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# woman

**DAISY MAY COOPER  
ON DIVORCE  
AND ALCOHOL  
ADDICTION**

**EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW**

**LOSE AN  
INCH  
by Christmas**

**FOLLOW  
OUR EASY  
PLAN**

**AMANDA  
& EAMONN'S  
PAYBACK!**



**How the stars are  
plotting their revenge**

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# This ISSUE

**woman**  
IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!



I hope you enjoyed our first Christmas issue. I know it seems early but being prepared is key to a stress-free period and with a bit of luck, the gift guide, the prep-ahead food, including Gino's top tips, as well as a taster of what's to come on TV (can't wait for the new Gavin & Stacey!) have inspired you to get organised and in the mood. They have me – I'm already starting to squirrel the gifts away; it not only helps the last-minute panic, but the bank balance, too! In this issue, find out how to lose an inch by Christmas (p26) – yes, that little black dress lurking in the back of the wardrobe WILL make an appearance! Also, stop the season ageing you by taking our quiz (p28) – I don't know about you, but dark mornings and dark evenings are definitely making me feel my age! And, if all else fails, do what I do and hit the make-up bag. We have the perfect party preppers from £5.99 (p22), which should do the trick nicely! Plus! Read our interview with the brilliant comedian Daisy May Cooper (p10) – I love her honesty, it's so refreshing. Enjoy.

*Hannah*

Hannah Fernando, Editor  
hannah.fernando@futurenet.com

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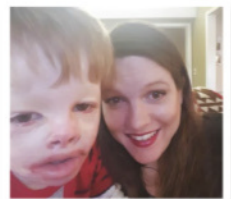
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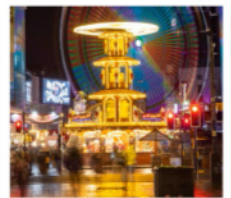
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# WHAT A WEEK

Here's what the stars have been up to in the last seven days



Cheryl and Liam dated for two years

## CHERYL LEANS ON SIMON

Pop singer Cheryl has reportedly turned to former *The X Factor* co-star Simon Cowell for support following the tragic death of Liam Payne, dad to her seven-year-old son Bear. A source revealed, 'Simon and Cheryl have been friends for over 20 years and she knows she can put her trust in him. Simon will do whatever he can for Cheryl. He wants to support her and Bear through this awful time.' In a statement about Liam's death, Cheryl, 41, heartbreakingly said, 'Liam was not only a pop star and celebrity, he was a son, a brother, an uncle, a dear friend and a father to our seven-year-old son. A son that now has to face the reality of never seeing his father again.'



Liam with son Bear as a baby

## 'Terrified' Coleen

**L**oose Women star Coleen Nolan has revealed that she is 'terrified' about losing her job on the panel. During a discussion on the ITV daytime show, talk turned to technology - specifically the rise of AI and its potential to replace jobs - prompting Coleen to share her fears.

'AI is frightening the life out of me. It's all very well and we're all excited, until all of a sudden nobody has a job because AI is doing all of it,' she said. The star, 59, added, 'It's already happening in supermarkets where you can now self-serve... I know that's not AI, but they're still getting rid of staff because now we can do it all ourselves.' Coleen then warned fellow panellist Ruth Langsford, 'Wait until it's four AIs sitting here.'

Earlier this year Coleen, who rose to fame in singing group the Nolan Sisters (later The Nolans), shared her fears about being cancelled thanks to the woke world we live in today. 'We're all worried about it, because we're a cancelling culture now. It's scary,' she said. Speaking about how she has to be mindful of what she says on *Loose Women*, the outspoken star went on, 'It's made it much harder to do. I know it looks easy but it's not, because in the back of your mind you have to be really careful now, and self-edit as you go along.'



## RICHARD AND JUDY'S SEPARATE BEDS

They've been married for almost 40 years and have one of the strongest marriages in showbiz, but Richard Madeley has revealed that he and wife Judy Finnigan don't always share a bed. The star, 68, admitted, 'When I'm doing *Good Morning Britain*, I sleep in the spare room. I do probably sleep a little bit better in bed with Judy, but I'm OK on my own.' He then explained, 'Apart from anything else, Judy and her sleep, you do not mess with.'



WORDS: ARIANA LONGSON. PHOTOS: DYMOND/THAMES (S/C)/SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY, KEN WICKAY/SHUTTERSTOCK, INSTAGRAM @CHERYL.OFFICIAL, @MARTINEMcCUTCHEON, @LORRAINEKELLYSMITH, @MEDIUNCANJAMES





Coleen shared her fears with fellow panellist Ruth

## MARTINE'S MIRACLE BABY

Actor Martine McCutcheon was told she couldn't have children - before welcoming her son Rafferty. The star, who suffers from ME (also called chronic fatigue syndrome), shared, 'The top doctors were amazing but said, "You can't have children. Your immune system and disease thinks it's got to fight everything off and that includes, sadly, babies."' Thankfully, they were wrong and Martine had Rafferty, now nine, who she says 'completes her' and is her 'miracle baby'. She revealed, 'When I held him, there was no love like it, so unconditional. It made me realise that by just being who I was, I was always enough.'



Martine shares Rafferty with her ex, Jack



## PET OF THE WEEK

Lorraine Kelly's adorable pooch Angus celebrated his 7th birthday. We love his party hat!

## HARRY'S FORTUNE REVEALED!

Pop star Harry Styles has topped the rich list for British celebs under 30, with a reported worth of £200 million. Harry, 30, who shot to fame with One Direction in 2010, has seen his bank balance soar since the band went on hiatus in 2015, thanks to three hit solo albums, film roles and a global tour. Fellow singer Dua Lipa, 29, was second, with a net worth of £104 million, while Spider-Man actor Tom Holland (inset), 28, was the third richest with a fortune of £30.6 million.



## Man of THE WEEK

It's not just on stage that singer Duncan James impresses. Look at those abs!







**AMANDA AND EAMONN**

# *PAYBACK TIME'*

*Are the duo coming together to bring Phillip Schofield down once and for all – and does revenge taste sweet?*



**E**amonn Holmes is not one to mince his words – and he certainly hasn't when it comes to his feelings about Phillip Schofield. Most recently, he made a dig at both the disgraced star and Phil's former friend and *This Morning* co-host Holly Willoughby, revealing that most breakfast TV presenters 'hate each other'. He sarcastically said, 'When you look at all those breakfast presenters and you can go through and say, "He hates her, she hates him," and they do. And I used to say it about Phil and Holly, but nobody would believe me. False, false, false.'

Someone who will be on Eamonn's side when it comes to Phil is Amanda Holden. She has had her own issues with Phil, 62, over the years, after he apparently blocked her from getting a job on *This Morning* back in 2018. So is now the time for the pair to come together and get revenge on Phil?

PR expert Dermot McNamara seems to think so, telling *Woman*, 'It's not hard to imagine Eamonn and Amanda quietly relishing Phillip Schofield's public

downfall, given the tumultuous history they've shared with him.'

After covering for Holly when she went on maternity leave in 2014, Amanda, 53, said of the *This Morning* gig, 'I loved every minute. Holly is incredible, but if she ever does finally hang up her stilettos, that's the job I'd really want to be considered for.' However, Amanda's dreams came crashing down when she was tipped for a *This Morning* role while Holly presented *I'm A Celebrity* in Australia in 2018, but was replaced by Rochelle Humes at the last minute. A former daytime TV executive said at the time, 'Phillip campaigned for Rochelle to get the job despite Amanda being more experienced – and having been told privately she'd got the gig. She feels Phil unfairly used his powers of persuasion. She was told he'd chosen Rochelle because she was easier to "manage" on air – and understandably that incensed her.' Phillip later said of working with Amanda, 'She kept me on my toes. She has a faulty edit button and she forgets she's on the telly, which is enormously endearing and funny, but occasionally quite scary.'

Then, in 2020, Eamonn, 64, and his estranged wife Ruth Langsford were axed from their Friday slot on *This Morning*, with Dermot telling us, 'Eamonn makes no secret of the fact that he was removed from ITV, and it was possibly linked to Phillip.'

And, speaking to her *Heart Breakfast* co-host Jamie Theakston, Amanda revealed she'd reached out to Phil, but he rejected her. 'I did offer to meet him for a coffee months ago; he didn't reply to my text. What can I say?' She later admitted that three things she wouldn't like to find in her home were 'spiders, flies and Phillip Schofield'. And Dermot adds, 'Her frustration with Phil has festered for years.'

## Fiery fall-outs

In response to Phil claiming on *Cast Away* that several of his ITV colleagues threw him 'under the bus', Eamonn recently said, 'Well, if I'm one of the people who threw him under the bus, I'm very proud to have done it. This man is addicted to fame, absolutely addicted to fame.' Eamonn previously said of Phil's behaviour at *This Morning*, 'He is the chief narcissist. He is a complete and utter dyed-in-the-wool narcissist; everything is about him. He



Phillip and Amanda co-presented *This Morning* in 2014 and 2015

created an atmosphere where people hated him, people would avoid him in the corridor, he didn't look at anybody, he didn't know anybody's name.'

Eamonn added he felt 'used' when it was arranged without his knowledge for Phil to come out as gay on *This Morning* on a day Eamonn and Ruth were presenting, saying Phil took them 'for fools'.

Dermot suggests Eamonn and Amanda will be enjoying Phillip's downfall. 'Eamonn likely feels vindicated seeing his old rival brought to a new low. One can almost picture him indulging in a triumphant smirk, feeling that justice has finally caught up with the man who snubbed him and Ruth.'

## 'He didn't reply to my text'

He adds, 'For Amanda, the satisfaction might run even deeper. It's hard not to imagine her, perhaps with a cheeky smile, knowing that the tables have turned. While she claimed to have drawn a line under their feud, one would suggest she never truly forgave him for the professional slight.'

It could be a case of letting karma do its work for Eamonn and Amanda, with Dermot explaining, 'Both stars are now in the position to watch his downfall unfold from a distance. Eamonn seems to enjoy playing the long game, having previously hinted at Phil's toxic behaviour, implying that Phil's downfall was only a matter of time. His faltering comeback may feel like karmic retribution.' He concludes, 'It's as if Eamonn and Amanda are both standing by the sidelines, sipping metaphorical tea while Phil's once-invincible public image crumbles. For them, watching Phil's downfall is the ultimate payback for the way he treated them.'

Hmm, imagine what would happen if they all got together and spoke out...







1998

## Ben Shephard

After aspiring to be an actor while at university, Ben found his calling in broadcasting. In 1998 he appeared on *The Big Breakfast* before moving to ITV, where he has stayed ever since, with roles hosting *Good Morning Britain* and, more recently, *This Morning*. You'd barely know almost three decades have passed since Ben, 49, got his big break!



1995

## Carol Vorderman

*Countdown* queen Carol joined the show at its inception in 1982 and stayed there until 2008. Since then she's been a *Loose Women* panellist and had multiple radio shows, but the biggest difference since her early days is her appearance. After ditching her 1980s hairdo for long blonde locks, Carol, 63, has become one of television's most glamorous faces.

# Celebrity THROWBACK

We take a look at what our favourite presenters looked like when they first rose to fame



1999

## Holly Willoughby

In 1995, a 14-year-old Holly was scouted and signed to modelling agency Storm Management, but five years later a TV career beckoned. After a few small roles, she joined ITV's *Ministry of Mayhem* and soon her career skyrocketed, landing big gigs, including *Dancing on Ice* and *This Morning*. Last year she left the ITV daytime show, but in 2025 the celeb, 43, is set to return with a new Netflix show.

2000

## Cat Deeley

After leaving her career as a model, Cat moved into presenting in 1997, co-hosting MTV's *HitList UK* and later children's show *SM:TV Live*. She soon jetted off to the US, getting her big break presenting *So You Think You Can Dance* in 2006. In 2020 Cat, 48, returned to the UK and in March this year took the helm at *This Morning* alongside Ben Shephard. With hardly any wrinkles, she looks just as good - if not better - than she did 25 years ago. Please share your skincare routine, Cat!





KS

2000



1995



### Lorraine Kelly

Last month, Lorraine, who began her broadcasting career on ITV's TV-am in 1984 as Scotland Reporter, celebrated 40 years on breakfast TV. A telly favourite, her show *Lorraine* is a staple of daytime TV, having been on our screens since 2010. And, apart from losing the glasses and growing her hair, the star, 64, has hardly changed at all.

### Susanna Reid

After earning a postgraduate diploma in broadcast journalism, Susanna began her career at BBC Radio Bristol in 1994, before becoming a reporter for BBC News 24. Her big break came in 2004 on BBC *Breakfast* but it was when she moved to *Good Morning Britain* in 2014 that she really became a household name. With her sleek bob that she rocks today, Susanna, 53, looks just as youthful as she did back then!



1998

### Ruth Langsford

Telly fave Ruth began her career at ITV regional station Television South West over 30 years ago, before joining *Loose Women* in 1999 and becoming a regular on *This Morning* in 2006. While she left *Loose Women* in 2002, the star, 64, returned in 2010 as a regular anchor. Apart from growing out her blonde locks, we can barely spot the difference between then and now!



1993

### Eamonn Holmes

Eamonn cut his teeth at Ulster TV – ITV's Northern Ireland network – before moving to the UK and making it big at the helm of GMTV. He went on to work at Sky News and *This Morning* before quitting ITV and moving to GB News. Eamonn, 64, has faced a string of health battles in recent years, including chronic hip, leg and back pain, and has had shoulder surgery, so understandably looks different from when he first appeared on TV.

WORDS: ARIANA LONGSON. PHOTOS: GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK





EXCLUSIVE

# 'I tho COMP UNLO

*Daisy May Cooper on motherhood, her battle with alcohol addiction, and why she's started to like herself at last*

**D**aisy May Cooper shot to fame with *This Country*, the BAFTA-winning, village-life mockumentary she co-wrote and co-starred in with her brother Charlie. Further success came with the hit comedy thriller *Am I Being Unreasonable?* and unconventional love story *Rain Dogs*.

Yet life hasn't always been so good for the actor and writer, who was also recently a team captain on the game show *Password*. Here, the 38-year-old mum opens up about her interest in the afterlife, her baby son's traumatic arrival, and her single-mum struggles.

**Tell us about life as a mum of three...**

My daughter Pip is so unlike me. She likes rules and regulations. She'll want to play teachers, and I'm forever a student. She's telling me how to live my life, and I'm like, 'You're six. You drink milk at break time. How dare you? I pay my taxes!' Jack's more like me. He loves Playmobil.

I did *The Masked Singer* [as Otter] because Pip loved the show. She was furious. She said, 'Why would you go on that? You can't sing.' I said, 'I did it for you...' And a giant pay cheque.

**Your other son, Benji, was born prematurely in June. What happened?**

He was seven weeks early. I was getting painful contractions, then my waters broke.



# I thought I was COMPLETELY UNLOVABLE

I ended up having an emergency C-section and haemorrhaged. It was tough and go.

**You lost a lot of blood?**

Litres. I didn't get to see him immediately because they took him to neonatal. He was in this Perspex box, plugged into all these wires. I didn't want to bond: I was so terrified I might lose him. I thought, 'I can't, sorry...' I don't think it'll hit me for a long time how hard it was. It's so traumatic.

**You've spoken of the struggles you faced after your divorce...**

I found myself getting completely addicted to alcohol when I was newly a single mum. I felt so incapable, and it felt shameful not being able to admit I was struggling. Talking to my friend Selin [Hizli, who she writes *Am I Being Unreasonable?* with] helped, and not being so hard on myself.

Taking alcohol out of the equation meant I could be present with my children, as opposed to rushing to get them to bed so I can pour a gin and tonic. I've been sober a year-and-a-half. It's insane how much alcohol advertising is targeting single mums.

