the opportunity to relax and spend time with other people – socialising, yes, but also the ideal time for friendly, constructive work meetings.

**1-3pm:** As the small intestine takes its prime time to work, it begins sorting and filtering, so mirror this in your day: use it to focus and organise.

**3-5pm:** Now the bladder takes over. Most of us see the bladder as being just a sack for urine, but in Chinese medicine your bladder is in charge of your energy reserves, like a reservoir. Make sure you drink enough water throughout the day, so that when you get to the time of the day most known for that midday slump, you'll have enough energy to keep going.

**5-7pm:** The energy flows through to your kidneys at this time, cleaning out the mind and body: a real opportunity to feel calm and settle from within.



**7-9pm:** This is the time for your ‘heart protector’: your circulation and sex facilitators – the optimum time for socialising, relaxing and sex. Avoid that big evening meal and enjoy yourself – this is the stomach’s resting time.

**9-11pm:** The energy now travels to your ‘three heater’, which adjusts all parts of your body and mind to the correct physical and emotional temperature for winding down after the long day so that you’re ‘chilled’ and in the best state for sleep.

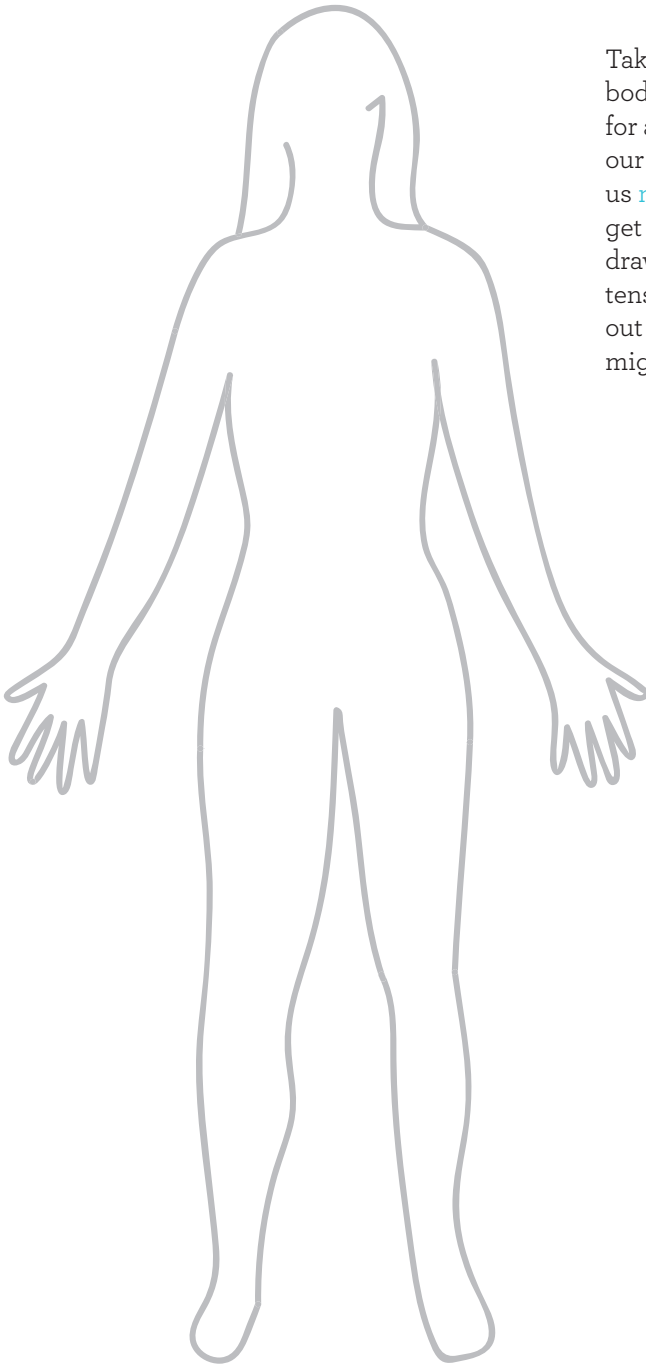
**11pm-1am:** As we reach the end of the day, the gall bladder comes to the fore. This organ excels in ‘judgement’ and directs the regeneration of your body and mind, the perfect time to rest and sleep.

**1-3am:** During this time, the energy shifts to the liver, cleansing our bodies and minds to help us sleep deeply ready for the next day.

What I love about the law of midday-midnight, is the natural intelligence at play that keeps us calm despite how busy our bodies and minds can be. If we work with these natural laws, everything naturally falls into place – we feel calm and life, although busy, is no longer experienced as struggle.



Taking an **inventory** of how your body is feeling is so important for all-round health. Respecting our bodies and their limits helps us **mitigate physical stress** and get back to calm. Mark on the drawing below where you feel tension and see if you can work out why it is there and what might help to **ease it**.



## HELLO TO . . . ANNETTE

Annette Twigg is a GP who has advised many people who have experienced panic attacks. After I was consumed by that oxygen-gobbling fear on the motorway, the first thing I wanted to do was understand physically what on earth was going on with me. I love to look outside of the box and figure out new ways of thinking and living, but learning about the medical reasons felt imperative to truly understand how to stop them. Here Annette describes a little more about what happens to our bodies during this process.



**F: Hi Annette. Can you tell us a bit about what a panic attack actually is and why some people experience them?**

A: ‘Panic’ symptoms arise out of our response to a threat or stress, and form the basis of the fright-flight-fight response. In such a situation, our eyes pick up on a visual threat and relay the information to the brain, which triggers a chemical response, involving the release of stress hormones, which in turn cause a number of physiological effects. The purpose of these is to increase the blood supply to our muscles so that we can run away from the threat, defend ourselves or indeed attack the threat.

As a result our heart rate increases, as do our blood pressure and breathing rates in order to maximise the oxygen and energy (glucose) levels directed to our muscles, all in order for us to run away. Hence you experience a racing heart, rapid breathing etc.

Since blood is being diverted to the muscles, less flows to non-essential areas – those deemed less important in the response to a threat – such as the skin. As such the skin may look pale, feel clammy and have a prickling sensation, because sweat is released to help cool the muscles. The mouth might also feel dry because body fluid is kept in the circulatory system to keep the supply of oxygen and glucose going to the muscles.

Other symptoms can occur too, such as feelings of loss of control, difficulty swallowing or feeling you have a lump in your throat and poor sleep (because your body is maintaining a high state of alertness). For many people the net result of all this is the sensation of fear, i.e. panic. For others, though, the net result may be aggression or an angry outburst.

A person's individual response to this depends on lots of factors, including coping strategies, previous exposure and build-up of resilience. In day-to-day life the 'threat' we see may be people, places, situations, spiders, dogs or insects, or often it can be the build-up of pressure caused by other people's expectations of us and our desire not to let others down, be that family, friends, work etc.

The important thing is to understand that the physical symptoms are not representative of something that will do us harm, even though they can be very distressing and at times disabling.

### F: Have you seen a rise in people coming to you with these symptoms?

A: I believe that current daily lifestyles almost certainly contribute to more people experiencing these symptoms, as we're not very good at allowing quiet and non-stimulation time for the brain nowadays, which is not good for us. But there is more openness about anxiety and mental health now, which is almost certainly beneficial and means people feel able to go to the doctor about it.

### F: What can people do if they're experiencing panic attacks?

A: Anything that reduces your overall level of anxiety will also help to reduce specific fears or triggers, to an extent. For example, someone having hypnotherapy for a fear of heights may find they are no longer as afraid of spiders, snakes etc.

Sleep is another big issue with anxiety and panic, and it relates more to generalised stress. Essentially we have episodes of deep (restorative) sleep and lighter sleep, often called rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, during which we may dream or feel we are sort of asleep but our minds are ticking over and thinking of many things which seem really important at the time but in the morning are not so bad. We have to have the correct balance of these types of sleep in order to function.

If we are anxious or stressed/having panic attacks, we often find ourselves going over and over things (this is called rumination). If we are doing this during the day our brains continue with this overnight, so our sleep becomes dominated by REM sleep, which is less restorative

and consequently we feel more tired and over time we feel less able to cope, our perspective on life changes, our mood can fall and we end up in a vicious circle as this further impairs our sleep.

Breaking this cycle can be initiated by having periods where we don't allow this rumination. This is the basis for using breathing techniques and mindfulness. Physical activity also helps, as long as we are not thinking. So playing football, doing Zumba or playing tennis etc. is good. At home I tend to say a treadmill is better than an exercise bike simply because on a bike you can pedal but still think, whereas on a treadmill you have to focus more on the activity otherwise you risk falling off the machine.

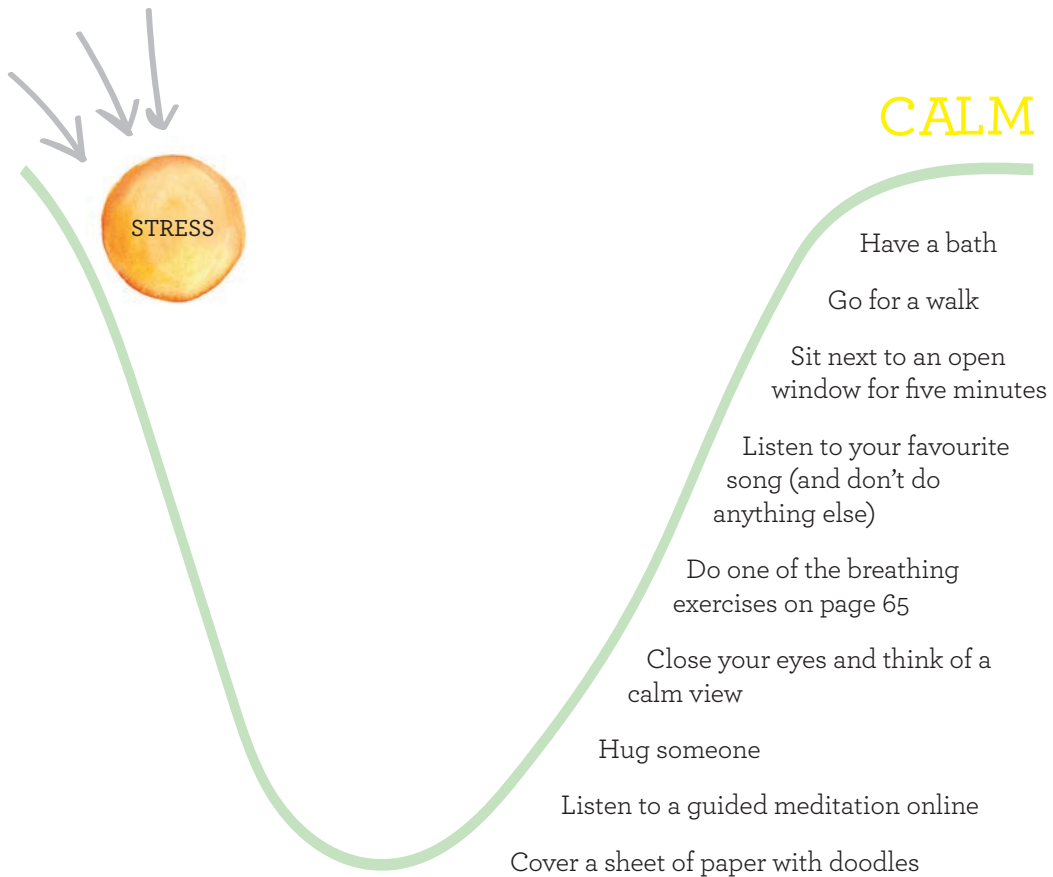
### F: Do you have any final top tips?

A: Whenever someone comes to see me and we have talked through their issue, usually one of their biggest problems is the feeling of loss of control. I try to really reinforce that recognising there is an issue is the starting point and that making an appointment IS them taking control – and that is really important. Without wishing to sound anti-social-media, a lot of people who use it get bogged down with everyone else's positive posts and as such feel that they are the only one feeling as they do. This is something that has to be addressed. There was a lovely phrase in a book I am reading which referred to someone's house not having the 'tinnitus of technology', i.e. no computer, TV etc. I thought this comment captured quite nicely that we do need that space to be free of extraneous 'noise'.

But finally, if you have any of these symptoms I've mentioned here, then definitely report them to your GP if they become distressing. There is lots that can be done to manage them.



Stress is like a **snowball** - if you don't stop it from building when you first notice it, it will continue to roll and get bigger as it goes. Pick something from the suggested list to **stop the stress** from gaining any more momentum.





When I know I'm being too hard on myself I imagine what I would say to a friend and what advice I would give in a similar position. Below, write a letter to yourself imagining you are talking to a friend and see how much kinder, softer and forgiving you are. Then see if you can apply your advice and suggestions to the situation.

