

Be Phenomenal *Women*

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Amy Brammell/ITV

Be Phenomenal Women

Thanks to many of you, our first issue of *Be Phenomenal Women* was a huge success.

It made me realise that our instinct to produce something positive for women over 35 was correct and that lots of our readers actually want to become involved with providing some very important content and I would like to extend that offer to you all again - without readers getting involved and telling us what you want to read, and even providing some, it's just a vanity project for us!

Christmas is well behind us now and as we move into spring I'm hoping that it will bring with it a healthier community, not free from, but living side by side with Covid and managing the spread of this still sometimes deadly disease.

As someone who has health issues I would urge you all to be mindful of those who are still frightened, and rightly so, of catching the virus and who may feel very vulnerable around others, especially in confined spaces. I'm aware of some women who are still sheltering, physically but also emotionally. This is not to be batted away as some being over sensitive: it's real to them and should be respected.

While we have been moving into a post Covid world, just as we saw some hope for the future, we have been shocked out of our complacency by the war in Ukraine.

It is truly devastating to watch the news each day and see scenes reminiscent of World War 2. No one could have imagined that war would once again come to Europe. Even in a world as rocky as it has been over the past few years, it still stunned many of us.

It's difficult to watch the news. There's many other wars going on right now: Yemen, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria and it can become overwhelmingly painful to see such suffering, so please reach out to someone if you are feeling that sense of despair. Just sharing your concerns can make them smaller.

So, let's end on a positive. Take a look around you and see passed the darkness and look for small signs in nature that better times are ahead. Little flowers are poking their heads up through the frost and birds are chirping to wish you a good morning. There's always something to hang on to if we look hard enough.

Namaste.



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An, Amazing Group of Women,

They've carved out careers on screen over six decades and after almost two years of being apart, the presenting powerhouse of female hosts on Good Morning Britain, Lorraine, This Morning and Loose Women have featured together in a new ITV image and promo to mark International Women's Day.

The super accomplished female cast of presenters were photographed by Amy Brammall earlier this month and the promo to accompany the new image will air across ITV from Saturday night (26th February) in the run up to International Women's Day on 8th March.

From one of the first ever female broadcasters in their ranks (Gloria Hunniford), the first ever female rector of Dundee University (Lorraine Kelly) to waterskiing the channel (Christine Lampard) they have accrued multiple achievements.

Between them, they've reported on the biggest news events worldwide over the last 50 years, including 9/11, Madeline McCann's disappearance, Lockerbie, Princess Diana's death, Dunblane and the Manchester bombing.

They hold in their number a two-time TRIC News Presenter of the Year (Susanna Reid), a television excellence award for coverage of the Westminster attacks (Ranvir Singh, Golden Nymph for Live Breaking News in 2017). There's also a lawmaker (Linda Robson), one of the first female newspaper editors (Janet Street-Porter) and several charity patrons, of organisations like Scope and those tackling knife crime.

They kept us informed and entertained in good measure across the Pandemic and they have brought joy to our screens with coverage of royal weddings, royal babies, the London 2012 Olympics, people scared of custard, and The Rock, Beyonce, George Michael, Hugh Jackman and of course Alison Hammond's eternally joyous and viral interview with Harrison Ford and Ryan Gosling - which has over 16 million views worldwide.

Emma Gormley, Managing Director of ITV Daytime said: *"I'm beyond proud to work alongside this amazing group of women, who both individually and collectively have accrued an incredible array of broadcasting achievements. Their experience and expertise in front of camera is second to none and this year's International Women's day is the perfect opportunity to celebrate them all."*



Sophie Morgan

Sophie is radically changing representation of disability on television and is one of the first female TV presenters in the world with a physical disability. Off screen and on the airwaves, she hosts the podcast *Equal Too: Achieving Disability Equality*. Featuring stimulating conversations around key issues surrounding disability, the series sets new standards for how we think about and discuss the subject. Her incredible journey from a life-changing accident to one of the most influential disabled leaders in the country, will see Sophie publish her debut book, *Driving Forwards* in March 2022.



Lorraine Kelly

Best known for her strong Scottish accent and chirpy, sunny disposition Lorraine Kelly has been on our TV screens since 1983 when she joined TV-am as Scotland Correspondent before going on to present *Good Morning Britain* in 1984. She currently presents *Lorraine* each morning on ITV but has made guest appearances on a variety of shows including *Coronation Street* in 2019. In 2012 she was awarded an OBE and then again in 2020, a CBE. Lorraine is one of the UK's most prominent supporters of LGBTQ+ issues and has described herself as "a gay man trapped in a woman's body".



Holly Willoughby

Holly's modelling career kicked off when she was just 14 years old with one of her first jobs being the face of a sanitary towel ad. She continued in a modelling career appearing in a variety of teen magazines and children's TV until at the relatively young age of 28, she landed a role of presenter on *This Morning*. During an interview with then Health Secretary Matt Hancock, she revealed that she was Dyslexic. She stated that it obviously impacted her TV journey but that it was one of her favourite things about herself because it brought her a unique skill set.



Susanna Reid

Susanna's first public appearance came in 1982 when she appeared on stage with Shirley Anne Field in a production of Agatha Christie's *Spider's Web* and then in a Channel 4 production of *The Price* alongside Harriet Walker. She studied Politics & Philosophy before training as a Broadcast Journalist. In 2001 she co-presented BBC's Breakfast show before moving to ITV's *Good Morning Britain* in 2014, where she still appears on a regular basis. In 2021 she publicly supported Crystal Palace football club's *Divert* scheme aimed at reducing knife crime and revealed that she had been a victim of knife crime when she was attacked after lifting cash from an ATM.



Charlene White

After graduating from London College of Printing, Charlene went on to become the youngest senior journalist at the BBC, aged just twenty-two. In 2008, she joined ITN as a newscaster and, in 2014, became the first black woman to present *ITV News at Ten*. While presenting an ITV bulletin, she refused to wear a Remembrance Day poppy, stating: "I prefer to be neutral and impartial on screen so that one of those charities doesn't feel less favoured than another." Her grandparents first came to Britain from Jamaica as part of the Windrush generation.



Kate Garraway

Kate has had a long and varied journalistic career beginning in 1989 at *ITV News Central* before joining *GMTV* in 2000 and eventually now as co-presenter with *Good Morning Britain* since 2014. She was widely supported by the public in her appearances in both *Strictly Come Dancing* and *I'm A Celebrity* - both shows revealing her humourous, caring and genuine personality. Lately she has come under even more scrutiny from the public as she has revealed the struggle within her family as her husband Derek has battled with the catastrophic consequences of long covid.



Alison Hammond

Alison showed great promise as an actor at the age of 11 when she attended drama classes organised by Central Television but she was unable to attend drama school because her family couldn't afford to pay for her tuition. She really came into the public eye in 2002 when she joined the *Big Brother* house and, while she wasn't there for that long, her presence made a great impact on viewers and she continued to appear in a variety of celebrity reality shows. In 2020, in a shake up of presenters, it was revealed that she would co-host *This Morning* alongside Dermot O'Leary.



Rochelle Humes

Rochelle was part of *S Club Juniors* before eventually becoming a member of girl band *The Saturdays*. Lately she has been presenting *Good Morning* and also *The Hit Show* with husband Marvin Humes. In 2021 she was drawn in the controversial argument over colourism when asked to present a programme dealing with the shocking fact that black women are four times more likely than white women to die during pregnancy. It was hinted that she was given the role in favour of a darker skinned presenter: she even received death threats at the time.



Charlotte Hawkins

After graduating from London College of Printing, Charlotte began her broadcasting career with ITN in 1999 as a newsreader and was one of the first journalists to report live from the fatal Paddington rail crash. In 2014 she joined ITV's *Good Morning Britain* where she currently co-hosts alongside Ben Shephard. Her love of classical music opened up a regular slot on *Classic FM* and in 2020 she released a Classical music album 'Mindful Moments', which reached number 1 in the Classical Album Compilation charts. She is also the host of the classical music podcast 'Last, Past and Blast'.



Ruth Langsford

Ruth is said to be one of ITV's top earners but it wasn't always this good as she revealed earlier this year that at the age of just 18 she was heavily in debt. She described how her Bank Manager at the time helped her manage her money by cutting up all her store cards and asking her to only work in cash. In 2006 Ruth was made a regular presenter of *This Morning*, making her the longest serving presenter of the programme and is currently a regular anchor of *Loose Women*.



Linda Robson

Linda is probably best known and loved for her character Tracey in *Birds of a Feather*, where she appeared alongside her long time friend Pauline Quirke - they first met in 1968. However her more recent appearances on *Loose Women* has allowed viewers an insight into her real world and her battles with alcoholism, depression and severe OCD, which she attributed to a bad reaction to a tablet she had taken when she stopped drinking wine. So severe was her OCD that she would have 4 baths a day and change her bedding every morning. Her friend and co-presenter, Stacey Solomon, finally accompanied her to rehabilitation in 2018.



Coleen Nolan

On 5 February 1974, Coleen made her first television appearance with her sisters when she was almost nine years old, as *The Nolans* appeared on *It's Cliff Richard* television series. Owing to her age, she would not become a full-time member of the group until 1980, when she was fifteen, although she does appear in the music video to their 1979 hit 'I'm In the Mood for Dancing', which reached number three in the UK singles chart. In 2000, Coleen became a regular panelist on *Loose Women* and has since then, with a few breaks, been a regular.



Josie Gibson

The winner of *Big Brother* 2010, made even more headlines when she donated £20,000 of her winnings to CLIC Sargent - now known as *Young Lives vs Cancer*. Since then she has appeared in numerous celebrity shows but in 2019 she made her debut appearance on *This Morning* when she stepped in for Holly at the last minute. Such was her success that she is now a regular stand in for the main hosts. She has openly discussed her continual battle with weight gain especially after giving birth but also as a stress eater.



Denise Welch

She may be a *Loose Women* regular, but Denise has been on UK telly for years with stints in *Coronation Street*, *Down To Earth* and *Waterloo Road* to name only a few of her dramatic roles. Denise has confessed that her marriage was nearly ruined because of her mental illness as well as an affair she had during her depression. With the help of her former *Coronation Street* co-star Kevin Kennedy (Curly Watts), she attended *Alcoholics Anonymous* and suggests this helped her end her dependency on alcohol.



Nadia Sawalha

Nadia has had a very varied acting career both on stage and screen including *Eastenders*, *Casualty* and *The Bill* but she is probably best loved for appearances on *Loose Women*, *Wanted Down Under* and *Celebrity Masterchef*, which she won, before presenting her own cookery show *Nadia's Family Feasts*, on ITV. She is extremely open and honest about her health conditions including suffering from Tinnitus, weight gain and her battle against hair loss while she was going through perimenopause: she admitted that her curls were fake at times due to the condition.



Laura Tobin

On graduation from the University of Reading with a degree in Physics and Meteorology, Laura joined the Met Office and was assigned to the Cardiff Weather Office before moving on to RAF Brize Norton providing aeronautical meteorology reports and briefings to RAF transport crews. She joined the team at the *BBC Weather Centre* and appeared regularly on various BBC programmes before finally joining the team at *Good Morning Breakfast*.



Janet Street Porter

Janet is a writer, broadcaster and former editor of *The Independent on Sunday* but she originally studied architecture, before starting her journalistic career in her early twenties and then moving into television and radio as a presenter and a senior executive. She has won numerous awards including *Columnist of the Year*, the *Prix Italia* for arts programming and a *BAFTA* for originality and is a regular, and often outspoken, contributor on daytime TV as well as such diverse programmes on contemporary British art, walking, cooking and architecture. She has written two memoirs and had a bestseller with *Life's Too F***ing Short*, a self-help guide with a difference.