**What difference has your fiancé Ant [Huggins, 46, an artist she met on dating app Hinge] made to your life?**

Until meeting him, I thought I was completely unlovable. I thought I was a very dramatic person in a relationship where I'd be arguing at three in the morning, throwing dishes or whatever. With the right person, I'm not. I'm generous and loving. That was a real eye-opener, and stopped a lot of the self-loathing I'd had. He's so kind and thoughtful. He's brought



With brother Charlie in *This Country*

two kids, who are 14 and 12, into this relationship with my children, and they all love each other.

**What are you working on now?**

A second series of *Am I Being Unreasonable?* and an adaptation of Hilary Mantel's book *Beyond Black*, which is all about a psychic. Before she died, she said she wanted me to play that part, so me and Jack Thorne have been adapting it.

**'I'm forever a student'**

**Do you feel more content as you head towards 40?**

Absolutely. As you get older, you get more sure of yourself and who you are. Things I used to look for, success or money, are not as important. I'm relaxed. I've started to like myself for the first time ever.

**In your book *Hexy B\*tch*, you try to make sense of your paranormal experiences...**

My whole life, I wanted there to be something. Then, I saw not even a full apparition... It was a pair of legs wearing what looked like white PE shorts. I heard this running before I saw it. I was watching *Paw Patrol* with my little boy, and he clocked it, too.



With her partner and fiancé Ant



Sharing a laugh on *Password*

**Scary stuff...**

I'm shaking thinking about it. I've doubted myself. Was it a hallucination? Maybe I fell asleep? I felt ashamed to talk about it. If this isn't a spirit or something, I need to see a doctor, because I witnessed that. I'm 100% a believer.

**Where does your fascination with the paranormal come from?**

My mother lost her sister to drink-driving when she was 30. My mum was massively depressed. I was dragged round to laughable mediumship nights, always in the back room of some seedy pub. These people were absolute con artists. It was like watching my mum's heart breaking again and again. I desperately wanted there to be something.

**Would you do a ghost-hunting show?**

Oh, 1,000%.

**Who would you hunt ghosts with? Aside from your crush Ben Shephard, obviously...**

There wouldn't be much ghost-hunting: I'd be trying to snog him. Alan Carr [fellow *Password* team captain] would be funny. No, he'd be terrible. He'd be screaming, so I'd be screaming. We'd be wetting ourselves.

**\* *Hexy B\*tch* by Daisy May Cooper (£22, Octopus) is out now**



WORDS: KATHERINE HASSELL. PHOTOS: GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK, BBC, ITV





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# The ROYAL INSIDER



By royal biographer Emily Andrews

## THE REASONS BEHIND THE SUSSEXES' NEW MOVE

**I** must admit, the news that Harry and Meghan have reportedly bought a new home in Portugal really took me by surprise. Are they moving? Is one of them moving?

No, not quite (yet...).

Apparently, they've bought a holiday home, just 90 minutes south of Lisbon, to add to their property portfolio – which also comprises their £11 million Montecito mansion where the couple live with children Archie, five, and Lilibet, three.

The main reasons for doing so, I'm told, are two-fold.

First, they were introduced to the uber-exclusive CostaTerra Golf and Ocean Club by Harry's bestie and cousin Princess Eugenie and her husband Jack Brooksbank, who live there part of the year.

Perhaps Jack, who works in sales and marketing for the members-only resort, managed to negotiate a family discount on the rumoured starting point of €3.6 million.

The couples are super close; they were the first members of the Royal Family to meet Meghan when Jack and Eug, as she's known, flew out to Toronto to celebrate Halloween with the pair at Soho House in 2016.

They lived next door to each other in Kensington Palace – Harry and Meghan at Nottingham Cottage, Jack and Eugenie at Ivy Cottage – they've 'vacayed' together before and the Sussexes 'sublet' Frogmore Cottage to them when they moved to the USA back in 2020.

Fun-loving Eugenie has always made a real effort to stay friends with Harry (and Meghan), despite the toxic fall-out and



The pair are said to have taken a shine to the CostaTerra Club (inset)



war of words from the Sussexes after they left The Firm, and wants her two sons – August, three, and Ernest,

17 months – to know their cousins.

The feeling is mutual from the Sussex side – particularly since they are the only family members left on real speaking terms.

The other main reason for the purchase is a European base.

You might have thought somewhere in the UK, perhaps in the Cotswolds (where they previously rented) would have been more logical for the Sussexes, given that Harry has indicated he wants to spend more time over here on his charitable ventures.

But Meghan has made it perfectly clear, I understand, that she does not want to return to the UK, and as Harry himself has said, he does not feel his wife and children are safe here.

Therefore the high gates and privacy laws of Portugal appeal to the Sussexes, just as much as the uber-exclusive resort that promises both



Eugenie and husband Jack



## WHAT'S THE LATEST?

He may be the King, but deference to His Majesty is thrown to the winds when it comes to his step grandchildren. His stepson, and godson, Tom Parker Bowles revealed that his children call Charles 'Uppa'. Little people don't, of course, stand on ceremony and, as Tom said, 'For the first 10, 12 years of their life, they didn't know any different. They thought of him as the most kind, funny, sweet, step-grandfather.' George, Charlotte and Louis are thought to call him Grandpa, while Camilla (called 'Gaga' by all her grandchildren) once told me his favourite story to read to all his grandchildren was Babar the Elephant.

outstanding food and woo-woo wellness. It's A-list central in this area of Portugal – Madonna, George Clooney and Paris Hilton have all been spotted there – so the duchess should feel right at home!

## From the palace

Prince William is truly carving out a role as a campaigning royal – much like his father. But it's in picking up the mantle of Princess Diana that he really hopes to make a change. Ending homelessness has been his focus this year and with his ITV documentary, Saatchi gallery art show and Homewards initiative, he's making strides. Wills, 42, said, 'When I was very small my mother started talking about homelessness, much like I do with my children now on the school run... It had a deep resonance with me.'





# Why are we so obsessed with MOVING HOUSE?

*With more homes on the market than last year, we investigate the nation's love of selling up*

**W**e've all been there. When you've just finished decorating the last room in your home, you look around and

think, 'What next?' Do you redecorate, beginning with the first room you started with? Do you sit tight and simply enjoy your home for a few years? Or is it time to move on and start a new project?

As many as 50,000 people move home every week in the UK, suggesting that a huge number of us choose the latter. And recently, it was reported that the property market is booming. Buyers are currently spoilt for choice, with the number of homes being sold at a 10-year high, according to Rightmove. But why, as a nation, are we so obsessed with moving? One woman tells us about her love of trading her home for a new one...

£5,000

The average amount that home-movers spend on goods and services directly relating to their move.

## 'I JUST CAN'T HELP MYSELF'

**Shona Sibary lives in Sussex.**

There is a man's name in my phone contacts – let's call him Dave – who was once an important person to me but who now refuses to answer my calls. He isn't an ex-boyfriend or even a friend. He's just some poor bloke who happens to own a Luton van and who once advertised his removals business on Gumtree.

He didn't know it when I first contacted him in 2018, but he was doomed to help me move four times over the next six years. He has seen the contents of my underwear drawer more times than my husband and got groin strain twice from trying to shove our super-king-sized bed up narrow staircases.

## Addicted to moving

You might wonder why I have this crazy compulsion to keep moving house. The truth is, like many people with an addiction, I just can't help myself.

Since having our first daughter Flo, in 1998, we have lived in 13 properties. That's an average of roughly one house move every 25 months. Other than in a beautiful, detached Edwardian property with a wisteria that bloomed twice a year, the longest we have lived

in one place is three years and five months. We've been in our current Victorian semi in Chichester for three years and four months and there is a For Sale sign outside.

With the first home we bought, in Haslemere, Surrey, in 1999, having moved out of London with Flo, then aged one, it was justifiable to move again three years later because we'd welcomed two more children and a black Labrador called Oscar. Then came the big house with the wisteria which I know my long-suffering husband Keith hoped would become our pension – and most definitely a home we'd still be living in today. Instead, we have moved 10 times since then – eight of those houses have been rentals; two were ones we bought.

I look back and wonder why I forced us to move from that lovely wisteria house. In many ways it was the beginning of my slide into this compulsion. We'd spent £100,000 doing it up and the children all had spacious bedrooms of their own.

There was a trampoline in the garden and guinea pigs in a hutch. But Keith







12%  
The percentage increase in homes for sale compared with last year.

worked in London all day and I was struggling to adjust to the juggle that is working as a freelance writer and motherhood. It wasn't a particularly easy time in our marriage and, gorgeous as the house was, I never felt wholly happy there.

## No reason for leaving

There have been three houses where we have lasted just six months. They were all rentals but still there was no concrete reason for leaving any of them except I simply woke up one morning and decided I didn't want to be there any longer.

Keith relocated to Dubai seven years ago, after we moved from North Devon back up to West Sussex, and we try to see each other every eight weeks or so. His job as a sales director took him there, but I wonder if this

decision to be 4,000 miles away has anything to do with his desire to exist under one roof for longer than five minutes. I know he finds my restlessness exhausting.

The thing is, I am usually happy in the beginning. I relish all the exciting possibilities a fresh space brings to reinvent and put down roots. And, strange as it might sound, I hate the upheaval of moving. Who doesn't? Having done it so many times, the thought of packing up boxes and the ensuing chaos for weeks afterwards makes me want to lie down in a dark room with a bottle of whisky.

Then there's the admin. Quite honestly, I have spent more hours on the phone to internet service providers, energy companies and councils than I have changing the nappies of my children.

What I need is – to adapt a Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer phrase – to love my house and not list it. And I'm trying so hard to do this. I wander from room to room forcing myself to imagine being here in five, 10, 20 years. But I just can't picture it.

As far as addictions go – is it so bad really, this aversion to being stagnant? At least I'm doing my bit to keep the housing market afloat. I also once read a quote saying, 'Home is what you take with you, not what you leave behind.'

That can go on my gravestone. The place where I will finally rest in peace.

## Expert opinion

**Clinical psychologist and author of *The Grief Collective* Dr Marianne Trent says:**

For some, the urge to move frequently isn't just about finding a perfect home, but shaped by deeper experiences. If home life was ever inconsistent growing up, that feeling can become a familiar pattern. So staying in one place can feel unsettling or triggering, making the idea of a fresh start a relief.

While this desire for change might keep life exciting, it can carry challenges, like the strain of repeated upheaval or the financial and emotional impact on family. Understanding this cycle with compassion can be a powerful first step toward finding contentment.

\* [goodthinkingpsychology.co.uk](http://goodthinkingpsychology.co.uk)



Shona (left), and with her family





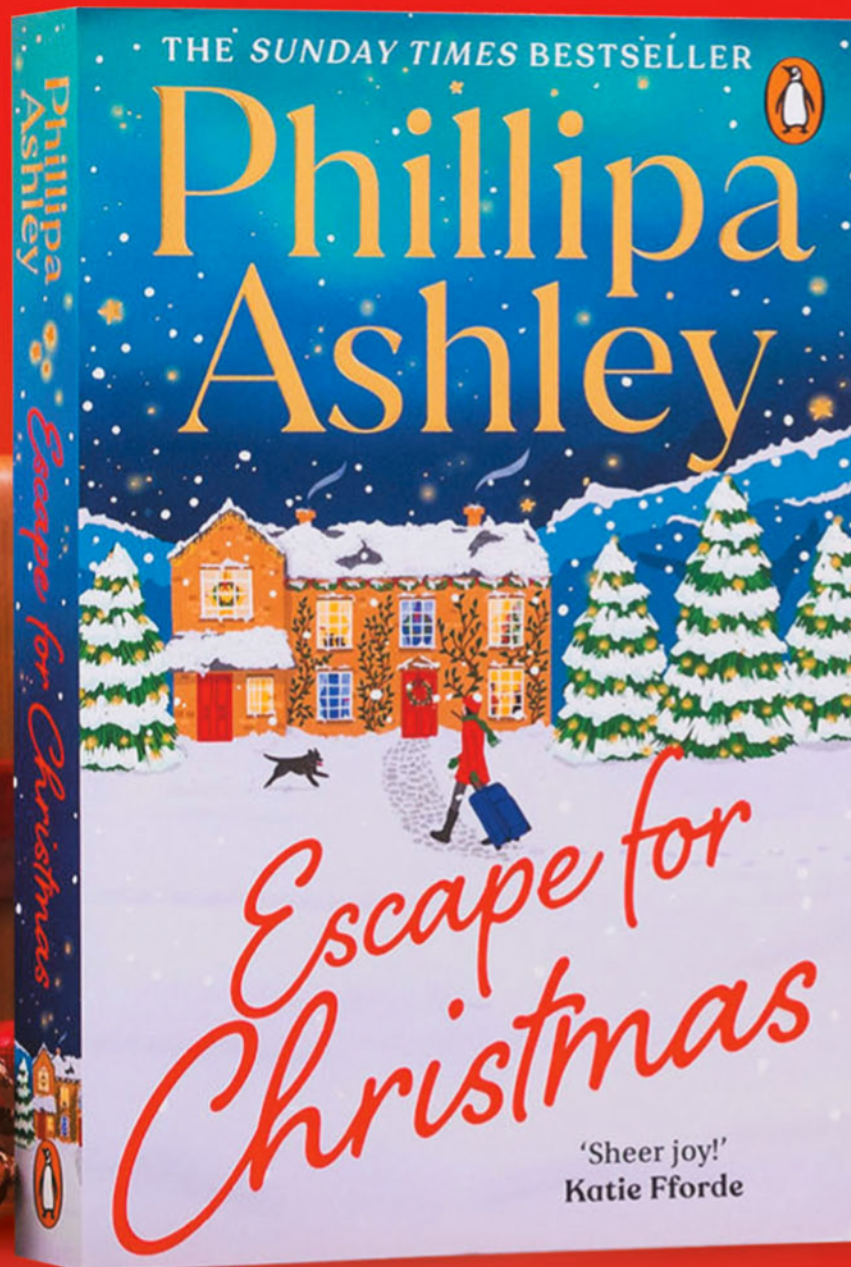
'Entertaining'



'Romantic'



'Heartwarming'



The perfect festive read  
from the bestselling author



# Your LOOKS

Style | Beauty | Health

## UPGRADE YOUR MAKE-UP BAG

Exciting news – No7 has just launched a brand-new make-up range, inspired by professional make-up artists. It's a beautifully curated 12-piece collection, ideal for getting you glammed up this party season. You'll find everything from velvety lipsticks, creamy bronzers, eyeshadow palettes and setting powder, all with a seriously luxe look. If you're searching for a designer-inspired make-up range to gift or to treat yourself this Christmas, look no further.

LUXE FOR LESS



From left to right (all No7 Pro Artist): Matte Muse Lipstick, £14.95, Eye Palette Nude, £16.95, Soft Glow Cream Bronzer, £19.95, Finishing Touch Fixing Mist, £19.95, Touch Concealer, £19.95, 12 Hour Artist Eye Pencil, £12.95, Runway Ready Brow Gel, £14.95, Precision Edit Lip Liner, £12.95, Set The Scene Loose Setting Powder, £12.95, Base Perfecting Primer, £19.95, Lip Shine Oil, £14.95, Luxe Liquid Blush, £14.95, all Boots



# In store **NOW**

*What to look for from your favourite  
high-street shops this week*



Jacket, £75

Jeans, £45



Bag, £31



Top, £65

**SIZES  
10-32**

## **JD WILLIAMS**

Whether you're looking for a glamorous evening ensemble, relaxed yet chic winter wear, or metallic accessories to complete your look, JD Williams has you covered.

With inclusive sizing, everyone can find something special, making it easy to feel comfortable and confident.

Top, £69, skirt, £75, shoes, £40; bag and earrings, stylist's own





## MATALAN

With a variety of on-trend options designed for the holiday season, Matalan has a fabulous choice of pieces to make dressing up both stress-free and fun. This gorgeous green satin skirt is a standout piece for £20.