TO	
SUBJECT	



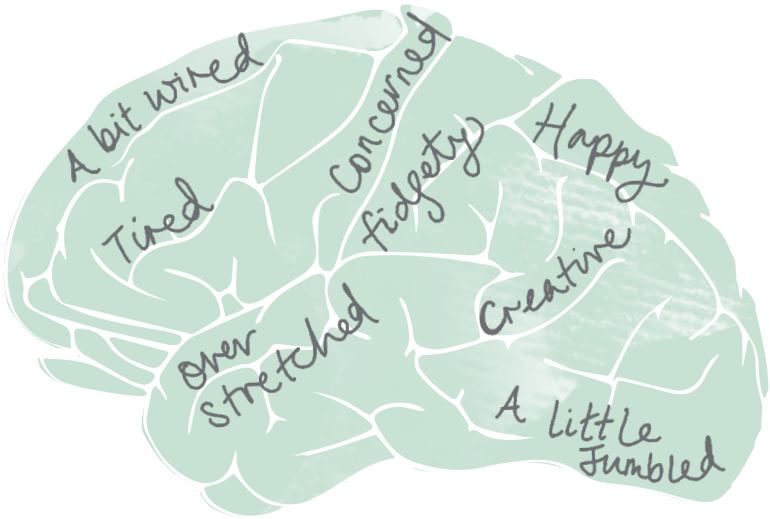
## WHAT DOES A CALM BODY LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.

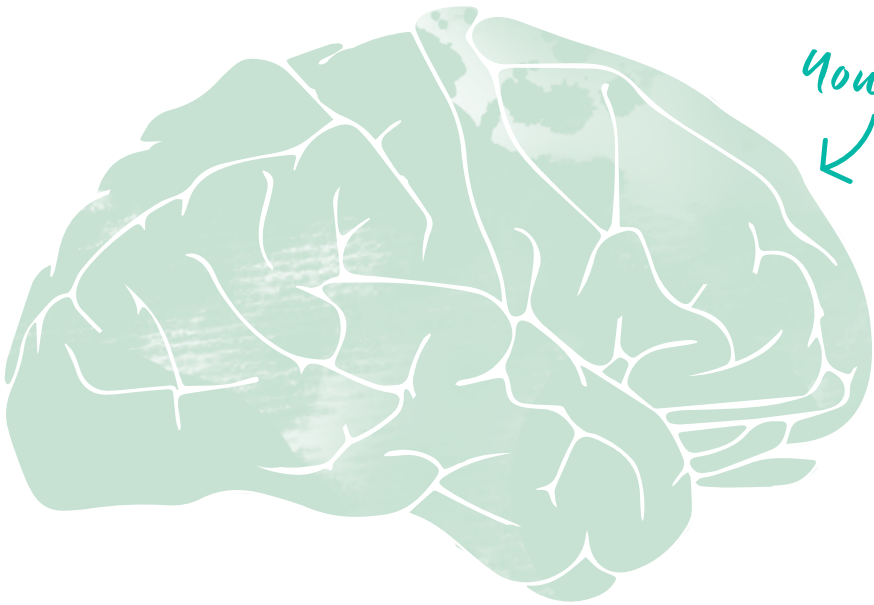


Our minds are bulging with information, ideas, concerns, dreams and everything else in between. Sometimes it feels like a right old jumble sale in that brain. Write in the spaces in the pictures below what is on your mind and how your brain is feeling today.

My brain  
↓



Your brain  
↓



## HELLO TO . . . REBECCA



**F:** Hello Rebecca, it has been so wonderful meeting you and experiencing your amazing Transformational Breath sessions. Can you tell us roughly what this sort of practice can offer up?

**R:** At the foundation of all breathing sessions is the practice of understanding our breathing patterns and deep breathing or ‘belly breathing’ – in which you allow your diaphragm to drop downwards and your rib cage to expand, creating more space for the lungs to inflate. In one of my sessions, I ask breathers to envisage breathing right down to their pelvic floors, starting with the breath expanding in the lower abdominals. Breathing in this way is also called ‘deep diaphragmatic breathing’, or ‘conscious connected breathing’, and it helps to balance the nervous system. When we activate our parasympathetic nervous system this is our calm state during which our heart rate slows, our blood pressure lowers and our blood supply is directed to nurture our digestive and reproductive systems rather than our muscles and brains. When our parasympathetic nervous system is active, our sympathetic nervous system – our ‘fight or flight’ state – becomes less active. This is the state that raises our heart rate, our blood pressure and respiratory rate to make us ready for action – and it is also responsible for releasing the stress hormones of adrenaline and cortisol into our bodies.

Many of us are unaware we are in fight or flight all the time or have feelings of low anxiety that we take for granted as a normal way of being. Human beings are designed to go into flight or fight if we are in danger or fleeing for our lives rather than when we open our email inbox or are under pressure with commitments. The problem is that most of us breathe in a rapid, short and shallow way all the time, or we are holding our breath regularly. A lot of clients I see are chest breathers and not breathing into their belly. This creates tension in the muscles that serve our respiratory system such as our shoulders, neck, throat and intercostals. We tend to guide our breath into our upper chest and no further, and fail to take advantage of our full lung capacity.

Founder of Transformational Breath and renowned breath expert, Dr Judith Kravitz, who has studied the way people breathe for the past 40 years agrees and says that in her experience most people are only using about 25–30 per cent of their lung capacity.



Breathing is something we all know how to do, and yet the majority of teenagers and adults let go of their natural ability to breathe fully. We are conditioned from an early age to control our feelings and emotions, and as a result our muscles tighten and our breathing patterns become restricted. The impact on our mental and physical wellbeing is huge.

By learning to consciously connect to our breath and encourage its natural rhythms, we can harmonise the body and mind, live life fully, find emotional freedom and feel calm and centred. Breathing can heal on many levels and of course our breath is constantly life-sustaining – taking in oxygen, invigorating red blood cells and expelling carbon dioxide, which is a metabolic waste product.

The first thing we do when we make our entrance into the world is breathe, and it is the last thing we do when we exit, so we may as well have a good relationship with the way we do this. We are all unique and we all have our own breathing pattern, a bit like our thumb print. Our breath pattern shows how we function in the world and what our coping mechanisms are. As a breath coach I am trained to read those patterns.

Babies are perfect breath gurus, and observing them means observing what an open healthy breath should be. Babies are so present, they don't have the 50,000 thoughts a day that we do as adults, and when you see them lying in a cot you will notice their breath is in their belly, midsection and chest and there are no blockages or restrictions. The same is true of toddlers, however, the majority of teenagers and adults are either chest breathers, belly breathers, shallow breathers or breath holders. Research shows that we only use around 33 per cent of our respiratory system. Conscious connected breathing helps us to understand and clear these restricted breathing patterns. By practising this technique we open up our respiratory system to its full capacity and this helps our overall wellbeing on a physical, mental and emotional level.

### F: How can an awareness around our breathing help us in life?

R: Breathwork is much like therapy but without having to do the talking, which for some is a welcome relief. It's not about going over and over the story, but letting it go. Our experiences are our perception, and with this work we are accessing the conscious and subconscious mind. Our



body is like a biological recording of our past and when we experience emotions such as fear or anger or feeling stressed, for example, our physiology can go into chaos. Our heart rate increases, our muscles tense, our digestion and immune system may be affected. We activate our sympathetic nervous system, our fight or flight mechanism, and release adrenaline and cortisol. Our body remembers everything and holds on to these memories. Think of when your body freezes or reacts and you feel triggered by events or people in certain situations. Data is constantly streamed down to the body from the brain and vice versa and is stored like a computer.

Just as we blink our eyes, our heart beats and our digestive system works, we breathe automatically. When we become aware of our breath we can control and be conscious of how we breathe. That can be really empowering and helps us to feel calm, centred and relaxed.

### **F: How did you stumble across this game-changing practice and how has it enhanced your own life?**

R: I lived with depression for over 20 years, 15 of which were spent on prescribed medication. I reached a point in my 30s where I had tried and failed with so many therapies from CBT, psychotherapy to yoga and other alternative ways, I knew I needed help but I didn't know how to get it.

The black dog of depression jumped on my back when I was in my teens. Back in the 1980s, depression was taboo and people chose not to discuss it as there was a real stigma attached. I used to watch people going about their everyday life and quietly wonder if they felt as bad as I did. At my lowest point, I would go to a very dark place and feel that life was no longer worth living. On those days, I was just existing, watching the clock and wishing the day away. I had no sense of living in a healthy, vital way. I would on occasion have suicidal thoughts. Unable to share these irrational thoughts (like many depressed people, I didn't want to burden others), I would hide away, avoiding contact, feeling numb, disconnected and in despair at not being able to shift the mood. You can't show people you are feeling unwell if you are depressed. You don't have a plaster cast or a bandage.

Two months before I discovered Transformational Breath, I attempted to take my own life

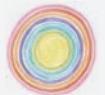
with a combination of pills and alcohol and ended up in hospital. Thankfully, it wasn't my time.

The first time I walked into a breath workshop, I didn't know what to expect. I'll try to describe my first experience. I could feel every cell in my body releasing and letting go. Physically, mentally and emotionally, I was in a complete state of flux. I was crying and sweating and my whole body was reverberating and vibrating. It was intense! I had no control and totally surrendered to the maelstrom of emotions and physical reactions.

Afterwards, I felt lighter and, for the first time in a very long time, I was full of hope. I also noticed I could make decisions more clearly and felt really positive. Realising I had been introduced to something very special I wasn't going to let it disappear from my life.

I want to stress that none of this happened overnight. I used the breath technique I had been taught every day and worked closely with my doctor. Medication was simply not working for me but for others it is necessary and you should always be guided by a doctor. Sometimes I'd have dark episodes and wonder if I should go back on medication, but I never did.

I began to feel whole, complete and physically present. My mind was clearer and my emotions were more balanced. Breathwork gave me my life back. It helped me to enhance other practices by being more present during yoga and letting go of my often destructive mind during meditation. After years of suffering with anxiety and chronic depression I discovered the healing power of my breath. My experiences have furnished me with an understanding and empathy for others, and my daily reward is my continuing journey and observing life-changing transformations with my clients by using breathwork.



### **F: How much do you think we underestimate the power of breath?**

R: We totally underestimate our breath. I am always blown away by how powerful it is. We can heal ourselves on many levels simply by connecting to our breath. I have witnessed too many beautiful moments to mention where people have finally let go of physical and emotional pain, and the magic that comes with that can often be a deep and profound spiritual connection to whatever that person finds. We are all on some level seeking inner peace, and this to me is a fast-track way to getting there. We all have different belief systems – be it religion, connection to the divine, a god, the universe, self or nature – and our breath

can help us to deepen that connection. Good breathing helps us feel more confident and able to let go of old belief systems and negative thought patterns that no longer serve us. Releasing old stories and past dramas previously held on to on a subconscious level gives us emotional depth. As if that isn't enough, breath can also reinvigorate sexual energy, deepen creative expression, improve sleep patterns and lower blood pressure.

The quality of our breath helps to relax the mind and enhance the ability to learn, focus, concentrate and memorise. The brain requires a great deal of oxygen to function and breathwork helps us to achieve clarity, feel grounded and be productive. It also relieves stress, anxiety, depression and negative thought patterns. Breathing properly can help us overcome addictive patterns of behaviour and eating disorders as well as igniting creativity and passion.

A statistic for you: we inhale and exhale around 20,000 times a day, yet most of us pay little attention to how we breathe or how deeply it affects us. In our increasingly demanding and complex world very few people are aware of the detrimental effects that improper breathing can have on our health and general wellbeing.

To balance work commitments, lifestyle and family life can be challenging. There is a lot of pressure in today's society for everyone to perform, and there seems to be just one pace of life – fast. In modern-day life we are tied to our phones, our laptops, our iPads. In a world where we are more connected than ever with people through the internet and social media, people feel more alone and disconnected.

The pattern goes a bit like this: life happens, we are multitasking, hitting deadlines, and certain situations put us under pressure. As a result, we are burning more energy than we need to, just taking care of business. Stimulation, activity and demands are all around us. We are on high-speed-runaway-train mode and our responsibilities, commitments and worries prevent us feeling calm and staying in the moment.

Sometimes we literally forget to take a breath. We find ourselves thinking, 'I'm so stressed out, I can't breathe', or we feel a tightness in our chest and feel 'I just need some space to breathe'. This is where conscious breathing comes in as an effective method of reducing stress.

How we breathe is indicative of how we feel about life. Our breath patterns correlate to every emotion, thought and experience. Think about when we are happy and relaxed, the breath feels free and easy. When we are feeling sad or depressed, however, our breath is shallow. When

we are angry or fearful our breath pattern also changes and our body's chemistry reacts and takes action.

These breathing techniques are like taking the breath to the gym or for an MOT. We need to take care of our body in the way we do a vehicle in order for it to run smoothly, and in that way we are resetting and recalibrating the systems of our mind and body with the breath.

**F: In my sessions with you I have felt a huge sense of release as energy and emotion pours out. How exactly does this technique work?**

R: Breathwork is about feeling everything rather than analysing and overthinking it, and often that can be uncomfortable – but releasing and cathartic, too. Emotion is simply energy in motion. Often we suppress and repress our emotions and we hold onto them or we push them down until they come up again. Heavier emotions, such as grief or anger, can disrupt our lives when they stay with us. For example, we hold on to repressed emotions in our jaw and some people may grind their teeth at night. Others feel emotion in the belly, such as fear or butterflies, which can affect our digestive system and cause issues such as IBS. We carry a lot of tension in our shoulders and our body which can play havoc with the mind. Our body has an innate intelligence and is constantly sending messages to let us know when something is happening, although often we miss the signs.