Gloria Hunniford

After starting off as a singer, Gloria worked as a production assistant for UTV, then as a local radio broadcaster for the BBC. She has had a long and varied TV career including *Open House with Gloria Hunniford* and more recently *Rip-Off Britain*. She became a fervent advocate of Chakra meditations after meeting a Swami backstage on *Loose Women* and while not converting to esoteric Hinduism fully she nevertheless has been quietly vocal in her support for Tantra ever since. After the death of her daughter, she set up a cancer charity in her name; the *Caron Keating Foundation*.



Kelle Bryon

Aged just 11, Kelle joined the prestigious *Italia Conti School*, where she completed 8 years of performing arts. One night whilst clubbing with schoolmate Louise Redknapp she met music producer Denis Ingoldby, who was in the midst of forming a girl band. She auditioned and that band later became *Eternal* - Britain's most successful R&B group ever. In 2000, Kelle gained a black belt in kickboxing after taking lessons to help regain her health following a diagnosis with lupus. In the same year she was given the great honour of becoming a celebrity patron of the *Saint Thomas Lupus Trust*, a cause she continues to campaign to raise awareness of.



Katie Piper

In March 2008, Katie was attacked with acid by her ex-boyfriend and an accomplice, causing major damage to her face and blindness in one eye. She underwent pioneering surgery to restore her face and vision. In 2009, Katie gave up her right to anonymity in order to increase awareness about burn victims. Her experience was documented in the 2009 documentary *Katie: My Beautiful Face*. It has subsequently been sold internationally. More recently she has released a best-selling autobiography, and had a regular column in weekly magazines. She also presents the Channel 4 television series *Bodyshockers*.



Christine Lampard

Christine started her television career as a runner and then trained to become a floor manager while studying for her A-Levels. She continued to work at BBC NI while studying for a politics degree at Queen's University. However, she did not complete her degree course, and instead moved into television work full-time. As a presenter she has worked on a variety of magazine programmes across BBC and ITV. She is a Northern Ireland ambassador for *The Prince's Trust* and in 2010, she did a water skiing challenge, raising £1,321,623 for *Sport Relief*, making her the first person ever to water-ski across the English Channel.



Ranvir Singh

Ranvir is a journalist and television presenter. She is the Political Editor and newsreader/deputy presenter for *Good Morning Britain* which has seen her travel around the world on board the RAF Voyager with the Prime Minister, with visits including China, Canada and inside the White House with President Trump, and live reporting from the ground as the Grenfell Tower fire unfolded. She is an honorary fellow and Chancellor of University of Central Lancaster.



Jane Moore

Best known as a columnist for *The Sun* newspaper and as a panellist and anchor on *Loose Women*, Jane always wanted to be a journalist, but was told by her teachers that, 'it was no job for a lady!'. However, she went on to study journalism at the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education in Cardiff, then trained at the Solihull News in 1981, moving to work full-time at the Birmingham Mail and Birmingham Post. She also writes regular articles for The Sunday Times and in 2006, was nominated for a *British Press Award* in the category of 'Columnist of the Year'.



Frankie Bridge

According to Frankie, her parents are very "sporty" and she would hate Sundays due to them making her do sport, so she began taking dance lessons from the age of three and later successfully auditioned for *Collins Performing Arts*. Her next big move was to *S Club Juniors* and later girlband *The Saturdays*. In 2011, following reports by the media that she was hospitalised due to stress she came out and spoke about her battle with depression after people began to believe she was admitted due to alcohol and drugs. She was praised for coming out and speaking about her battle with depression and this led to her becoming the ambassador for charity *Mind*.



Brenda Edwards

Brenda and her older brother Rodney were raised by relatives following the death of their parents in a car crash in 1974. Her grandmother, who was a member of the local Pentecostal church, encouraged her granddaughter to attend and she soon discovered a love of music and singing. In 2005 she appeared in the *X-Factor* and later went on to much success in a variety of West End musicals including *Hairspray* and *Sister Act*. In 2014 she showed her fun side when she became the giant pair of lips in the Alan Carr interactive gameshow *The Singer Takes It All*. She sadly lost her son to suicide earlier this year.





Penny Lancaster

At the age of six Lancaster took up dance, but at 16 she gave up because of her height and decided that aerobics would better suit her frame and six years later became a certified fitness trainer. It was during this time that she was spotted by a model scout, who suggested she should consider a career in modelling. In 1999 she decided to learn about the other side of modelling and began taking photography classes. She is an ambassador for *Penny for London*, a charity helping young people escape poverty and is also a vice-president of the *Royal National Institute of Blind People*. Penny is also a Special Constable with the City of London Police.



Kaye Adams

Kaye graduated with an MA Honours in Economics and Politics from the University of Edinburgh and started her media career as a graduate trainee at *Central Television*, concentrating on political and news journalism. For the next few years, she remained focused on hard news and was one of the first journalists on the scene of the Lockerbie disaster in 1988. In 1993, she hosted *Scottish Women* which ran for six years under her chair, and won a number of awards which marked the start of her career as a talk show host. She is co-patron of *Kindred*, a Scottish-based charity supporting families of young people with disabilities and mental health issues.





The City of Lovers & Sails

Imagine an urban environment where everyone lives within half an hour of beautiful secluded beaches, rural hiking trails and dozens of enchanting islands. Add a sunny climate, a background rhythm of Polynesian culture and a passion for outstanding food, wine and shopping - and you'll begin to get a picture of the South Pacific waterside city of Auckland.



Surrounded by lush subtropical forests, volcanic hills and peaceful islands, Auckland boasts a naturally stunning location adjacent to the spectacular Hauraki Gulf. Basking on a thin stretch of New Zealand's North Island, the city is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean on almost every side.

In the Maori language, Auckland is known as 'Tamaki Makau Rau' - 'the city of 100 lovers'. The city earned this name because it was a place desired by all and conquered by many. The districts of New Zealand's largest city follow the curves of the shoreline, utilising the many bays that are ideal for watersports, swimming and yachting - the favourite Kiwi obsession that gives the city its modern-day nickname: The City of Sails.

The City of Sails has five distinctive geographical regions: Central, North, South Auckland, West Auckland and the Hauraki Gulf. And they are all a pleasure to explore...

Central Auckland

Central Auckland, which embraces the Waitemata Harbour (Waitemata meaning 'sparkling waters'), includes the central business district and the city's most picturesque residential areas in Remuera, Epsom, Ponsonby, Parnell and the waterfront areas of St Heliers and Mission Bay.

Central Auckland boasts some of the city's top attractions, including the Auckland Museum with its collection of Maori 'taonga' (treasures), the largest art gallery in New Zealand, the Sky Tower, which is the tallest structure in the southern hemisphere, the nautical treasures of the New Zealand National Maritime Museum, and the Viaduct Harbour, which was the base of the America's Cup regattas in 2000 and 2003. And if all that doesn't get you excited, you could always bungy jump off the Auckland Harbour Bridge!

North Auckland

The North Shore City is all about lifestyle. It has more than 20 beautiful beaches, lush native bush land and unspoiled sea views - all just a short 10-minute ferry ride or a trip across the Harbour Bridge from Central Auckland.





The Rodney District, with its two distinctive coastlines and spectacular scenery, has earned the reputation of 'Auckland's Playground'. Rodney has many attractive beaches from the calm, safe waters of its golden east coast, to the awesome surf of its rugged west coast.

South Auckland

The southern part of the Auckland region includes Manukau City and is characterised by a large expanse of beautiful rolling farmland. Vibrant, diverse and unique, Manukau is New Zealand's third largest city, and home to people from more than 150 different cultures.

Just a stroll from the wharf, the historic Devonport district bustles with cafés, restaurants and shops. A heritage delight, Devonport is easy to explore on foot and has a village-like atmosphere, cafes, art galleries, elegant villas and interesting boutique shops.

At nearby Takapuna you can enjoy great views of the volcanic island of Rangitoto, or head for the picturesque freshwater Lake Pupuke, which provides a beautiful venue for rowing, sailing and canoeing.

This rapidly expanding multicultural city offers an appealing blend of urban and rural spaces, quality shopping and entertainment centres, markets, cultural festivals, nine golf courses and seven local wineries.



Manukau's 320 kilometres of coastline are wild and rugged in the west and Pohutukawa tree-fringed in the east. To the south the magnificent Hunua Ranges with their forests, lakes and waterfalls provide a dramatic backdrop to the gently rolling farmlands of Clevedon.

West Auckland

To the west, Waitakere City is blessed with the magnificent rainforest of the Waitakere Ranges, the spectacular west coast surf beaches and picturesque vineyards.

The Waitakere Ranges rise high and sharply above the surrounding sea and land, and thanks to their hard rocks and the works of erosion, they are clear-cut and often dramatic. Thickly clad in lush native forest, the 8,000 hectares of the Waitakere Ranges offer some of the best bush tramping and camping in New Zealand.

Hauraki Gulf

With its opportunities for sailing, boating, fishing, kayaking, swimming with dolphins and island escapes, the Hauraki Gulf region is Auckland's aquatic playground. Stretching between the Waitemata Harbour and the Coromandel Peninsula, the Gulf's sheltered waters are studded with over 50 idyllic islands and islets.

The two largest islands on the Gulf are Great Barrier and Waiheke. Waiheke Island is only 35 minutes from downtown Auckland and its beautiful beaches and native forest reserves harmonise with its cafés, vineyards, olive groves and art studios.



'Waiheke' translates as 'cascading waters', which refers to the waterfalls in the island's Whakanewha Regional Park.

The Maori originally called the Great Barrier Island 'Aotearua', meaning 'white cloud'. The island is one of the last great wildernesses of the Auckland region, with its spectacular ridges rising up to the highest peak Hiraikimata, at 621metres. To the west forest-covered ranges meet the coast, while to the east there are sweeping white sands and surf beaches, often backed by tidal creeks and wetlands.

With its winning blend of island paradises, ancient rainforests, Polynesian culture, glistening harbours and modern urban environment, it's no surprise that Auckland provides the kind of lifestyle that is ranked as one of the highest in the world.

Article by: **Vickie Sam Paget**



Sky Blue Vickie is a travel and tourism storyteller located in Vancouver.

Come with her as she travels the world!

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Margaret Woods Moore

Margaret Woods Moore is a multidisciplinary artist living in Belfast. After a long career as an Art teacher she now works as full time artist and is based in Vault Artists Studios, Belfast.





Her work process generally begins with observational drawings which she develops into prints and paintings or reworks into finely detailed and often intricate finished drawings. She is inspired by the natural world and people, especially children in everyday situations. "I am interested in nature and people. I particularly love birds, big birds and small birds alike and have produced a number of prints of Crows and the corvid family in general, as well as some small garden birds." Margaret also does illustrations which have been included in various publications. She is currently involved in two collaborations with Dublin based author Lindsay Sedgewick, one which is about a collection of quirky bird babies who live in a birch tree. The other is a lockdown exchange of pictures and words.

Margaret loves to explore new materials and will often incorporate these within her drawings and prints to produce multimedia pieces.

She loves intaglio based print-making methods which she uses as an extension of her drawing based practice.

Her work has been exhibited at home and abroad





including Japan and America and has been purchased for private and public "Etching and drypoint are my preferred processes. My work is generally drawing based and etching and drypoint work so well for me. I love the immediacy, and the simplicity of a drypoint image. I enjoy scratching away at a little bit of perspex recreating and developing my original drawing ready for printing.

Etching for me is a much more thoughtful process requiring some forethought and planning but I love the range of tonal values and the incredible diversity of marks that can be made on an etching plate. When I first starting etching I never fully realised the potential and versatility of the process and there is always something new to discover.

I also love stone lithography, I love that I can draw directly onto the stone to create an original drawing with endless mark making opportunities."