**SIZES 8-22**



Blouse, £17



Earrings, £5



Jumper, £20



Skirt, £20

## V BY VERY

Get your Christmassy fashion fix online at Very. From on-trend prints to rich velvets and dazzling sequins, the range is packed with affordable items that will elevate your wardrobe. With everything you need just a click away, you can effortlessly shop from the comfort of your sofa!



Dress, £35

**SIZES 8-20**



Dress, £55



Skirt, £25



Boots, £42

## NEXT

If you're dreaming of glitzy partywear, a cosy knit for Christmas morning, or stylish separates to mix and match, head to your nearest Next store for their unbeatable selection. The new festive collection offers an array of elegant options, perfect for every occasion.

**SIZES 6-26**

Blazer, £65



Cardigan, £39



Skirt, £55



Bag, £38



Dress, £60, earrings, £8



# Steal her *STYLE*

From  
£3.50

*Copy Davina McCall's glam outfits  
with exact matches and these great  
high-street lookalikes*



Dress, £99,  
sizes 6-16,  
Never Fully  
Dressed at  
Asos



Coat, £60,  
sizes 2-26,  
Next



Earrings,  
£14, M&S



Bag, £32, Ted Baker at JD Williams



Shoes,  
£42.99,  
New Look

## *SPARKLE AND SHINE*

Whether you opt for a mini style like Davina or prefer a longer length, a sparkly dress is a must-have! Sequins are timeless, making them a year-round staple worth investing in. To elevate your look, choose a tonal colour palette for an effortlessly luxurious feel. Finish with a chic cream coat.







EXACT MATCH

Blazer and trousers, from £33 per day (for a minimum of four days), sizes 6-14, Nadine Merabi at hurrcollective.com

EXACT MATCH



Faux fur jacket, £45, sizes xs-xl, George at Asda



Dress, £29.99, sizes xs-l, Bershka

### RENT FOR THAT SPECIAL LOOK

If you're after new ways to update your wardrobe, or dream of wearing designer clothes without the steep price tag, consider using a rental platform. This sustainable approach lets you enjoy high-end fashion while reducing waste and saving money, making it a smart and stylish choice for any event.

### BROWN IS THE NEW BLACK

Effortlessly tap into two of the season's biggest trends by styling this sleek, strapless brown dress with striking leopard-print accessories. The rich, neutral tone of the dress creates the perfect canvas for the bold animal print, allowing you to blend timeless elegance with a trendy, modern edge.



Bag, £45.99, parfois.com



Earrings, £3.50, Primark



Shoes, £26.99, Public Desire at New Look



Top, £12, sizes 6-22, M&S



Bracelet, £14, John Lewis & Partners



Shoes, £27.99, Zara

Bag, £55, Accessorize

Earrings, £16, bettyandbiddy.com

COMPILED BY: BECKY JOINER-O'RIORDAN. PHOTOS: GETTY



# PERFECT par

Whatever your event, use these essentials to shine this season

## MAKE-UP MUST-HAVES

Invest in glowy highlighters, luminous primers, pigmented lipsticks and lengthening mascaras ahead of your festive parties.



## HEAD-TO-TOE TREATS

Everything you need to feel confident in your skin this Christmas season. Stock up on body scrubs, instant tans and body shimmers to feel your best self.



Top shelf (left to right): Iconic London Lit and Luminous Highlighter, £25, Sephora; Revolution Skin Silk Serum Foundation, £10.99, Superdrug; L'Oréal Paris Color Riche Satin Lipstick, £11.99, Boots; Revolution Juicy Peptide Lip Balm, £5.99, Superdrug; Ciaté London Dewy Stix Highlighter, £19, ciatelondon.com; E.L.F. Glow Reviver Lip Oil, £8, Boots; Milani Cheek Kiss Cream Blush, £13.50, Superdrug; Kiko Milano Gold Reflections Mascara, £15.99, kikocosmetics.com; Ciaté London Dewy Skin Glass Glow Tint, £29, ciatelondon.com; Sculpted by Aimee Beauty Base, £23, Boots. Bottom shelf (left to right): Tropic Body Smooth Polish, £24, tropicskincare.com; Sienna X Gradual Clear Self Tan Water Mousse, £19.99, amazon.co.uk; Body Proud The Hot Seat Sculpting Booty Cream, £12.95, iamproud.com; Loving Tan Bronze Shimmer Luminous Cream, £30.95, Debenhams; Ella & Jo Face Filter Tanning Mist, £23, ellaandjo.co.uk; Rituals Shimmering Body Oil, £24.90, Boots; Sanctuary Spa Lily & Rose Body Butter, £16, Boots.



# Beauty preppers

From  
£5.99

## HAIR HEROES

Style, hold, smooth, gloss, hydrate and protect your hair with these styling products, ensuring you'll be the mane event at any occasion.



## SKINCARE SAVIOURS

Let your skin radiate and shine with the help of some hard-working clarifying, brightening, hydrating and detoxifying skincare treats.



Top shelf (left to right): Davines Hair Primer Heat Protectant, £11, [uk.davines.com](http://uk.davines.com); Umberto Giannini Weatherproof Hold Hairspray, £9.95, Boots; Amika Perk Up Plus Clean Dry Shampoo, £16, Sephora; Percy & Reed Wonder Balm Hair Primer, £22, John Lewis & Partners; L'Oréal Elvive Glycolic Gloss Treatment, £15.99, Superdrug; Hair by Sam McKnight Cool Curls Refresh & Revive Mist, £28, Sephora; Arkie The Headliner Modern Definition Gel, £13, Boots; Bondi Boost Anti-Frizz Flyaway Wands, £15, [bondiboost.co.uk](http://bondiboost.co.uk). Bottom shelf (left to right): Super Facialist Rose Hydrate Miracle Makeover Facial Oil, £16, Ocado; Garnier Micellar Gentle Peeling Water, £8.99, Boots; Grace & Stella Dead Sea Mud Mask, £17, [graceandstella.com](http://graceandstella.com); Lumene Glow Renew Night Cream, £27.90, Boots; Bubble Deep Dive AHA + PHA Exfoliating Mask, £18, Boots; Fresh Elements Clarify Skin-Perfecting Jelly Cleanser, £9.50, M&S; Boots DermaCare Ceramides Refining Serum, £7, Boots; Nip + Fab Vitamin C Fix Jelly Eye Patches, £19.95, Boots.

PHOTO: RICHARD BUTCHER



Promotion

# Love that **BINGO FEELING!**



**ADD £10,  
GET £30 IN  
BONUSES!**

**Join in  
the fun**

**woman** *Bingo.com*

New players only. Min dep £10. 200% Bingo Bonus (max £20) + 100% Games Bonus max £10. Games Bonus wins cap: £100 + initial bonus. 4x Bingo Bonus; 35x Games Bonus wagering req. 5-day expiry. 18+ GambleAware.org. Full T&Cs apply womanbingo.com/#tnc



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Play within your limits



**GambleAware**  
Advice | Tools | Support

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PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): GETTY



# Feel great



ANNIE DEADMAN IS HERE TO HELP YOU, THE EASY WAY!

## How to lower your cholesterol

**C**holesterol is a fatty substance (known as a lipid) and helps make hormones, cell membranes and vitamin D. It's absolutely vital. Cholesterol is made in the liver and carried in the bloodstream in the form of lipoproteins. There are low-density lipoproteins (LDL) known as the 'bad cholesterol', because it can contribute to plaque building up in arteries and is therefore linked to heart attacks and strokes, and high-density lipoproteins (HDL), which is the 'good' stuff.

Time for my no-nonsense hat. If you have high overall cholesterol then the first focus should be to lower the LDL. If our HDL is high, but our LDL is also high, we can't be content with that. The work we do must focus on reducing the LDL. To do this (and therefore help keep our arteries clear) we need to do the following.

**1** Eat more unsaturated fat. We may have been told a decade ago to cut out fat completely, but actually it's eating more of the good stuff which is crucial. Namely unsaturated fats. That's oily fish, tofu, nuts (especially walnuts) seeds and seed oils (pumpkin, olive and flaxseed). Traditionally, we were told to cut out all saturated fats to lower LDL, but in fact fermented cheese and yogurt are helpful along with a little red meat.

**2** Eat less refined carbohydrates. White

bread, white rice, sugary and ultra-processed foods are a sure-fire way to raise LDL. Try to reduce them and replace them with wholegrain alternatives.

**3** Eat more fibre. Adding more fibre (vegetables, fruit, pulses, beans and wholegrain carbohydrates) is another winner as it reduces the absorption of LDL into the bloodstream.

**4** Keep our weight down. Losing body fat will have a positive impact on LDL. Other factors which will benefit our cholesterol levels are: a) stopping smoking (it's no good just cutting down) and b) exercising. This raises our HDL. Fact.



Annie x

\* Annie is a fitness coach and creator of The Blast Plan, a 28-day nutrition and fat-loss programme aimed at motivating women towards health and confidence. Visit [theblastplan.com](http://theblastplan.com) to find out more

### ANNIE'S TIP

Around 35% of our calories should come from fat (25% unsaturated, 10% saturated). I make a point of eating six walnut halves and 2tsp pumpkin seeds every day to help keep the LDL down.



### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

'Health is not about the weight you lose but the life you gain.'

Give this a go...

### DITCH THE GLUG

Olive oil is very high in unsaturated fat, but obviously also high in calories. Spraying rather than glugging can ease the load. Try Oil Sprayer For Cooking (£12.93, [lightinthebox.com](http://lightinthebox.com)) to keep an eye on your measures.





# LOSE AN INCH

## by Christmas

*Stride into shape with our simple walking plan*

**W**hether you want more freedom to enjoy seasonal treats or need a confidence boost, there's plenty of time to shed unwanted weight. And you don't need to spend hours in the gym – after all, who has the time amid Christmas preparations?

Simply lace up your trainers and step outside for the next five weeks. Not only will your silhouette slim, but your fitness will improve and the fresh air will help clear your mind. So, what are you waiting for?

### Consider technique

If you want to ramp up the weight-loss effects of walking, increase your speed or vary the gradient – for example, walking uphill. 'If you're trying to hit your moderate-intensity aerobic target, that means you can still hold a conversation while walking but have an increased rate and depth of breathing,' says physiotherapist Aisling O'Malley. 'If you're going for a brisk walk to meet the vigorous-intensity target, walk as if you're late

for an important meeting, so a more purposeful stride.'

### Battle the elements

Be prepared, whatever the weather.

#### \* PLAN YOUR WARDROBE

Layered clothing works best. Look for wool, silk or a wicking synthetic, such as polypropylene for your base layer, and something waterproof, breathable and lightweight on top.

#### \* THINK ABOUT ACCESSORIES

Ideally, find gloves that are waterproof and breathable, and don't hinder your dexterity. Look for a beanie hat that will keep you warm and dry. And don't forget your socks! Merino wool is best, but not particularly durable, so look for a pair with a synthetic toe and heel, which will last much longer.

#### \* INVEST IN SHOES

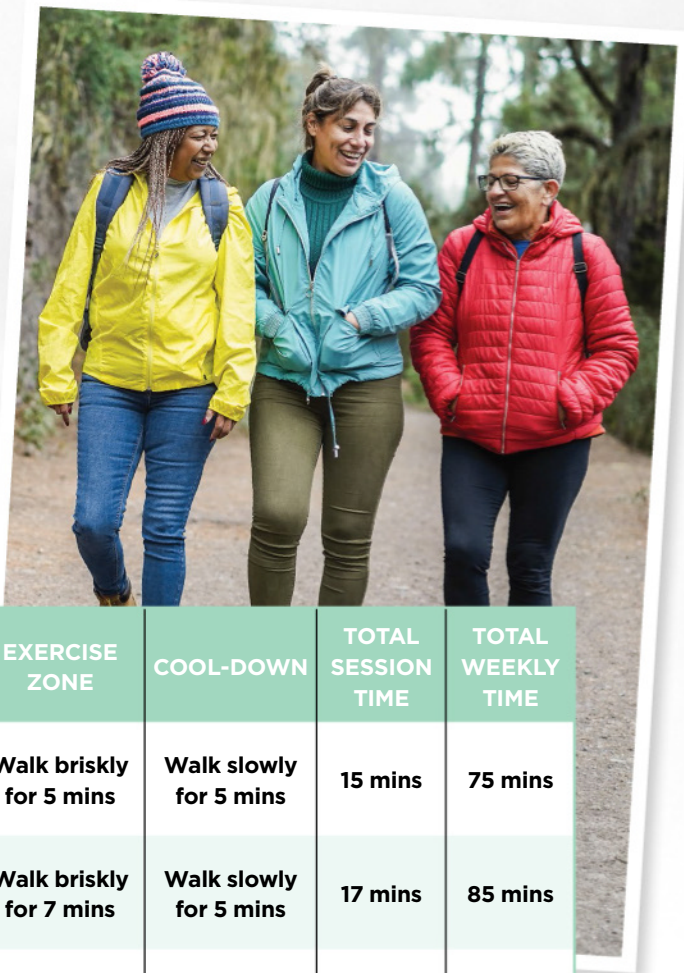
They need to be supportive, lightweight, waterproof and slip-proof. If you have a problem such as flat feet, look for trainers with built-in orthotic soles.





# YOUR FIVE-WEEK PLAN

Just getting out every day will improve your fitness, but walking with a purpose is better. This simple schedule is designed to be achievable, even if you're busy.



SESSION	WARM-UP	EXERCISE ZONE	COOL-DOWN	TOTAL SESSION TIME	TOTAL WEEKLY TIME
WEEK 1	Walk slowly for 5 mins	Walk briskly for 5 mins	Walk slowly for 5 mins	15 mins	75 mins
WEEK 2	Walk slowly for 5 mins	Walk briskly for 7 mins	Walk slowly for 5 mins	17 mins	85 mins
WEEK 3	Walk slowly for 5 mins	Walk briskly for 9 mins	Walk slowly for 5 mins	19 mins	95 mins
WEEK 4	Walk slowly for 5 mins	Walk briskly for 11 mins	Walk slowly for 5 mins	21 mins	105 mins
WEEK 5	Walk slowly for 5 mins	Walk briskly for 13 mins	Walk slowly for 5 mins	23 mins	115 mins

## Avoid injuries

Muscles can become less flexible when it's cold out, increasing your risk of injuries. Do this stretching routine on rest days to stay supple...

### Calf

Take a big step forwards with your left foot, keeping your right heel on the ground. Hold and repeat on the other side. Keep your body upright and your abs tight. Be careful not to arch your back.

### Achilles

From the calf stretch position, bend the back knee to change the angle and stretch the Achilles tendon. Keep your heel down.

### Hip

Stand up, take a half step back with the right foot. Bend your left knee and shift your weight back to your right hip. Keep the right leg straight, bend forward more and reach further down your right leg.

### Hamstring

Sit on a bench with one leg extended, then lean towards the extended leg.

### Quads

Stand on one leg. Now bend your other leg and pull the heel towards your bum.

## Manage temptations

Struggle to stop at just one or two Quality Street? A short brisk walk can help, found Exeter University. Heading outside was found to reduce the intake of high-calorie snack foods by half, contributing to weight loss when maintained over time.

## Calories burnt

### Slow stroll:

Around 150 calories, walking at two miles per hour.

### Brisk walk:

Around 300 calories, walking at four miles per hour.



# Stop the season AGEING YOU

*Take our youth-boosting quiz to find out how you can keep looking and feeling fabulous*

**F**rom eating too many sugary desserts and knocking back glasses of fizz, to stress, lack of sleep and cold weather, the festive season is sometimes not the best for our health. Want to sparkle like your party dress? Our expert advice reveals how to have fun and stay young.