Thoughts can be just as toxic as some of the things we consume and the breath helps us to release these toxins through our exhale. When we are connecting to our breath we are creating a circuit that can access that lower, denser energy and raise the vibrations so we can integrate them.

**F: How can we all use breath in everyday life to improve our general wellbeing?**

R: The more we notice the rhythm of our inhale and exhale the more we understand our patterns. Just being aware of our breath can be helpful in everyday life, when we are at home, walking outside, watching TV, cooking, on our commute, in the bath or at the office. Ideally creating a practice every day can make a real difference, even if it's just for one to two minutes



each day. (If we put pressure on ourselves to have a daily one-hour meditation practice it may feel like a chore or not realistic and we give up before we have even begun!) We can make things simple by walking and using that time to meditate with each step, just by being aware of our breath. I find that running, using different breathing exercises and swimming is my meditation. There are no rules and it's about finding what works best for you.

**F: When we feel stressed or anxious the first thing that seems to alter is our breathing. How do we get more conscious and back on track with our breathing and how will this stabilise us?**

R: Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger. It helps us to get the job done and only becomes negative when we face continuous challenges without relief or relaxation in between. As a result, we become overworked and stress-related tension starts to build.

Often when we feel stressed or anxious our breathing speeds up and we breathe more into our chest area. We may feel different sensations in our body or we start to feel a little hot or flustered. Try to become the observer of your feelings and notice where your breath is. Take some deep diaphragmatic breaths into the belly. Inhale through the nose and out of the mouth with a little pause in between. As you breathe in, expand your belly and as you exhale the belly goes in. This will help you to be more focused and centred and bring you back into the moment.

”



## SOME BREATHING EXERCISES

BY REBECCA DENNIS

### 1) TO RELAX AND CALM THE MIND

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable, quiet spot where you won't be disturbed.
- Close your eyes and ensure your shoulders and jaw are relaxed and the spine is straight.
- Take a long deep exhalation out of your mouth.
- Close your mouth and inhale deeply through your nose, directing the breath deep into the belly – visualise filling a balloon of air in your centre as you do this.
- Exhale gently through the mouth – visualise the balloon gently deflating as you do this.
- Notice any sensations that arise in the body – acknowledge them and gently bring your attention back to your breath.
- Be aware of your thoughts, and rather than trying to push them away, gently push them aside and come back to the inhale and exhale.
- Visualise the breath calming and relaxing the mind and all the systems of the body, and as you exhale allow it to release any tension.
- Try to do this for 15 minutes, and notice the difference it makes to your day.

## 2) ANXIOUS ALARM CALL

Woken up early again? It's 4a.m. and you are wide awake with lists going through your head and you can't get back to sleep. Try this simple but effective exercise to regain a sense of calm. It really works.

Breathe in through your nose for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, then exhale through your mouth for eight seconds. This helps us to come out of the mind, slow the heart rate and activate the parasympathetic nervous system to bring us into a relaxed state.

## 3) A BREATHING EXERCISE FOR THOSE OF YOU WITH EMAIL OVERLOAD

You open your inbox and there are 100 emails waiting for you. Where to begin? Try this exercise to centre and balance your mind.

Close your eyes. Place your thumb over your right nostril and exhale through the left nostril for eight counts. Breathe in through the left nostril and hold for another eight. Now repeat on the other side. Keep going up to 10 times and notice the difference in your breath.

## 4) AN EXERCISE FOR CREATING SPACE IN THE MIND

‘By letting it go it all gets done. The world is won by those who let it go. But when you try and try the world is beyond winning.’ Lao Tzu

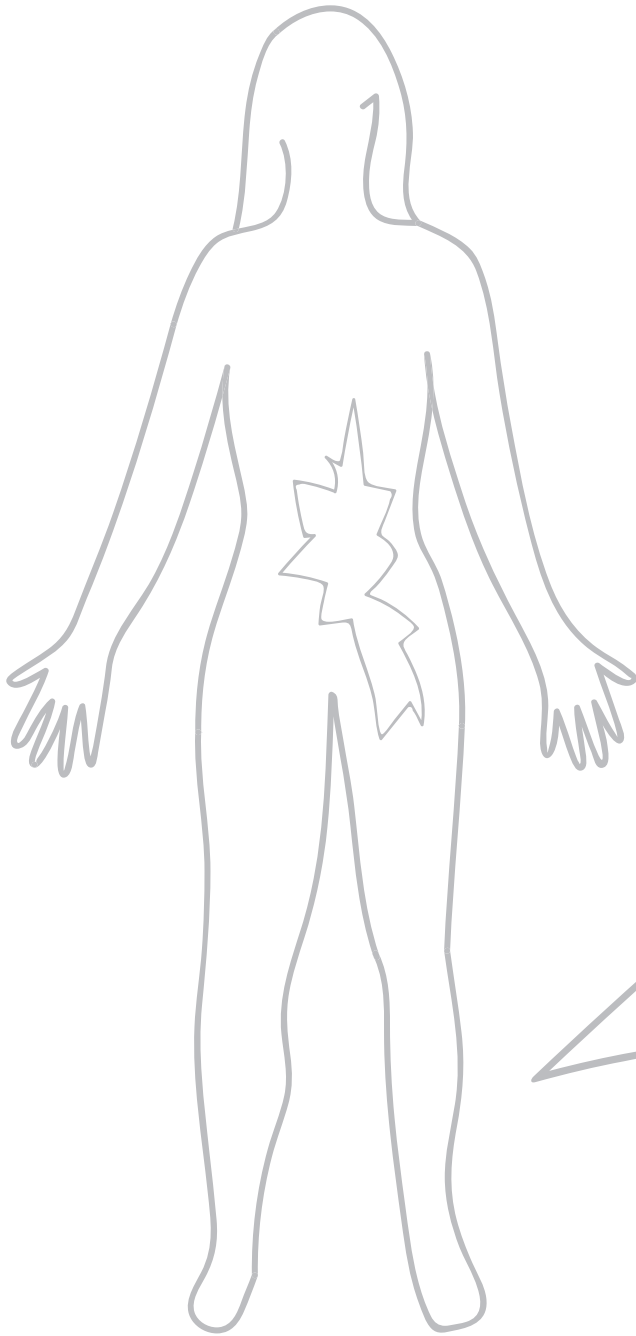
Often we spend a lot of time in our thoughts and sometimes experience recurring negative thought patterns. Don’t believe everything your mind is telling you, sometimes it is very destructive. Here’s a very simple exercise to help you let go of the mind clutter so that you can create room for clarity and calm.

First, leave all your thoughts at the door. Whatever it is you have to do today or tomorrow or should have done and perhaps haven’t managed to yet, leave it all at the door. You can return to this later.

- Close your eyes and sit up straight.
- Feel the ground beneath your feet and your sitting bones on the seat beneath you.
- Relax your shoulders and let out a deep sigh.
- Begin to notice the breath and become aware of the inhale and the exhale.
- Imagine the breath is coming in and out like a wave.
- Breathe softly and deeply in through the nose and out through the nose with a little pause in between.
- As you inhale, guide the breath into the belly, encouraging a deep diaphragmatic breath.

- Allow the mind to wander to the breath and each time you notice you're going back into thoughts, take the mind back to the breath.
- Begin to draw your focus and attention to the rise and fall of your breath.
- Allow the breath to flow – you are not forcing it or pushing it. Gentle breathing.
- Expand your awareness inside and let go of the outside.
- There is nowhere to go, nothing to do, just stay present with your breath.
- Everything is as it should be right now, there is no wrong and there is no right.
- Stay present with your inhale and your exhale.
- Notice any thoughts that are there and gently push them aside.
- Step outside of the thoughts and observe them.
- Do not entertain them, just allow them to pass like clouds in the sky.
- Breathe in and breathe out, letting go of anything that no longer serves you.
- Exhale away any tension or worries.
- Inhale in new energy, positivity and light.
- Let go of the pull of the future and the pull of the past.
- Continue to go deeper inside, explore and expand your awareness inside with each breath.
- Stay in this moment, which is NOW.
- Keep practising this for two to three minutes, then notice how your mind feels.

When we have **been through something** particularly traumatic or shocking, we lose pieces of ourselves or leave them behind in the wreckage, and it can be hard to put ourselves back together again. If this resonates with you, think back to where that **missing piece** of you may be. Is it in the hands of another? In a different geographic location or stuck in a particular occasion? Write down where it might be on the missing piece of yourself, then **visualise retrieving** it and placing it back where it BELONGS.



## HELLO TO . . . YVONNE



**F: Hey Yvonne, what exactly is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?**

Y: PTSD is recollections of stressful events or traumas. It's a complex disorder which affects a person in different, various ways. There are so many different circumstances which can bring this disorder into being, and it's never an identical process. Some may have a few symptoms, others a whole and varied set of distressing reactions. It is, however, manageable and a great deal of sensitive and skilled healing applications can truly help enormously.

**F: What are the symptoms of PTSD?**

Y: The symptoms of PTSD present in various ways. You may re-experience the traumatic event, have flashbacks and nightmares, but huge emotional shifts (anger, fear, irritability), tears, physical imbalance, muscle aches and physical weakness are not uncommon.

On a physical level the nervous system is deeply affected – people move into 'fight or flight' mode. The fear can actually immobilise them, and there is sometimes a regression into the 'inner child' self - feeling absolutely helpless and scared and out of control. The brain races to find a solution, so the patterns of thought can become muddled, disturbed and confusing and this of course can heighten the sense of trauma, and there is the potential to get 'stuck' in the experience again.

**F: Other than physically, how else can it affect us?**

Something I call 'soul loss' can occur. The fragmentation of the soul – or whatever you like to call your inner conscience. The individual can feel very lost following the trauma. Skilled professionals and healers can assist with the recovery of this fragmentation, so that those who feel they have 'jumped out' out of their body can come back to it through sensitive healing, such as vibrations and positive energy.

### F: How much of PTSD is about cognitive recall?

Y: The mind is a powerful tool and memories of trauma can be triggered by any one of the senses. The thought process can be helped and healed to realign itself with CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy). This is one of the most powerful tools, but there are others as well – sourcing appropriate help can actually also help and heal in itself as it becomes part of the re-empowering process.

### F: How can a person get help in healing and recovering from trauma and its lasting effects?

Y: The help available for PTSD is vast – specifically trained trauma therapists can be sourced and they will be able to expertly work with their client in a safe space that allows understanding and healing. Meditation, yoga, soul retrieval, breathwork, relaxation techniques, nature and music also are very powerful for the soul and mind.

Guided visualisations can also be an effective experience if you are that way inclined, otherwise music, art therapy and creativity can be equally effective. In terms of music, I have found the solfeggio frequencies with their specific vibrations are very good for soothing and healing.

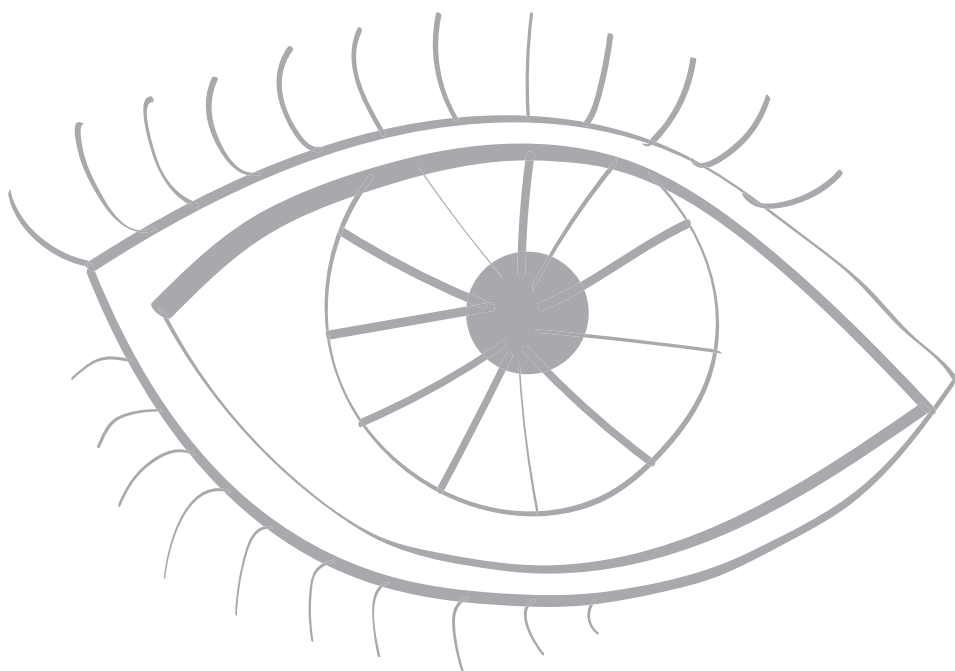
### F: What would you say to someone who thinks they may have PTSD but isn't sure?

Y: PTSD presents in many different circumstances and the awareness of this now is more prevalent, which means there is lots of compassionate understanding for those seeking help and healing. Don't be afraid to ask for it.