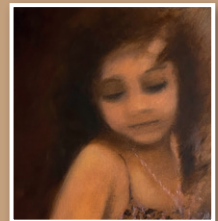
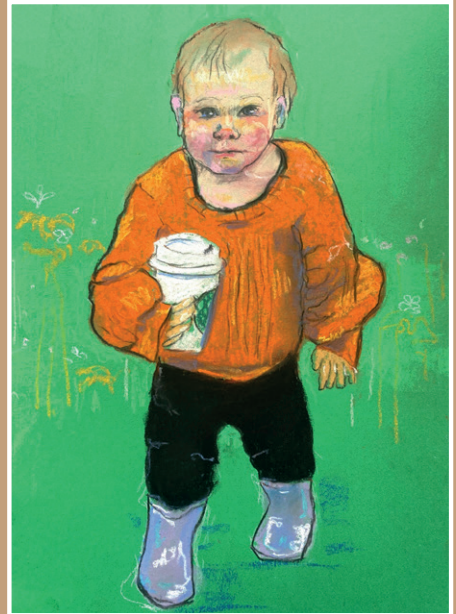
This includes extracts from an interview by Lisa Murray at Belfast Print Workshop

Margaret is a member of Belfast Print Workshop, Waring Street, Belfast.

Printmaking really excites me especially the potential that printmaking offers. One idea can be reworked in so many ways and even though you have a vision for what you want to produce there is always an element of serendipity, you're never quite sure what your print will turn out like. The fact that you can also mix print processes opens up endless opportunities to develop your work. Interpreting my drawings into print allows me endless variations on a theme.

Margaret has recently produced two new series of pastel drawings. The first is of children and these are now available as Giclee prints, the second a series of dogs is almost complete and will soon be available as Giclee prints.

During these past few years Margaret cared for her mother who suffered from vascular dementia at home. She is currently working towards a solo exhibition at Vault Artists Studios in East Belfast, which will showcase drawings and prints done by Margaret throughout her mother's illness and in the reflective time since



You can see Margaret's work on
<http://Instagram.com/margaretwoodsmoore>
<http://Instagram.com/margaretjwoods>
<http://Facebook.com/margaretwoodsmoore>
<http://2bhb.wordpress.com>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08c91t0>



SICK & TIRED OF BEING SICK & TIRED?

Most people live such hectic lives so it comes as no surprise to find that at any given time, one in ten people are suffering from persistent tiredness.

How often have you heard your friends say, "I just feel tired all the time"?

Women are more likely to be affected than men are, but severe tiredness is a common reason for either one for visiting their GP. With our stressful, busy lives, most people experience tiredness sometimes. Following some rest and relaxation and a good night's sleep tiredness generally disappears, leaving us refreshed and ready to face our usual activities.

But for some people tiredness becomes a way of life, a chronic problem that severely affects their ability to function on a daily basis.

There are many possible reasons for chronic tiredness, but it is often due to a combination of factors.

Tiredness can have physical triggers, such as a recent illness, pregnancy or breastfeeding. It can also be triggered by stressful situations, for example a recent bereavement, moving house, family or work problems. Stress and worry are tiring emotions. Facing a stressful situation can be draining, especially when you cannot see a solution to your problems. Feeling that you have no control over a situation may lead to frustration, irritability and tiredness.



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Shift workers, night workers and those with emotionally responsible jobs such as nurses are also more likely to suffer from problem tiredness. As well as well-defined triggers, there are other mental health factors that can increase your tiredness, or stop you from regaining your energy when you are tired and run down.

Mental health problems such as depression or anxiety can make you feel more tired and can prevent you from sleeping properly. It can be tempting to catnap during the day but this is not a good way towards establishing an improved sleep pattern at night. However, this is not an issue that needs to remain with you indefinitely. You may be able to overcome your tiredness with some simple measures.



If you are having trouble sleeping follow this advice for a better sleep routine:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Ensure that your bedroom is quiet, dark and comfortable and that it is neither too hot nor too cold.
- Don't eat too near bedtime.
- Take time out to relax before bedtime - chill out to calming music or have a soak in a hot bath.
- Try to get problems and worries out of your head, perhaps by writing recurring thoughts down in a diary.
- Food and drink are important to how you feel too. Ensure that you get a balanced diet and eat proper meals even if you don't feel like cooking. If you are underweight, gradually increase your portion sizes and your overall

INSOMNIA CAUSES



calorie intake. Cut down gradually on caffeine and alcohol, especially in the evenings. If you are overweight, try to get your weight under control by becoming more physically active and eating less. Avoid crash diets.

- Being unfit makes you susceptible to tiredness. And being tired often means you don't exercise enough. It is a vicious circle but you'll feel so much better if you take steps to break it.
- Introduce physical activity into your routine, gradually increasing the duration and intensity. Start with just ten minutes a day and try to keep it regular. Walking is often the easiest exercise to begin with, but any physical activity that you enjoy and which fits into your lifestyle is fine.
- A small number of people suffer from prolonged, severe and disabling tiredness for which there is no clear cause. This is sometimes called myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). Doctors now recognise that this is an illness although they know less about the causes and treatment than with many other problems.
- If you think you may be suffering from these or from tiredness that you just cannot shift, make an appointment to see your GP.



Hello my lovelies...

My name is Vivian McKinnon. I was once an addict.

Although I don't like labels, I have no shame in saying this because my past has become my educator, my mentor, my reason for being and doing better and for helping other people do the same.

It has led me on a journey of self-discovery and improvement. I am now an award-winning speaker, author, entrepreneur, therapist, addiction recovery specialist and owner of Hydro-ease; Northern Ireland's only dedicated floatation and trauma therapy centre.

It's a sanctuary, a healing place where people in physical and mental pain come to restore, rebalance and rejuvenate far removed from life's stressors. <https://hydro-ease.co.uk/>

Life was not always as good as it is today.

I was brought up in Roslin, Midlothian in Scotland to a mum of Irish descent; my father a Scottish coal miner.

At eight-months-old, I fell down 30 concrete stairs in a baby walker. My mum wanted me to be a boy. She lived and later died from mental health and

alcohol problems because of her own violent and abusive past, multiple miscarriages and the death of a son.

For much of the time I was scared of her, the screaming, shouting, erratic and unpredictable behaviour. Our 'family secret' left me vulnerable to suffering every type of abuse you can imagine.

Not at the hands of my parents but with strangers and in relationships. In 1999, when I was 28-years old I woke up in an Edinburgh Hospital in intensive care, my body and mind having decided enough was enough.

You see, I was eight when I discovered alcohol. I had easy access to it. When I was 13, my mum gave me carry-outs, by 14 there was cannabis, at 15, I ran away from home, got pregnant at 17 and was married and became a mum at 18.

The reality of my early years, through adolescence and into womanhood was a haze of alcohol, drugs, parties, relationships, dance music,





black eyes, abuse, violence, abuse and more violence.

By my late 20s, my lifestyle had become so heavy and overbearing, it led to that 'near death' experience with the pressure becoming so much I was put on life support.

I had a choice to make, keep going as I was and die or change my life for the better.

It was a chance encounter with floatation therapy that really made the difference. It sounds strange but it simply involves floating in 25cms of body temperature water and half a tonne of Epsom Salt.

It allowed my body and mind to rest, recharge and reconnect to my authentic self in a gravity free environment. It was the first intervention that managed to turn my inner critic off.

I knew instantly I could help other people with this, especially people with addiction and mental health issues and I visualised this whole plan to have my own floatation centre. Hydro-ease opened its doors on September 29th, 2015.

I now combine floatation with wellness therapies helping people with emotional and psychological trauma, anxiety, fears, phobias, PTSD, injury, depression, grief, guilt, addictions, whatever it is in life they need to overcome.

Using the latest developments in neuro-science, through techniques such as havening (touch therapy) or brains spotting, my brand of change work is quick and effective with permanent outcomes.

I like to work with the whole person and the root cause rather than the symptoms of the

personal experience. Wellness for me is about life and living.

That's why I am unapologetic about the addictions that drowned me, the drugs it took a long time to admit to or being hospitalised when my body gave in and gave up.

I'm not sorry because it has made me the person I am today. I proudly acknowledge my experiences. Those years are almost like my badge of honour.

I give thanks for my wonderfully flawed, lovingly polished skeletons who I've now promoted. They no longer live in the closet but stand proudly beside me, helping me to inspire and motivate others.

I know I am not my story. I have the ability to choose the life I lead, to create new pathways, to build new relationships, to live my best life despite the hand of cards I was dealt with in early life.

It is a journey that has led me to work with many brilliant people including Dr Gabor Mate; a world leading expert on childhood trauma and addiction. Hosting a webinar with him, was one of the proudest moments of my life.

<https://youtu.be/LpBHaVwN79s>

It's my purpose to help other people recover from the pain of the past and to reach their potential; the fullest expression of themselves.

And it's in speaking out and contributing to articles like this that gives other people permission to do the same. That is my story. Warts and all.

Extraordinary Feel Good Food,

Maldon Salt x Olia Hercules

Recipes created by Olia Hercules for Maldon Salt,
part of the 'Feel Good Food' series running on Maldon Salt socials
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4xIOVnYC48>



Olia Hercules was born in the south of Ukraine in 1984. She left her home town Kakhovka at the age of twelve, when she moved to Cyprus.

After finishing school, she moved to the UK where she studied Italian language and International Relations at the University of Warwick. After spending a year in Italy, Olia settled in London, pursuing a journalistic career after completing her Master's degree.

Following the financial crisis of 2008, Olia decided to quit her job as a film business reporter to pursue her dream to cook for a living.

She trained at the renowned Leiths School of Food and Wine and then worked as a chef de partie in restaurants, including Ottolenghi, and as a recipe developer before landing a book deal for *Mamushka*, a cookbook that celebrates her family recipes, from Ukraine and Moldova to Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. *Mamushka* has won the prestigious Fortnum and Mason Award for best debut cookbook 2016. It has been translated into five languages, and to date has sold over 100,000 copies worldwide. Olia was named the Observer Rising Star of 2015.

Her second cookbook is called *Kaukasis: a culinary journey through Georgia, Azerbaijan and beyond*. It was published on August 10th in the UK and Australia and in October 2017 in the US, Canada, Germany and Poland.



Her third cookbook, *Summer Kitchen*, with Bloomsbury was published in spring 2020.

Olialives in London with her son Sasha and husband Joe, writing, cooking and feeding her unceasing curiosity by researching food culture and culinary traditions of countries less explored.



Charred Cabbage with Almond Cream & Spiced Salt

This is a simple but also a very impressive and delicious dish that has place both on a weekday and a dinner party table.



Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:

- 1 sweetheart cabbage
- 3 tbsp olive or sunflower oil

For the cream

- 250g nuts (I used almonds here)
- 70ml water
- 1tbsp good vinegar or lemon
- 1-2 cloves garlic, peeled

For the salt

- 2 tbsp Maldon salt
- ½ tbsp caraway seeds
- ½ tbsp coriander seeds
- ¼ tsp sumac

Method:

1. Soak the nuts in plenty of water, for at least 5 hours, or better overnight in the fridge
2. Preheat the oven to 220C. Cut the cabbage in half through the core.

Then, depending on your cabbage's size, cut it into wedges the thinner the wedges the quicker they will cook

3. Put the wedges on a baking tray (line it to make cleaning easier). Drizzle the oil over the cabbage and massage it on and between the leaves. Put it in the oven and check after about 15 minutes. You may need to turn the wedges over and give them another 10-20 minutes or until the cabbages look lovely and charred
4. Meanwhile, drain the nuts and save the nut water if there is any. Put the nuts and 70ml of (nut or regular) cold water into a blender and blitz into a smooth cream. Finely grate the garlic and add that in too along with the vinegar and a generous pinch of Maldon. Blitz again, then taste. It should be gently seasoned remember there is spiced salt that is going on top when served. The texture should be that of a thick yogurt
5. For the salt toast the caraway and coriander seeds in a pan until fragrant and bash them in a pestle and mortar along with the Maldon salt. The salt will help everything grind down easily. Stir through they sumac
6. To serve pour the nut sauce on the bottom of a serving plate or small platter and put the cabbage on top (which by the way is good either hot or warm/room temp). Sprinkle over the spiced salt and serve alongside other dishes or a simple green salad or watercress.