## Take our quiz

Circle the answer you think is correct for each question

**1** Which alcoholic drink is most likely to age you?

- A  Glass of prosecco
- B  Glass of mulled wine
- C  Shot of brandy

**2** Which festive treat contains the most sugar?

- A  All-butter mince pie
- B  Four segments of Terry's Chocolate Orange
- C  Two M&S shortbread triangles

**3** What's worse for sleep?

- A  Late nights
- B  Lie-ins
- C  Getting less than six hours

**4** What's the worst posture pitfall?

- A  Carrying heavy shopping bags
- B  Standing for two hours at a party
- C  Bending over to wrap gifts

**5** Which of these is likely to cause your stress hormones to soar?

- A  Rushing around on Christmas Eve
- B  Family arguments
- C  Cooking the Christmas Day meal
- D  All of the above





47%

of Brits find December the most exhausting month, with festive fatigue really kicking in on 19 December\*.

## How did you score?

See how you did below and then follow our expert, age-defying tips

**1 ANSWER C**  
Treating yourself to a tippie? Avoid spirits. Although the shot of brandy contains the fewest units (one) compared with the glass of prosecco (1.5) or mulled wine (2.3 for 175ml glass), it could age you the most. Compared with beer, spirits had a 2.5 times greater effect on biological ageing (essentially how old your cells are), according to a study by Northwestern Medicine. Although it can be tempting to knock back a few more than normal, drink no more than 14 units a week. And use an alcohol measure to keep track of how much you're drinking. Switch prosecco for champagne to halve sugar intake.

**2 ANSWER A**  
On average, we consume over 160g of sugar on Christmas Day alone\*\*. A seemingly 'savoury' Christmas lunch can contain 30g of sugar (our recommended daily intake). High levels are linked to cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, mood disorders and skin problems. You might also notice a difference in your appearance. 'Sugar is a known catalyst for skin ageing. Anything over 30g daily can lead to acne, dark spots, dark circles and dullness,' says chartered chemist Bruce Green.

### Slash your sugar...

- \* Swap cranberry sauce for horseradish, saving 4.6g sugar per teaspoon.
- \* Swap a portion of Christmas pudding and vanilla custard for crackers and cheese, saving around 35g sugar.
- \* Swap shop-bought mince pies for homemade ones, saving up to 15g sugar per mince pie\*.

**3 ANSWER C**  
Socialising, festive prepping and overindulging can all disrupt our sleep cycle. Consistently getting less than six hours is one of the worst things we can do for our health. Sleep deprivation increases cortisol, which breaks down collagen (protein that keeps our skin smooth) and causes inflammation throughout the body. Avoid late nights, as this can upset your circadian rhythm - try going to bed and waking up at the same time every day. The occasional weekend lie-in is probably not a problem, says sleep expert Neil Robinson, but it's not advised long-term. Known as 'social jet lag', it may impair cognitive performance as well as trigger diabetes and high blood pressure.



**4 ANSWER B**  
Standing or sitting in the same position for hours is the worst thing you can do for your posture. And a bad posture - think hunched shoulders, stooped back, head bent forward and pelvis sticking out - can add on years. Enhancing your stance will not only help to turn back the clock, but could improve digestion, boost circulation, reduce anxiety and make you look slimmer. Physiotherapist Phil Evans recommends ditching the slippers, moving every 20 minutes to wake up your body, limiting reading time in bed and avoiding one-shoulder bags where weight is unevenly distributed.

**5 ANSWER D**  
Christmas is a stressful time of year. If the thought of squeezing a giant turkey into your oven is making you feel tense or the cost of, well, everything is making your eyes roll, you're not alone. Over a third of women feel overwhelmed by the festive season. And it's ageing us. The release of adrenaline raises our heart rate and blood pressure, blood is diverted from non-vital areas, weakening our immune system, our digestive system starts to shut down and our muscles tense. Over time it can also damage our cells. Try these calming tips...

### \* Make a note

Scribble down five things you're grateful for to feel happier, shift your mindset, reset your current mood and help you to sleep better\*\*\*.

### \* Read yourself calm

Just six minutes of leisurely reading can reduce stress levels by 68%\*\*\*\*.

### \* Brush off tension

Small, repetitive movements can calm you. Brushing your hair tops the bill - do it each night to help to ease mental chatter.



# The clinic

WOMAN'S GP DR HELEN WALL ON HER TOPIC OF THE WEEK

## Why it's not too late to get a flu jab

Getting protected is quick, simple and could save your festive celebrations...

Shall I start with some bad news? The UK flu season usually peaks in December and January – just in time to ruin your Christmas festivities and, potentially, the new year celebrations. The good news is there's still time to protect you and your loved ones by getting an annual flu jab.

Most of us will proclaim to have had flu at some point, but while some of you may have felt extremely poorly, you may actually have had a bad cold. I can assure you that flu (a virus spread by air droplets or even surface contact) is far worse and will likely at best leave you bed-bound for a short period. Last year, during the peak of flu season, there were more than 2,400 people in hospital with flu each day in England. Some of these will have been in critical care and, sadly, some will have not lived to tell the tale.

### AVAILABLE FOR FREE

If you are eligible for a free jab on the NHS, you are deemed at high risk of becoming seriously unwell with flu and

### IT WON'T MAKE YOU SICK

The flu vaccine injection used for adults is not a 'live' vaccine and therefore cannot cause flu. Some people may experience side effects, such as muscle aches and a slight fever or sore arm. This is usually very short-lived and not flu.

potentially hospitalised or worse. Flu can lead to pneumonia, severe bacterial infections and worsening of underlying conditions, such as heart failure. It can be fatal.

It doesn't matter if you were vaccinated in previous years or have had the flu before. There are three or four common strains (types) of flu each year in circulation and these can be different to what you have had both naturally and from previous vaccines. The flu vaccine is updated each year according to expected flu strains for the coming winter.

### CHECK YOUR ELIGIBILITY

This year, you are eligible if you're aged 65 years old or older; are younger than 65 with a medical condition, such as diabetes, asthma or heart disease; care for someone else with poor health, or are living with someone who has a weak immune system. Children and all pregnant women are also eligible, as are health and social care workers, and care home residents.

If you're uncertain if it applies to you, ask your GP, practice nurse, midwife or pharmacist. You should have been notified by the NHS by now, but if you're still unsure and haven't been contacted yet, I'd recommend that you double-check.

The flu vaccine takes effect to protect you from about day 10, so it's still not too late to get yours this winter. If you're not eligible for a free vaccine, many pharmacies will offer these for a relatively small fee. I will be making sure that I've had mine.

### FACT OR FICTION? BEING SCARED WILL STOP YOUR HICCUPS

Fiction! If you've got a case of the hiccups, someone might try to give you a fright. However, getting scared isn't enough to cure them – this is just an old wives' tale. Unless you have an extreme case, your hiccups should eventually disappear on their own. If you're still hiccupping after 48 hours, see your GP.



# ASK US ANYTHING



SUZIE HAYMAN AND SUSAN QUILLIAM CAN HELP

## Help! I'm confused about my new sex toy

**Q** I've bought a vibrator, which penetrates like a penis. It's my first and I love it! If I play around with angle and depth I get amazingly strong climaxes like never before. But is this caused by how I'm stimulating myself, rather than having a partner penetrate me? Or is it the vibe that's delivering all this pleasure?

**SUSAN SAYS**

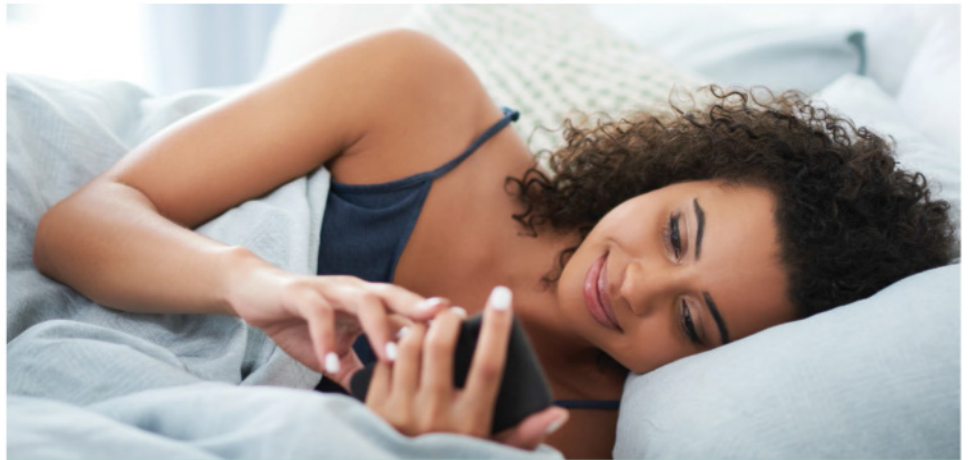
**A** Both your possibilities could be true. By self-pleasuring, you've discovered your vaginal arousal points such as the G-spot, which previous partners may not have known about so haven't stimulated during lovemaking. But it could also be that your new vibe is making the difference by giving you stronger and more varied sensations. Whatever the case, you're doing the right thing by 'playing around' to discover just what turns you on!

## Their fighting terrifies my kids

**Q** My parents fight constantly. When I was young my sister and I would huddle together at night, terrified. My own children are now teenagers and say they don't want to visit their gran and grandpa any more because of the fighting. I feel we should visit as they're getting older but I don't want them scarred for life as we are. What would I tell them?

**SUZIE SAYS**

**A** Tell them the truth. That you and your sister lived in fear and insecurity. Now your own children don't want to be part of it and you understand why. If you feel you ought to protect them from having to



## Should I have sex with someone new?

**Q** My partner and I are currently on a trial separation. I've started online dating, although I don't want to have sex until I'm certain he and I have split for good. But my female friends are suggesting that going the whole way with someone I meet online might cheer me up, boost my self-esteem and help me decide whether to try again with my man. What do you think about this?

**SUSAN SAYS**

**A** I think you should follow your instincts. If you're not sure your relationship is over, focus on sorting that out. Even if you are sure it's over, take time to recover from the break-up – casual sex might leave you feeling vulnerable. So yes, go online dating to regain confidence, but hold back on full sex until you're more certain about what's happening in your life.

face up to their behaviour, remember they never protected you from it. Saying no now, as you never could as children, might give them the chance to address their behaviour.

## Grandparents need summer holidays too!

**Q** My firm gives priority to parents when it comes to allowing holiday leave in school holidays. Last summer, our daughter and her family rented a cottage and we joined them for the August bank holiday weekend. I just wished we could have been there for the

whole two weeks. How can I persuade my boss that we deserve family time in the summer just as much as those with school-age children?

**SUZIE SAYS**

**A** Grandparents have just as much need for time off during the school holidays as parents. I'm sure you'd be able to find colleagues in the same position, and parents who might be willing next year to take their big holiday at half-term or Easter. Do some research and make your case – a boss will listen to a well-presented argument, so start some discussion and negotiation now.

## HOW TO GET IN CONTACT

Susan will tackle your sex and relationship problems, and family dilemmas can be solved by Suzie. Write to 'Susan and Suzie' at *Woman*, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or send a direct email to [asksusan@futurenet.com](mailto:asksusan@futurenet.com) or [asksuzie@futurenet.com](mailto:asksuzie@futurenet.com).



# My little MIRACLE

*After a horrific blaze, Amanda Stephenson will never forget how lucky she is to still have her son*



One-year-old Alex, before the fire that changed his life



Alex in protective gear as his recovery in hospital begins



He had to stay in hospital for weeks for his treatments

**C**hristmas is a time to reflect. The end of the year sparks the desire to look back and feel grateful for what we have, and look towards a brighter future. Each Christmas, I feel ever thankful that my precious boy Alex is still with us – because, as hard as it is to think back to what happened in December 2016, it really is a miracle that he survived.

Our day had started off in its rather ordinary way. Alex, then two, and I had just dropped his big sisters, Alyssa, then nine, and Rachel, six, my girls from a previous relationship, off at school.

Alex's dad, Jacob, then 26, was at work as a mechanic, and back at home, it was just the two of us. We had pet rabbits and chickens in our garden, and our morning routine was to feed them after the school run, so Alex and I headed outside.

As I poked my head in the rabbit hutch to give them some food, Alex went toddling off. He was only small, so I didn't think he'd get very far, but it's a mistake that I'd come to

torture myself with for years after – even now. Seconds later, an agonising shriek pierced the air, coming from the garage. I threw the rabbits' food bowl down and ran across the garden. Smoke was billowing out the garage door, and when I stepped inside, a wave of heat hit me. It was on fire.

## Acting on instinct

Adrenaline was pumping through me by this point. It's as though I went into autopilot, not allowing myself time to think because in doing so, panic and fear would have just delayed me. I spotted Alex in the middle of the garage on the floor, his body engulfed in flames. I ran through the blistering heat of the fire – the flames licking my skin, my shoe catching on fire – to scoop him up in my arms, before sprinting as fast as I could through the adjoining door into our kitchen.

By now, the flames on Alex had gone out, extinguished by my own body, but his tiny frame was still burning, his skin a vicious red, hot to the touch. I tried my best to

soothe him, repeating 'It's OK, Mummy's here,' but he was screaming in agony.

With fire raging in the garage, I found my phone on the kitchen counter and phoned the emergency services with shaking hands. I'd placed Alex on the floor, a wet towel covering his body where his pyjamas had once been. Within minutes, firefighters were outside tackling the blaze and paramedics burst in, peeling a hysterical Alex from my arms. He writhed in agony as they tried to inject pain medication into his arm, but he was so badly burnt his skin seemed to crumple, his veins collapsing as they tried over and over to inject him.

As Alex was put in an ambulance, I tried and failed to get hold of Jacob. With no pain relief, Alex was hysterical in the ambulance to paediatric intensive care, where he was placed in an induced coma. There, a doctor told me that Alex had third-degree burns. He was rushed into theatre, where donor skin was grafted onto his worst burns.

And, still running on adrenaline, I'd barely noticed I'd got burned too, when





I'd plucked Alex from the flames. I was so consumed with worry about Alex, it was as though I'd become numb to the pain.

I suffered second-degree burns on my ankles, palms and fingertips – and at some point doctors dressed them, not that I remember it.

## Fighting back

Two hours after arriving at hospital, I went with Alex as he was flown by helicopter to a specialist burns hospital around 500 miles away, landing at 3pm.

By then I'd finally got hold of Jacob, and I fell into his arms when he arrived at the hospital at 9pm. When the specialist sat us down later that night, we were told Alex had burns covering 83% of his body, and that he only had a 30% chance of survival. I remember howling like an animal.

Jacob and I barely left Alex's bedside through endless surgeries and skin grafts, while Alyssa and Rachel were with their dad. As well as donor skin, patches were taken from his bottom, groin, and a small section of his shoulder that hadn't been burnt. Bit by bit, his toes, right ear, and all but one finger were amputated, and each time it was devastating. But Alex was here, still fighting, and I had to focus on that.

Fire investigators said our cat Rufus had knocked a gas canister off a shelf, and the pilot light of our hot-water heater had

ignited the fumes – an accident after Alex entered the garage. Smoke, and water from the hoses, had destroyed the house and, tragically, Rufus had died.

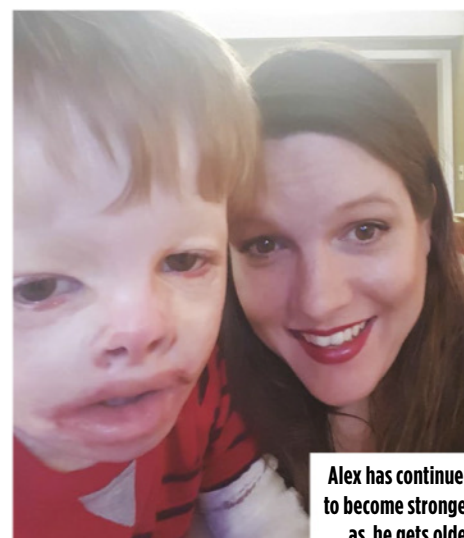
We continued to focus on Alex. After two weeks, doctors brought him round from the coma. His first words were 'Mumma' and 'Home'. He was so confused, so it was even more painful not being able to hold him.