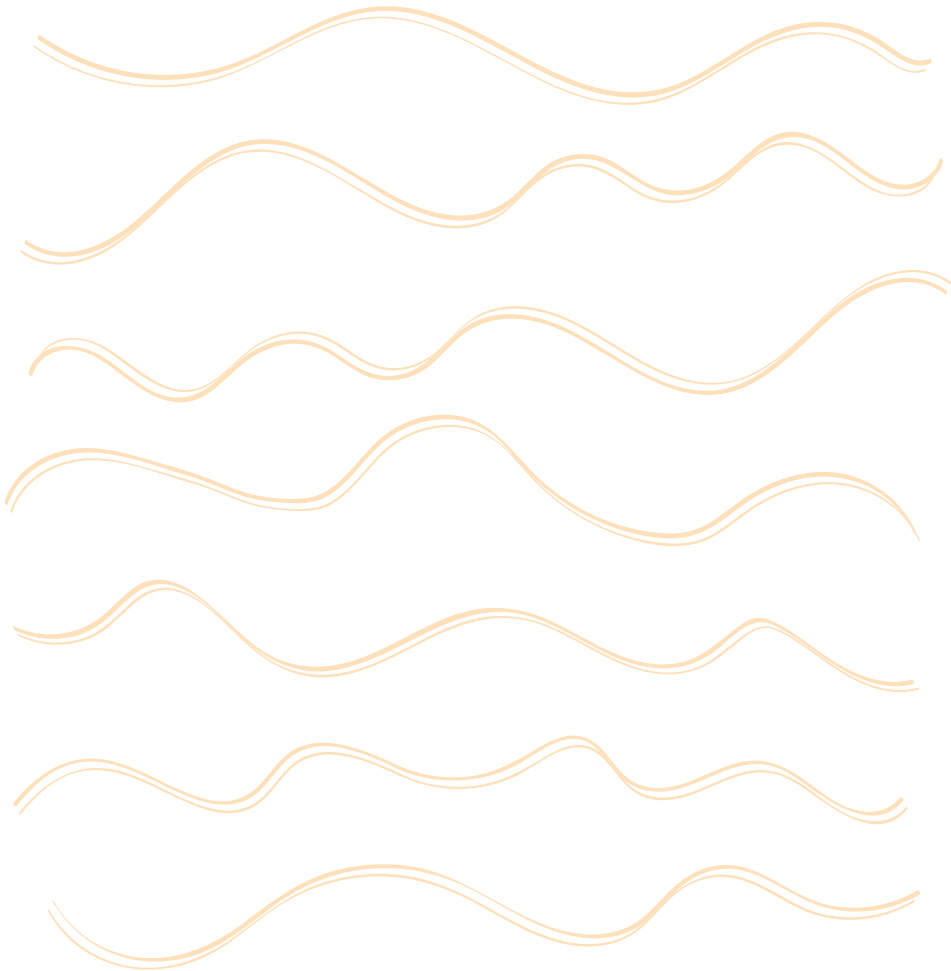




Meditating can feel impossible at times. We lack the concentration, inclination and focus to see it through. I always find visuals **help me** a lot, and try to picture an **eye** when I close my eyes so that I can concentrate on something, and use it to zone out on. Colour in this eye on the page and then use it to **focus on** if you feel you need a moment to zone out or meditate.



We all go through a **myriad of emotions** throughout every day. In one day, we can feel as if the seasons have changed several times before we go to bed because of our emotions. Write down all the emotions you have felt today and the one you are currently feeling; don't be scared to be **totally honest** and then own it. Accept the emotion, welcome it in but know there's also no need to hold on to it for too long. Imagine it **flowing** in and out naturally.



Often we feel our stresses are bigger than we are. Use this trick if you're in need of some **perspective**. In the boxes on the left write a list of all the things you are worried about today. Now imagine yourself a year from now and write down how you'll feel about them then. How many do you think you'll still be worrying about? Concentrate on a solution for those, but use this **'time-machine' power** to know the other worries aren't worth it in the bigger picture.

**TIME MACHINE**

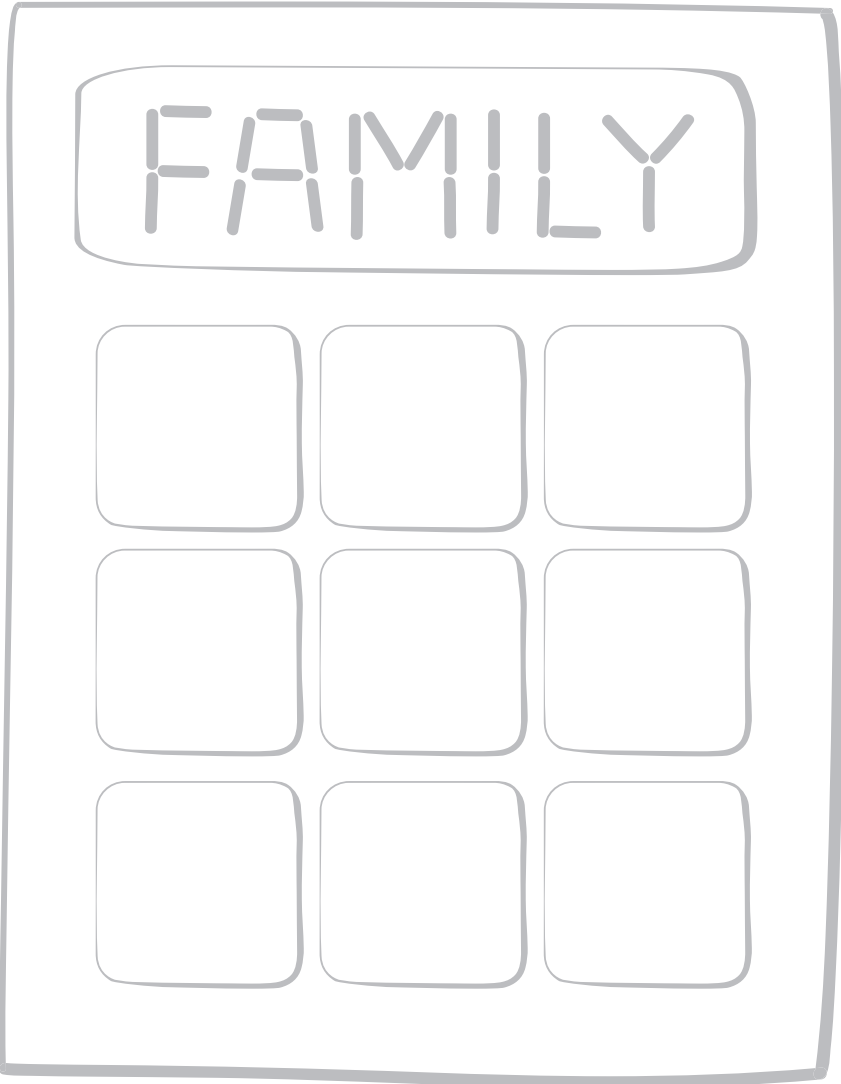
<b>TODAY</b>	<b>A YEAR FROM NOW</b>

## WHAT DOES A CALM MIND LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.



There is usually *someone* in a family who knows exactly how to press our buttons. They know you so well they have the ability to tap into areas of yourself others can't. If you can relate to that, write down what buttons are pushed most regularly *for you* on the calculator below. Acknowledging our weak spots is the first step in learning how to stop them being an issue in the future.



witty person for a good chat, moan or laugh. Her kids all happen to be unbelievably polite and well-mannered, too. After her eldest, Louis, first came to stay with me and my husband, he wrote me a thank-you note! Heaven.

Whatever Heidi is doing, she is doing it right. I'm forever eager to find out more about her family alchemy and personal aptitude for juggling life, so I took this book as an opportunity to quiz her further.

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**F: You are one of my mum heroes and I am in constant wonder as to how you make the cogs of family life keep turning. What makes you lose your calm?**

H: I am quite calm these days, but I haven't always been this way. I suppose the change came from making a decision to embrace the chaos instead of fighting it. The one thing that still manages to make me lose my calm is when others affect my work running smoothly. I have to run such a tight ship to be able to do what I do and take care of my family simultaneously, so if it is rocked it still gets my goat. At these times I have to try to remember that you can't control everything and sometimes you have to trust and let it go. One of my best friends (you) once told me, 'Just remember, Heidi, the cream always rises to the top' – I take that with me wherever I go.

**F: You have five kids and a flying career. When things feel overwhelming and the noise of life is omnipresent, how do you keep cool?**

H: I am still working on that. I come from a long line of professional hot heads; I am related to a gangster who was famously shot by the Kray twins for not keeping his cool, for God's sake. When the external or internal noise is too much I go for a run, walk, do yoga – as long as it involves moving outside, preferably with my dogs by my side, it's an instant tonic for

me. My husband is great at reminding me what is important. Just after we met, my pancreas decided to turn on itself. Whilst in the hospital the doctors performed a scan and told me, 'Congratulations, you are pregnant. Unfortunately you need major surgery now or you will die. There is very little chance your baby will survive the operation.' That baby is now 16.

**F: Do you think it's important to have time for you when you can just focus on being a woman rather than a mother, writer, wife or friend?**

H: The times I have felt most focused on being a woman is when I am fully immersed as a mother, writer, wife, friend. When I had my last baby I loved giving myself entirely to him and his brothers and sister, knowing nothing else was more important at that time and that everything else would, and could, wait. This felt empowering. I think sometimes women feel that their other commitments can't afford them this time but it's important to remember that you are allowed to make that choice, and when you do it feels good because you stop the juggling and just enjoy. My girlfriends mean a lot to me, with regards to my focus on being a woman living in the 21st century. Right now I don't have time for hairdos, unless it involves the nit comb.

**F: Your job is of a very creative nature. Do you need to be in a calm headspace to get the best out of yourself?**

H: Yes. If I go onto a set with a hot head two things would happen. Number one, it would spread amongst the cast and crew like wildfire. The director starts shouting and screaming and suddenly everyone is at each other's throats and nothing is achieved. Number two, everyone would think I was a complete tosser and no one would listen to me. I am so grateful to do what I love, I am always calm on set because I am genuinely so happy to be there.

**F: How do you manage to keep on top of all your children's lives, activities and needs, and does it ever feel too much?**

H: With five kids from one to 16 the most challenging aspect is spotting their different needs as they arise. Kids don't always tell you the stuff they really need so you have to pay attention. I have to check myself sometimes and make sure that I have spent time with every one of them at some point every day, even if it's just on the phone if I'm not at home. The only time it ever feels too much is when I get out of the bath and have to dry myself on a face cloth because they have used all the towels.

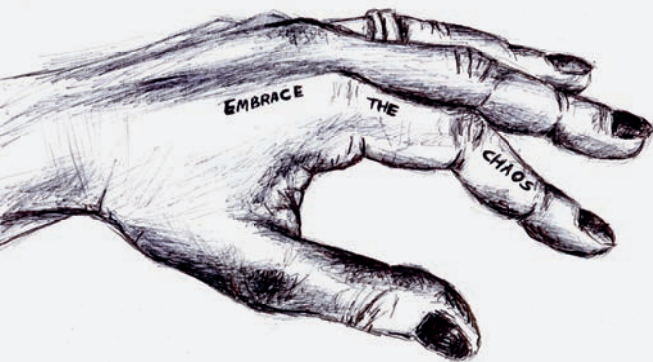
F: How do you find your calm in the chaos of life? Is it an activity? A headspace? A person?

H: I write scripts, immersing myself in imaginary worlds with imaginary people, and I swear that this is what keeps me sane. On the other hand, it could be the reason behind my madness, let's not analyse it too much! I also listen to loud music and dance with the kids. Right now we are learning to dance like Michael Jackson, it's very therapeutic.

F: Can you recall a particular moment of bliss in your life where everything felt serene and calm?

H: After a birthday dinner in Sardinia with my husband, my kids and friends, we went swimming in the sea as the sun went down and I remember feeling truly at peace. Calm moments are very few and far between, but I don't think we should worry too much about that. Often the things that drive us and make us the people we want to be are not born out of calm, but out of complete chaos.

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It is very easy to react without thinking when family members push our buttons. Taking stock of how we react and looking for patterns helps us try to change our thought process and reactions. Complete the following sentences.

Sometimes ..... breaks my calm. When he/she does

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I behave in this way: .....