Immune Boosting, Fridge Foraged Soup

I always have bits of ginger, chilli and turmeric lurking in the fridge and in the winter months, there is always a pumpkin too. I roast it whole either in the wood fired oven or the regular oven until it's soft inside. I don't bother to peel the ginger; I want the nutrients in the skin, plus it's undetectable. But if you want to peel yours scaring the skin off with a teaspoon works best

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- Vegetable offcuts including onion peel, carrot peels, celery
- 1 medium pumpkin or squash
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 1 large knob ginger
- A few pieces of fresh turmeric or 1 tsp turmeric powder]
- 50g pumpkin seeds
- 1 tbsp honey
- Maldon salt
- Some chilli flakes

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180C. Rub the pumpkin with some oil and place it in the oven and cook for about an hour. When it is soft, take it out and let it cool down enough to be able to handle, then peel off the skin, cut in half and get rid of the seeds. Put the flesh into a food processor.
2. To make the stock, place your vegetable offcuts into a stock pot and add about 1L of water. Bring to a boil and cook for about 30 minutes. Switch off the heat and let it stand
3. For the pumpkin seeds, line a tray with some foil or baking parchment. Toss the pumpkin seeds in the honey, then sprinkle over Maldon salt. Bake in the oven at 180C for about 10 minutes. Add the chilli flakes for the last 3 minutes of cooking
4. Meanwhile, melt the coconut oil in a big pan and add the onion and a big pinch of salt, cook over a medium low heat until soft and translucent. Grate the ginger and turmeric and add them to the onion.
5. Cook for about 5-10 minutes. Add the pumpkin flesh and some of the stock to the pan and blitz using a stick blender.
6. Serve with the sweet salty spicy pumpkin seeds sprinkled over the top.



Savoury Granola

This is an incredibly addictive dish and is so versatile. I enjoy it best sprinkled it over salads, soups, stews

Ingredients:

- 2 tsp sunflower seeds
- 2 tsp sesame seeds
- 2 tbsp cashew nuts
- 1 tbsp almonds, chopped
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 5 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 20g piece of ginger
- 1 tbsp tamarind puree
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
- Maldon salt

Method:

1. Put the sunflower seeds into a dry frying pan and toast until golden. Do the same with the sesame seeds and then the cashew nuts and the almonds. Put the nuts into a bowl.
2. Now heat the oil in the pan and add the garlic and the ginger, cook over a medium low heat until lightly golden and aromatic. Add this, including the oil, into the nuts, add the tamarind and maple syrup and stir through properly.
3. Preheat the oven to 160C.
4. Line a baking sheet with some non stick baking parchment or foil and spread out the nut and seed mixture. Sprinkle over the salt and cook for about 8-10 minutes. You are looking to dry everything out without letting the garlic to burn.
5. Remember that it may feel sticky but will dry out once left out of the oven. Keep in an air tight container for up to a week. Use on everything or as a snack.

Grated Carrot with Herbs and Poppy Seeds

Two things I can always find in my fridge are carrots and herbs. Sometimes the herbs are not at their best but minced finely with some salt they make for a good basis for a dressing. Almost any soft herbs work, and you can vary the spices and seeds that you add. Being Ukrainian I always have an excess of poppy seeds, but sesame and nigella seeds would work really well too. This can be eaten as a salad or as a relish of sorts think cheese or leftover roast pork or chicken stuffed into a pitta bread. It keeps very well in the fridge, becoming a pickle after 24 hours.



Serves: 2**Ingredients:**

- 500g carrots
- Sad, fridge herbs
(I am using coriander,
tarragon and dill)
- 1 small clove of garlic
- 1 lime, juice only
- 1 tbsp mild vinegar
(cider works well)
- Maldon salt
- 1 tbsp poppy seeds
- Black or white pepper

Method:

1. I rarely peel carrots, but I will do here because I want to save the peels to make vegetable stock for other dishes. Grate the carrots on the rough side of the grater.
2. Roughly chop the herbs and the garlic, then sprinkle over some Maldon salt and chop through again until the herbs and the garlic are quite past-*ie*. Put this into a bowl.
3. Whisk in the lime juice and the vinegar and taste.
4. Toast the poppy seeds in a small frying pan. Stir the seeds through the carrot and serve.

Mushroom Broth

In Ukraine, we would have some sort of broth pretty much every day. There is something so wholesome, especially when it involves mushrooms. This is like a beautiful canvas you can always add other herbs you like as well as chilies or crispy ginger and garlic, brown rice or buckwheat groats instead of the noodles; bulked up with kale orchard so good for your health and also for the soul.

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 50g dried mushrooms
- 2 onions
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large carrot, grated on the rough side of the grater
- 100g kale or other dark green leaves, finely chopped
- 200g buckwheat noodles
- 15g butter
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- A handful of fresh mushrooms
- Lots of dill and parsley, finely chopped

Method:

1. Put the mushrooms into a bowl and cover with 500ml of hot water, cover with a plate and leave for at least 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, peel and dice one of the onions. Heat the oil in a heavy based pan and sweat the onions over a medium low heat until soft and translucent. Add the carrot and sweat some more until

starting to caramelize gently. Add the chopped kale and cook for about 3-5 minutes.

3. When the mushrooms look plump, pick them out with a slotted spoon and carefully pour the liquid into the pot with the onion and carrot, making sure to leave any grit behind. Add the rehydrated mushrooms in too, add a litre of water and one whole, peeled onion. Bring to a simmer and cook for about 20 minutes.
4. I cook the noodles separately, according to the packet instructions and toss them in a tiny bit of oil once they are drained
5. Sometimes, I also fry some mushrooms in butter to use as a topping. I roughly chop the garlic and then crush using Maldon salt and the side of a knife. Then I simply heat the butter and add the mushrooms, cook until nice and brown, then stir through the crushed garlic and cook for a minute
6. To serve put some noodles into a bowl and top with the broth, scatter some fried garlicky mushrooms on top and finish with the herbs.





Fennel, Blood Orange and Shallot Relish

The fennel adds crunch, the orange lends sweetness and acidity, and the shallot gives this relish a mignonette kind of feel. It keeps well in the fridge and is good with so many things including mackerel and pork belly and it would also work well in a sandwich. It is equally good with roast vegetables such as pumpkin, especially if it's been charred on some coals.

Ingredients:

- 1 banana shallot
- 1 fennel bulb
- 1 blood or regular orange
- 1 handful of chopped green olives
- 2 tbsp good quality vinegar
- 1 tbsp Maldon salt
- 1 tbsp honey
- A few sprigs of fresh marjoram or oregano

Method:

1. Peel and dice the shallot as finely as you can. Cut the fennel in half, then cut it into very thin strips, then across into small dice.
2. Segment an orange by cutting the peel and the pith with a sharp knife, then draw the knife in between the membrane to release the orange flesh. Try to catch the orange juices, swipe them into a bowl. Chop the orange up into small pieces.
3. Because this relish has fruity notes and also honey, it is important to season it properly, to push it into that savoury realm. Pour the vinegar into the bowl with the orange juice, then add the salt and honey, whisk well the vinegar will help dissolve both salt and honey (This is a good tip for any dressing making, first dissolve salt in the vinegar, then whisk in the oil).
4. Taste the dressing, it should be almost on the verge of being over seasoned with a good sour sweet balance, adjust it to your palate but remember it will be diluted by the orange.
5. Stir the fennel, orange, shallot and olives through the dressing and add the herbs before serving.

TWN Launches a New Podcast Channel

From Farmers Daughter to President



Maureen is President of Soroptimist International and commenced her 2 year biennium on 1 January 2022. Recognising, the importance of being able to

able to speak in public, Maureen is a firm advocate for the SI NI Public Speaking Competition.

She believes that education and training is essential to achieving gender equality - empowering women and girls to be change leaders, and contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future.

Education is the one area that is required by all of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals which are the blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all people.

Maureen began her journey as a Soroptimist in 1989 and is a member of SI Portadown, Northern Ireland. Serving at Club, Regional, Federation, and SI levels, (roles too numerous to mention!), Maureen held the role of President of Soroptimist International of Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI) from 2011 to 2012.

During her professional life, she worked for 38 years within the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services, in the Procurement and Supply, Contracting, Facilities Management, and Primary Care sectors, before setting up her own Consultancy Company.



She has a Master's Degree in Public Procurement, and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Supply Management, and Health Services Management, in addition to being a Trustee and Board member of two organisations: Training for Women Network (TWN), and United Nations Association, Northern Ireland Region.

She has also played an important liaison role with the Department of Justice, Northern Ireland, working on increasing awareness of, and helping to reduce the incidence of Modern Day Slavery.

Listen to Maureen's Podcast Here



From Greenisland to Washington DC

Caroline is an International Business Executive with over 15 years of successful managerial and business development

experience in various sectors in Europe and the Americas. Caroline completed her MBA in Spanish at EUDE in Spain. She also obtained a BA in Management from ESC Business School in France and an MA in International Business and Languages from Heriot Watt University, Scotland.

Caroline is multilingual and is a certified Coach with a specialist focus on leadership for women and positive psychology. In 2019, she established Caroline Sarah Ventures LLC, which provides consulting & coaching services that focus on motivating and developing customised pathways to success.



Most recently, Caroline launched a new venture Greenisland Bakery, an Irish & European Specialty Bakery in DC. Partnering with Union Kitchen, she launched a shortbread range in multiple retail stores and has set up various partnerships with non-profit organisations to serve the local community.

Listen to Caroline's Podcast Here



New Start...



Ariana Burgos Palma

I am 20 years old and I am from Piura, a city in the north of Peru. I study at Queen's University in Belfast. I am in third year in International

Studies and Politics and currently doing a placement at Training for Women Network (TWN). I have been living in Belfast since 2019 and have fallen in love with the city, culture, university and the friendliness of the people. I am really interested in social issues such as women's rights and the environment.

The aged wooden seat was cold and damp to the touch, still being saturated with the heavy night dew and not yet being dried by the rising sun. I sat down anyhow; contented to know this seat had been here for many years and would hold my weight admirably. Numerous before me had sat and pondered, and many after me would do the same. As I looked north, Slieve Donard and Meelmore rose majestically, carpeted in their purple heather coat, their peaks hidden with low lying cloud. To the west, the sea glistened in the early morning sun.

This was a magical place for me and it felt like a long time since I had been here. I was at the edge of Tollymore forest, right at the perimeter, with all of its splendour sweeping out before me.

It was beckoning me to come, as it had done so many times before, like a long lost friend, wanting to draw close and tell me their secrets and show me their delights.

I bent forward and pulled my worn, comfortable walking boots on to my feet, and laced them up carefully, making sure not to draw the laces too tightly and cause discomfort later in the day. My socks were thick and cosy, a purchase I had made reluctantly, as I had never expected socks to be so expensive, but they did their job

and became a necessary part of my attire. I was dressed for walking, and any mountain leader would have given me full marks, my waterproof trousers slightly uncomfortable and my bright turquoise blue coat made for days such as this.

Standing up, I got my balance and slipped my light rucksack onto my back, took the walking stick in my right hand, and with a last look at the glorious view dominated by the mountain range before me, headed off into the forest.

This was a special day for me. A day of achievements, to prove to myself that I could function normally, fight through the pain barrier and still enjoy those things which give me the very reason to live. From a child, wild landscapes, birds and animals had captured my imagination in a way nothing else could.

I had been diagnosed with fibro-myalgia many years ago, but had been fortunate to have had a few years without any major symptoms. The past twelve months had been different, and the pain had come back worse than ever, causing me numerous tests and visits to the hospital to confirm what I already knew in my heart, it was back to haunt me again.

It is a strange illness, lurking under the surface, not wanting to divulge its presence to those

Every Cloud has a Silver Lining

Article by: JACKIE MURPHY



around you, and jumping out usually early in the morning and late at night when you are behind closed doors. The muscular pain is excruciating and debilitating, reducing you to no more than a functionless person, unable to involve yourself in normal everyday chores, and so, making you feel useless as a person and for me as a mother and a home maker too.