After three weeks in hospital, it was Christmas, and it brought a miracle we'd been longing for. When a consultant told Jacob and me Alex was doing better than expected and would survive, I felt weeks of fear drain away.

Even though Alex was still too unwell to join in the festive activities at the hospital, like seeing Santa, we made it as special as we could. I'd already bought the kids their Christmas presents, so I gave Alex books, stuffed animals and toy cars.

Later, on Christmas afternoon, the

## I remember howling like an animal



Alex has continued to become stronger as he gets older

girls visited, but they couldn't see Alex because of the risk of infection. I took them for a walk around the hospital grounds and gave them their presents.

As the new year came, Alex was healing better than expected. By January he'd started physiotherapy, learning to walk again, and to pick things up without fingers. Finally, in April 2017 he was allowed home – although what was left of it wasn't much of a home. We'd salvaged what we could of our belongings, but our house was beyond repair and had to be demolished.

We stayed with family at first, while we sold the land and used the insurance money to buy a new place. But none of that mattered – all Jacob and I cared about was Alex and being together as a family.

And Alex was thrilled to be reunited with his sisters. Having them around bolstered him, and within a week he was walking on his own. After that, there was no stopping him. Over the next few years, he breezed his way through more than 60 skin grafts, physio, and occupational therapy.

He started school in 2019 and, as he got bigger, he learnt to ignore the stares he'd get from strangers. While he doesn't

remember the fire, he understands just how lucky he is to be alive.

Alex is 10 now, and is such an intelligent, curious little boy. Life won't always be easy for him – but he's the strongest boy I know. This Christmas, when everyone says what the highlight of their year has been, mine will be the same as the last eight years – simply having all my family here to celebrate, safe and happy.



Rachel, Alex and Alyssa on Christmas Day last year



## DEAL OF THE WEEK

Get a £20 M&S voucher with SIM-only upgrade orders at [mobiles.co.uk](https://mobiles.co.uk).

VALID FROM 12 NOVEMBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2024 OR WHILE STOCK LASTS. T&CS APPLY. UK ONLY

## FINANCIAL FIRST AID



### Mind the NI gap

If you've had a career break to raise children you may not have kept up with National Insurance payments. As this can affect your state pension entitlement, check how much you've paid (or National Insurance credits you've received if you couldn't work) at [gov.uk/check-national-insurance-record](https://gov.uk/check-national-insurance-record). If you have any payment gaps, you may benefit from paying voluntary contributions to fill them. Visit [moneyhelper.org.uk](https://moneyhelper.org.uk) or call 0800 011 3797 for specialist help.

PHOTOS: GETTY. \*IPA INSIGHT REPORT THE 2024 CHRISTMAS CONSUMER

## JARGON BUSTER

### What is compound interest?

'It's when you are paid interest on the interest you've already earned. It can make a big difference over time to how quickly your savings grow, but also how fast your debts grow,' explains Andrew Gall of The Building Societies Association.

# Clever wit

FINANCE AND CONSUMER EXPERT CAROLINE

# Cut festive spending

**T**he average Brit expects to spend almost £600 on core Christmas-related products and activities this year, including food, gifts, decorations, socialising and travelling\*. Whether you're watching every penny or determined to splurge, it pays to monitor your spending. Start by reminding yourself how much Christmas cost you last year, then check how healthy your bank account is, how much you have saved and how much card debt or other short-term financing you already carry.

31%  
How many consumers expect to still be Christmas shopping during December\*.

### SET GOALS

Inflation has made everything about Christmas more expensive. Use a budget planner (such as Money Saving Expert's) to work out what you can realistically afford. Break the costs down: how much for gifts, food, drink, leisure and entertainment. Don't be afraid to cut your cloth to the size of your budget – far better to do this than wake up in the new year with a financial hangover. 'If the cost of Christmas hosting usually falls to you, spread the load by encouraging everyone to contribute a certain part of the meal,' says Lisa Conway-Hughes, chartered financial adviser and blogger (@misslollymoney).

### TRACK WITH AN APP

Check your bank balance regularly in the run-up to Christmas so that you're less

likely to overspend. Use a budgeting app that connects your bank and card accounts to make monitoring spending easier, such as Snoop. Alternatively, HyperJar is a prepaid card that helps you control your spending by dividing your budget into different 'jars'. For long-term monitoring, Moneyhub connects current and savings accounts, credit cards and mortgages,





# th cash



BLOOR CAN HELP YOU SAVE £££s



pensions and investments (six months free then £1.49 per month subscription).

### HAVING TO BORROW?

Spend as little as possible. Find the cheapest credit you can and if possible, get some cashback. 'Make a plan for repaying the debts. Credit cards and buy now,

pay later deals are a trap to get you to pay more than you can easily repay, so credit you thought was cheap can lead to a lot of stress in January and February,' says Sara Williams, blogging as Debt Camel. Stick to a budget, prioritise essentials and avoid debt where possible to maintain financial stability.

Email questions to [woman@futurenet.com](mailto:woman@futurenet.com); add 'Clever with Cash' as the subject.

## SMART SHOPPER

Woman's food director Jen Bedloe helps you grab a food and drink bargain this week.



SAVE UP TO £7.20

### SWEET TREAT

Minty and refreshing, After Eight Dark Mint Chocolate Box is a tasty evening treat. **WAS £3.50,**

**NOW £2.50, TESCO (Clubcard price)**



### JAMMY

New to Tesco, Fearn & Rosie jams are a great addition to your breakfast, with 70% more fruit and 40% less sugar than standard jams.

**RRP £3.20, INTRO OFFER £2.50, TESCO (Clubcard price)**



### EASY WINS

Stock up on a selection of frozen meals, from Cathedral City Our Cauliflower Cheese to Iceland Satay Chicken Skewers and much more.

**3 FOR £10, SAVE UP TO £3.50, ICELAND**



### BOOZE OF THE WEEK

Strawberry-flavoured dairy cream is blended with tequila to make this delicious Tequila Rose Strawberry Cream Liqueur. Serve chilled over ice, or use as the base for cocktails. **WAS £13, NOW £11, TESCO (Clubcard price)**

OVER 18S ONLY, T&CS APPLY, UK ONLY



# How many calories are *YOU* eating at Christmas?

*Lynsey Hope tracked what she ate over the festive period, with shocking results*

**T**he average person consumes 6,000 calories on Christmas Day, three times the recommended daily amount for women. But last year, when I looked at how much food I had in my fridge and cupboard after doing my big shop on 20 December, I couldn't help but think that would just be the tip of the iceberg. A recent poll found that one in five of us starts boozing at breakfast time on

25 December (I'm among them) and with parties starting weeks before the big day itself, it's likely many of us will consume thousands of extra calories over the Christmas period. I decided to keep track of my intake and do a step count for seven days up to and including Boxing Day, to see how much I ate and how much weight I put on. Here's how I got on.

## DAY 1: DECEMBER 20

I started off as usual with cereal, then a healthy soup for lunch and a green smoothie. But my good intentions didn't last long and I was soon tucking into a box of Cadbury Heroes with a can of Coke. It went further downhill when I went to a Christmas party and ate a rich three-course meal, with lots of booze, including three pints of beer. I got in late and had a slice of toast and some crisps. I totalled up I'd had 4,000 calories during the day, double what I'd normally have, and it's only 20 December.

**Step count:**  
**11,000**  
**Total calories:**  
**4,098**

## DAY 2: 21 DECEMBER

Today I took my three kids Jacob, 10, seven-year-old Olive and Ivy, four, to see Santa Claus. There weren't many lunch options at the venue and I chose a hot dog and chips, topped with ketchup and mustard. I also treated myself to a gingerbread biscuit and I had an extra coffee and can of cola while out. I felt stuffed and bloated all afternoon but it didn't stop me pinching one of the kids' Dairy Milk Snowmen. For dinner, I cooked chicken breast with chorizo and veg. I then polished off half a bottle of wine and finished the day with some Advent calendar chocs. →

**Step count:**  
**6,000**  
**Total calories:**  
**4,284**







Lynsey enjoyed the rich food that was on offer

‘Many of us will consume thousands of extra calories over the Christmas period’





## DAY 3: 22 DECEMBER

I wanted a healthier day, having seen what I'd consumed so far and knowing the worst of the mega calories were yet to come. I went for a 5k run and had chicken and veg for lunch and roast chicken for dinner. But despite my best intentions, I went overboard on Yorkshire puddings. Later in the evening I had friends over for a drink and had three glasses of wine. I also put away another 500 calories eating crisps and dips, a chocolate florentine and two Lindt truffles, which had around 75 calories each. I wouldn't usually have this many snacks on a weekday night. We were not even at Christmas Eve and I already felt like I'd put on a few pounds. I'd broken out in spots too, probably from the extra alcohol and chocolate.

Step count:  
**11,000**  
Total calories:  
**3,882**



In just a week, Lynsey put on weight and her skin suffered

## DAY 4: 23 DECEMBER

Today I had a Chrimbo party with family members I wouldn't see on the big day. I'd bought lots of food for a buffet, including meat pizzas, breaded chicken, as well as cheese and biscuits. I ate four slices of pizza. My mum made a homemade quiche which I scoffed a slice of – and I tried out all three desserts, including a Christmas tree brownie and a snowman smash cheesecake. For drinks, I had two cans of lager and a glass of wine. My step count was pretty low as I'd spent most of the day sitting at my desk at work, then I was in the kitchen preparing. After four days of eating junk, I was beginning to look bloated and had indigestion. My skin looked dull and was spotty too.

Step count:  
**6,200**  
Total calories:  
**4,011**

## DAY 5: CHRISTMAS EVE

We went for an early walk along the coast this morning, and while out I had a bacon roll and a big 's'mores' hot chocolate, which was loaded with cream and marshmallows. I then had chicken and salad for lunch, but when friends arrived for a drink in the afternoon, we chatted over mulled wine and mince pies, plus lots of nibbles. The kids wanted to give Father Christmas something homemade to eat, so we made brownies, which I had to taste to make

Step count:  
**10,400**  
Total calories:  
**4,429**

sure they were good enough for Santa. Common sense seems to have gone out the window now and I was dipping in and out of the chocolate pot all day. I've always liked to cook a special meal on Christmas Eve and we had a big family lasagne with garlic bread and salad – followed by yule log.

## DAY 6: CHRISTMAS DAY

I had my usual breakfast early on the big day while the kids were opening presents. We then had pancakes with bacon and maple syrup, as well as Buck's Fizz. Although I felt full straight after eating, it soon wore off and it was easy to nibble on party foods given we had so much in the house, including sausage rolls, Twiglets, crisps and dips. I was shocked to see I'd eaten 2,230 calories before I'd even sat down for my turkey dinner. We had a Camembert starter, then turkey with all the trimmings and, though we needed a break after dinner, we had Christmas pudding with cream and some chocolate brownie cake. I felt stuffed afterwards but my total intake was upped by booze, some chocolates and, later in the evening, cheese and biscuits. I don't think of myself as someone with a big appetite but I put away 6,751 calories on Christmas Day. Just before bed, around 11pm I ate another few chocolates, which I regretted as I had heartburn when I was trying to get to sleep.

Step count:  
**3,000**  
Total calories:  
**6,751**

## DAY 7: BOXING DAY

After staying the night with relatives, I woke to the smell of smoked salmon and eggs – and while I didn't feel hungry, I ate it and enjoyed it. We then had family over for lunch and I made a steak pie with vegetables and was back on the booze again with two glasses of wine. A relative brought along a pavlova, and it felt rude not to eat it. In the afternoon I had some more party food and nibbles before tucking into a buffet in the evening. Once the family had gone and the kids were asleep, I sat down with more wine and had a slice of yule log. I also had two gin and tonics. It was another high-calorie day and I'd done barely any exercise to burn it off.

Step count:  
**4,000**  
Total calories:  
**5,020**

## THE VERDICT

It was time for the moment of truth, and after stepping on the scales, I was horrified to see I had gained 9lb in just one week. But when I totted things up, I'd consumed 32,475 calories in seven days – that's 18,475 more than I would in a normal week. I felt bloated and lethargic and my skin had broken out in spots. I made immediate plans to go for a run the next day and ease off the festive foods in the run-up to the new year. All I can say is, thank goodness Christmas only happens once a year.



# Your LIFE

Recipes | Homes & gardens | Travel

## Fireside FEASTS

Easy batch-cook dinners for cosy nights in

### Pulled pork tacos

This Mexican-style meal can easily be scaled up to feed a crowd.

**SERVES 6 PREP 30 MINS, PLUS OVERNIGHT MARINATING COOK 3 HRS**

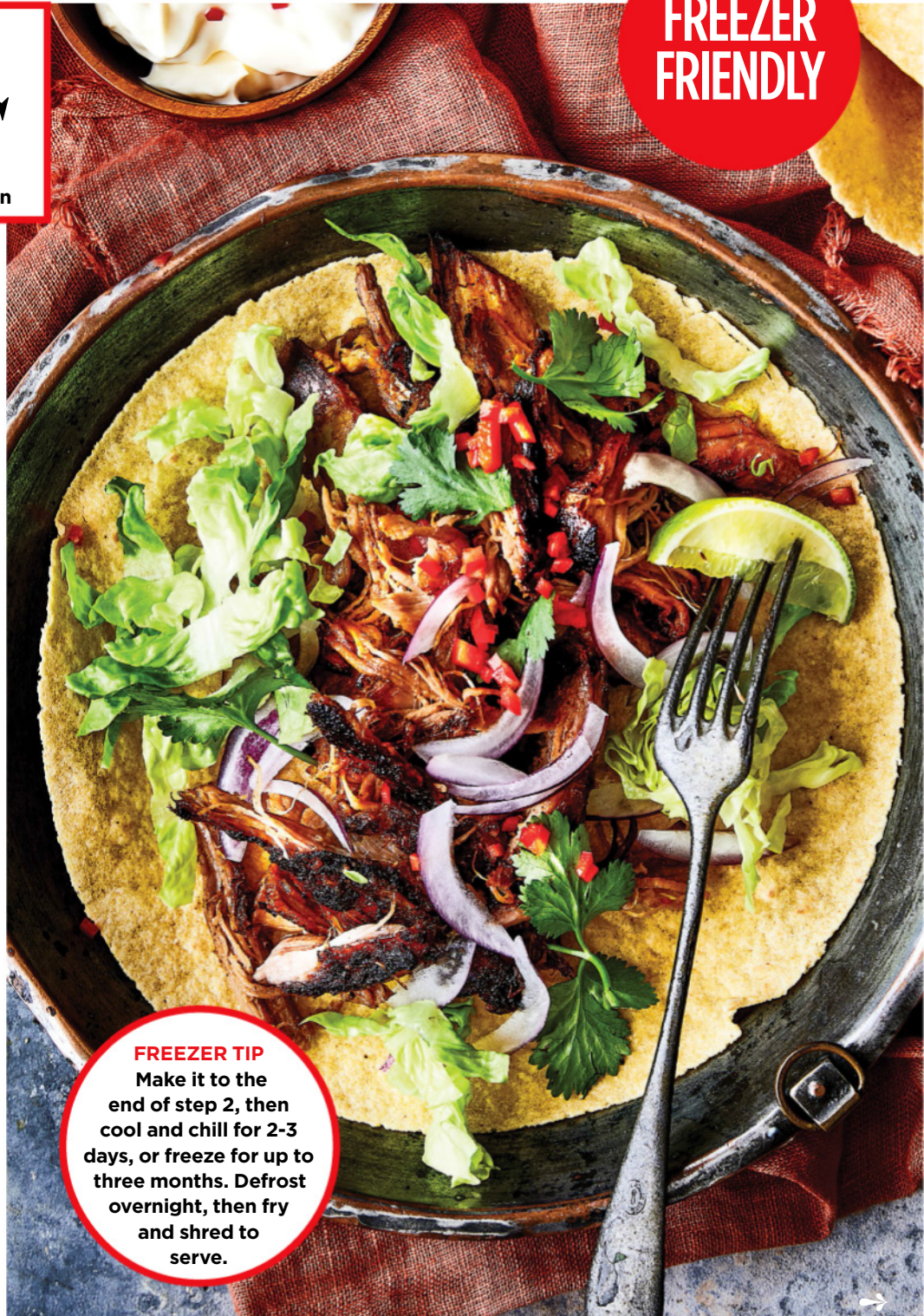
- \* 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- \* 1tbsp salt
- \* 1tbsp dried oregano
- \* 1½tsp ground cinnamon
- \* 1tsp ground cumin
- \* Juice 2 limes, plus wedges to serve
- \* 1kg piece boneless pork shoulder
- \* Juice 1 orange
- \* 2 bay leaves
- \* ¼tsp freshly ground black pepper
- \* 2tbsp olive oil
- \* 2tbsp clear honey
- \* 12 small tortilla wraps, warmed
- \* Soured cream, shredded lettuce, sliced red onion, coriander leaves, to serve

**1** Whizz the garlic, salt, oregano, spices, and lime juice in a blender to form a paste. Put the pork in a ceramic dish, rub over the paste, then cover and chill overnight.