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I know I don't have the power to change them, so instead I can react in this way:

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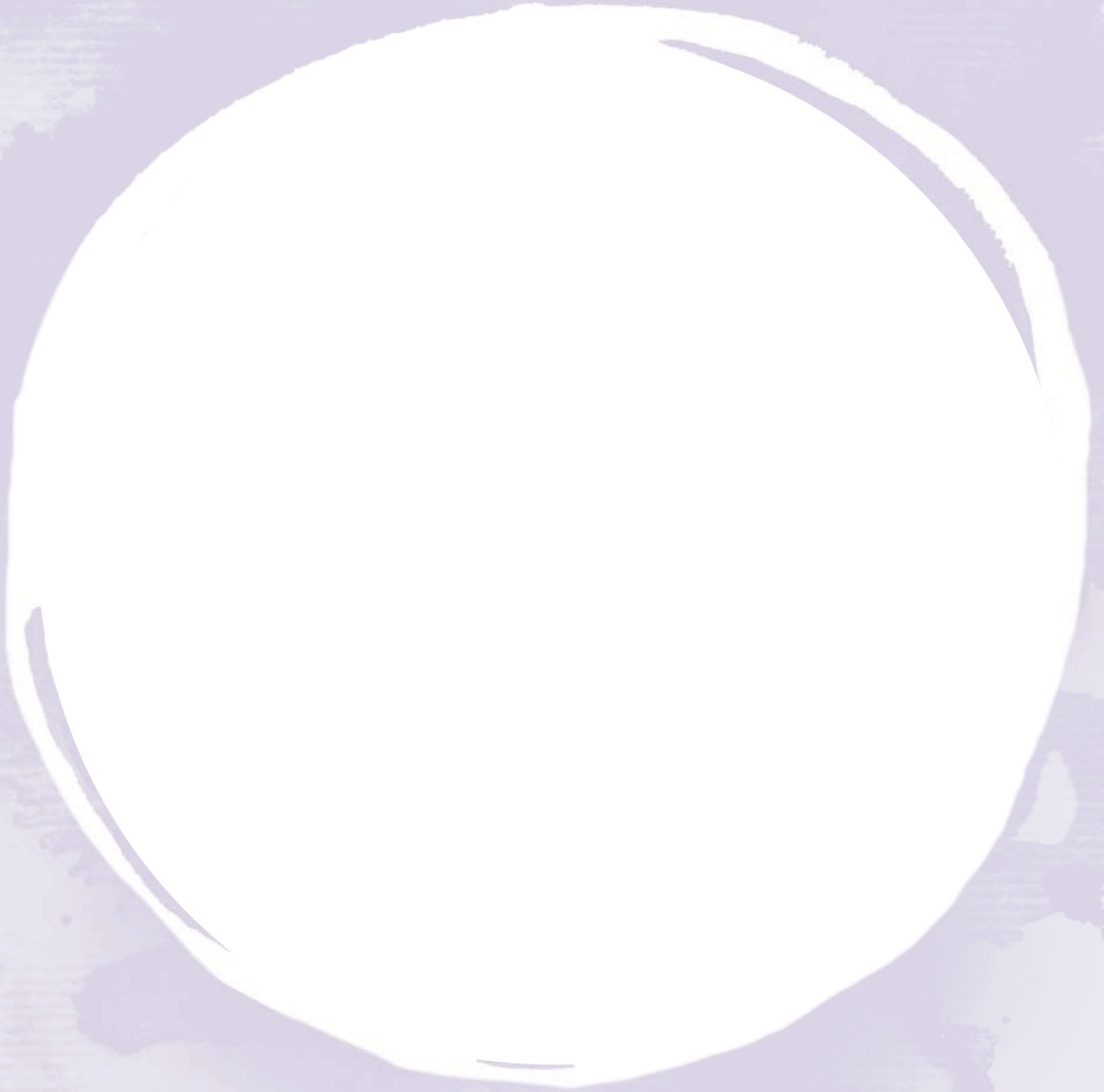
..... which will bring calm back into my life.

One way of diluting stress and rage when someone in your family is frustrating you is to put yourself **in their shoes**. Think more deeply about why they are acting in a certain way and try to think about what is **causing them** to do so. In the first shoe write down the family member and their actions and in the second shoe write down the real reasons you think they're doing it.

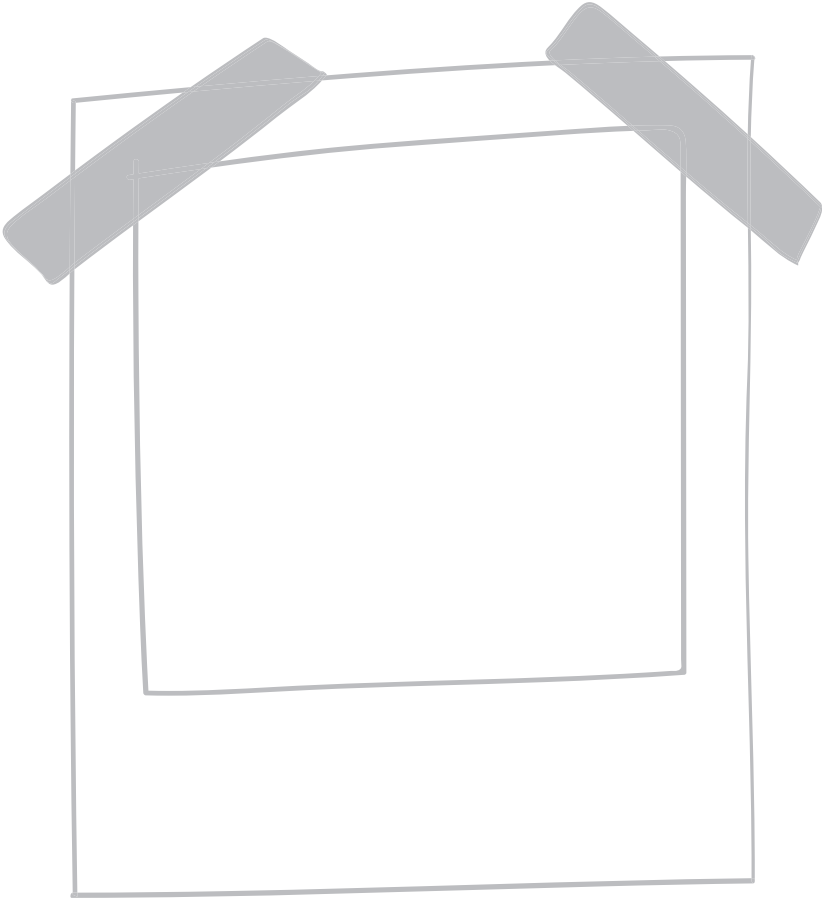


## WHAT DOES A CALM FAMILY LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.



Having great mates is a total gift and something I never take for granted! I love my mates and thank the universe for them every day! Make this your friend gratitude page. Stick a photo of your best mates here and celebrate what they bring you in life.



## HELLO TO . . . REGGIE

One friend I constantly turn to for life chats and good old-fashioned advice is Reggie Yates. My first memory of Reggie is seeped in kindness. I was 15, extremely professionally inexperienced and in wonder of it all. My first ever TV link to camera was with dear Reggie who calmed my nerves and put a big smile on my face. Even now, one look at Reggie's beaming grin with white gnashers on display is enough to make all my problems fade away.

So back to the echoing TV studio, cameras on and crew at the ready. With nerves fully in the driving seat I cocked up my first piece to camera and then stage whispered 'OH SHIT' which warranted a swift telling off from the director. I thought I had ruined my TV career before reaching the end of my first taped sentence.

Take TWO. Reggie started and fluffed his lines and quietly sighed 'OH shit' feigning complacency and making me feel a whole lot calmer. Reggie's faux mess-up made me look less awful and him appear more human to a nervous me.

This is where our friendship was formed – in one chivalrous move to dilute my own shame and embarrassment. This is pretty much how our relationship has continued, with love, care and humour. Reggie has made me laugh to the point of incontinence and has calmed so many worried and wired moments. It's been a friendship of 20 years that I hope will carry on for many more. I feel unbelievably lucky, and it brings so much calm and support to my life.



**F: Hey Reggie. What do you remember about the early days of our friendship?**

R: *The Disney Club* feels like five lifetimes ago, when we had the pleasure of sharing with the great British public probably the most awkward stage of our lives, our teens. When we first met, I was maybe 13 or 14 and had already shot a couple of series with the same crew. That continuity helped me feel comfortable on camera and confident in doing what I saw as the most grown-up bit of the day, the work.

At that stage, what interested me almost as much as interviewing pop stars was the shenanigans off set. *The Disney Club* was special as it was a pack of kids hosting a show that somehow wasn't a disaster. To this day I'll never know how you walked into a pack of spotty,

hormonal and loud plonkers without even breaking a sweat. You were the new girl who wouldn't take any crap and I loved it. Growing up in a house full of women, my four sisters quickly taught me the type of girl you don't mess with and you filled the criteria. You instantly reminded me of my family, which is probably why to this day I still refer to you as Sis. I'd rip the piss out of your Spice Girl Buffalo trainers and you'd kill me for coming out of the dressing room reeking of Lynx Africa deodorant. I remember you feeling part of the TV family very quickly and that sibling-like connection hasn't changed to this day.

**F: I love that you always have time for me and are a brilliant listener, that we can chat passionately about everything from house decor to heartbreak and you never judge or jump to assumptions. What do you get from our friendship?**

R: The best relationships I have are built on a similar world view or level of understanding. As I've developed, the importance of emotional intelligence has almost taken pole position in what I look for in any relationship, be it professional, platonic or romantic. Shared experience, albeit bonding, isn't enough to healthily sustain any relationship for two decades. Our friendship, I feel, has lasted due to its foundations.

When we met, we both knew that the job we were doing could be taken away at any time. That understanding changed our behaviour and relationship with money, fame and the job in exactly the same way. Whenever I looked at how you saw the world, it married with my value system which told me I could trust you in an environment full of shallow and at times bloody scary people.

I've never asked myself what I get from any friendship because I honestly don't have many new ones. Those whom I call friends have grown with me and I think as we've become adults our tastes in footwear and deodorant may have changed, but our values haven't.

F: What do you think makes a solid friendship and does a good one bring calm?

R: As I've always had a complicated relationship with my actual family, I see friends as the family you choose. Moving out at 18 and fighting for my own sense of independence, the people I turned to for help or advice usually weren't blood.

Trust and honesty for better or worse live as the backbone to everything I have of value in my life, especially my friendships.

F: How hard do you think it is to give a friend honest advice, especially if it may not be the answer they're looking for?

R: I spent years doing what I was told professionally while ignoring what I felt. The minute I gained a level of confidence in my gut, taste and opinion, my entire career changed for the better.

I avoid like the plague receiving advice from people who haven't lived or experienced the thing they claim to be an expert about. So when it comes to the people I love and sharing with them my take on any given situation, I try to see their issue through the lens of an experience of my own. It can be challenging, but I have to be honest with friends and myself if they come to me for help. There's nothing worse than the friend who says 'I told you so' – when they never actually did!

F: I love how calming it can be to meet face to face with someone and really connect. Chatting and switching up ideas feels important. How important do you think it is to make an effort and put physical face time into the equation?

R: Face time with friends I find essential. It may sound super Maya Angelou, but that shit is soul food to me! I go as far as looking at my calendar months in advance and planning out days where friends and I can go for dinner or drinks.



I spent years working on myself and what I could be doing to be a better man, but the minute everything clicked into place was when I realised it's not actually about me. Investing in people is one of the most important things in my life and that investment, I feel, is just as important with friends and strangers.

To allow a busy schedule to prevent investing in the right things just isn't good enough. To make time for a friend to simply ask whether they're okay is so important, as we all need to unpack and learn with people we can trust.

Since making the effort to give my energy to people or the issues I care about, I've felt nothing but support from friends and family without even asking for it. That return I don't see as being out of obligation – I honestly believe that's how things work.



When acquaintances and people in our lives bring us down, feel toxic, or make us react in a certain way it is good to have a list of rules to try and stick to. This always helps me when I'm navigating confrontation or am trying to defer drama. Mine go a little something like this:

- *I will not talk about the person in question.*
- *I will not allow them to take away my happiness.*
- *I will not feel fear around them or worry what they can take from me.*
- *I will fill my heart with those I love instead.*

I will then look back to this in times of need. Write below your own list of rules and when you feel you need them refer to this book or take a photo of them on your phone so they're always close by.

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In the middle of Bonny's house is a large terrace that overlooks the ocean, all framed by a network of hanging crystals and wind chimes. There are so many other beating hearts in this home – I'm not sure how many pets reside at this hillside paradise but I certainly always feel outnumbered. This serene terrace is where Bonny and her family and friends eat freshly picked figs, the sweetest melon I've ever tasted and local creamy yogurt. This is also where we have spent some delicious moments chatting and listening to each other. Each summer I so enjoy being bathed in Bonny's energy and husky storyteller voice, all the perfect natural antidote to London life. Instant calm. Bonny has had a thousand adventures, has followed her gut and gone with the twists and turns that life has presented her with. She lives totally in the moment and without concern for how her life may differ to others. I'm constantly inspired by this wonderful friend, whether it be on balmy evenings when I'm treated to juicy tales of the 70s or over email where she'll tell me how her many pets are faring and how the quiet Ibiza winters move along with grace and serenity.

Let's hear Bonny's take on life and calm.

**F: Whenever I come to your beautiful home I always feel an instant wash of calm over my body and mind. Would you say you feel calm most of the time?**

**B: Most of the time.**

**F: Have you got calmer as the years have passed by?**

**B: Definitely.**

**F: When you've been hit with unexpected adversity over the years, how have you reacted?**

**B: If the adversity is not of a personal nature – such as living through the experience of a major typhoon, or earthquake (done both!) or having to deal with a scarcity of income – then I have no fear! I trust implicitly that all will be well, and in the meantime, I do whatever needs to be done.**

However, I totally crumble when the adversity affects my emotions – rejection and betrayal in relationships, loss of loved ones.

**F: When you look back over your life from where you are now, do you think you'd react differently in those moments?**

B: Looking back over my life there are obvious milestones along the way where a different choice would have led to a different outcome. But whatever the choice that was made in the moment, that was the one for that moment. At that time you don't know what you don't know.

**F: How do you personally route back to calm?**

B: Stop. Breathe! Feel gratitude and love for Life. Send love to all those who are suffering. Feel Love . . . Love . . . Love . . . Gratitude!

**F: What is calm to you? A place? A person? A thought? A discipline?**

B: Calm to me is a state of being. Simply being; floating along down the river of life. It can be felt in a place that transmits a powerful calm energy, and in the company of a person who is peaceful and centred. Calm thoughts bring calm. As a discipline it's the practice of the lessons of 'Acceptance' and 'Letting Go'.

**F: What things in life throw you off balance and make you feel far from calm?**

B: Arrogance, ignorance, despotism and inequality between the sexes push my buttons. There are obviously many major issues that are challenging our existence. Listing them loses the calm!

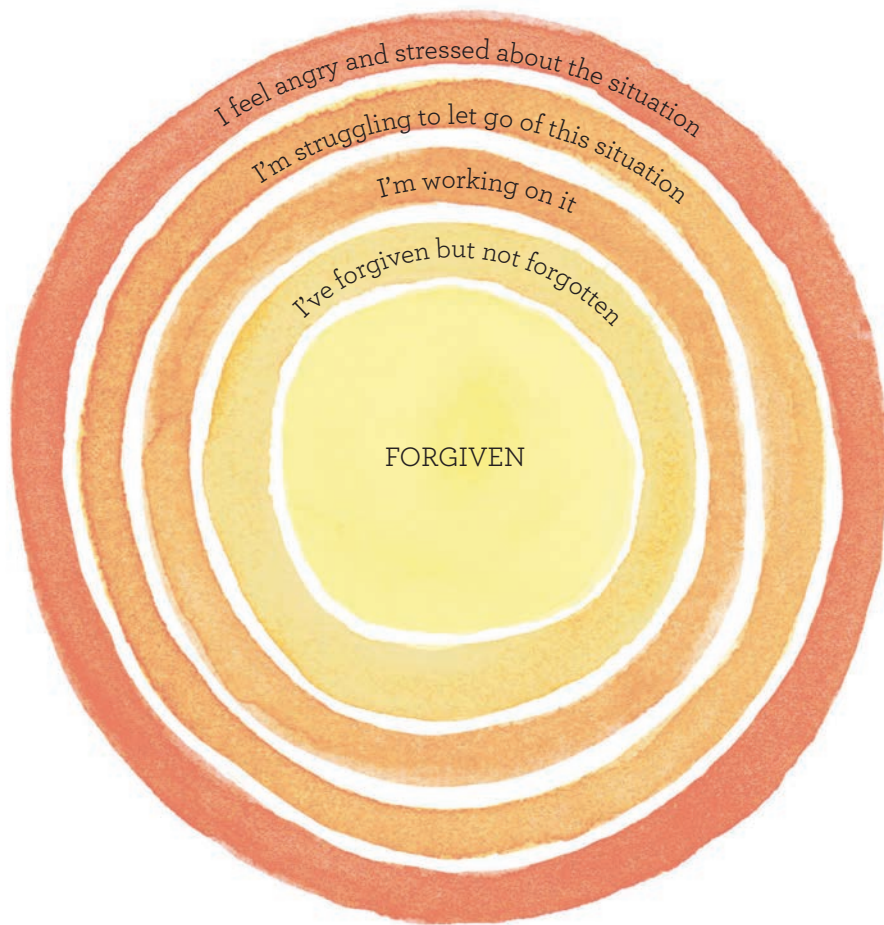
F: One of things I love about you the most is the fact that you live 100 per cent in the moment. How important do you think this is to your wellbeing?

B: Thanks to Eckhart Tolle's brilliant book, *The Power of Now*, and The Guide's teachings in The Little Guide Book, I have been learning the practice of living in the moment and this has profoundly transformed my life. When living as fully present in the moment as possible, there is a different rhythm to life. Our society has conditioned us to value who we are by what we do. There is a constant pressure to achieve. This is an insidious fear for our survival. By focusing on the present moment there is no room for fear. There is just the being. Being present. Being aware of one's part in the miracle that is Life. Living in love, harmony and gratitude.

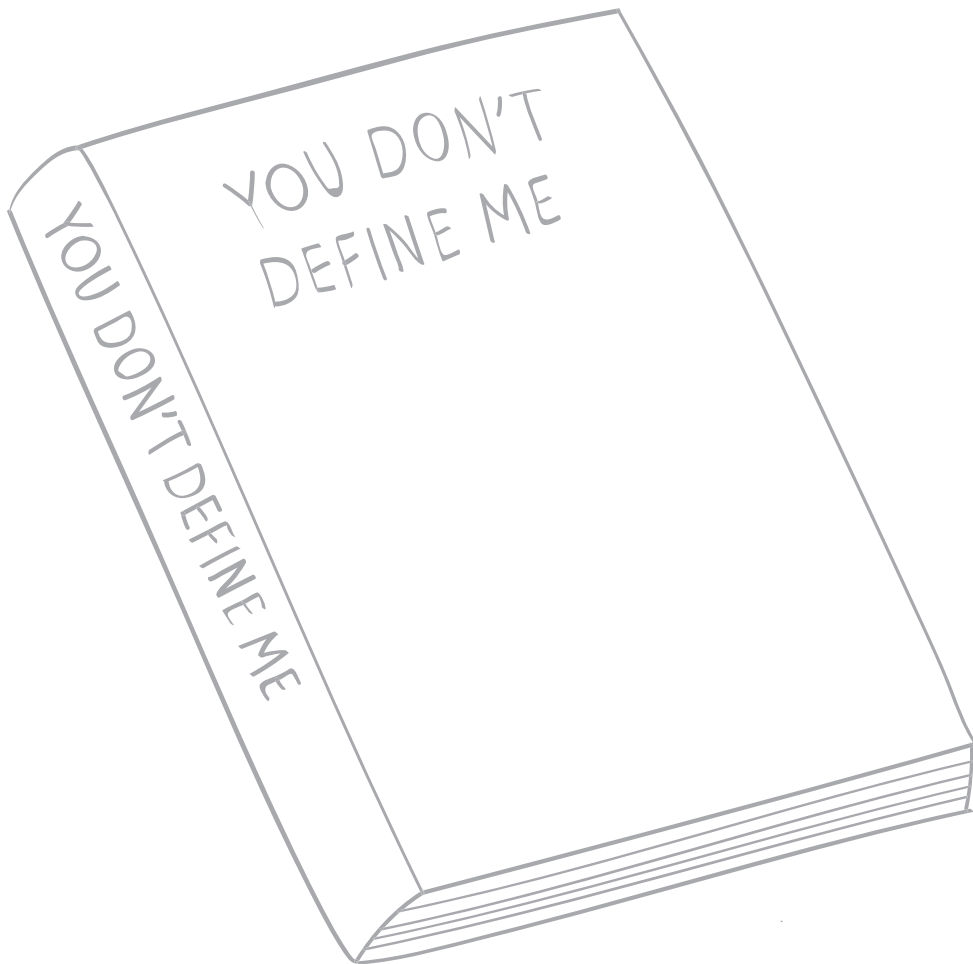
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Forgiving others is very tricky at times as situations are loaded and some people are in your life whom you would rather were not. But **forgiveness** essentially frees us from them, so it's always worth it no matter how tough. Mark where you believe you are on the **ripples of forgiveness** and see how you could progress to the next ring in.



Sometimes it is easy to believe that our past mistakes or history define us. It's time to truly remember that we can **write our own story**. If there are some memories or a person who you feel takes over your head, write it down here and realise it **doesn't define you** - it's a story that you can rewrite.



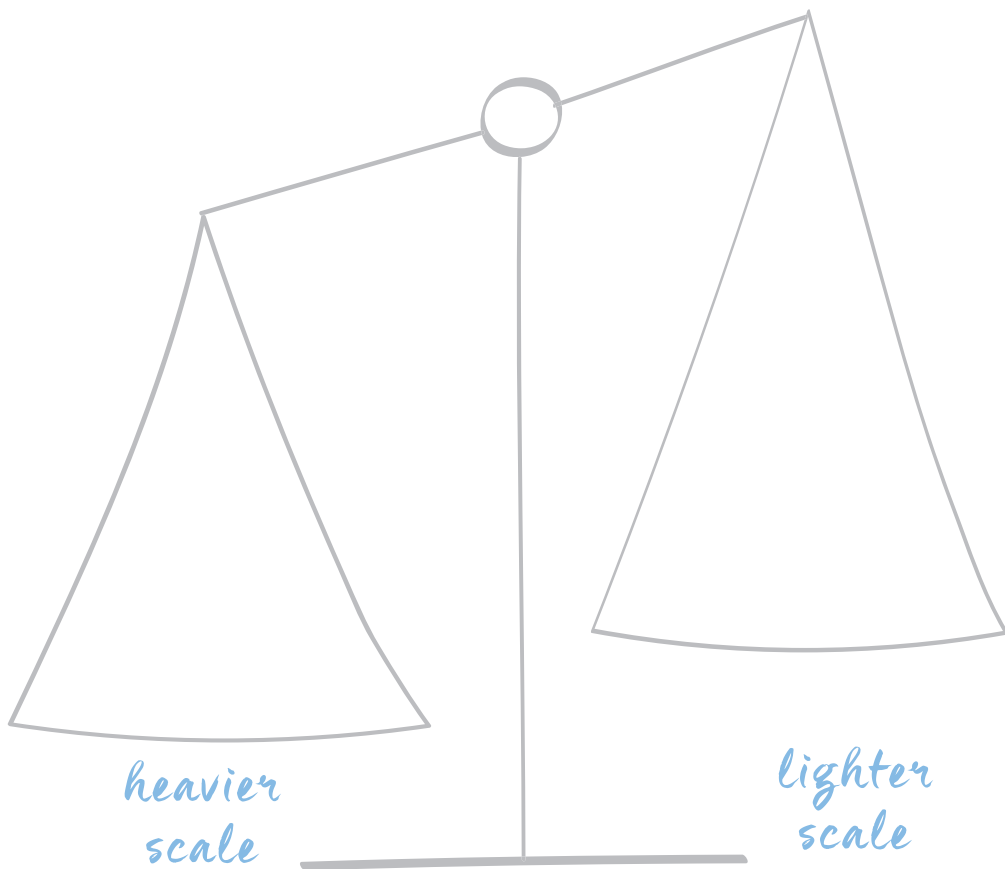
## WHAT DOES A CALM FRIENDSHIP LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.





How **balanced** do you believe your life is? Do you work way too much and let the rest of your life suffer? Do you let stress in because of this? Do you shy away from work because you have fears of failing or are just simply not sure what you want out of it all? Write down what you believe takes up **most of your time** in the heavier scale and put all other activities in the other. Then look at how you might be able to **balance them** out.



Having dreams isn't foolish or unrealistic. We all **deserve to have dreams** and to believe in them. This doesn't mean we can expect them to happen quickly or even as we imagined but hey . . . **anything is possible!** Once you have a clear goal of what your dream is, it can be a lot of fun walking that bit closer to it. Write down your main work **goal or dream** at the top of the steps, then write down a few things you believe could lead you in the **right direction** on the steps climbing up to it.





balancing it all. He is a classic example of someone who has risen to the top without drama or fuss, proving you can achieve success and a lot of love without pushing and shoving your way there. I thought Woo would be the perfect person to chat to about success, determination and keeping calm throughout it all.

“ F: Hey Woo, I've known you for over a decade now and have so enjoyed watching you soar in your career. When we first met you were working at Shamrock Social Club with a beginner's experience but big dreams. Did you always believe you would be the best and so in demand when you were starting out?

W: Though I never actually thought I'd be where I am now and in my current situation . . . I always knew I would do my best and work hard no matter what, and this would lead me to do something great, no matter what it was. It was always a mantra I had and now I feel blessed to see it come to fruition.

F: You have always been very focused and dedicated, do you think that's what has allowed you to gain such popularity and status in the tattoo community?

W: To be honest, I think it was a bit of good timing with the rise of social media, the sincerity of my work and the reinterpretation of tattoo works we are familiar with. The aesthetic drew interest, and the digital realm spread the work.

F: When you started to succeed how did those around you react? Were any friends wary of your success? Did anyone start to treat you differently?

W: All my close friends and family were so supportive and energised. They were happy to see positive things shifting into place for me and I was always grateful. But as with all things, some people resent it and that's fine... I get it. But for the most part everyone has been great.

F: Although you are at the top of your game you seem to have remained particularly calm throughout your journey to the top. You have never come across as pushy or desperate to succeed, it's all been done with an air of calm. Is that the reality?

W: I think I'd like to believe it is! But sometimes it's not even the push to succeed or a constant effort to get to the top, it's just simply the effort to make the best of my work and be happy with myself. At the end of the day, if those things make me happy and my family is in a good place, then I'm okay with that . . . the subsequent great opportunities that come, are to me, maybe a lasting impression of that work and the rewards that come from that.

F: How do you stay calm at work when the pressure is on?

W: It's the only situation where I feel calm. I have discovered it is a very relaxing mindset for me in the chair.

F: In this day and age I believe many get sucked into believing success relies purely on status and money rather than how much you enjoy your work. What does success mean to you personally?

W: It's true, and I feel it sometimes . . . it's tough, especially in a city like LA. But before I get too caught up I always remember, true success for me is my family and their happiness . . . as long as that is right, nothing else matters.

F: Have your goals formed organically over the years or have you had a set plan?

W: To be honest, a bit of both. Pretty much I have been trying to manoeuvre the planned and unplanned events in my career and hope they work together seamlessly.

F: What else do you want to achieve in the future?

W: I have so many ideas and creative projects that I still want to get out there, and just grow this brand organically and correctly as much as I can.



When we feel stressed at work there is often a way to help dilute these feelings if we stop and think **outside of the box**. Write down below what you feel most stressed about, then look at the list to see if any of these options can help with what you're dealing with.

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Can you ask for help from another?

Can you take time for yourself in your day? Perhaps a walk to work, walk at lunchtime or stroll home afterwards.

Can you slow down and not worry about how fast everyone else is working?

Can you switch off fully when you get home and not mention work to those you live with?

Can you work out who is applying the most pressure to you? Is it your boss, your colleagues or you? Can you talk to them about it?

## WHAT DOES CALM WORK LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.





Calm spaces don't have to be a **long haul flight away** or anywhere fancy at all. It's all about creating an atmosphere that feels right to you.

Is there a space in your house that **feels** calm? .....

What **colours** make you feel calm? .....

Does that space need a clear-out to create **more space**? .....

Brainstorm some ideas of how you can make that space your own **utopia**:

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## HELLO TO . . . ALICE AND LAURA

Creating a calm space is of paramount importance for two friends of mine who regularly host supper clubs for groups of excited strangers. Alice Levine and Laura Jackson are not only brilliant broadcasters on our screens and on radios but they're also the hostesses with the mostesses . . . Wait, that doesn't work, but you get my point. They've been friends for years and both love cooking and entertaining, so they started up their own supper club which they do for fun alongside their careers. Their inventive food concoctions teamed with their delicate eye for all-round comfort and class has won over tonnes of feasted fans. Their supper clubs are visually fairytale gorgeous with Pinterest-board-worthy table settings, soft candlelight and colour palettes that instantly relax. Who better to hit up for some advice on how to set the scene for a relaxed and calm evening?



**F: Hello ladies, how are you? I'm constantly in awe of your supper clubs and how beautiful they are. Every inch of your gatherings look elegant, chic and so very calming. How did you start out creating these nights?**

A: It all began as a challenge – can we open a 'restaurant' for the night in Laura's flat and have 20 people come and eat? Can we make it look great and taste great? Can we make people feel like they've had a completely unique experience?

L: We normally start with the season as a 'theme', that way we can ensure that we are using the freshest ingredients for the food, as seasonality and provenance is really important to us. With the season defining the food, we also look into what flowers are in around that time too, using their colours as a base for the evening in terms of tablecloths and tableware.

### F: What is the main aim when you are organising one of your nights?

A: People having a good time is definitely the main aim. The food, of course, is important and the space and the table looking eye-catching and inviting is key, but mainly we want people to go home at the end of the evening saying they've had fun and met some great people.

L: We love to bring different people together, as food really unites people of all different walks of life. You can get the most diverse, interesting people around a kitchen table with a plate of food and it unites everyone around it. It's really powerful. We aim to bring people together through their shared love of food, to chat and enjoy a night of laughter with new friends.

### F: As well as delicious food, how important is the setting and colour palette for your evenings?

A: We play around with colour a lot. We've done serene schemes using mainly white (the napkins, tablecloth, crockery etc.) with the addition of a subtle pop of colour from dusty pink hydrangeas, for example. Or we've gone for something moodier with indigo linen and raffia place mats.

L: We spend a lot of time looking for fabrics, place mats and vintage crockery so that each evening we devise feels special. It makes the guests feel so valued when they each have their own personalised place setting – all the little extras go a really long way.

### F: Which colours do you find calming when you're working out the scheme for an evening?

A: Pale, plain and neutral don't have to be the only ways to do calming – we've had dusty pink blush tones, dove grey and navy as the main palette, but we love to go bolder and brighter with clashing prints, too, which can be equally inviting.

L: I think nothing too busy, something really clean, simple and chic is always very calming. Light pastel colours I would say have the most calming effect, and if you're feeling like adding a pop of colour it's easy to do so with candlesticks, platters or even gold cutlery.

**F: As well as colour, what else is important for getting the right mood?**

A: Lighting. No one has ever had a lovely time sat under a 100-watt bulb in the central light. Use incidental lighting with lamps and candles.

And music – silence can make people feel edgy but blaring tunes can stop people from chatting freely, so volume is as important as the music choice itself.

L: Music and lighting are key for creating the perfect mood. Lighting needs to be candlelight or low-level lamps, no bright overhead light bulbs and no spotlights. Music needs to be loud enough so that it creates a little buzz, but quiet enough for people to talk over. My favourite two fail-safe, easy listening soundtracks are from the films *Dirty Dancing* and *Amelie*.

**F: How do you both keep calm in the chaos of having to cook and cater for big numbers?**

L: Well, there are times when we do not feel calm at all, but it's so lovely working together because we help each other to feel relaxed even when it can be really stressful. Before guests come we normally take 10 minutes to do our make-up and get dressed out of our cooking clothes. These few minutes allow us to 'get in the zone'.

**F: Thank you so much ladies! When can I come for tea?**

”

We all hoard and hold on to certain objects, photos, or items of clothing because we have **emotional attachment** to them. Some people find letting go of stuff very traumatic and it can hold them back hugely. Others simply need to really think about what they need and want in their personal space and perhaps just a little time to actually sort through it all.

Write in the sack below what you know you're **holding on to** - is there anything in there that you don't need that you could give away?



Music is always my biggest remedy and healer when I'm feeling stressed. I let songs drench me and revive me and I love their healing power. These songs always bring me back to my place of calm! Here is my calm playlist. What is yours? Write your list below.

### MY CALM PLAYLIST

Sampha – 'Too Much'  
George Harrison – 'My Sweet Lord'  
Baz Luhrmann – 'Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen)'  
Neil Young – 'Razor Love'  
Bon Iver – '29 #Strafford APTS'  
Elton John – 'Mellow'  
Fleet Foxes – 'Blue Ridge Mountains'  
Oasis – 'Champagne Supernova'  
Tracy Chapman – 'For You'  
Groove Armada – 'At the river'  
Laura Mvula – 'She'  
Led Zeppelin – 'The Rain Song'  
Otis Redding – '(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay'  
Bat For Lashes – 'Travelling Woman'  
Bob Marley – 'Three Little Birds'  
Chris Stapleton – 'Traveller'  
Nick Mulvey – 'Mountain to Move'  
London Grammar – 'Rooting For You'

### YOUR CALM PLAYLIST

## HELLO TO . . . KATE

For advice on how to declutter, I thought I'd speak to expert Kate Ibbotson.



**F: Kate, you're a professional declutterer, what exactly does this entail?**

K: I work one-to-one with clients who are struggling with clutter and disorganisation – in their homes and workspaces on the surface but in their lives and minds when we delve deeper. The process is quite structured:

- I start by helping them create a vision for their space by honing in on their unique style and personality type.
- Then the physical declutter takes place through questioning whether an item adds true value to their life compared to the space it takes up.
- I put in place organisational systems, routines and appropriate storage which ensures the smooth running of their house.
- I have links with different charities, i.e. homeless shelters, food banks and animal charities so I can donate almost any item on the client's behalf.

We don't just address the physical stuff – everyone carries around mental and emotional clutter, so a big part of my job is coaxing out the reasons why clients accumulate things or fail to let things go.

**F: How much do you think the space around us impacts our state of mind?**

K: There's no doubt that living in a mess can lead to stress. Being surrounded by lots of physical possessions can bombard the senses and drain energy. I also don't believe it's possible to relax at the end of the day in a cluttered home. This environment would send signals to the brain that there is still work to do, and it creates anxiety because it feels like such a huge mountain to climb.

Clutter has other negative effects which can increase general stress levels. Time – surely the most precious commodity we have – can be lost searching for misplaced possessions, and it also costs money. It's very common to buy a duplicate of something if a possession is misplaced. I also regularly see people buy more possessions to make themselves feel better about living in a cluttered home.

Possibly the most insidious cost of clutter, though, is the guilt and embarrassment it can bring upon people. This may cause a reluctance to invite others into the home, or anxiety when visitors are due or when people drop by unannounced.

In contrast, when we surround ourselves with possessions we find useful and/or beautiful and when we follow simple systems for maintaining order, we not only feel inspired and energised, we also give ourselves more opportunity for psychological growth. For example, we might feel creative and start a project and we are more productive because of lower stress levels and fewer distractions. People even report that relationships improve, they make healthier food and lifestyle choices and they sleep better – all because of exerting positive control over their environment.

## F: What are the reasons why people find it hard to create order and clear stuff at home?

K: The number one reason for failing to create order is having too much stuff in the first place. We need to streamline and simplify first because otherwise we could be organising forever. But we also need to think, 'Why do we have too much stuff?'

Older members of society often have the 'make do and mend' post-war mentality ingrained in them which younger people inherit. Taking care of belongings saves money and encourages an appreciation of them, but the concept can be taken too far. Some people hang on to duplicates or possessions which don't work properly or are no longer to their taste.

There's also the rise of cheap retail. There's nothing inherently wrong with cheap goods (if they were made ethically) but people tend to end up with a larger volume of goods because of the low price tag. And the rise of cheap retail MIXED with a waste-not want-not mentality is a very cluttered combination.

Sellers want us to be happy with our purchase, but very soon afterwards they want us to be dissatisfied! They wouldn't make any money if we were content in the long term. Most people



aren't immune to clever marketing and at some point they have been sucked in by hype.

A psychological theory could shed some light on why one purchase tends to lead to another. The Diderot effect refers to the process whereby a purchase or gift creates dissatisfaction with existing possessions and environment, provoking a potentially spiralling pattern of consumption. An example would be buying a new sofa and then wanting a new coffee table to match.

Another simple explanation for rising levels of possessions might be that these days the population takes for granted entire classes of possessions that didn't exist in years gone by. Children's toys tend to be marketed with an end game to 'collect them all'. Electronics come with various add-ons and wires/cables (isn't it so common to have drawers full of these things?). More products have simply been invented. All this contributes to cluttered homes.

People also gather stuff to soothe and protect themselves, relying on it for confidence, authority, escapism, freedom and fun. Possessions are clearly something everyone needs but there is a limit. If we don't feel 'good enough' internally, 'things' are just a cover-up for our insecurities. The truth is, we can't buy contentment, we have to cultivate it ourselves – from within – otherwise it's just trying to fill a hole that can never be filled.

### F: What are your own rules about clearing out?

K: I follow some pretty simple rules. I find that, once the initial full-house declutter is done, they are quick and easy to follow:

- Being intentional about what I buy. I love shopping but if I have even the tiniest doubt about a purchase, I won't make it, because I know it's going to end up as clutter. If unsure, I'll exercise a 'purchase pause' – holding off and seeing how I feel in a week.
- Assign a home to each possession. Everything within the house will have a permanent resting place. It helps to use drawer dividers and storage containers for smaller items, and labelling can work well, too.
- I keep a large bag in the understairs cupboard specifically for charity shop donations. When I realise something is surplus to requirements, it goes straight in there. With a

family of four, I find that around a bin liner per month goes out – I think of my home as having a turnover!

- Each possession has to add value to life in some way. Either because it's useful – like a potato peeler – or because it makes me smile – like a handwritten note or piece of art. If an item holds a negative memory or I can find something else to do the same job, I'd rather have the space it takes up instead.
- Return possessions to their 'home' after use. This will reduce the need for constant tidying up. I follow the mantra: 'don't put it down, put it away'.
- I don't buy in bulk. I try to use up toiletries and food in the freezer. I figure that the worst that can happen is that I have to pop out to a shop for something essential and it's easier to keep track of what I have this way.

#### F: How do you work with someone who is emotionally hoarding objects/clothing/paperwork?

K: It's not as simple as just getting them to have a clear-out. I get to the root of why they can't let go or why they are accumulating too much. Are they a perfectionist? Does this stem from not feeling good enough? Are they delaying making a decision about an item? Does this stem from anxiety? Do they feel unfulfilled so they are looking to possessions to provide that excitement? I always start by dealing with less-emotional possessions such as the contents of a kitchen drawer. We then work our way up to books, clothes and sentimental items.

#### F: What should we be aiming for to create a calm environment at home?

K: It's important to have a clear vision in mind. So I recommend looking for inspiration in magazines or online. What the individual's personality is like or what their hobbies are will determine what storage is most appropriate. It's important that the furniture chosen is not too big for the rooms as this can cause a cluttered feel. Wall storage, furniture that doubles up for another use and adding shelving can all make a massive difference. Possessions should be easy to reach and stored near to where we use them – this will mean we're more likely to return them to their place after use.



If you feel stressed out in busy places, repeat a simple sentence in your head that allows you to focus on getting back to your place of calm. What is your personal calming mantra?

MY MANTRA

*I am safe, I am loved*

YOUR MANTRA

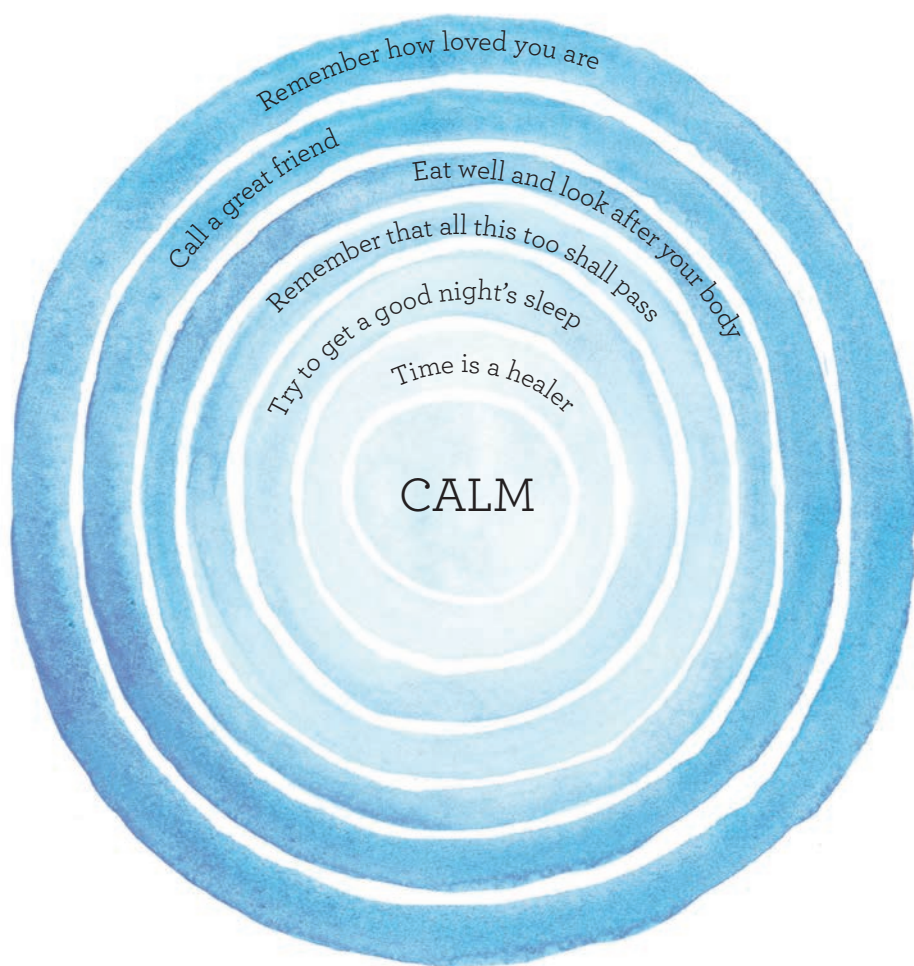
## WHAT DOES A CALM ENVIRONMENT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.





When the unexpected leaps out of the dark it can whip us speedily away from **calm**. If you feel like you're trapped in a place of trauma can you start to work yourself back into the **centre of these ripples**, to your own calm? Try to work through some of these suggestions to see if they help.



## THE PAST

All of us fear things in the future due to our past. It's a work in progress to not let things that have previously occurred affect us now but it is possible. The first step is recognising the memories that determine portions of our lives now. On the timeline below fill in the years that are relevant to you and write down the past events that have affected how you live today. In the boxes closer to 'Today' write the occasions and worries that you know are affected by these past events.



## TODAY

## WHAT DOES A CALM FUTURE LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Write one word, or draw a picture here that sums it up?

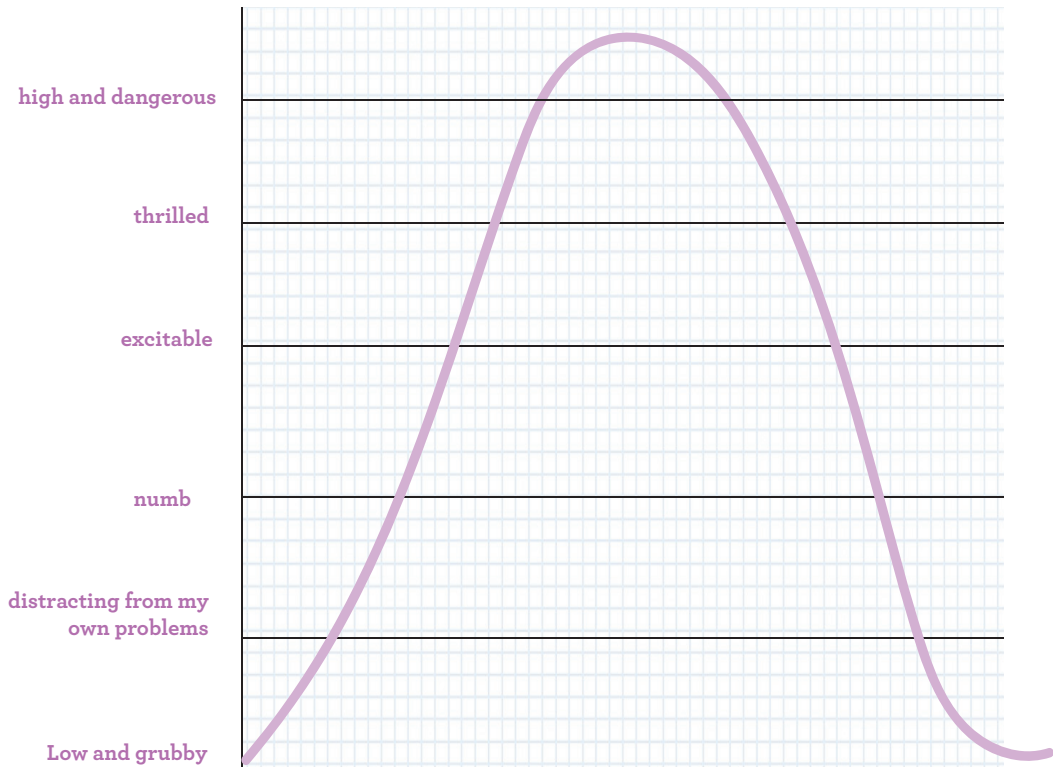






Gossip is so seductive and **near impossible** to avoid at times. We get such a high and instant rush from it as we lose our footing from calm and forget that the oppositeside of the high is waiting imminently on the other side. Write down who you regularly gossip about and notice how it makes you **really feel**. Do you feel an initial sugar rush high from it, but come crashing down on the other side? Or do you feel like you need a good bath when the rant is over? Mark on the graph where the gossip takes you.

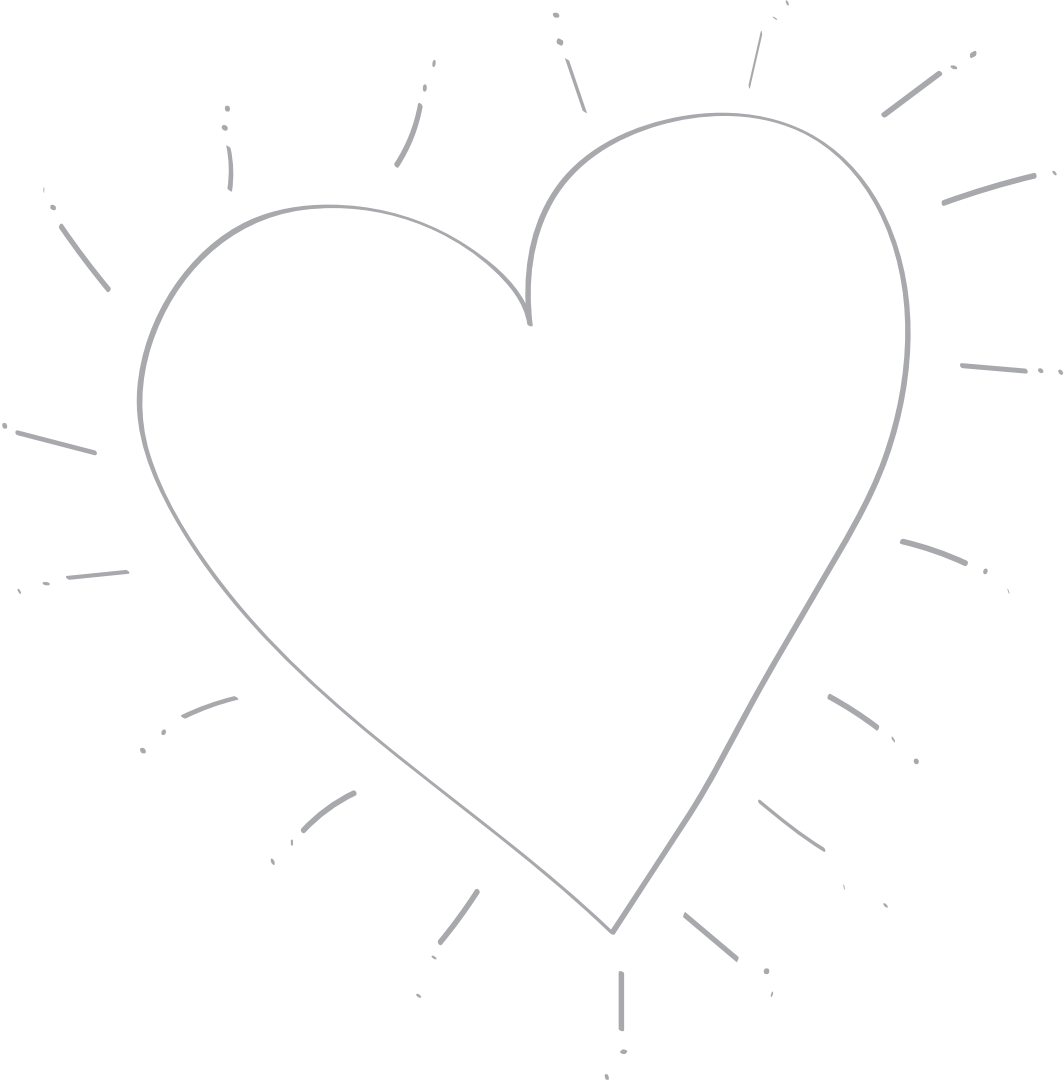
I gossip about .....



We all feel judged in one way or another by other people, but more often than not that judgment is only **coming from ourselves**. Others may highlight our weaknesses but really we are the ones giving ourselves a hard time. Give yourself a **pat on the back**: write down everything you've done, however small, that you're proud of below.



What moments in your life have felt completely magical and full of love?



## HELLO TO . . . RUSSELL

Russell Brand needs very little introduction, as you will all be familiar with his incredible quick-witted and capacious vocabulary, self-deprecating tendencies and free-flowing locks. He has been on our screens and radios for nearly two decades and has had gargantuan levels of success, which of course in his line of work brings fame. I have known Russell on and off over the years and have always been intrigued as to how he has kept such a cool head whilst being in the centre of continuous outside judgment and assumption. When in the audience of his 2010 stand-up show I greatly admired how he turned particular career lows into a moment of self-deprecating humour. He has a remarkable way of making fun of himself and the events that surround his life and mines the humour out of it all. Everyone has an opinion about him yet he remains calm and focused on what he loves to do and wants to achieve. I find this massively inspirational, as viewing his own focus from afar makes me want to care even less about others' opinions, which in turn is very freeing and calming! Also, he is bloody clever . . . so . . .



**F: Hello Russell. How calm would you say you are today in comparison to in your twenties and thirties?**

R: Compared to that maniac I'm as serene as Jesus. Which is ironic because in my twenties and thirties I thought I was Jesus.

**F: You've experienced fame to an extreme extent. Does being in the epicentre of public furore make for a chaotic existence?**

R: When you take it seriously and allow it to form your identity and nourish your self-worth, which I did, it does.

**F: How do you cope with outside opinion? Does it ever affect you in a negative way?**

R: Yes it does, which I think is natural. We are social animals and without other people, who are we? The important thing is to have a source of nutrition that is not controlled by others.

F: You've taken breaks from social media but now use it to seemingly have fun (singing to your dog Bear) and also to talk about subjects you're very passionate about. Do you enjoy that public transaction?

R: I am a performer, I love to show off and I love to help people (when I'm not feeling self-obsessed) so social media, used wisely, can be great.

F: How do you keep calm when everyone else seems to be kicking up a fuss about your own narrative?

R: By recognising that what other people think about me is none of my business. This sense of independence is easier to achieve when I feel inwardly connected and I am not looking to external resources for validation.

F: Why do you think others get so involved in a story that has nothing to do with them directly?

R: Gossip as a means to understand your place in a social system is a vital tool. This tool has been overused and overwrought in order to keep people focused on consuming rather than inner evolution. If people feel at ease they buy less stuff.

F: Finally, Russell, what does calm mean to you?

R: Calm means being happy where I am, with who I am and who I'm with.

F: THANKS for your time and energy!



**WHAT DOES CALM AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD LOOK  
LIKE TO YOU?**

Write one word or draw a picture here that sums it up.