I had been able to push through the pain barrier many times, walking frequently through the mountains and then the forest park, which was not so undulating, and safer considering my condition.

Today was different. I had been having pains in my chest, thankfully nothing to do with my heart, but severe enough to be worrying. I knew that about half a mile in to my walk, my hands and feet would swell, my muscles would ache and I would feel generally awful. But, I came to walk and that was what I was going to do. This was my life, the wildlife, the trees, the tumbling brooks and moss covered stones, the red squirrels and the deer, all lurking in the woods waiting for me to find them.

I began to stroll, slowly at first along the gravel path heading left. It started to wind among the trees and cut out the sunlight, forming a dappled

pattern on the ground where the sun forced its way through the branches of the trees. Now and again a sunbeam would break through, shining directly on the path in front of me, and my heart would lift, as I absorbed the sight. It is a rare moment when light and land come together, one to be appreciated and cherished.

A little stone cottage sat to my right hand side, surrounded by briars and large ferns. The window boxes were laden with plants that had seen better days, their leaves had gone and only the dried stalks protruded from the soil. These were intermingled with warped and twisted pieces of drift wood, probably collected on the beach in Newcastle itself. My mind allowed me to wander back to the days when I would walk this same path with my children. They were convinced that this little cottage belonged to Goldilocks, and many a morning, as we walked past, they would smell the porridge cooking and whisper in anticipation of the three bears coming out into the garden!

They would hold tight to my hands, depending on me for their safety and security. This fantasy was put to rest when the forestry commission erected a sign saying, "Jackie's Cottage" and then they were totally convinced in their minds that I had purchased that little dwelling.





The ground was soft under foot, and the first signs of bluebells were pushing through the leaf strewn undergrowth. This explosion of new growth created a vibrancy of fresh green foliage. The whole area felt surreal, having a stillness and silence virtually unobtainable, with just the sound of trickling water in the distance. Although I had not walked far, I put my bag down and positioned myself on a large rock, protruding from the ground. My body ached, but I would not be beaten, as there was more to see and refresh my memory with.

I rubbed my swollen fingers, wishing them to appear normal and not like fat sausages about to burst, but to no avail. My back was aching too, even though the rucksack was relatively light; it was enough to cause a shooting pain from the base of my neck to the top of my head. I knew tomorrow would be worse, but I could dose myself with painkillers and rest, knowing my forest was still the same and could still give me a type of medicine no doctor could prescribe. It always lifted my spirits and gave me the will to fight on, even in my darkest days.

I looked across the meadow where the deer meet at night, but it was empty, they were most likely frolicking in the mountain valleys and heavily wooded glens above me, but the chances of seeing them was very slight. They usually avoided the public, choosing to reveal themselves to the elected few, every evening at their designated place, which was a closely guarded secret. The deer were there however, watching us wander through their home, content to share it with us and from time to time allow us to indulge in the beauty of their form, especially when a majestic stag revealed himself with his huge antlers silhouetted in the distance.

As I sipped on the cold, refreshing water, I watched a grey squirrel running across the branch of an old oak tree. He was not having much success getting food, for the clever foresters had devised feeding boxes which could be used by the red squirrels and not the grey ones. This little fellow was not getting the message easily, but on the fifth attempt, gave up and decided to forage for himself.

The quality of my footwear no longer mattered, my legs ached and each stone was felt under foot. I was glad to rejoin the gravel path leading to a narrow, stone bridge over the river below.

This bridge was humped and seemed to be erected for walking over only, not like the others in the forest which were made for horses and carriages from the large house which once stood in the grounds, before it was burnt down in a fire. The house was never rebuilt, but numerous bridges and stone seats dotted around show that the inhabitants enjoyed the forest as much as me.

The river tumbled over huge stones and rocks, breaking from time to time to form large, deep pools. The water looked cold and grey but it was so clear that the little spricks were visible darting to and fro just under the surface. This river could swell at times of heavy rain and become ferocious; removing everything in its path, including trees growing along the edge of the river and recently, the rain came off the mountains and down the river in such torrents that the paths were washed away too!

A clearing in the trees ahead revealed the lake. This is a shallow lake and home for copious noisy ducks that all fight for your attention, and of course, scraps, if you were so kind to bring any. The lake has always been my safe haven, my place where I go when the pressures of life have become too much and I just have to get away from it all. It is not necessarily a very private place, there are always comings and goings, children feeding the ducks or little boys determined to catch their first fish with a stick and a piece of string. But it is big enough to find me a space of my own, where silence reigns and the mountains rise out of the forest in the background. It reminds me that there is a reason for my troubled life, there is a purpose and that someone is watching over me. I feel Him in nature, wrapping His arms around me and comforting me, encouraging me to go on and to enjoy life for what it is. Watching the antics of the wildlife in such surroundings is an unforgettable

experience which helps me to put life into perspective. There is no time to be discouraged, we must make the most of every day, pushing ourselves to achieve the impossible.

I sit and contemplate. This almost makes the pain worthwhile. Minutes pass to hours and a chill begins to be felt in the air. There is no-one else here now, they have all gone back to their warm homes, but I watch for a final few minutes as the little fish jump out of the water trying to catch the flies hovering just above the surface and dragonflies and damsel flies dance around the reeds at the water's edge. I gather myself up and begin the short walk back to that first wooden seat at the car park. It is uphill on the way back, and the muscles in my legs do not like it one little bit. I take it gradually, stopping regularly until the pain subsides and then pushing on again until the top is in sight. When I arrive back at the car, I will be sore and tired, and the pain and tiredness will stay with me for days. I will have to rest and depend on painkillers to see me through, but I do not mind.

When completed, my short journey will have been less than a mile in length, and will have taken me two hours to complete, but I will have achieved my goal, I will have seen my forest park again, savoured all the delights it has for me and experienced that wonderful feeling of belonging to something a lot bigger and more powerful than me.

Although hard, I have learnt how to look beyond the difficulties life throws at me and focus on the positives, those things which encourage me and give me a reason to live. There are many clouds on the horizon of my life, but I have found the ability of looking carefully at them all, and realising that even though they may be storm clouds, grey and heavy, that every cloud has a beauty about it, you see every cloud has a silver lining.



5 Tips for Those Struggling with Debt after Christmas

Holly Andrews, Managing Director at KIS Finance (<https://www.kisbridgingloans.co.uk/>) and finance expert, outlines her tips for people who are struggling with debt after relying on credit over Christmas.

1. Get organised and keep track

The first thing you need to do to get on top of your debt is to sit down and work out exactly how much you owe and to who.

You may find it beneficial to create a spreadsheet so you can list each loan/credit card/BNPL, the total balance, and either the minimum payment amount or any set monthly repayments.

Again, it may be difficult to look at your debts in black and white, and this might make you feel more stressed in the short term if the total is more than you thought. But trust me when I say that you are now already in a better financial position than before.

2. Start by focusing on minimum payments

If you have a considerable number of loans and credit cards, then it can be quite daunting to look at the total amount you owe.

To make things feel more manageable, start by just looking at the minimum payment amount on each debt.

This is the amount that you have to pay each month to avoid missed payment fees being added. It's important that you avoid these fees if you want to prevent the debt from building up more quickly, and missing payments can also have a lasting negative impact on your credit score.

You should also set up a direct debit for the minimum amount each month for each credit card/loan that gives you this option. Doing this means you will never be charged missed payment fees even if you forget one month as the minimum payment will be made every month automatically.

Once the minimum amount is paid, you can then pay whatever you can afford on top.

Only paying the minimum amount each month means it will take a long time to repay the debt, so you really need to pay as much as you can over this. Not only will it bring down the debt faster, but it will also save you money in interest.

3. Prioritise

When you're working out your debt repayment strategy, you need to organise and prioritise which debts are the most important to repay. These may be the loans or credit cards with the biggest balances, or the ones that charge the highest interest rate.



Then you need to decide whether you want to try and pay off everything together, or to focus one debt at a time until each one is repaid. If you choose this method then you should start with the loan/credit card that you've put at the top of your priority list, putting as much as you can towards this each month, and then work down the list after each one is cleared.

Remember though to keep paying at least the minimum amount on each other loan/credit card to avoid missed payment fees. You will also still need to keep paying any set monthly repayments if you've used Buy Now Pay Later services.

4. Consolidate

If you're struggling to manage your debts, then it might be worth looking into a consolidation loan or credit card.

Consolidating your debts means paying off all of your loans and credit cards with one single credit facility. This will make managing your debts much easier as you'll only have one loan, and therefore one monthly payment, to think about.

If you can find a lender that is offering a loan or credit card with 0% APR introductory period, then you could save a lot of money on interest too. This means that if you pay off the full amount within the offer period, you won't pay any interest. Just make sure you know what the APR will be after the offer period though, as you need to ensure that this is better than the interest you're currently paying.

5. Seek help

Admitting you're in debt can be difficult, but there's no need to struggle in silence. The past couple of years have been very difficult and financially demanding for many, and you are definitely not alone.

If you can't speak to close family members or trusted friends about your problems, then there are organisations and charities that can help if your situation is particularly bad and you don't know what to do. This may be if you are consistently in debt and struggling to meet repayments.



FREE ADVICE

For detailed and comprehensive guidance on dealing with your debts there is free advice offered by:

National Debtline

National Debtline is a charity who give free, confidential, and independent advice over the phone and online. Call them on **0808 808 4000** or visit their website for details of how to set up a webchat with an advisor. Download their 'How to deal with debt' guide on www.nationaldebtline.org

Advice NI

Advice NI offers free, confidential and impartial debt and money advice services at a range of outlets across NI and via a helpline and website. Its helps people manage their money and debt issues so they can take back control.

Freephone **0800 915 4604**

Email advice@adviceni.net

StepChange Debt Charity

StepChange Debt Charity has a helpline and website providing free and impartial debt help to people with debt problems

Freephone helpline **0800 138 1111**
(Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm)

[www.stepchange.org/
debtadviceinNorthernIreland](http://www.stepchange.org/debtadviceinNorthernIreland)

Back on Track

The Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) is an independent government organisation set up to help sort out personal debt problems and help get people back on track.

www.backontrack.ie
Freetext **GETHELP to 50015**

Importance of Recycling

Computers, Batteries & Mobiles

These days, given the tremendous amount of waste that is generated every single day, more emphasis is given towards recycling.





Organisations and even governments all around the world are calling for the efficient implementation of recycling measures especially since research has shown that the earth's natural resources are fast depleting because of the continuous presence of toxic and unreusable items.

Some of these items include computers, batteries and mobile phones, which have become staples in almost every home and office. Can't you just imagine the millions of tons of waste if these pieces of equipment are simply allowed to rot.

Hence, everyone is encouraged to learn the importance of recycling computers and batteries and mobile phones.

Computers, for one, have tiny, bio-accumulative compound particles that could pose harm not only to animals and to bodies of water, but to humans as well.

Batteries, on the other hand, contain cadmium, lead and mercury. If batteries are carelessly thrown out, they can end up in incinerators and landfills. The earth's surface may see the toxic ingredients of batteries and this may lead to soil and water contamination.

Meanwhile, mobile phones have become indispensable gadgets.

In fact, the number of mobile phone subscribers is anticipated to grow by the billions every year. However, while some consumers store old phones and look for outlets where they can have their phone recycled, many include these old ones in their household waste, prompting highly poisonous elements such as mercury and lead found in each phone unit to be released.

It is important to keep these elements away from landfills so as to maintain the health of the soil and of the animals that depend on the earth for food.

There are many resources available to help recycle computers, batteries and mobile phones. For one, there are organisations that take in these old items via drop off centres or home pick-up schemes. These organisations either refurbish the items and donate them to financially hard up communities or forward them to a recycling facility for proper disposal.

You can also contact the manufacturers of these items and ask if they have a recycling program. Companies that have recycling programs even offer free pick up of your old computers, batteries and phones so please don't just throw them in the bin!

Find out more by clicking the button.