**2** Bring the pork to room temperature for 1 hr. Heat oven to 140C Fan/Gas 3. Remove pork from marinade and pat dry. Move it to a casserole dish adding orange juice, bay leaves, pepper and half the oil. Cover and bake for 2 hrs to 2 hrs 30 mins until meat is falling apart. Rest for 10 mins. Alternatively, cook in a slow cooker for 6 hrs on low.

**3** Heat oil in a frying pan over high heat. Fry pork for 3-4 mins until browned, then shred and add cooking juices and honey. Stir-fry for 3-4 mins until crispy and glazed. Serve with tortillas and toppings, family-style.

**Per serving:** 426 cal, 14g fat, 4g sat fat, 38g carbs



**FREEZER FRIENDLY**

**FREEZER TIP**  
Make it to the end of step 2, then cool and chill for 2-3 days, or freeze for up to three months. Defrost overnight, then fry and shred to serve.



## Beef koftas with yogurt sauce

Inspired by Middle Eastern dishes where the meat is often served with a thickened yogurt sauce. Cook the sauce over a low heat to prevent any splitting.

**SERVES 4 PREP 35 MINS**  
**COOK 25 MINS**

- \* 500g minced beef
- \* 100g fresh white breadcrumbs
- \* 50g pine nuts, toasted and roughly chopped
- \* 50g raisins, chopped
- \* 2tsp ras-el-hanout spice mix (or garam masala)
- \* 4tbsp olive oil
- \* 1 onion, finely chopped
- \* 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- \* 150g spinach leaves, roughly chopped
- \* 300ml beef stock
- \* 250g Greek yogurt
- \* 2tsp cornflour
- \* 1 egg, beaten
- \* Pomegranate seeds, black sesame seeds and mint leaves, to garnish (optional)
- \* Couscous or flatbreads, to serve (optional)


**1** In a bowl, mix together the beef, breadcrumbs, pine nuts, raisins, spice mix, and some salt and pepper until well combined, and then roll into 12 balls.

**2** Heat half the oil in a large frying pan. Fry the koftas over medium heat for 5 mins until browned, then set aside.

**3** Add the remaining oil to the pan and fry the onion and garlic until soft. Add the spinach and cook for 1 min, then stir in the stock. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low.

**4** Whisk together the yogurt, flour and egg. Season, then stir in 2tbsp of the spinach sauce. Carefully stir this back into the pan. Add the koftas, then cover the pan and cook gently (not boiling) for 25 mins. Garnish with pomegranate seeds, black sesame seeds and fresh mint, if liked, and then serve with your choice of couscous or warm flatbreads.

**Per serving: 715 cal, 47g fat, 15g sat fat, 36g carbs**



**FREEZER TIP**  
Freeze the raw koftas on a baking sheet, then transfer to a freezer bag until ready to use. Cook from frozen, adding a few mins to the cooking time.





**FREEZER TIP**  
Cool the stew, then freeze in portions for up to three months. Defrost overnight, then reheat to serve.

## Spiced lamb and chickpeas stew

This one-pot uses budget-friendly chops for a super tender result and bags of flavour.

**SERVES 6 PREP 25 MINS COOK 2 HRS TO 2 HRS 30 MINS**

- \* 1kg lamb neck chops
- \* 3tbsp olive oil
- \* 1 large onion, finely chopped
- \* 2 red peppers, sliced
- \* 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- \* 1tsp each: ground coriander, ground cumin, cinnamon
- \* ½tsp ground ginger
- \* 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- \* 500ml beef stock
- \* 2tbsp tomato puree
- \* 75g pitted dates, roughly chopped
- \* 2 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- \* 2tbsp finely chopped parsley
- \* Crusty bread, to serve

**1** Heat the oven to 140C Fan/Gas 3. Season the lamb with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large flameproof casserole dish and fry the lamb in batches, over a high heat until browned. Set the meat aside, and reduce the heat to low.

**2** Add the remaining oil to the casserole dish. Fry the prepared onion, red peppers and garlic for 10 mins until really soft. Add the spices and ginger, and fry for 1 min. Next add the chopped tomatoes, beef stock, tomato puree, dates and chickpeas, and then return the lamb to the pan.

**3** Bring to the boil, cover, and bake for 2 hrs to 2 hrs 30 mins or until the lamb is falling from the bone. Scatter over the parsley and serve with crusty bread.

**Per serving: 533 cal, 31g fat, 12g sat fat, 24g carbs**



# Home for *THE*

*Renovating a dated property gave Amy Russett the chance to flex her creative*



**C**hristmas is a really special time for my boyfriend Elliott and me. I love filling our home with traditional decorations and twinkly fairy lights.

When I think back to what a poor state the house was in when we bought it, though, it's hard to believe it's even the same place.

## Taking on a challenge

When we bought this house in May 2018, it was pretty much uninhabitable. We knew we weren't going to be able to move in straight away and that it would need some work. Within an hour of getting the keys, we were ripping up mouldy carpets and peeling off stained wallpaper that we think must have been a good 50 years old.

Despite its poor state, we'd fallen in love with the house and lots of its features, from the deep windowsills and old wooden doors, to the beautiful village location in picturesque Chew Valley, Somerset. Even the fact that we were going to have to change the house substantially didn't dampen our enthusiasm.



**WELCOMING COTTAGE**  
'The log burner creates a cosy feel, along with the warmer colours and wood.'



# HOLIDAYS

skills and create the perfect house for Christmas



**FESTIVE TREATS**  
'Our Christmas is all centred around food.'



**PERFECT PRESENTS**  
'Creative touches bring a lovely rustic feel.'

## Making plans

We knew that the floor plan of the house was slightly larger than your average three-bed semi, and that if we were clever we could include all the things we wanted, such as a small utility, pantry cupboard and entrance hall. We love cooking and entertaining, so a spacious kitchen-diner was on our wish list, as was an upstairs bathroom, which we managed by moving the staircase, using dead hallway space and extending the floor out further.

However, that wasn't the end of the work, →





#### HUB OF THE HOME

'The kitchen is secondhand. We bought the appliances separately and the whole kitchen came in at just under £3,000.'



#### TAKE NOTE

'Memo boards are great for playful messages.'

though. We renovated the place from top to bottom with help from my dad, re-plumbing, rewiring and decorating each room and restoring elements where we could. We even had the front of the house landscaped to give us more space and a larger driveway.

Despite it being our first home, I think we were quite clever when it came to spending our budget, choosing a second-hand kitchen and doing lots of upcycling to keep our costs down. We've managed to create the lovely traditional cottage feel we were after at a fraction of the price.

I love traditional decor but with a relaxed feel to it, and I don't mind a splash of colour here and there. Our bathroom, for example, has a traditional roll-top bath but we've been bolder with our bathroom tiles to make it a bit more fun – and we've tried to apply this idea to most of the rooms using various colour schemes.

## From house to home

With it all coming together on such a tight budget, we're happy with what we've achieved and it was worth all the hard labour. The cottage feels so homely now and I love that every detail was thought through so carefully during the renovation. I look at the kitchen, for example, which was second-hand – we bought it for £600! – and I remember painting it and laying the wood flooring, which I became quite skilled at. We learnt a lot!

With Christmas approaching, I like to decorate and show it off to its very best. I love lots of lights, green foliage and garlands to create a cosy seasonal space. I also think investing in handmade, personal Christmas decorations every year is special. Although I don't necessarily go for a colour scheme, I like lots of little trinkets dotted around the house in warm colours.



GET THE LOOK

Metal star garland, £20,  
John Lewis & Partners

Mango  
wood tree  
ornament,  
£12,  
Habitat

SCANDI  
STYLE

Santa wall art, £6,  
George Home

Faux mistletoe  
pick, £8,  
Habitat

Star decoration,  
£3, Dunelm

Vinterfint tree  
ornament, £4  
for six, Ikea

Mango  
wood  
serving  
dish,  
£8.50,  
Matalan

Tree trio cushion, £20, Next



**QUIRKY SPOT**  
'Originally the front door,  
the archway has been turned  
into a feature in its own right.'

'The cottage feels so homely now,  
and I love that every detail was  
thought through so carefully'



**SERENE SPACE**  
'We painted our bedroom in  
Pimlico by GoodHome at B&Q.'



**INTO THE BLUE**  
'The fun patterned floor tiles  
are from Walls and Floors.'

WORDS: LAURIE DAVIDSON; PHOTOS: COLIN POOLE



# Christmas MARKETS

Little ones will have the chance to meet Santa



*The UK's finest fairs promise an enchanting blend of tradition, local culture and fun*



St Enoch Square hosts an impressive event

## Glasgow

**17 November-5 January**

In the run-up to Christmas, Glasgow's city centre buzzes as two lively markets showcase their festive delights. The Christmas Village in St Enoch Square offers everything from mulled wine and craft beers to delicious street food and charming gifts. Just a short stroll away, the George Square Market features vintage fairground rides, German bars and live entertainment. Known for their cosy atmosphere and family-friendly attractions, the markets are a festive highlight – don't miss the big switch-on event on 17 November. \* [glasgowlife.org.uk](http://glasgowlife.org.uk)

## Winchester

**22 November-22 December**

Inspired by Germany's traditional seasonal markets, the festive event in Winchester Cathedral's Inner Close attracts almost half a million visitors to the city. Dubbed England's Christmas Capital, Winchester boasts a market renowned as one of Europe's best, featuring more than 100 wooden chalets offering a mix of high-quality gifts, crafts, and festive food and drink. You'll also find an open-air ice rink and a charming nativity scene. Throughout December, the soothing sounds of the cathedral's choir services will fill the air, adding further to the enchanting festive atmosphere.

\* [visitwinchester.co.uk](http://visitwinchester.co.uk)



The cathedral choir accompany the market

WORDS: HELENA CARTWRIGHT; PHOTOS: JOE LOW/HARVEY MILLS/VISIT WINCHESTER; DARREN ROBINSON/MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL; CARRIE DAVENPORT/TOURISM NORTHERN IRELAND; VISIT SCOTLAND/KENNY LAW; DETAILS CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING



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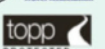
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## Belfast

16 Nov-22 December

The famous City Hall and its beautiful gardens provide the atmospheric setting for Belfast's Christmas Market. The gardens are transformed into a vibrant continental village, where shoppers can enjoy produce from over 30 countries, including French crêpes, German bratwurst and Spanish paella. Browse the stalls, with their trinkets and gifts, and get a fabulous view of the city from the top of the helter-skelter. Those bringing little ones will want to visit Santa's grotto.

\* [visitbelfast.com](http://visitbelfast.com)



The markets are spread across the city centre

## Manchester

8 November-22 December

Winding through the heart of the city, Manchester's Christmas Markets include over 300 stalls and chalets. There are markets in various key locations - including Exchange Street, Piccadilly Gardens and St Ann's Square - and each offers a unique festive atmosphere. The stalls feature everything from amber jewellery and handcrafted leather bags to French soaps and hand-made Belgian kitchenware, giving the attraction a distinctly European feel. The catering is just as varied, with international street food, mulled wine and traditional German sausages.

\* [visitmanchester.com](http://visitmanchester.com)



## ACTIVITIES FOR ALL THE FAMILY

**1 LEGOLAND:** The park is transformed into a winter wonderland filled with festive lights, extraordinary Lego builds and an appearance from Santa himself.

23 November-4 January.

**2 LONGLEAT FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS:** This family-friendly extravaganza includes

a stunning lantern-illuminated trail. 9 November-5 January.

**3 EDINBURGH'S CHRISTMAS:** Family favourites return - including

the big wheel, Santa Stories and ice skating - plus there's an all-new illuminated Christmas tree maze.

15 November-4 January.

\* Always check the latest travel advice before booking a trip



# CROSSWORD & STARS

Put your feet up and have a go at this week's puzzle

IF YOU  
LOVE TO WIN  
PRIZES THEN VISIT  
[comps.womanmagazine.co.uk](http://comps.womanmagazine.co.uk)

**W**hat do actors **Scarlett Johansson** and **Martine McCutcheon** have in common? To find out, solve the crossword then read down the shaded squares to find the five-word answer.

## ACROSS

- 1 Punctuation mark (5)
- 4 Organ of smell (4)
- 6 Three-sided shape (8)
- 13 Progress (7)
- 14 Public concert (7)
- 15 Garden pest with a shell (5)
- 16 Goals (4)
- 17 Pressed clothes (6)
- 18 Pieces of written work (6)
- 20 Large military vehicle (4)
- 21 Precise (5)
- 22 Bookworm (6)
- 25 Look similar to (8)
- 28 Handy (6)
- 30 Large Greek island (5)
- 32 Flourishing (8)
- 34 *\_ Bull*, film starring Robert De Niro (6)
- 35 Danny *\_*, host of game show *The Wall* (4)
- 38 Shouted (6)
- 39 Take place (5)
- 40 Notion, idea (6)
- 43 Put under ground (4)
- 44 Easily frightened person (6)
- 45 At the present time (8)
- 48 Slack (5)
- 49 Parts of a flower (6)
- 51 Frozen missile (8)
- 54 Casual garment (1-5)
- 55 Ketchup, for example (5)
- 56 Jumps on one foot (4)
- 58 Stay (6)
- 60 Deliver from harm (6)
- 61 Chamber (4)
- 65 Courage (5)
- 66 Disease (7)
- 67 Assign to a position (7)
- 68 Commonplace, normal (8)
- 69 Combines numbers (4)
- 70 Requirements (5)

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PHOTOS: GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK





# Starscope

YOUR STARS FOR 12-18 NOVEMBER BY PENNY THORNTON

## DOWN

- 1 People in a story (10)
- 2 Motions (9)
- 3 Parent's sister (4)
- 4 Comedian and actor, \_  
Fielding (4)
- 5 Armed forces (8)
- 7 Depend (4)
- 8 Help (10)
- 9 African country (5)
- 10 Billie \_\_, singer (6)
- 11 Academics (8)
- 12 Road (6)
- 19 Country, capital city  
Dublin (7)
- 23 All the people (9)
- 24 Double-crosses (7)
- 26 Young woman (6)
- 27 Den (4)
- 29 Small statue (8)
- 31 Lacking knowledge (8)
- 33 Very funny (9)
- 34 Ran quickly (5)
- 36 Emblems (7)
- 37 Dark patch (6)
- 41 Engage in a contest (7)
- 42 Double (4)
- 46 For certain (10)
- 47 Fellow students (10)
- 50 Blasts off (8)
- 52 Say sorry (9)
- 53 Went backwards (8)
- 55 Takes illegally (6)
- 57 Country, capital Paris (6)
- 59 Code made up of dots  
and dashes (5)
- 62 Capital of Peru (4)
- 63 Supporters (4)
- 64 Unwrap (4)

## ANSWERS

- 70 Needs
- 67 Appointment 68 Everyday 69 Adds
- 61 Room 65 Nerve 66 Illness
- 56 Hops 58 Remain 60 Rescue
- 51 Snowball 54 T-shirt 55 Sauce
- 45 Nowadays 48 Loose 49 Petals
- 40 Theory 43 Bury 44 Coward
- 35 Dyer 38 Yelled 39 Occur
- 30 Crete 32 Thriving 34 Raging
- 22 Reader 25 Resemble 28 Useful
- 18 Essays 20 Tank 21 Exact
- 15 Snail 16 Aims 17 Ironed
- 6 Triangle 13 Advance 14 Retail
- ACROSS: 1 Comma 4 Nose
- DOWN: 1 Characters 2 Movements
- 3 Aunt 4 Noel 5 Services 7 Rely
- 8 Assistance 9 Ghana 10 Elish
- 11 Scholars 12 Street 19 Ireland
- 23 Everybody 24 Betrays 26 Maiden
- 27 Lair 29 Figure 31 Ignorant
- 33 Hilarious 34 Raced 36 Symbols
- 37 Shadow 41 Compete 42 Twin
- 46 Definitely 47 Classmates
- 50 Launches 52 Apologise
- 53 Reversed 55 Steals 57 France
- 59 Morse 62 Lima 63 Fans 64 Open
- SOLUTION: THEY HAVE TATTOOS
- OF ROSES



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### ARIES 21 Mar – 20 Apr

There's a chance you might have forgotten a payment or are about to make a financial flub. So, first thing Monday, do your sums and monitor accounts thereafter.

For your reading ☎09058 172557



### TAURUS 21 Apr – 21 May

The only Full Moon in Taurus takes place on Friday, inspiring completion. Whether or not you're expecting a happy ending, there's an element of surprise in the mix.

For your reading ☎09058 172558



### GEMINI 22 May – 22 Jun

You may feel it's taken forever for something to happen, so that you can finally move forward. That time may well be now, and once one thing changes, everything changes.

For your reading ☎09058 172559



### CANCER 23 Jun – 23 Jul

A gestation period's at an end and a new beginning will follow. For some this is all about a love affair; for others, a project that's involved your whole heart.

For your reading ☎09058 172560



### LEO 24 Jul – 23 Aug

Forget perfection and aim to be the best you can be. The cosmos is in contrary mode, making mincemeat of your plans, especially over the weekend. Go with the flow.

For your reading ☎09058 172561



### VIRGO 24 Aug – 23 Sep

Listen to others, but don't take it to heart. There is a lot of static surrounding life and love, and some people are simply acting out. Least said, soonest mended.

For your reading ☎09058 172562



### LIBRA 24 Sep – 23 Oct

Arguments over money are never nice, but sometimes necessary to right the balance – literally and figuratively. This is especially true on Friday, so be open to the alternatives.

For your reading ☎09058 172563



### SCORPIO 24 Oct – 22 Nov

Full Moons have a habit of bringing simmering situations to a head, and if you're not careful someone's going to say something they didn't mean. Don't let that someone be you.

For your reading ☎09058 172564



### SAGITTARIUS 23 Nov – 21 Dec

Don't leave a major endeavour to the last moment. Whether you're daunted by the task or not feeling up to it, simply make a start and keep on going. You'll get there.

For your reading ☎09058 172565



### CAPRICORN 22 Dec – 20 Jan

Venus enters your sign lending her charms to your progress, especially around love. Rest assured she'll be there for a month, so don't lose heart if you suffer a setback this week.

For your reading ☎09058 172566



### AQUARIUS 21 Jan – 19 Feb

There could well be a link between events now and those of mid-August. Perhaps someone will come back into your life or maybe some other story was left unfinished...

For your reading ☎09058 172567



### PISCES 20 Feb – 20 Mar

Rising to the occasion is your task for the week ahead. So, don't allow petty issues to dampen your spirit or listen to those whose criticism is masking their envy.

For your reading ☎09058 172568

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# NEVER too late

*Catriona had regrets about the past – but perhaps it was time to embrace her future*

**T**he precious photograph had slipped between two others in the dog-eared album – a forgotten memory waiting to be rediscovered.

Catriona gazed wistfully, recalling a vivid youth that felt like another world now, before tucking the nostalgic reminder of her past back in the wardrobe. There was work to do before her visitor arrived.

She was in the garden when the taxi pulled up and her younger sister Shona, with teenage daughter Scarlett in tow, got out.

‘Now, Scarlett, make sure you behave for Aunty Cat,’ instructed Shona.

‘Mum, stop fussing, I’m 15, not 10!’ Scarlett groaned.

She was wearing her trademark black leggings, cobweb-patterned hoodie and Doc Martens, her poker-straight hair dyed bright magenta – the same shade as Catriona’s.

‘Go and enjoy that salsa and spa break with your girly mates.’

Shona looked anxiously at Catriona. ‘I feel guilty, leaving Scarlett with you. You’ve hardly had time to settle into your new home.’

Catriona smiled. ‘It’s no bother, honestly.’

The last time Scarlett visited, Catriona was still in the cramped, second-floor flat over a tattoo shop on the noisy high street, and Scarlett had declared she couldn’t wait until she was old enough to have tattoos and multiple piercings.

‘She’s been in trouble at school,’ Shona had confided on the phone the night before. ‘It’s so out of character but she won’t talk to me. I was hoping maybe you could find out what’s going on.’

‘I’ll do my best,’ Catriona had promised. She enjoyed Scarlett’s company. A sensitive girl, imaginative and creative, she was growing into a socially-aware, considerate young woman.

In some ways, she reminded Catriona of herself at that age – always writing stories and poetry, or engrossed in a book. They waved at the departing taxi, before turning back to the house.

\*\*\*\*\*

‘So, what do you think of my new place?’ beamed Catriona.

‘New is probably the wrong word,’ Scarlett teased. ‘It’s Victorian, isn’t it?’

‘It is. There are so many wonderful original features, but the place needs a fair bit of work. Still, there’s no hurry. I have a functioning kitchen, basic bathroom, working electricity and running water. What more could you want?’

‘Decent Wi-Fi for a start!’ joked Scarlett. ‘Is it haunted?’

‘Goodness! I wasn’t expecting that,’ Catriona replied. ‘Why do you ask?’

Scarlett hesitated. ‘Well, it just feels full of character, like it has secrets.’

Although the house had given Catriona a warm welcoming hug the moment she’d stepped over the threshold, she’d also sensed

another presence, sometimes glimpsing a shadowy figure at the top of the stairs or flitting across the landing.

‘Since you ask, I believe I may be sharing my house with a ghost.’

Scarlett’s face lit up. ‘Ooh, a haunting! How exciting!’

‘She’s not a malevolent spirit,’ Catriona added. ‘Before I moved in, the house had been standing empty for years, so I did a bit of research and discovered that an amazing woman called Iris, who was a leading light in the suffragette movement, was born here. She campaigned for women’s rights, constantly challenging society’s conventions. A proper rebel.’

Scarlett grinned, clearly captivated.

‘Why don’t you pop your rucksack in the attic room,’ Catriona added. ‘Then you can



help me make a start unpacking some boxes in the garage. How does that sound?’

\*\*\*\*\*

An hour later, they were making steady progress sifting through the array of crates and storage containers. ‘I’ve decided to take up painting again, and the sooner we can get this cleared, the sooner I can set up a studio,’ Catriona explained.

‘Sounds great,’ Scarlett agreed, delving into a dusty cardboard box and taking out the top item. ‘What’s this?’

‘That, my dear, is a videocassette,’ Catriona replied, eyebrows raised.

‘I know – I’ve seen *Antiques Roadshow!*’ Scarlett joked. ‘I meant, what’s on it?’ She scrutinised the biro scrawl on the peeling paper label. ‘*The Curse of Frankenstein!* I didn’t know you liked horror movies.’

‘I’m rather fond of the old Hammer films,’ said Catriona. ‘They wouldn’t be considered scary these days, although I found them frightening when I was growing up in the 1960s and 70s. I have fond memories of me and Mum snuggled up on the sofa with our drinking chocolate and custard creams, watching them together on a Friday night after Shona had gone to bed. Even then, the films were over 20 years old but they were new to me. While all the other girls I knew had posters of the Bay City Rollers pinned to their bedroom walls, I had pictures of Hammer stars Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. Such charismatic actors, although my friends thought I was weird!’

She noticed Scarlett react to that comment and wondered if it might prompt a different conversation. Instead, her niece was glancing out of the open





evening and, after a hot chocolate intermission, they saw the 1959 version of *The Mummy*, one of Catriona's favourites.

After the thrilling final scene, Scarlett said, 'My sympathies were with the Mummy, Kharis. He really loved Princess Ananka. Why wouldn't he want to bring her back to life?'

Catriona nodded. 'I've always thought of it as a tragic romance.'

'Well, when I fall in love, I won't let anyone or anything tear us apart,' declared Scarlett.

Catriona fell silent. She wanted to say, 'Life isn't always that simple.'

Scarlett continued, 'You seem so confident, Aunty, comfortable in your own skin. What did you do when your friends called you weird?'

'I think the word you are looking for is unconventional,' Catriona joked. 'At first, it bothered me. It's natural to want to fit in when you're

younger, to be like everyone else. So I tried to conform, to hide the person I was inside. Until I left home and started travelling, meeting different people.' She stopped abruptly, bittersweet memories flooding back.

'It's hard if you feel like you're different. But you have to be true to yourself,' said Scarlett firmly.

Catriona hesitated. 'Are you being bullied, Scarlett?'

'Of course not,' Scarlett retorted, genuinely puzzled. 'Why would you think that?'

'Your mum says you've been in trouble at school.'

'I had a bit of a run-in with some mean girls. They'd been picking on Jazmine – she's my new friend – and it was getting to her, so I intervened. Had a word with them.'

Catriona raised her eyebrows. 'A word?'

'Things may have got out of hand. I was just sticking up for Jazmine. You have to fight for the people you care about. Don't you agree?'

Catriona's eyes filled with tears, which she quickly brushed away. She always regretted not fighting hard enough, but the past was the past.

'Are you OK, Aunty Cat? Have I upset you?'

'Not at all, love. Sounds to me you have no problems standing your ground.'

'Too right!' Scarlett paused. 'I promise I'll do my best not to get into any more fights. But I won't ever let anyone push me around or upset the people I love. We're lucky, aren't we? To be alive now,

to have choices about what we do and who we care for.'

'Yes. We have choices.'

\*\*\*\*\*

Later, after Scarlett had gone to bed, Catriona retrieved the photo album from the cupboard, her eyes resting on a picture of a younger version of herself on a yoga retreat in Goa, arm in arm with Kalinda.

They were both 21 when they'd met, instantly clicked and became inseparable. They'd talked of the life they could spend together, but differences in culture, religion and, most of all, disapproval and pressure from family, all conspired to keep them apart.

The situation caused Kalinda to agree to an unhappy marriage, while Catriona stayed single. But she never forgot their brief time together, and was haunted by regret for the life they never had, wishing she'd fought harder for their relationship. So when Kalinda had recently found her on Facebook, messaging with a wish to get back in touch, Catriona had been thrown.

Divorced from her husband, with a grown-up lawyer son, Kalinda had relocated to New York and forged a new life for herself teaching yoga. She was free. Even so, Catriona told herself, it was too late now.

\*\*\*\*\*

The weekend flew by and, before she knew it, Catriona was hugging Scarlett goodbye.

'Thanks, Aunty Cat.'

'For what?'

'Being you and accepting me.'

'That works both ways, Scarlett.'

Catriona watched her beloved niece get into the taxi beside a grateful and rejuvenated Shona, and waved as they disappeared into the distance.

She decided to set to work in the garden again, but she found it difficult to focus

when her mind was elsewhere. For some reason, her eyes were drawn to the upstairs window, and she saw Iris watching her with an encouraging smile.

Reflecting on her conversation

with Scarlett about being true to yourself, not having regrets, Catriona picked up the phone and tapped in the number.

'Hello?'

Her heart leapt when she heard Kalinda's voice, as if all those years had fallen away and she was 21 again. 'Hello, Kalinda. It's Catriona.'

'Cat, how lovely to hear from you! I think of you often.'

'I think of you, too. We have a lot of catching up to do.'

THE END  
Jane Ayres

garage door at the brooding sky.

'Thunder and lightning is forecast,' Catriona said. 'A proper dark and stormy night.'

'Oh, I hope so. I love a good storm,' Scarlett replied.

'Me, too. Right, time to eat. Shepherdess pie with baked beans and steamed spinach, followed by courgette and apple crumble with soya ice cream.'

Scarlett grinned. 'I enjoy your eccentric meals.'

'Thanks... I think. Let's get these boxes into the house before it rains.'

\*\*\*\*\*

After supper, Catriona asked if there was anything on TV Scarlett wanted to see.

'Actually, I'd rather watch one of your vintage films,' Scarlett replied as the first rumble of thunder threatened.

Catriona was surprised. 'They're much slower-paced than today's movies. None of this trendy time-hopping and fast editing for the shorter attention spans of the internet generation.'

'Ouch! Harsh, Aunty. But you know how old things fascinate me. They have history and character. Like your haunted house. Like you.'

'Again, I'm taking that as a compliment. Luckily, I kept my ancient video player. Movie night it is.'

Scarlett insisted on lighting candles to create a spooky, gothic atmosphere, and they snuggled up on the settee together under a big stripy fleece as the film began. From the ominous music to the climactic finale, Scarlett was mesmerised.

'That was epic! Can we watch another?'

'If you like.' Catriona was enjoying the



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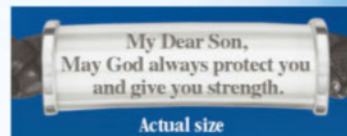
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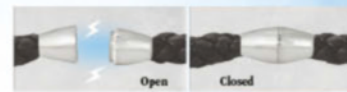
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# TV & REVIEWS

Our pick of what to watch this week, plus the best podcasts and new books...

**M**el Giedroyc is among the hosts of this year's *Children in Need* telethon, which aims to raise life-changing funds for children and young people across the UK. Joining the comedian and presenter for the Friday-night charity event are Ade Adepitan, Rochelle Humes, Chris Ramsey, Lenny Rush and Vernon Kay. Here, she reveals more...

**This is your eighth year presenting the show. What do you enjoy most about being part of *Children in Need*?**

It's the incredible feeling in the studio of everybody coming together. That's what it is all about. It brings out the best in everyone, and it is unique. It helps so many kids in so many different ways. It is loved, very, very special and must be protected at all costs. It's one of my favourite 'work' nights of the year, if you can call it work!

**As well as the mix of comedy and entertainment, there are stories of the young people who have been helped by *Children in Need*. Do you find it difficult to keep your composure?**

I'm very prone to weeping at anything these days. Some of the stories we feature are very emotional! I am always particularly moved by the stories of young carers - what they do is extraordinary. I love the way that *Children in Need* can support them through various projects.

**What message would you like to share with all the amazing fundraisers taking part this year?**

I am in total awe of you! Every single person that is out there doing all of those incredible things is truly awe-inspiring and shows us that literally anyone can be a hero.

**Have you ever been involved in raising funds for *Children in Need*?**

I used to run a cake stall when my kids were small. I got massively invested and, I have to confess, a bit bossy. I started to give all the mums and dads on the stall a pep talk, and would insist that we could not dismantle the stall until every cake had been sold. The power went to my head!

\* *Children in Need* is on BBC1



## Children in Need highlights

This year's show includes a visit from the stars of *Gladiators*, and *Doctor Who*'s Ncuti Gatwa with a preview of the Christmas special, a *Strictly* spectacular, a special edition of *Dragons' Den*, a new *CBeebies Bedtime Story* and a performance from pop singer Ella Henderson.

Mel is back as host of the 'very, very special show'

## WHAT TO STREAM

The latest releases to watch on demand



### Joy

Netflix

This one-off drama tells the story of surgeon Patrick Steptoe (Bill Nighy), scientist Robert Edwards (James Norton) and embryologist Jean Purdy (Thomasin McKenzie) who developed IVF, leading to the world's first 'test tube' baby in 1978.



### Blitz

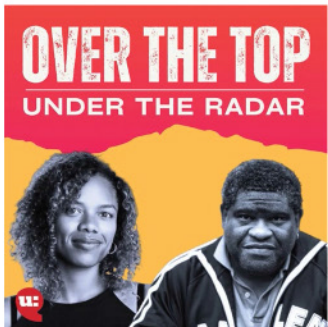
Apple TV+

Set in 1940, this drama follows nine-year-old London boy George (Elliott Heffernan), who is sent to live in safety out of the city by his mum Rita (Saoirse Ronan). But she comes to regret it... Look out for singer Paul Weller as George's grandad Gerald!



## LISTEN UP

Musical mixtapes and traitorous true crime



### Over the Top, Under the Radar

Tired of the same old news stories? This current affairs podcast sees communications guru Carys Afoko and journalist Gary Younge discuss the events that get missed. Prepare to be enlightened. Apple, Acast, Spotify



### Like Minded Friends

Something special happens when two long-time friends get together. Treat yourself to a lovely listen and plenty of laughter with comedians Suzi Ruffell and Tom Allen as they enjoy a good old natter. Uplifting, joyful and a little bit naughty too. Apple, Global Player, Spotify

## BEST BOOKS

Zoe West picks the best reads for you



### Close Knit

by Jenny Colgan (£16.99, HB, Hodder & Stoughton)

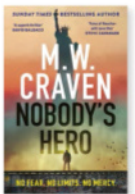
Gertie has never strayed from the remote Scottish island she grew up on. A knitting circle lies at the heart of her close community, where generations of strong and capable friends and family share gossip and laughter to see them through the long, dark winters. But while she knits, Gertie dreams about her future. Then she seizes an opportunity. By becoming an air stewardess for the local airline – which is owned by her crush, Callum Frost – Gertie can finally spread her wings. A warm and moving tale.

For more books information, see [goodtoknow.co.uk/books](http://goodtoknow.co.uk/books)

### Nobody's Hero

by MW Craven (£20, HB, Little, Brown)

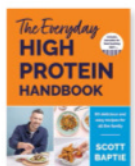
Superhuman former US Marshal Ben Koenig is back! He's been in hiding, but when a double murder and abduction takes place in a London park, the CCTV footage creates a ripple effect surrounding the mysterious Acacia Avenue Protocol. Tasked with protecting someone from his past, Koenig is propelled into action in a bid to save the nation. As the tense and meandering cat-and-mouse plot unfolds, Koenig's formidable ability to think laterally creates graphic jaw-dropping thrills and kills. An explosive, fast-paced and cinematic adventure.



### The Everyday High Protein Handbook

by Scott Baptie (£22, HB, Hodder & Stoughton)

With everyone talking about increasing their daily intake of protein – one of the major building blocks of life – it's no wonder that we're all looking for ways to include it in our diets. And this super-easy book shows you how. Baptie not only presents us with 60 brand-new protein-packed dishes, but also 20 favourites, as seen on his popular YouTube channel. Using few and simple ingredients, tasty creations such as Cuban Pulled Beef and Diet Coke Chicken are sure to delight the whole family and health-conscious foodies.



## WHAT'S ON TV?

Our top picks from BBC, ITV, C4, Channel 5, Sky and more...

### I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!

ITV1

Ant and Dec host as another bunch of celebs brave the Australian jungle, where hair-raising challenges and stomach-churning Bushtucker Trials await them, as well as a diet of rice and beans! Among those rumoured to be taking part are Coleen Rooney, Alan Halsall, Oti Mabuse and Tulisa Contostavlos.



### Return to Paradise

BBC1

If you love *Death in Paradise* and *Beyond Paradise*, you'll enjoy this new spin-off. It follows DI Mackenzie Clarke (*Home and Away* star Anna Samson) as she's forced to leave London and work in her home town of Dolphin Cove in Australia, where there are plenty of crimes to solve and criminals to catch!



### Moonflower Murders

BBC1

In this six-part sequel to *Magpie Murders*, editor-turned-sleuth Susan Ryeland (Lesley Manville) investigates a murder at a country hotel and it seems another novel by late author Alan Conway may contain clues to solving it... Daniel Mays also returns as DS Locke along with Tim McMullan as Alan's fictional detective Atticus Pünd.







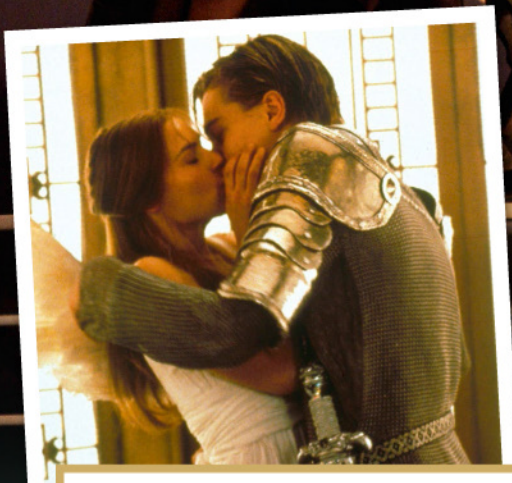
## TITANIC 1997

Who could forget his iconic role in *Titanic*. At 23, the part of Jack Dawson made him one of the world's most famous faces. As the penniless artist who wins the heart of first-class passenger Rose (Kate Winslet), his line 'I'm the king of the world!' has since gone down in movie history. The two actors reunited in 2008's *Revolutionary Road* to once again play tragic lovers.

## WHAT'S EATING GILBERT GRAPE

1993

The role of Johnny Depp's disabled younger brother Arnie proved pivotal for Leo and earned him his first Oscar nod at just 19. He was on his way to becoming a star, despite almost missing out on the job for being 'too good looking'.



## ROMEO + JULIET 1996

Before he set sail on the *Titanic*, Leo had audiences swooning as one half of Shakespeare's doomed lovers, opposite Claire Danes. Baz Luhrmann's modern-day retelling was a huge hit, with Leo swiftly branded a heartthrob. But co-star Miriam Margolyes later claimed he was smelly during filming! Leo reunited with director Baz for *The Great Gatsby* in 2013.

# LEONARDO DICAPRIO

# TURNS 50!

*To mark the Hollywood heartthrob's milestone birthday, we take a look at some of his most memorable movie roles*



## THE REVENANT 2015

Leo landed an Oscar for his role as frontiersman Hugh Glass. The snowy survival drama saw him ambushed by Native Americans and mauled by a bear before being betrayed and left for dead. In one scene, he climbs inside a dead bear to stay warm. The A-list star confessed it was the most difficult movie he'd ever made.



## DJANGO UNCHAINED 2012

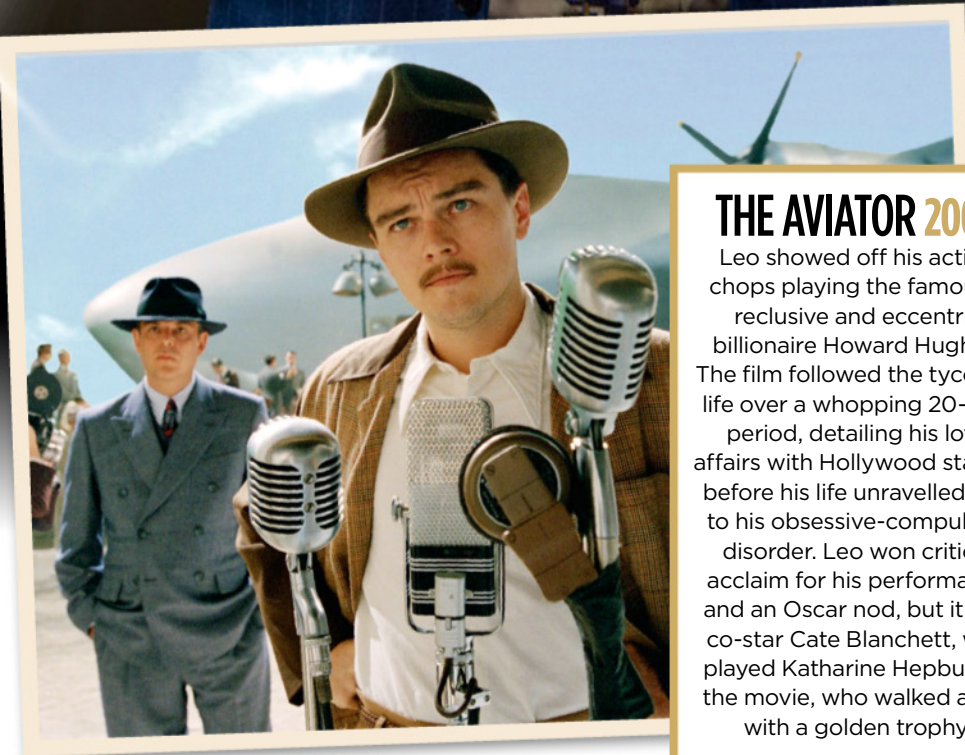
Leo played racist plantation owner Calvin J Candie in Quentin Tarantino's action flick. He committed so much to the role of the suave villain, complete with blackened teeth and a flawless southern accent, that during one scene he cut his hand after smashing a glass and never broke character. And the scene was kept in the film.





## THE WOLF OF WALL STREET 2013

Leo was nominated for a fourth Oscar for his role as stockbroker Jordan Belfort. Joining forces once again with director Martin Scorsese, the actor delivered his funniest and most foul-mouthed performance to date. The black comedy raked in \$400m at the box office, catapulted co-star Margot Robbie (of *Barbie* fame) to superstardom and cemented Leo's place as one of Hollywood's biggest stars.



## THE AVIATOR 2004

Leo showed off his acting chops playing the famously reclusive and eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes. The film followed the tycoon's life over a whopping 20-year period, detailing his love affairs with Hollywood starlets before his life unravelled due to his obsessive-compulsive disorder. Leo won critical acclaim for his performance and an Oscar nod, but it was co-star Cate Blanchett, who played Katharine Hepburn in the movie, who walked away with a golden trophy.

## LEO'S LOVE LIFE

The star is well known for his love of the ladies, and reportedly likes his girlfriends to be around the age of 25.

### Naomi Campbell 1995

Leo was linked to supermodel Naomi in the 1990s. Before there was a chance for them to become a power couple, the relationship 'fizzled out' but the pair continue to be pals today.



### Kristen Zang 1996-1997

He dated model Kristen for two years, taking her to the *Romeo + Juliet* premiere. It seems she was the one who dumped him, though she later said he was 'sweet and thoughtful'.



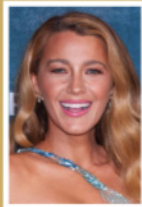
### Gisele Bündchen 2000-2005

Leo and (you guessed it) model Gisele were considered one of Hollywood's hottest couples. She later said she suffered from panic attacks, which had contributed to the break-up.



### Blake Lively 2011

Blake and Leo enjoyed a brief fling after reportedly meeting when she auditioned for *The Great Gatsby*. She went on to marry another Hollywood hunk, Ryan Reynolds.



### Camila Morrone 2017-2022

Actor and model Camila had a five-year relationship with Leo, who was said to be serious about her. There was talk about them tying the knot, but things ended before she turned 26.



### Gigi Hadid 2022-2023

Another model, but Gigi bucked the trend and was 27 when she was linked to the actor. They were spotted together several times but it didn't last. Gigi has since moved on with actor Bradley Cooper.



### Vittoria Ceretti 2023-present

Leo is said to be smitten with his latest model love, who's walked the catwalk for numerous designer brands. After meeting in Cannes, where his movie *Killers of the Flower Moon* premiered, they've been spotted packing on the PDA. Things look to be going well.







# View from THE BACK

Isabel Webster says what you're thinking

## PERHAPS YOU'RE A GENIUS AFTER ALL

**M**y mother once described me as a 'frivolous lightweight'. A polite way of calling me the dunce of the family. She met my father at Cambridge University and my older brother followed in their footsteps. But I was always proud to be the 'frivolous lightweight'. After all, my mother has been known to wear socks and sandals – a crime I will never need punishing for.

Recently, though, I've been wondering if Mother didn't know best. Perhaps I am a genius after all? Psychologists have linked certain social indicators to being an intellectual. For example, I've long been an insomniac. I assumed this was down to my neurotic temperament – prone to worrying and self-criticism. But, behold! Psychologists link sleep deprivation to overthinking and high IQ.

I've always found being sociable exhausting. I get nervous walking into a room of strangers and need a long time to recharge afterwards. Ah-ha! According to New York psychotherapist Dr Jennifer Hartstein this too could be a hint of greatness. There was me thinking I was just antisocial and curmudgeonly. Nope – small talk just 'lacks the cognitive reward' I seek?

The same can be said about fashion. If you're not a dedicated follower, you too could be the next Albert Einstein. I've noticed I'm caring less about clothes. I assumed this was a sign of perimenopause and that things just don't look as good as they used to on me (sigh). But I much prefer the idea that it could be explained away by



brilliance. A great mind can't find stimulation in the superficial. OK, I might be clutching at straws here – but we'll go with it.

Emotional outbursts can also be common for 'logical and reason-oriented people', according to Dr Dakari Quimby. After all, ignorance is said to be bliss. If you know too much, the burden can be heavy. My husband says I have fire in my belly but love in my heart. Hey – it could just be those clever genes!

Lastly, maintaining friendships and dating can be hard for gifted people who often struggle to fit in and may withdraw. This is where my theory falters. I hold onto friends like they're going out of fashion. And my marriage is going strong a decade in. So maybe I'm just an average Jo after all. I'll let you decide by the quality of my column...

## Will you sign?

I've just signed an online pledge promising no smartphone for my kids until at least the end of Year 9. Thousands of parents are signing the pledge – but there's clearly so much more work to do. Reports that under 12s are spending 21 hours a week 'doom scrolling' is a recipe for disaster. Talk about breeding an anxious generation!



## Smile!

I've never been a fan of the American-style forced-smile. But failing to smile at work can officially get you into hot water. An employment tribunal found a boss who ignored a colleague on purpose three times was 'undermining trust'. Better paste on my grin then!

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

'Sourdough has my heart, I like to think of baking bread as like giving birth.'



Erm... think you're on your own there, Pamela Anderson!

## Best for baby?

Health experts are calling for formula milk to be sold in plain packaging in a bid to boost breastfeeding. The multimillion-pound formula industry is accused of 'psychologically' targeting parents and exaggerating health benefits. Formula is a wonderful fallback for those who struggle – but anything that promotes something natural (and free) has to be a good thing, right?



ISABEL PHOTO: STUART MITCHELL; OTHER PHOTOS (SOME POSED BY MODELS): GETTY



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- 15 breakfasts, six lunches and 16 dinners
- Guided tour of Old Delhi and visit to Qutub Minar
- Train journey to Amritsar and Palki ceremony at the Golden Temple
- Golden Temple tour and a visit to Jallianwala Bagh and the Indo-Pakistani border
- Guided 'Heritage Walk' around Pragpur village
- Guided Dharamshala excursion and tour of Shimla
- Guided tour of Jaipur and visit to a local market
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