 [Recycling Locator](#)



If you have difficulty in recycling, please let us know so that we can report on it and hopefully encourage accountability.





MONSOON

Back to origin

We were born in 1973 out of a bohemian adventure celebrating the colours, patterns, and artisanal craftsmanship from our travels. These elements were the foundation behind our brand.

50 years later, we are going back to our roots. Back to our origin.

We're visiting the like-minded countries and cultures that inspire our product today. We're meeting with modern-day artisans, learning new techniques behind their craft, and exploring how we can bring that back into our product.

Welcome to Chapter One, Jaipur. In pursuit of spring reverie, we ventured to where it first began.

We collaborated with renowned local photographer Naveli Choyal, to capture this season's colourful block print pieces and embroidered treasures. Follow our journey and discoveries on our Scrapbook.





The Maxine Dress

Maxine is made from 100% recycled polyester. Her delicate embroidered blossoms were inspired by the delicacy of Jasmine flower clusters, which can be found in most Indian gardens.

The beautiful embroidery reflects the light thanks to the fine satin threads that compose the blooms and leaves.



The Freya Dress

Freya is made from 64% lyocell, 19% nylon and 17% linen.

Freya's feather print was inspired by the free-roaming, regal peacocks of Rambagh Palace, India. The majestic feathers have taken form in a soft fluidity, representing the bird's ethereal beauty and striking boldness.



Freya Tiered Shirt Dress
£110

Right page: Maxine Sustainable Embroidered Shirt Dress
£140





The Anna Quilted Heritage Print Jersey Jacket

Anna is made from 100% sustainable cotton jersey with topstitch detailing.

This unique form of printing is called Ajrakh and traditionally brings together rich primary colours of reds and indigos. Originating in Sindh, this is one of the oldest forms of print to create intricate designs..

Quilt Print Jersey Jacket £99



The Fiorella Dress

Fiorella is made from 100% sustainable viscose. The vibrant shades of the graphic floral prints featured on this dress, are inspired by the strong and bold colours of the fabrics found while walking around the Rajasthan markets.

Left: Fiorella Sustainable Floral Midi Dress £99





The Luzia Tie-Dye Dress

Luzia's fabric was hand-crafted in Jaipur using 100% sustainable viscose.

This tie-dye technique called Bandhani, originated thousands of years ago in the Indian states of Rajasthan and is one of the oldest known methods of tie-dying still practiced today. Hand-tied knots create relief patterns after the fabric is dyed creating statement motifs and fluid lines.

Left: Luzia tie dye dress £60



The Sophia Dress

Sophia is made from 100% sustainable viscose.

This enchanting scarf print dress features illustrations of Indian botanical flowers which were inspired by heirloom vintage scarves, that can still be found in most wardrobes today.

Right: Sophia Scarf Print Dress £110



Middle-Aged Eating Disorders

We take a look at the seemingly new phenomenon of middle-aged eating disorders, and why this debilitating illness is affecting more and more women in their 40s, 50s and 60s.

Surrounded by images of stick-thin and toned female celebrities, middle-aged women are exposed to increasingly unrealistic images of how they should look as they age, pushing them harder than ever to counter the effects of getting old. This is a particular issue in our current culture, since it often presents youth as the standard of beauty, and older people are expected to try to imitate a younger age, rather than embrace their own.

One of the more well-known eating disorders that they can develop is anorexia. Anorexia nervosa is a psychiatric diagnosis that describes an eating disorder characterised by low body weight and body image distortion with an obsessive fear of gaining weight. Those with the illness control body weight by voluntary starvation, purging, vomiting, excessive exercise or other weight control measures, such as diet pills or diuretic drugs.

The past years have seen a significant increase in the number of middle-aged women with anorexia.





young adult and recovered, only to relapse in midlife

- Those who develop an eating disorder for the first time in midlife

In the majority of cases, the eating disorder in question will have its roots in a girl's formative years. Therefore, the women who turn up for treatment in their later years are usually from the first two categories listed above. The result is that almost all women who have an eating disorder later in life have, in fact, been suffering from it for many years.

In the main, women are likely to grow out of an eating disorder if it is fairly mild, but the increasing focus of women on their appearance as they get older may influence this trend adversely.

In conclusion, the unrealistic images of mature celebrities are an aggravating factor at best, and the root cause at worst. More importantly, these cases prove that eating disorders can affect anyone at any age, and people should not assume that someone is not susceptible to developing symptoms, or redeveloping symptoms, just because they've passed the 30-year mark.

According to mental health charity *Verywell Mind*, research shows that around 3.6% of women aged 40 to 50 years experience some sort of eating disorder every year.

But, these disorders do not, in reality, just pop up in later years due to external factors. According to midlife eating disorder specialist Dr Holly Grishkat, midlife or older women living with eating disorders essentially fall into three categories:

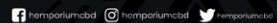
- Those who have struggled with an eating disorder for years without seeking treatment
- Those who had an eating disorder as a teen or



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But there is also a third, and perhaps slightly more positive point to consider. The fact that a larger number of older women are being diagnosed with an eating disorder might also be a reflection of the fact that, during the last several decades, having such disorders has become more acceptable - enabling women to acknowledge their illness and to seek help. This, therefore, may also be contributing to the rise in the number of logged cases.

So, what can be done about this? Should people continue to focus their efforts on breaking the stigma around these mental diseases? Or should perhaps more effort be put into treatment instead, particularly for those experiencing it in later years?

Well, as pointed out, most women who have a chronic form of an eating disorder later in life have been ill for many years. And, in fact, they often do not really want to make a full recovery, instead wanting help to live with their eating disorder in a healthier way.

Treatment for the illness varies from patient to patient, but it often consists of some dietary advice and cognitive behaviour therapy. Only severely underweight patients are advised to stay in a psychiatric clinic to increase their weight initially. So, although logged cases are rising and the stigma is being reduced around the disease, sadly, despite the life-threatening nature of eating disorders, many women prefer to receive only limited help, and seldom join an anorexic programme or wish to return to a normal body weight.

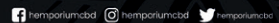
The stigma associated with these diseases has reduced, but not totally disappeared. And treatments can be effective, but not if the patients in question are averse to making a total change from their current lifestyle. It seems therefore that the actual solution is, as always, to look at the root causes - whether they be unrealistic body images earlier or later in life - and to fight them.



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Everybody hurts sometimes

Lifeline

**If you or someone you know is in distress or despair
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(Textphone: 18001 0808 808 8000)

Calls to Lifeline are answered by trained crisis counsellors who can provide help and support. Counsellors are experienced in dealing with suicide, self-harm, abuse, trauma, depression and many other issues. Lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Calls are free from all landlines and mobiles. For more information visit www.lifelinehelpline.info.

The Lifeline service is provided by Contact under license from the Public Health Agency



Countdown to Spring

As we approach spring and our gardens start to shake off their winter frost, so begins one of the busiest times in a gardener's calendar. The official start of spring is on 20 March and this is the season our gardens start to come to life, with blossoming trees, plenty of bulbs to be planted and seeds to be sown for a blooming good summer.



Dobbies' Horticultural Director, Marcus Eyles talks through how to get the most out of our gardens this spring, all the jobs we can be doing to take advantage of the longer days, as well as his top sustainable products. Marcus' spring steps cover:

1. Spring clean and prepare
2. Plant bulbs for summer colour
3. Grow your own fruit and veg
4. Refresh your pots
5. Design your beds and borders
6. Care for your lawn
7. Welcome wildlife

Spring clean and prepare

Spring cleaning your outdoor space is a crucial first step when it comes to preparing for the new season, giving you a fresh canvas. One of the easiest ways to tidy up your garden is by neatening your beds and borders for the growing season. You can do this by hoeing borders to remove weeds and applying a good layer of mulch or manure over the surface to lock in moisture and give plants a boost for spring.



Once you have removed weeds, Marcus suggests lightly trimming back winter flowering plants where blooms have started to fade and pruning summer flowering shrubs such as Buddleia and Hardy Fuchsias to allow for new growth that will produce an abundance of flowers.

He also recommends pruning early spring flowering shrubs as required once flowering has finished,

as this will give your beds and borders a tidier look.

Preparing your garden for spring is a task that should be undertaken by all gardeners, expert and beginners alike and is an easy

way to transform your space. If you're looking for inspiration on how to get your garden looking its best this spring, there's a wealth of gardening content on social media to get you excited for the new season and inspire fresh ideas for your outdoor space.



Planting for colour

One of the most enjoyable spring gardening jobs is planting and there's a wide selection of great plants

that can be grown quickly in warmer soil for earlier blooms.

Plant summer flowering bulbs such as Dahlias for a burst of colour in the summer months, ensuring you mulch well and use peat-free compost. There is a huge range of other bulb types available at Dobbies now for summer flowers this year including Begonias, Gladioli, and Lilies.

Cottage garden plants can be planted now for a beautiful display in summer, and hardy annuals like Nigella, Centaurea and Calendula can be sown in spring to flower later in the year.

To achieve a natural look and avoid any plant damage, Marcus recommends inserting plant supports around any existing plants that are coming back to life and make sure you prune bush Roses back hard before the new season leaves begin to unfurl.





Grow your own

Spring is a wonderful time to plant soft fruit and vegetables for a summer harvest.

Soft fruits such as rhubarb, raspberries, blackcurrants, and blueberries can all be planted in spring, as can strawberry plants. For an early strawberry crop, Marcus recommends planting strawberry plants in ground enriched with manure and covering with cloches to encourage growth. If you're planting apricots, peaches and nectarines, Marcus suggests protecting them from any late frosts as this can cause damage to their blossom and therefore no fruit will set.

For vegetables, Marcus says you should start by chitting (sprouting) your first early potatoes in trays ready for planting in the ground or potato pots/bags later in March. Now is the time to sow carrots, parsnips, spinach, and peas - just make sure you protect your crops from frost with a layer of fleece if the weather turns chilly.

Refresh your pots

Whether you have a sprawling lawn or a compact courtyard, pots, hanging baskets and containers are great for outside spaces of all sizes.

- 1 **Wooden Growhouse** from Dobbies Garden Centres
Timber GroZone Max. Price: £169.99
- 2 **Raised Bed** from Dobbies Garden Centres
Tall 6-in-1 Metal Raised Garden Bed Monolith. Price: £129.99
- 3 **Cold Frame** from Dobbies Garden Centres
Timber GroZone Cold Frame. Price: £89.99

All prices correct at time of print

Let's Celebrate plants and pots

Description: Echinacea 'Sensation', £12.99; Digiplexis 'Falcon Fire', £12.99; Dianthus 'Cocktail Shirley Temple', £7.99; Echinacea 'Sunseeker Tequila', £12.99; Rudbeckia 'Smileyz', £16.99; Two tone cylinder pot, from £9.99; Heritage pot blue, £8.99; Pastel pink pot, £19.99; Pastel egg pot, £34.99.

All prices correct at time of print.



- 1 Wilkinson Sword trowel
£6.99 - on offer
at £4.99



- 2 Kneelo Kneeler Moss
£16.99



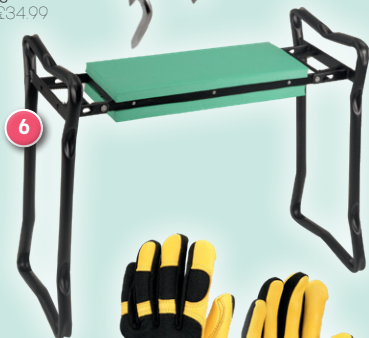
- 3 Dobbies peat-free
multi-purpose compost
with added J1 50lt
£6.99 3 for £18

- 4 Wilkinson Sword
Hand Fork
£6.99 - on offer
at £4.99



- 5 Kent & Stowe
Garden Life Hand
3 Prong Cultivator
£9.99

- 6 Folding Kneeler
Seat £34.99



- 7 Gold Leaf Soft
Touch Gloves,
ladies and gents
available £24.99



All prices correct at time of print.



To ensure instant colour in your garden for the new season, Marcus recommends early spring bedding plants such as Pansies, Violas, Bellis, Primroses and potted bulbs to inject life back into your pots.

One of Marcus's favourite ways to fill your garden with colour come summer is to grow bedding plants from young plants. You can plant these immediately into 9cm pots filled with peat-free young plant compost to be grown in a warm greenhouse, conservatory or well-lit windowsill, and then plant outside when the risk of frost has passed. This is a fantastic economical way to give your summer garden some beautiful colour, and Dobbies has an extensive range of bedding plants in store to choose from.

Beds and borders

Spring is the ideal time to get your beds and borders in shape for the longer days, with plenty of things to do to get them looking their best. Lightly trim back winter flowering plants that have started to fade, and pruning summer flowering shrubs, like Buddleia, Lavatera and hardy Fuchsias to allow for new growth this year. Early spring flowering shrubs such as Forsythia can be also pruned as required once flowering has finished.



To give your garden structure, Marcus also recommends planting new container grown shrubs, hedges, and trees in spring as well as tending to your evergreen trees and shrubs. If you have evergreen trees and shrubs that need relocating, March is the last time to do this before the plants start growing again.

To feed your trees and shrubs, make sure to apply a slow-release general-purpose fertiliser, lightly forked into your borders, and don't forget to feed your hedges too.

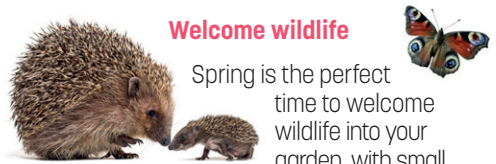
Lawncare

Depending on the weather, early spring is the time to prepare your lawn ready for sowing by cultivating soil and making sure the area is level and firm.

Alternatively, you can also lay new turf for quicker results. If doing this, Marcus says don't walk on the new turf for several weeks to allow the new roots to establish.

Spring is also the time to straighten lawn edges with an edging iron and get the area looking neat, and as we approach summer, applying a lawn feed high in nitrogen to established lawns will encourage growth. Once your lawn is showing signs of growth, you can then give it the first light cut of the season. However,

make sure the blades are kept on their highest setting at the start of the season so as not to scalp the lawn which will result in patches.



Welcome wildlife

Spring is the perfect time to welcome wildlife into your garden, with small animals coming out of hibernation and new birds hatching into life.

To ensure your garden is a safe space for all wildlife, Marcus suggests dedicating a small section of your lawn and garden to creating a wildlife-friendly habitat and making sure you only use eco-friendly pest and weed control products.

To protect small animals and insects from cold weather and predators, you can make a shelter by stacking branches together and placing under any large shrubs, trees, or hedges. Planting wildflower seeds is also a great way to encourage pollinators, and only take a few weeks to bloom, making them a great choice for those looking to attract wildlife this spring.

Spring gardening calendar - ideas for your monthly garden focus, with new ranges for 2022:

MONTH	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
Hardy Plants	Blossom (e.g. Magnolias & Cherries & Clematis Montana) New Michelia Fairy Magnolia in blush, cream & white	Acers New Acer palm varieties including Extravaganza, Shirazz & Starfish; Acer shirasawanum Moonrise & Jordan; Acer palm Cascade varieties including Citrine, Emerald and Gold	Clematis & climbing plants New Wisteria Blue Waterfall
Flower garden	Lupins, Delphiniums, Hollyhocks & Foxgloves	Aubretia & Saxifrage	Lavender New Lavender stoechas Fairy Wings blush, pink & purple
Bedding Plants	Dianthus New Senetti varieties including Blue Biocolour & Magenta; New Dianthus varieties including Bacco & Peman	Marguerites and patio plants New Marguerite White and varieties of patio plants including Calibrachoa, Surfinia & Double Petunia	Geraniums New Pelargonium varieties including Scented Cola, Scented Peppermint, Callicope Red, New Nemesis varieties including Aroma Heat of Gold, Rhubarb & Custard
Grow your own	Herbs; Strawberries New strip vegetable plants as lettuce, cabbage & peas	Tomatoes	Vegetable Plants New patio veg plants including chilli peppers & mini-cucumbers



Sugar and Spice & Everything Nice

Remember that rhyme from early childhood? What are little boys made off? Dating from the 19th Century, it goes like this. What are little boys made off... Snips, snails and puppy-dogs' tails. That's what little boys are made of. What are little girls made of?... Sugar and spice and everything nice, that's what little girls are made off.



Virginia Mason Mendez (34), feminist, equality and diversity campaigner, an emerging influencer in the battle for global equality and soon to be author of a new

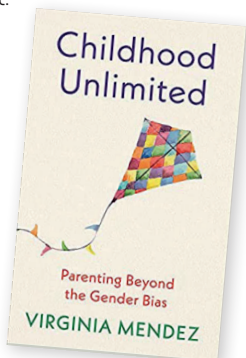
parent guide on gender equality, *Childhood Unlimited: Parenting Beyond the Gender Bias* says, this nursery rhyme is like fingernails being scraped down a chalkboard.

In the polar opposite, her ground-breaking book published in the Spring will give parents a series of actionable, practical and easy to implement strategies to fight gender-stereotypes and help children become a positive agent for change.

First of all, Virginia says: "I'm from Spain originally but now married and living in Belfast with my husband Chris McEldowney and our two children Eric, 5 and Nora 3. I'd never heard of that poem until recently and was horrified by it. It's every single thing I'm against.

I'll show you why by taking a look at the issue of gendered children's birthday parties and what an absurd idea it is?"

I get it, you don't want to invite the





whole class, too many kids, too much mess, lots of hassle and huge expense. Not everyone can go big or go home when it comes to kids' birthday parties, but sure there are other solutions, quick and easy, like let's invite the girls and not the boys and vice versa.

When talking about this with another mother on the school run I came up with a great idea. So why don't we just invite the children in the class with the same hair colour or eye colour as your child. It's just as arbitrary?

She looked at me with wide eyes but I pushed on.

I mean if we are relying on a physical reason such as genitalia, then surely that's not the only physical attribute we could agree on. When you think about why you would select a child to go to a birthday party on these grounds, it makes utter nonsense of all the stereo-typing we have been brought up to just accept.

The constant separation of people by their gender is just as ridiculous to me as the stupid rhyme that equates boys with puppy-dog tails and girls to a sickeningly sweet sugar cube.

Socially accepted gender division perpetuates the idea we are mostly different. It tells kids there is an "us" and a "them". Imagine if kids were defined by their hair colour instead? Would blonde kids have expectations attached to them

the same way girls do? Would bad behaviours of brunette kids be justified because 'you know who kids with brown hair are like'?

If applying gender stereo-types is OK, then my idea of segregating which child I choose to attend my child's birthday party based on the colour of their hair seemed a pretty fair one to me.

The more I thought about it the more tempted I was to actually carry it out. But then when Eric speaks to me about his school friends, I know their names but not their hair colour. It would be unfair for me to leave out his closest friend, a kid he enjoys spending time with, just because they have the "wrong" hair colour. I hope you get where I am going to with this, right?

So no, arbitrary body attributes don't work well when it comes to making the choice of who gets to go to the shindig. What about making the party an opportunity to celebrate with their closest friends? Giving them agency and choice?





It's not that easy, I hear you thinking. How do you explain to your kid they are not invited to a party if there is no obvious, objective reason?

Honesty to me is always the best approach. Kids (and parents too) can take it when it is truthfully explained only a certain amount of people can go and those asked will be their closest friends.

Along these lines, explanations to your child, if they have been invited to a birthday party or not become clearer, simpler and ultimately help your child deal with rejection in a much fairer, less harmful way.

You help them understand nobody is on everyone's "absolute best friend list" and that is OK. You remind them they have other friends and sometimes we can't do things or go to parties even if we really want to.

Reassure them it doesn't always feel good but we have to try not to let it affect how we feel about ourselves.



You tell them it is OK to not like the situation but also remind them they are exactly the same amazing kid they were before those invitations were issued.

Use that opportunity to have a conversation and reinforce that they are much more than being "chosen" by someone else and promise there will be many other parties to attend.

Walk them through the unpleasant situation with kindness and empathy because the reality is they have a life of this ahead. There is so much to be gained from this approach rather than opt for the 'it was only for boys or girls explanation.'

Ask yourself, are we reinforcing sexist bias in our kids in our efforts to avoid them being rejected? The truth is we can't protect them forever but we can equip them to deal with it in a healthy way when it happens. And trust me, both rejection and sexism will happen.

This is not about isolating one kid; the one that's not routinely invited to any party. That is cruel. I'm advocating for a normal way to deal with parties where invites are issued not along gender lines but on the circle of friends closest to your child in a way that is fair and makes them happy.

To find out more about Virginia's work follow the link www.thefeministshop.com.



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Learning About Wine



*It might look complicated or snobbish,
but the process of tasting wine has many elements based in common sense.*

*But what is the point of tasting wine when we don't worry too much about anything
else we drink on a regular basis? The answer is probably because every glass has a
different story to tell - whether based on geography, history or culture.*

There's no reason to be snobbish about wine but it can be a good interest - and one well worth talking about and sharing with friends. Drinking wine is meant for pleasure so there's no need to set yourself up with an impossible task... just relax and take the time to think about what you're drinking so you can enjoy it as much as possible.

The first pointers are to have a good look at its colour, before taking a deep sniff. What does it smell like - fruit, flowers, cinnamon. Wet dog?

Then you take a swig and consider all the senses the wine gets to... put it all together in your head because taste doesn't mean only what we sense with our mouths - the word also describes the quality of critical appreciation that we have the ability to enjoy as humans.

Smell is important to the wine taster. Much of what we think is taste really comes through our noses.





If you don't believe it try to enjoy a wine - or a meal - the next time you have a bad head cold. We can train our sense of smell and you don't have to be an expert taster to tell the difference between wines.

For example, the aroma of Cabernet Sauvignon and the closely related Merlot grape often reminds drinkers of cedar wood, pine, and salt fruits while others have undertones of olives, green peppers, tobacco leaves or grass.

Ageing the wine in oak may add touches of vanilla, cinnamon, cloves and almonds. Extended bottle ageing may lend a toasty quality and impart earthy scents as variable as mushrooms, old leather, roses and wildflowers. Other grapes have their own trademark aromas: Zinfandel often evokes berries. Pinot Noir, the fine grape of Burgundy, may recall violets and spice. The floral quality of freshly ground black pepper signals Syrah, the French Rhone grape. Among whites, Chardonnay has a scent of apples and may add notes of butter, coconut, figs and other tropical fruits, particularly if it's aged in oak - while Sauvignon Blanc often shows a grassy smell and sometimes grapefruit.

It's important to understand that these scents and tastes rarely dominate the wine. Typically they add a small but significant element to a larger pattern. In other words, the hints of chocolate and coffee in some California red wines and the nuances of coconut, figs and dates in oak-aged Chardonnay don't make

the wine taste like a milkshake or fruit salad; they are subtle, often elusive parts of a larger whole.

Fine, aged wines add the most complex (and sometimes unwelcome) scents, which some wine tasters call "bouquet," as the result of gradual chemical reactions in the wine. Less pleasant changes in odour and taste occur if the wine is poorly or carelessly made or spoils with excess age.

Young wines are usually simple and straightforward, offering uncomplicated smells of grapes and fresh fruit. It's bottle age that brings about the chemical changes that provide unusual and delicious nuances that cry out for descriptive terms.

But whatever the description, the key is to enjoy the act of tasting - so that over the years (and the bottles) you get to know what you like. Probably the most important act of the serious wine drinker!



#BreakTheBias

with Louise Minchin

ITN Productions Industry News has produced a series of short films #BreakTheBias to champion International Women's Day.





This year's theme includes the importance of challenging biases and misconceptions in the interest of creating a more inclusive and gender-equal world. #BreakTheBias features powerful stories from business leaders and global organisations who are all committed to ensuring gender equality for a future for women. Anchored by Louise Minchin from ITN Studios in London, the films will be hosted on a dedicated microsite launching on International Women's Day.

The programme explores how organisations worldwide are providing progressive policies, practices, benefits, and support mechanisms so women's careers can thrive. In a traditionally male driven finance sector, gender inequality has prevented many women from reaching the top. Susanne Chishti Founder and CEO of the Fintech Circle, shares her views in an interview that women are not only essential to Fintech success but are in fact the key to shaping its future.

Louise Minchin hosts a panel discussion with a group of inspirational and highly successful women focusing on the biases

women face in the workplace today, the work that is being done to address the issues, the gender pay gap and the future of work for women.

Panelists include Kate Mosse OBE, Novelist, Playwright & Founder Director of the Women's Prize for Fiction, Sarah Howard MBE Chair of The British Chambers of Commerce, Pinky Lilani CBE DL, Founder of the Women of the Future Pro-gramme, Stemettes CEO, Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE and Vivienne Artz OBE, Advisory Board and former CEO of Women in Banking and Finance.

The past few years have demanded ground-breaking, life-saving scientific discovery. At AstraZeneca, innovation is a direct result of a diverse workforce that is empowered to speak their mind and challenge the status quo. Their film, led by reporter Donna Bernard, shows how women are making a huge difference in various roles across the organisation.

In a world where only 2 percent of mariners are women, championing gender equality is front of mind at Celebrity Cruises who are

making waves by setting new standards in diversity and inclusion. Reporter Sue Saville interviews Captain Kate McCue, Celebrity Cruises Captain and MD, Celebrity Cruises EMEA, Jo Rzymowska to understand more about their outstanding leadership approach.

Improvements in gender equality mean more women are working for longer, which is bringing issues like the menopause to the fore. In 2 films with Professional Services firm, PwC, and health and hygiene company Essity, both companies show how they are including menopause support for employees as part of its ongoing drive to protect the wellbeing of its female employees.

Financial services is a world traditionally dominated by men, but at haysmacintyre 46 percent of its workforce and 29 percent of its partners are female with the firm's financial services sector led by three women. Sangeeta Kandola reports on how the company keeps breaking through the glass ceiling. Priding themselves on their inclusive values and culture, reporter Selina Downes interviews staff at Nationwide to learn more about how they are working hard



to ensure they have a diverse work-force, reflecting the communities they serve.

Newton is an operational consultancy company who have partnered with 'Gender Equity Now' to create lasting sustainable change and global law firm Simmons & Simmons show how they are making great strides by approaching gender balance as a core business issue driven by a powerful Gender Network.

A film with Theramex explores how the pharmaceutical company are empowering women through every stage of their journey from motherhood to menopause.

Nina Harrison-Bell, Head of ITN Productions Industry News, said: "We are delighted to be producing this series of short films showcasing the work that is being done by so many organisations in the public and private sector to #BreakTheBias and provide opportunities for women and future generations of women, right across society.

There are so many success stories, and we can't wait to share real accounts of those who are part of the move towards greater gender equality."

Check out the dedicated website platforming these films on

www.IWD2022.itn.co.uk

Inside of me

Once inside of me was darkness nothing but blackness, pain, heartache, guilt betrayal - bruises on my soul. I was afraid of all people and what they could do. I was a caterpillar - dark brown with no colour at all, just blackness.

I was cheeky and some adults didn't like me which was fine by me. I learned to be quiet, to shut up from the evil and darkness so I became that caterpillar. I lived in darkness inside. But also inside of me was her, a little girl who still believed in love, who had compassion for others, who was quiet but had fire deep inside her - who refused to stay in darkness, who fought for survival, who fought for life for years and years.

Still not really living, still afraid of people and what they could do because after all it was the people who should have loved and protected her were the ones who cut her most. They were the ones who brought her to her knees, those are the ones who brought the darkness, the blackness, the antidepressants, the overdoses, the pain.

But one day colour came through. A little bit of colour everyday because you see that little girl, deep inside, who refused to give up and who fought and fought for 50 years is an adult now. She took all that hate and became a butterfly full of so many, many colours that dazzle and sparkle: she learned one day at a time to love herself and to listen to the child within. She learned from people who loved her unconditionally that she is worthy of love.

So she took all that hate and darkness and covered it with amazing dazzling colours.

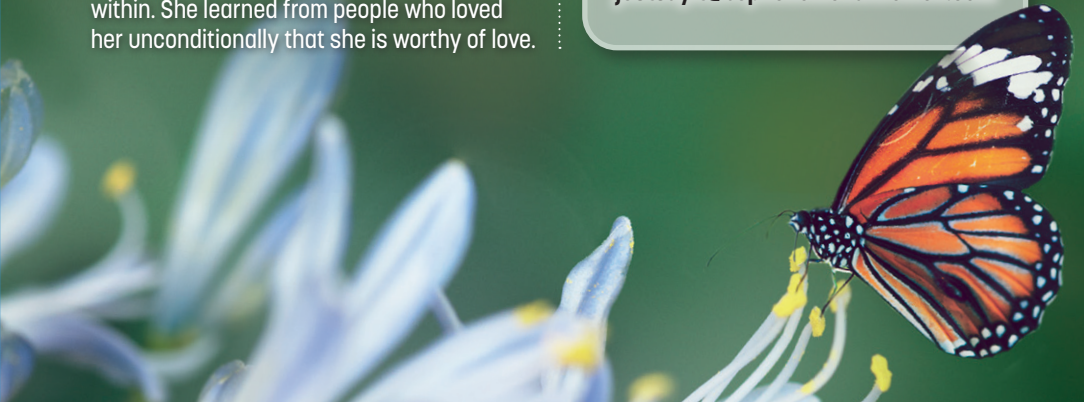
She chose to forgive. She chose to let love conquer. Chose to meet new people who are now new friends and everyday she thanks God and the universe for all her blessings and still to this day that little girl pops up to say hello. Now she is me and I am her: say my name, say it loud, because I am Cassie and I'm afraid no more.

Cassie Blackmore

It's not always about the grammar or the spelling. It's not always about what rhymes with what or being so precise that you get lost in how to say something rather than what you want - or need - to say.

Be Phenomenal Women is all about you... so if you have something you want to say: Just Say It!

Send us your thoughts, observations, poetry, stories whatever you like to justsayit@bephenomenalwomen.com



Music Rocks



Love Sux Avril Lavigne

Avril is back! At 37 she is still one of my favourite punk rockers and her latest album, Love Sux, doesn't

disappoint. I feel like I'm back in the early 00's when I had the energy to jump off the floor for hours at a time to her first album. But for now I'll settle for playing air drums in the comfort of my living room.



Never Forget My Love Joss Stone

I had almost forgotten about Joss Stone: maybe forgotten is

too strong a word but she certainly didn't float up to my top artists when searching my iPod but here she is with a new album. Co-written with her producer Dave Stewart, of Eurythmics, this is her first album in seven years and is an elegant return that puts the onus firmly on her extraordinary voice. Motown legend Smokey Robinson once dubbed her 'Aretha Joplin', because of her ability to fuse the gospel hues of Aretha Franklin with Janis Joplin's blues and this album certainly delivers that. There's even a 1960s Burt Bacharach vibe which is very comforting to my old soul. Imagine a late nightcap with a loved one, either 2 legged or 4, curled up on the settee - it's the perfect background accompaniment.





a touch of the beat gets you up on your feet....

aly & AJ

It's great to see that these girls have finally brushed off the obstacles that almost derailed them back at the beginning of their career and are finally doing their own thing - a little bit of synth-pop with a splash of disco-country (if that's possible?). This is exactly what I want to listen to as we emerge from a very dark winter to spring - bright, breezy and fun.



Feeling Good Her Greatest Hits & Remixes Nina Simone

This new album gathers together some of her most iconic songs and includes 7 remixes by some of the hottest, in-demand DJ's worldwide. There's not much to say except The High Priestess of Soul does it again with her voice this time atop dance music that will fill any dance floor and introduce a whole new generation of followers, much in need of hearing what she had to say when she was with us.

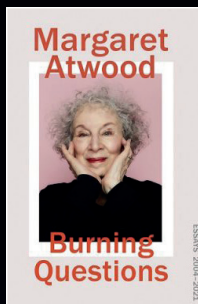


Star-Crossed Kacey Musgraves

I'm a huge Kacey Musgrave fan and while this album is a little more sombre than what I'm used to, I still rate it. Following a Shakespearean theme of three acts she works her way through her recent divorce and out the other side. In some places she shows her sadness and in others the victory of pulling herself together and finding a new way through. While the album is undeniably country this very talented singer-songwriter has bonded it together with the pop genre and is successful in doing so - love it.



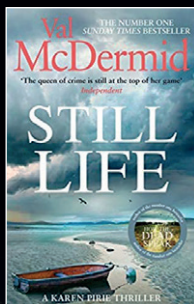
Book Reviews



Burning Questions *Margaret Atwood*

This is the third book of a collection of essays and occasional pieces written by Atwood over the past 15 or so years. It's full of everyday questions that each of us at

one time or another have mused and the answers - where there is one - can be humorous, intellectual or simply create another question - or all of the above. Fascinating and entertaining.

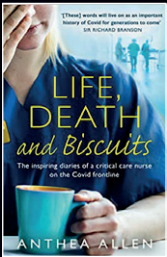


Still Life *Val McDermid*

This is the latest in the Karen Pirie series from the 'Queen of Crime'. After a spell in the reader wilderness I picked up the first of this series 'Distant Echo', and upon finishing it immediately

bought the other 5. Karen Pirie is a flawed but no nonsense cold case detective who is easy to relate as she continually exceeds what is expected of her. If you love a good psychological thriller, you'll love this.





Life, Death and Biscuits

Anthea Allen

A powerful reminder, if we needed one, of what actually happened in our hospitals during the height of the pandemic. How our nurses and

doctors coped or didn't cope, what was expected of them by the public and what they demanded of themselves. What started as a weekend email to family and friends quickly won Anthea a worldwide following and the collection of emails in the book vividly paints the heartbreak and triumph of humanity.

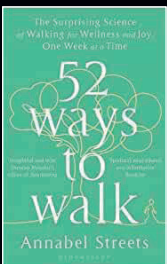


Happy Days

Gabrielle Bernstein

Would you like to waken up each day without that anxiety tumbleweed in your stomach? What about a life without fear? That's what Gabby is offering with her guided

path from trauma to freedom and inner peace. Known as a spiritual teacher, motivational speaker and catalyst for profound inner change her latest book promises to help you transform your life.



52 Ways to Walk

Annabel Streets

Did you know that walking in cold weather burns extra fat? That walking alone strengthens our memories and walking in woodland helps us

sleep? Location, time and direction all matter when it comes to getting the best

out of our daily walk. Annabel shares the thrill of 52 walking styles, explaining the latest science behind each one, and providing practical tips for making the most of your daily steps.



The Four Winds

Kristin Hannah

This book is about the love of a mother for her child, the value of female friendship and the ability, against all the odds, to find love again. Set in Texas 1934

during a drought that threatens her very existence, it's the story of Elsa's incredible journey of survival, hope and what we do for the ones we love.



Run, Rose, Run

Dolly Parton & James Patterson

Anything that Dolly does is OK with me and her voyage into fiction is no different. Released just in time for International Women's Day it's the story of a star on the rise who sings about the hardship of her past - sound familiar? Nashville is where she's come to claim her destiny. It's

also where the darkness she's fled might find her. And destroy her. It's an easy read packed with believable storytelling. And to add that touch of 'Dolly' there's a 12-track original audio to accompany the book!



Click each book cover for more details.



Northern Ireland
Executive

LET'S KEEP
MOVING
FORWARD
SAFELY

KEEP WASHING YOUR HANDS

**WE ALL
MUST DO IT
TO GET
THROUGH IT**



KEEP
DISTANCE



WEAR FACE
COVERING



WASH
HANDS



FRESH
AIR

Follow the public health advice even after you're vaccinated.

nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus