

# Reader's digest

DECEMBER 2020

## CHRISTMAS AT HOME

How COVID  
Is Shaping  
Festivities

## TIM MINCHIN

On Music,  
Marriage &  
Monogamy

## DAVID BAILEY

On Living  
Life Behind  
The Lens

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**SECRETS**  
To Boosting  
Immunity

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# BRINGING HOPE OUT OF DESPAIR: AFIA'S STORY

In March 2015, during one of the Operation Smile Ghana awareness campaigns, in a remote village without electricity and water, we met a family with twins. The boy Kofi was strong with chubby cheeks and big eyes. However, the girl, Afia, was small, fragile and suffering.

How can twins, both 4 months old, be so different?

Afia was born with severe cleft lip and palate. She was so malnourished that she seemed to be disappearing in front of our eyes. Being born with cleft lip and cleft palate makes it extremely difficult, sometimes, almost impossible to eat.

Her parents, Christiana and Kwame, had never seen a cleft before and they didn't know what to do. In Afia's village and in many rural villages across Ghana, the deeply rooted stigma of cleft is most severe. "The first time I took her out, many stopped to look at her, many ran away, some even screaming." Christiana said.

When she was found by Operation Smile staff, Afia, 4 months old, weighed only 1.2 kg. A healthy child should weigh around 6.4kg at that age. Given the gravity of the situation, the baby was rushed to a hospital in Accra, but her road to recovery was still long and difficult.

Afia's family knew that Operation Smile was their only hope. Christiana took Afia to three medical missions, but the little girl was always too anaemic or ill to safely undergo surgery. Finally, when Operation Smile brought a medical mission to Tamale in November 2016 the eagerly awaited day came and Afia received her life changing surgery.

Dr Clive Duke, a UK anaesthetist and Operation Smile medical volunteer, was in Tamale and he took Afia into recovery room into the arms of her mother. "That moment was one of the highlights of my experience with Operation Smile. All who were watching had a huge smile and a tear in our eyes as we had the strong feeling that a life had just been saved" said Clive "I felt proud of our Operation Smile team and a little proud of my contribution in helping Afia. She still needs further surgery, but the future is there for her now."

---

## ABOUT OPERATION SMILE

Since 1982 Operation Smile has provided hundreds of thousands of free, safe surgeries to children and young adults born with cleft conditions in developing countries who could not otherwise access or afford medical care.

If you would like to learn more about Operation Smile and to find out how you can help, please visit: [www.operationsmile.org.uk/Reader](http://www.operationsmile.org.uk/Reader) call 020 3475 5126 or write to: Operation Smile UK, Genoa House, Juniper Drive, London SW18 1FY



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PARTNERSHIP  
PROMOTION

## Making it count



After spending far too much time on apps and social media over the last few years, Gemma decided it was time for a change. “I’d started to get really frustrated with how I was spending my spare time”, said Gemma, 54 from London. “One day, I realised I’d checked my phone over 100 times. Something had to give.”

“So, I deleted my social media apps from my phone and made a promise to myself to do something more positive with my time.”

At first, it wasn’t easy for Gemma to find things to do.

“I’m embarrassed to admit that I’d stopped reading as much over the last couple of years. But, then a friend recommended Readly to me. I’d always loved reading magazines and thought it was time to give them a go again.

The selection is amazing: food, fitness, lifestyle, culture, crafts and

hobbies are all covered. I’ve been using Readly in the evenings to relax instead of watching TV. I’ve also found it great for inspiration and ideas for new recipes. We’ve been doing some re-decorating, so the interior design section has been really helpful. Having so many past issues to browse through is just fantastic. I can’t think how much I would’ve had to spend to get all that content. If you read more than a couple of magazines, you’ll be saving money each month.

My husband loves the car, sport and business magazines. And we cuddle up and do the puzzles and crosswords together now as well!

As it’s a family membership, I’ve shared my subscription with my daughter who has started using it. She’s a teacher and loves getting inspiration from the kids news, science and history magazines.”

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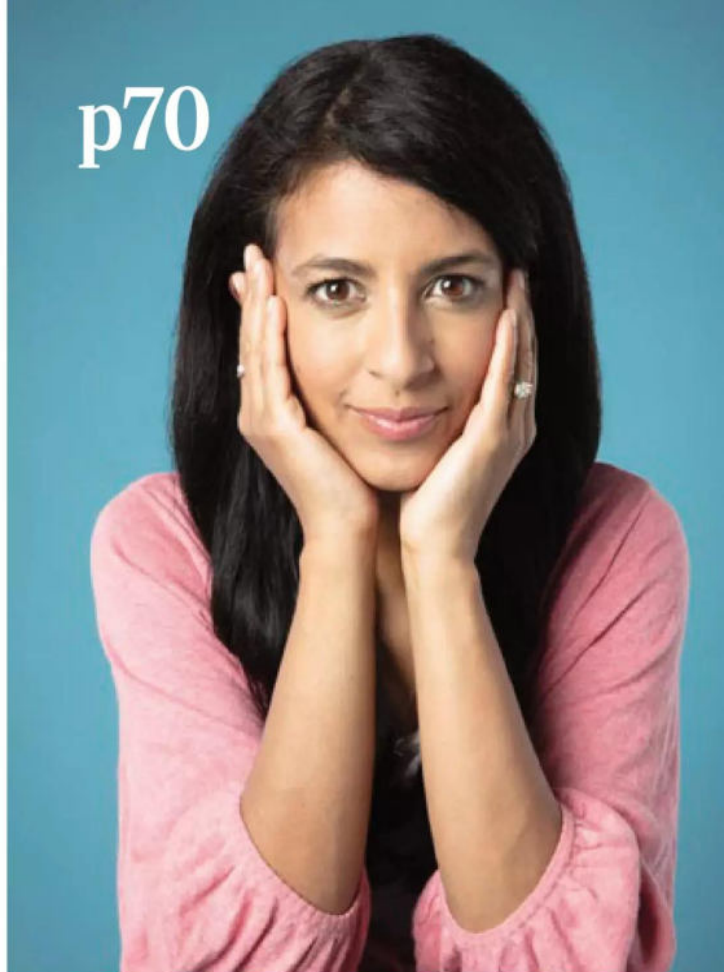
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# Open minded advances in healthcare from wellness innovators **Medicaleaf**



Over 200 million people in the UK and mainland Europe suffer from debilitating chronic pain, seizures and sleeping disorders as well as an equal number of increasingly enlightened people who can appreciate the recuperative benefit of cannabinoids.

There is a clear movement away from the 'traditional' medical practitioners and pharmaceutical companies and we aim to provide trusted and licensed products that can be bought legally and administered safely.

Public awareness and open-mindedness towards alternative cures for lifelong conditions are growing; and the World Health Organization (WHO) reports research suggesting that CBD may have therapeutic benefits for many conditions, including:

- Multiple sclerosis;
- Arthritis;
- Spinal cord injury;
- Epileptic seizures;
- Alzheimer's disease;
- Parkinson's disease;
- Huntington's disease;
- Hypoxic-ischemic injury;
- Chronic and acute pain;
- Psychosis;
- Nausea;
- Inflammatory diseases;
- Rheumatoid arthritis;
- Inflammatory bowel disease;
- Cardiovascular disease; and
- Diabetic complications.

**Research is ongoing:** clinical trials to test the effectiveness of medicinal cannabis in all its forms will prove best use and lead to more government approved cannabis-based medicinal products (CBMPs) containing cannabidiol or (CBD), joining those such as Epidiolex, which is already available on prescription in the UK for the treatment of seizures caused by two severe forms of epilepsy: Lennox- Gastaut syndrome and Dravet syndrome.

**Medicaleaf™** was founded by a team of business leaders, marketing & technology experts, scientists, caregivers and advocates who are committed to producing safe, reliable products and promoting wellness from nature.

The widening interest in 'wellness' as an alternative, preventative lifestyle, particularly in

these times, fuels our fire. As an organisation, we are committed to creating a business that will assist in the alleviation of pain and suffering and collaboratively create products to assist in better wellbeing and healthier living.

**Medicaleaf** expects to see its valuation increase five fold before floatation in three years' time.

**Medicaleaf** is looking to complete their £10 million initial investment by the year end.

Capital raised will be invested in Product Manufacturing, Sales and Marketing campaigns and distribution infrastructure but will also be used for suitable acquisitions and joint ventures that will catapult the growth of the company in suitable strategic moves.

**Find Out More about how you can get involved and profit from the £135B European Health and Wellbeing market.**



**[www.medicaleaf.org.uk](http://www.medicaleaf.org.uk)**

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# In This Issue...



December, for many of us, is a month of boundless festivities. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, or another festivity close to your heart, COVID-19 will undoubtedly impact your plans in some way. In this issue, we've endeavoured to show that you're not alone in the struggle to find a different way to celebrate this year. Whether that entails a Zoom call with relatives, caring for a loved one, or merrymaking solo, the stories in these pages will hopefully speak to your experience or offer some much needed escapism. However you're celebrating, we want to send you our very best wishes from team *Reader's Digest*, and thank you for another year of reading our little magazine. It wouldn't be the same without you.

Anna



It's been an eventful year, to say the least. Doubtless, most of us have been glued to TV screens or scrolling on our phones to keep up with the ever-developing news around the world to make sure we're up to date. But how many of us have stopped and wondered how harmful the 24-hour news cycle might be to our mental health? Shahed Ezaydi attempts to answer this question on p56, where she speaks to people who have struggled with "doom scrolling" about the impact that the constant connection has on our wellbeing.

News fatigue is also something Tim Minchin is painfully familiar with. On p20, the Aussie musician and comedian shares his ways of coping with news-induced anxiety and talks about lessons learned in relationships and personal development.

Eva

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# Over To You

LETTERS ON THE *October* ISSUE

We pay **£50** for Letter of the Month and **£30** for all others

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

Sometimes, a sentence jumps out and hits you right in the heart centre. For me, in October's "Recommended Reading" piece about Captain Sir Tom Moore's autobiography, it was this:

"He continued to organise his battalion's reunions for 64 years, until he was the only one left."

For so many people, to be "the only one left" of your peer group could be a sad and very lonely place. Sir Tom's evident lifelong relish for all that the world offered, along with his courage and dignity and complete absence of self-pity, have enabled him to continue to make friends from younger generations, who love and respect him and enjoy his company. Even when those battalion reunions were whittled down to four, or three, or even just two old friends, it's a safe bet that, along with sadness for lost comrades, there was

laughter and fun, and many happy memories shared.

— PAT METCALFE, *Yorkshire*



## THE LIFE OF BRIAN

I have long been a massive fan of the great actor Brian Cox and read your excellent interview with him in the October issue with utter delight. It was heartening to read that after his own brush with coronavirus he is fit and well and has been able to get back to the UK to visit his 90-year-old sister in her care home in Scotland. I also loved his attitude to political correctness and totally agree that sometimes you have to fly in the face of it and say what something is as opposed to what people *think* it should be. Please never change, Brian.

— LUKE RUSSELL, *Yorkshire*



## BATH TIME

It was really lovely to see my home city, Bath, featured in your magazine as it allowed me to see the city through fresh eyes. As a tourist destination Bath is wonderful but for a resident it presents many challenges—oppressively high parking costs and permanently congested roads. There is also this feeling that it's primarily a tourist playground, and many of our residents feel that their home has been hijacked and their everyday needs side-lined.

While these are very real and pressing problems, your article did succeed in reminding me how wonderful the city is if you are in “tourist” mode. It also highlighted how few of the touristy things I have actually done. And so—now that COVID-19 has encouraged us all to tap into the previously overlooked wonders that are sitting on our doorsteps—I think it's time to put on my tourist hat and enjoy a staycation (in the very truest sense of the word) in my home city. After all, it sounded like a wonderful place when I read about it in your magazine. Thank you for inspiring me!

—JENNIE GARDNER, *Bath*



## OLIVER'S ARMY

It's not often I nod my head and agree with every item mentioned in the “If I Ruled The World” feature, but I did just that when reading Neil Oliver's comments in the October issue. The author and presenter's simple and straightforward views on how our lives should be echoed my own thoughts. Enforcing kindness should be a must in every aspect of everyday life and issuing harsher penalties for litter louts is something I've always wanted! Along with shopping locally, having a dog and driving slowly through towns, these “rules” make perfect sense to an enjoyable way of life.

—MELANIE LODGE, *Yorkshire*



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**SEE THE WORLD...**  
*turn the page*



## ...DIFFERENTLY

**The Christmas market** in Vilnius is one of the most beautiful in Europe. One reason for this may well be the stunning Christmas tree set up in the Christmas market every year. The 90ft-tall metal structure is lit up by thousands and thousands of lights along its 6,000 or so branches. The tree in the Lithuanian capital certainly proved to be a crowd-pleaser in 2018, resembling a giant clock from above!







# Ex-Directory

*Olly Mann's local telephone box finds a new purpose, one which provides plenty of amusement...*

**W**HEN WAS THE last time you used a telephone box? I mean to make an actual phone call; not to shelter from the rain, or browse the "kinky" postcards. AGES ago, right? I ventured into a phone box once last year—but that was to get some privacy while I answered my mobile, so that doesn't really count, does it? Oh, and in 2012 some tourists asked me to photograph them mounting a red telephone box in tribute to a One Direction album cover. I'm not sure that counts, either.



Olly Mann presents *Four Thought* for BBC Radio 4, and the award-winning podcasts *The Modern Mann* and *Answer Me This!*

No, the last time I used a phone box for its authentic, intended purpose was... 2006. Fourteen years ago! I was producing an Edinburgh Fringe stage-play, and conducting auditions in my grotty London house-share.

In the vain hope that I might impress some talented actors to come and work for me for nothing, I set about chucking some throws over the sofas, and lighting pumpkin-scented candles to make it seem a bit more "young professional".

As I staggered outdoors to empty the dust bins, the door slammed behind me. Suddenly I was locked outside in my pyjamas, with one hour to go until the casting call. Not a great look. My mobile was inside—along with my clothes—but luckily there was a telephone box across

PHONE



Now That's What  
I Call Cooking! 94

**20TH CENTURY CHEF**

**BEST RECIPES OF THE 90'S**

the street. So, I dialled Directory Enquiries, got put through to our landlord's managing agent, and had a spare key couriered to me with just enough time to scarper back in and get dressed before the actors arrived.

I guess "use it or lose it" is the relevant maxim here: as it has been 14 years since I last used one, I should hardly be surprised that there are no longer any public telephones near my house. The last one standing (an ugly 1980s kiosk, not one of those delightful crimson creatures from the 1920s) has just been converted into a "mini community library."

It's a smashing concept: any passer-by can "borrow" a book from its shelves, and return it later, or replace it with another title from their own collection. For a few months after the "library" opened, I didn't bother browsing the stock, as, in my prejudice, I had assumed (from its location outside a nursing home) that it was going to be stuffed full of Mills and Boons and Jeffrey Archers. Then I noticed folk conducting spring cleans and end-of-tenancy clear-outs were dumping boxes of voluminous, eclectic reads there every weekend.



And these books were FREE.

This unbeatable price-point encouraged me to experiment with dozens of titles that I would never normally consider buying from, say, a car boot sale. But I've discovered some GEMS, many of which are now permanent fixtures on my bookshelves. (I should point out, at this juncture—lest a lynch-mob descend on my driveway—that I have been replenishing the books I've retained with donations of my own, including a signed copy of an Armstrong and Miller comedy annual, which came into my possession because I once sat next to Alexander Armstrong at a book-signing evening. He had a big queue of punters, and I didn't, and he very charmingly and graciously bought one of my signed books out of pity, but then of course I felt obliged to buy one of his. Showbiz!)

Anyway, my current fetish is for family cookbooks of the late 20th century—which for some reason the good people of my village seem most keen to chuck away. I can't explain why they jump out at me from the shelves—maybe it's because their bolshy, fluorescent jacket designs hark from the same era as the kiosk itself

(perhaps plonking a copy of Barbara Kafka's *Microwave Gourmet* in a metallic Thatcherite TARDIS is the 1980s equivalent of kitting out a 1960s airport terminal with Arne Jacobsen egg chairs... irresistible to the eye!).

At any rate, it's thanks to my new acquisitions that this summer you would not have found me obeying Ottolenghi's *Flavour* and griddling fennel and dukkah or whatever, but instead grilling maple-glazed ribs and "Noodle Doodle Salad" from *Ainsley's Barbeque Bible* (1997). This festive season will not, for me, revolve around Jamie's *7 Ways*, but the "Hot Fork Supper" from *Delia Smith's Christmas* (1990). Braised celery vinaigrette all round!

The latest tome to come back home with me is Jane Asher's

*Children's Parties* (1988), which includes a remarkable guide on how to transform a supermarket Swiss roll into a Thomas the Tank Engine birthday cake; the lyrics for all ELEVEN verses of the "Hokey Cokey" (who knew?); and some truly terrifying photographs of "lamb burger hats." Within a few days, it has already become a favourite of mine: where else can one quickly locate useful baking advice, laugh-out-loud hairdos and disturbingly remodelled meat, all in one handy hardback?

If I ever get trapped outside my house again, my local telephone box will, sadly, no longer be able to connect me with my keys in a matter of minutes. But it can certainly keep me entertained whilst I wait for my wife to rescue me. What an indispensable asset. ■

---

## Weird Christmas Traditions From Around The World

**For many Japanese people, traditional Christmas dinner is Kentucky Fried Chicken**

**Norwegians believe that Christmas Eve coincides with the arrival of evil spirits and witches. It is only logical then, that Norwegian householders hide all their brooms before they go to sleep**

**Each Christmas, Greenlanders tuck into *mattak*—raw whale skin with a little blubber**

**On the evening of December 5, German children leave a shoe outside their bedroom door. In the morning, if they've been good, they will wake to find the shoes filled with sweets. If they have haven't, they will find only a branch**

Source: wanderlust.co.uk



*Tim Minchin:*  
The Unromantic  
Romantic

BY Eva Mackevic

The Australian artist and comedian on  
surviving the lockdown, monogamy, maturity  
and his latest passion project



**R**OLLING OUT OF bed at 7am to conduct an interview ten minutes later is not exactly my favourite morning scenario. But the hefty 11-hour time difference between the UK and Australia, where Tim Minchin is based, doesn't allow either of us much leeway. I wait for him to join the Zoom call slouched in front of my computer, my swollen, sleep-deprived eyelids blinking sheepishly at the webcam. It's 6pm in Sydney, and, as it turns out, Tim hasn't had a great day himself. His signature long hair is scraggly and wet (he just got out of the shower) and his eyes are red and puffy, like he was crying just a moment ago.


"Something went wrong with my eyes last night and I ended up in the emergency department of an eye hospital. It's some sort of infection, so I woke up this morning unable to open my eyes but it's getting better", he explains. Despite an eventful night, Tim seems to be in good spirits. He's calm and buoyant, sitting beside his piano, family pictures hanging on the wall behind him—a comforting composition that makes our conversation feel much more intimate than it actually is. Maintaining this kind of air of composure hasn't come easily to the Australian artist over the last few COVID-stricken months though, he admits, and a large part of keeping

his sanity intact was avoiding the news, he says.

"I deliberately disengaged from the 24-hour news cycle and Twitter. I've got enough stuff going on in my life without feeling I need to binge on the ebbs and flows of the anxiety of everyone in the world. I think we make this mistake of assuming that one is morally obliged to stay in touch with what's going on in the world—and there's an argument for that. But putting aside whether or not it's a moral obligation to be across all the news and all the suffering of all different groups, what's certainly the case is that the 24-hour news cycle does not represent that body of knowledge you think you're looking for, the 24-hour news cycle is designed to make you anxious and het up, so that you click and click more, and comment, and engage, and buy the products advertised on their sites. I'm trying to read just a few longer term things every now and then, but to be honest, I'm just not reading the f\*\*\*\*\*g news right now. I am burying my head in the sand a little bit because I need it".

**Thankfully, the global standstill** allowed him to focus on his passion project of some 20-odd years: his debut music album, *Apart Together*. Tim has always been quite the polymath when it came to the arts. Originally aspiring to become an actor/musician, he spent many





“The 24-hour news cycle is designed to make you anxious and het up”

years as a “starving muso” specialising in a unique, subversive brand of cabaret-inspired musical comedy. He hit the big time around 2005 when he performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and since then, he’s appeared in multiple TV shows and penned a couple of Olivier-winning theatre productions (*Matilda the Musical* and *Groundhog Day*). Making this latest album has been his dream ever since he moved to Melbourne as a young man with a demo in his pocket, determined to get a record deal.

Though Tim doesn’t shy away from referring to himself as “successful” and “wealthy”, it seems that fame and money never muddled with his unique gift for sinking his teeth into life’s uncomfortable truths with

“It’s romantic to look life  
in its dripping jaws and  
still find it beautiful”

discerning sensibility and twinkling wit. “Candour is kind of my thing,” he admits.

“What I’m good at is overanalysing, talking too much and staying too long, you know, being a bit of a bore. But through that, every now and then, I manage to come up with an idea that’s helpful to people, I think. I’ve learned over my career that some people find the way I express things is kind of resonant or helpful.”

*Apart Together* is just that; a rolodex of very specific life settings that force us to ask ourselves big questions around love, mortality and ethics, peppered with Minchin’s signature dash of comedic panache.

“I just want to be my own genre; I know that’s incredibly ostentatious but that’s always been my goal. I don’t want anyone to be able to put an adjective in front of me, I just want people to go, ‘You’ve got to see that guy live, he’s funny and he’s heartfelt,’” says Tim when I ask him about this offbeat concoction of philosophy and humour, welded

together with music. One of the songs we end up discussing in more detail is “I’ll Take Lonely Tonight”, about trying to resist the temptation to cheat on one’s significant other while drunkenly flirting with an attractive guest at a party. Tim has been with his wife, Sarah, for almost 20 years, and I wonder whether this kind of candour ever causes any friction in their relationship.

“I don’t think it’s romantic to pretend life is what it ain’t, I think it’s romantic to look life in its dripping jaws and still find it beautiful, and so ‘Lonely Tonight’ is about the fact that if you’re away a lot and—if you’re lucky like me—in a fun industry where you meet interesting people who are also lonely and horny and drunk, you will get yourself in situations where you have to make a choice. And when you’ve been away for a long time, it does feel like a choice. Long term relationships are a pragmatic thing, you have to choose it again and again, and keep figuring out why.”




Tim and his wife Sarah arrive at the Olivier Awards, 2013

**Tim was born in the UK, raised in Australia** and then spent the majority of his adult life living all over the world, including a lengthy period in LA, which led him to suffer from what he refers to as “home dysphoria”, ie, not knowing where he belongs anymore. That’s what makes family so important to him: cousins, grandparents, Christmas and a tight-knit community—he wants all the things he experienced as a child.

“I mean, it would be ideal if I could have sex with a lot of people and fall in love many times. It’s devastating for both of us that we’ll never have the first time seeing

someone naked ever again, that’s s\*\*t, what a thing to miss out on, but it’s the lesser of two evils, because what are you missing out on if you don’t do it?” Though he jokingly says that they’re a “boring” couple and it’s their “conservatism” that’s kept them going all these years, you can’t help but get a warm, fuzzy tingle when you hear Tim talk about his wife. Despite being “very different”, he says he still gets an endorphin rush whenever Sarah enters his office to ask him a question. “And then she bugs me about something and I’m like, ‘F\*\*k!’” he chuckles.

A full-length portrait of Tim Lincecum standing outdoors. He has long, wavy brown hair and a goatee. He is wearing a dark blue, textured blazer over a white button-down shirt. His hands are in his pockets, and he has a serious, slightly furrowed-brow expression. The background is a blurred view of the ocean and a cloudy sky.

“You can either talk about the Kardashians or how to have a meaningful life”

**During his early career** as the extravagant cabaret weirdo, Tim gained notoriety for his controversial songs that hold up a mirror to society, such as “Thank You God” (“I assumed there was no God at all but now I see that’s cynical / It’s simply that his interests aren’t particularly broad / He’s largely undiverted by the starving masses / Or the inequality between the various classes”) or “The Pope Song” (the lyrics to which are so densely profane, we wouldn’t dare to print them). This outspokenness earned him a dedicated cult following and now, some ten years later, a lot of his fans are accusing Tim of becoming “too tame,” and

toning it down to avoid jeopardising his now-established career—this year's BAFTA performance being the most recent example. Yet Tim collectedly acknowledges his turn for the more “mature” kind of music as a natural progression, saying, “I suspect I won't write punchline songs again, I kind of took that form as far as I wanted to take it. Honestly, you can either talk about the Kardashians or you can talk about how to have a meaningful life in a meaningless universe.” It's always been his goal to write musicals and record his own album, and now that he's finally there, the edgy songs simply don't cut it anymore.

In fact, the musician's embraced a much more mature outlook towards life in general, abandoning his old rebellious ways in favour of empathy and open mindedness. Even when I ask him about UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak's recent [at the time of writing] suggestion that musicians should retrain, which outraged many performers, Tim expresses a surprising opinion on the matter: “It's a politician's job to think pragmatically about society and the economy in a pandemic. And obviously, if there's a bunch of humans who have the capacity to contribute to society sitting around then it's a pragmatic thing to say. It's not really a politician's job to tell us how to be, it is their job to come up with economically conservative

pragmatic solutions to economic problems. I'm trying to train myself to be a bit more mature and go, ‘OK, they're allowed to say that, I don't have to lose my freaking mind, that's just a piece of data that can come in and sit somewhere in my brain.’”

**As for his plans for** the near future, apart from writing a few songs for films and developing a new TV show, Tim is busy devouring literature, holding up his copies of Ann Patchett to the camera and raving about John Grisham. But mostly, he's just trying to keep up with his daughter, Violet. “She reads very fast and she reads stuff that I think is too old and too dark for her so I'm just trying to stay on top of her,” he smiles. ■

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 Tim Minchin's debut album *Apart Together* is out now. His TV show *Upright* is also out now on DVD & digital







# David Bailey

## I REMEMBER...

One of the most iconic British photographers of all time, **David Bailey**, has worked with everyone from top models to the Queen. With numerous exhibitions, photography books, short films and commercials to his name, the 82-year-old now has a new autobiography, *Look Again*

**...BREAKING GLASS WAS THE SOUNDTRACK TO MY EARLY CHILDHOOD.** I was born in Leytonstone, East London, but my family were bombed out during the war. We were protected from the blast in a concrete shelter and I was only about four, so I don't recall that much about what happened. But I can still see glass all over the place.

We moved to East Ham, but there were bombs there too. I had to drag

my little sister Thelma under the table when an explosion blew the windows in. When I was a little older, we'd play on bombsites. I loved the crack that broken glass made when I walked on it.

**...I THINK MY DAD, BERT, WAS A BIT OF A SCALLYWAG.** My parents both worked in the rag trade and were together for a long time. But he never seemed to be around much.

One Saturday, when I was small, I was waiting for him at the top of the road. Gladys, my mother, appeared and said, "Let's go and see him." I could tell something was wrong.

We walked into the Duke of Fife pub and saw him necking the barmaid. My feet didn't touch the ground trying to keep up with Mum, as she rushed home.

**...MUM WAS VERY PROUD OF HER DOORSTEP.** She was always cleaning it. She had to, because it was white, not red like other sensible people had. I was scared of treading on it, because you'd get a look from her terrible scary eyes. She was quite a disciplinarian.

**...GROWING UP IN THE EAST END WAS PRETTY ROUGH AND TUMBLE.** You didn't

want to stand too close to anyone, or you'd get head butted. And you had to have a sense of humour to get yourself out of trouble. Three members of a gang called the Barking Boys kicked the s\*\*t out of me. I'd danced with one of their girlfriends. I stood there wondering where my friends had gone! I avoided getting involved with gangs or crime, though. Reggie Kray, who I later photographed, told me he wished he'd done the same.

**...I HARDLY WENT TO SCHOOL. THEY DIDN'T CARE IF YOU**

**TURNED UP.** When I was 11, I went to a private school called Clark's College. But it only cost about £8 a year and was very lower-middle-class—nothing posh. The headmaster, Mr Skellon, wore a robe, but it was all torn at the bottom. He was a nasty man, always caning me. He had a cupboard full of canes, arranged from very thin to very thick. He'd make you choose which one you wanted to be hit with. He made

me spell a word like "was" or something in front of the class and I got it wrong. I only found out later that I was dyslexic. But he thought I was just joking and caned me for that, too.

**"YOU HAD TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOUR TO GET YOURSELF OUT OF TROUBLE"**

**...I LEFT AT 15 WITH NO QUALIFICATIONS.**

"Somebody's got to sweep the roads," Skellon told my mother. But I really liked show business and I always knew that I wanted to work in the media or films. I thought in pictures, not words. I was a runner for 20th Century Fox, then a gopher at the *Yorkshire Post*. But I really got into photography when I did my RAF National Service.

There were geeky guys there who taught me about things like delayed





David Bailey and model Jean Shrimpton photographed at his home, London. December 13, 1963

doing portrait shots of people like writers and up-and-coming actresses for them.

**...I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BE A FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER. IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.**

I did a picture in 1960 of a girl [Paulene Stone] on the floor talking to a f\*\*\*\*g stuffed squirrel for the *Express*. A ridiculous picture. But everyone seemed to like it. I started working for *Vogue* soon after that.

Then I met Jean Shrimpton. She was doing a Kellogg's advertisement for the

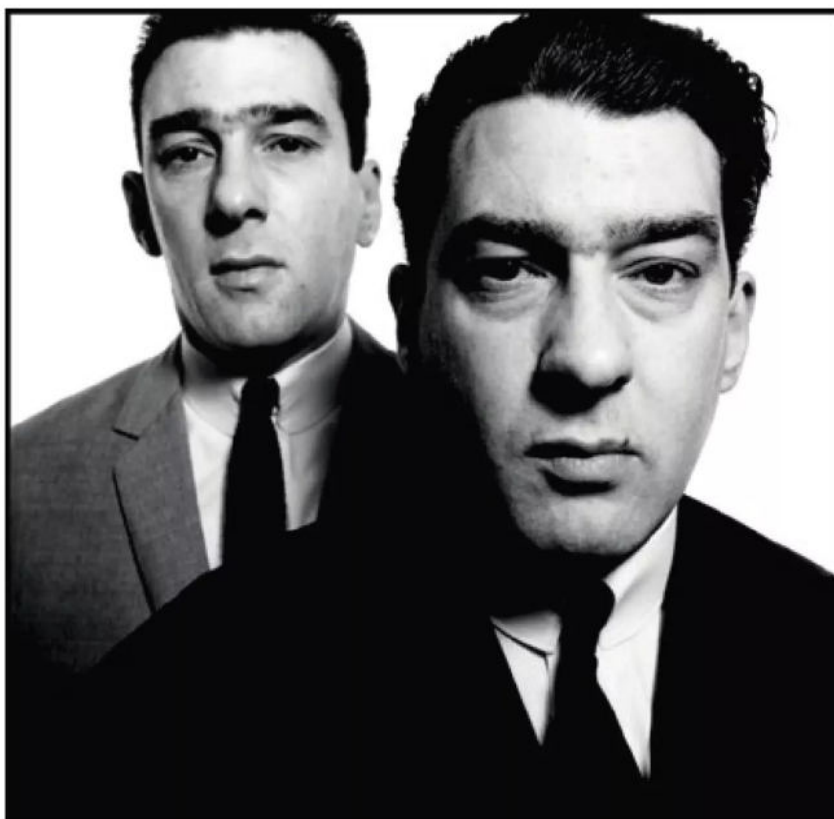
photographer Duffy, when I walked past the studio. She had incredible blue eyes against a blue background. I decided to book her for some test shots. We worked well together again and my career really took off after that.

We were together [romantically] for around four years. When she left, it wasn't like losing a girlfriend, it was like losing your best camera and muse, as well.

**...I'VE DONE AT LEAST 200 ADVERTISEMENTS, BUT MY VERY FIRST ONE WAS BANNED.** It was a

action. That's how I took that famous [1957] picture of myself on the bed, with a Picasso poster in the background. I used to get into fights with the other guys over that picture. Everyone else had girls from *Tit-Bits* on their walls. "Who do you think you are?" they'd say. I just preferred Picasso.

**...GETTING A BREAK WITH THE DAILY EXPRESS.** My second job after National Service was as an assistant to John French, the best English fashion photographer at the time. He introduced me to the art editor at the *Express* and I started



girl putting chocolate down her throat. It looked like she was [performing oral sex]. The advertising agency wouldn't even show it to the client.

I've got into trouble several times, since then. Mary Whitehouse tried to ban a film that I did about [Andy] Warhol in 1972, for instance. I've generally found that most things get banned by people—like Mary—who've never actually seen them..

**...CREATING A SYMBOL OF THE SIXTIES.** My [1965] *Box of Pin Ups* collection of photographs included everyone from the Beatles and Terence Stamp to the Kray [twins].

Shooting Michael Caine sticks out in my mind. He was working class, like me, and had this “there are so

many of us, you've got to accept us,” attitude that I admire. Lennon and McCartney didn't seem to be the best of friends. Paul was really nice, but John was an a\*\*\*hole. Which I liked, because I'm a bit of an a\*\*\*hole too.

**...NOT REALLY CARING ABOUT BEING FAMOUS.** I photographed everybody in England around that time. But I always believed that the less you care about being famous, the more famous you get. Stanley Kubrick was my inspiration for that.

**...WANTING TO PHOTOGRAPH MORE THAN FROCKS.** In 1975, I went to Papua New Guinea to shoot some tribes people for Polaroid. The tribes people weren't very impressed by the pictures. They thought they



(From left to right); The Krays; Bailey with Jacques Henri Lartigue; with Salvador Dali, 1972

were broken mirrors, as the image didn't change. But it was my first foreign shoot not doing fashion and I went on similar trips to places like Kenya after that.

**...GETTING MY "BUSY BODY" LIFE OUT THE WAY BEFORE SETTLING DOWN.** I first got married, aged 22, in 1960 to Rosemary. It was a typical East End marriage. I'm not saying this about her, but in those days, if you slept with somebody they'd say, "You've ruined my life, you've got to marry me."

Then I met Jeanne and later married Catherine Deneuve and Marie Helvin. In 1980, I spotted my current wife, Catherine, modelling at the Robert Street studios. I thought I'll go in and pretend I need to

borrow a bag or something, so I can see her.

She was a very proper, middle-class girl and I'm a bit rough, from the East End. But we got on extremely well together. I've got a sense of humour and she's sort of got a sense of humour [chuckles]. We've been married 34 years and have got three grown-up children. If you like something, why change?

**...THE SMELL OF FAMINE.** Bob Geldof asked me to photograph the starving people in Sudan for Band Aid. Where they were staying was really rough, without much money or organisation behind it—barely what you'd call "a refugee camp". Children seemed to be suffering more than anybody. But what people don't



Jerry Hall & Marie Helvin, 1982;  
Bailey family portrait, 1999;  
Bailey in Nagaland, 2012

realise is the smell. It was like being in a toilet that hadn't been washed for 20 years. Horrible.

**...WHEN YOU'RE A PHOTOGRAPHER, YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO ANYONE.**

I photographed Margaret Thatcher three times and she was charming. Not at all scary. When I finished a shoot early she said, "Well, you're going to have to sit and have tea with me." We discussed art.

I photographed Mandela. He was nice, but didn't like posing. He couldn't open his eyes properly. Desmond Tutu was hard work to start with. I told him he was a miserable old git. He replied "*You're a miserable old git*", and we got on fine after that. I've been doing a lot of photos in places like Barking, recently. I can talk to the residents there like I could talk to Thatcher or the Krays.

**...FINDING SOMEWHERE TO LIVE THAT WAS THE OPPOSITE OF WHERE I CAME FROM.**

Thirty-three years ago, we bought a cottage on Dartmoor, close to the prison. It's nothing like the back streets of the East End. I love it. When I was 12 or 13 I used to read the *Famous Five* books and they were always in the West country, so I always wanted to go west, too.

Our other home is a converted church in Tufnell Park. I've never



lived in such a middle-class place. Everybody has got two dogs and two children.

**...MY WORK IS INSPIRED BY PEOPLE.** I've done a lot of shoots with musicians, such as those in my *Rock & Roll Heroes* book. It's not that I'm keen on rock 'n' roll. I just want to shoot anyone who's interesting—from opera singers to politicians. I flew out to photograph the troops [in 2010] for my *British Heroes in Afghanistan* project for the same reasons.

**...I'M LUCKY—I HAVEN'T WORKED SINCE LEAVING THE AIR FORCE.** Being a photographer and a painter and commercial maker isn't work. I like what I do. I have learned the importance of comfortable shoes, though. You do a lot of walking in photography and when you're 82, that gets harder. ■

**As told to Simon Hemelryk**

*Look Again* is out now  
(£20, Macmillan)

**Tongue in Tree**

***Giraffes have blue tongues which protect them from sunburn, as they graze on the tops of trees for up to 12 hours a day in direct sunlight***

Source: [earthnworld.com/why-giraffes-have-blue-black-tongue/](http://earthnworld.com/why-giraffes-have-blue-black-tongue/)



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● HEALTH







How to  
effectively  
strengthen  
your immune  
system

BY *Mike Zimmerman*



**FIGHT  
OFF  
VIRUSES**

**O**NE THING THAT the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear is that some people who get the virus don't suffer much, while others become very sick indeed. And while the elderly have been particularly hard hit, some do survive—even centenarians. As for younger people, whose immune systems are supposed to be more robust, many have nevertheless died of it. So, what factors give some people a stronger immune system than others, regardless of age? What does it mean if, for example, your partner or child gets sick, and you don't—or vice versa?

We know that our immune-system function slowly declines with age. Just like when you see a photo of yourself from ten years ago versus one taken this afternoon, you see changes in your face, skin, and hair colour. It takes time. “Same process with your immune system,” says Dr Insoo Kang, associate professor of medicine and director of allergy and immunology at the Yale School of Medicine.

Kang has been studying human ageing for 20 years. “Immune cells, especially CD8+ T cells [a type of white blood cell], change with ageing. We see fewer of those CD8+ T cells, which are needed to recognise newly emerging microorganisms like the COVID-19 virus. It happens to everyone on some level, just not at the same rate.”

The difference in rate of decline between individuals is one of science's big mysteries. The immune system is complex, but most of us understand the basics: our body detects an intruder—a virus, bacterium, parasite or foreign object—and produces white blood cells to combat the problem. How many of these cells you produce when you're, say, 73 versus when you were 45 is the million-pound question. And it's at the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic as well: how does a 104-year-old man survive when people half his age, or younger, do not?

Fortunately, we won't always be in a pandemic. But we can use this one to gain an understanding of how our immune system changes with age—and how it might be possible to slow the decline and raise our immune reserves for the next time we get sick.

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## Immunity And Ageing

Our body simply doesn't produce as many immune cells as we get older, says Dr Atul Butte, distinguished professor of epidemiology, biostatistics, and pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco. “And no one really knows why.”

Butte worked with a research team on an extensive review of 242 immunity studies that revealed patterns in how our immune systems change as we get older. Certain key



## **YOU CONTROL MANY FACTORS THAT KEEP YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM STRONG**

immune cells—B cells (white blood cells that make antibodies to fight infection) and T cells (white blood cells that attack viruses)—become fewer in number with age. For example, we possess two broad categories of T cells: “memory” cells that have encountered a certain pathogen and “remember” how to fight it; and “naive” cells, like the CD8+ type mentioned earlier, that have yet to fight anything. “We’ve seen especially that the number of naive T cells seems to be lower as we age,” Butte says.

So let’s say COVID-19 shows up. Nothing we’ve seen before as humans matches this one, so we have no memory T cells to mobilise (although new research suggests some of us may have formed some defences

if we’ve had brushes with previous coronaviruses). The naive cells have to take on the fight, and older folks have fewer of those to fight with. That makes most of these people more vulnerable, but not all, because not everyone’s immune system declines in the same way. For example, another factor Butte observed in his study review: some healthy older people had little or no decline in T cells. Some had as many as younger people, and women seemed to have higher amounts in general as they aged.

No one really knows just what a healthy amount of B and T cells is. Says Butte: “If you want to have a test for your hemoglobin, they know what a normal range is. If you want your iron levels tested, they know what the normal range is. We have no idea what the normal level is for these cells. We don’t even measure them in a regular blood test.”

The reasons these key cells decline over time could be manifold. Is it genetic? Lifestyle? “We know genetics plays a part,” Butte says. “But it’s debatable how big of a part compared with environment and lifestyle.”

Lifestyle factors like poor sleep, chronic stress and weight gain often cause chronic low-grade inflammation, as can systemic issues like autoimmune diseases and decreased liver and kidney function. This inflammation degrades the immune system because it causes it to operate abnormally by constantly

firing. That accelerates the ageing process on a cellular level. It can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, and more, compromising your immune system without you even knowing it.

“Most systems in our body are tightly regulated,” says Dr Sean Xiao Leng, a geriatrician and professor at the Geriatric School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University. “The immune system is no exception, which is why this deregulation is so dangerous.”

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## How To Save Your Immune System

You can’t do anything about your genetic makeup, but, luckily, many

**IF YOU EAT RIGHT & AVOID OBESITY, YOU POSITIVELY AFFECT IMMUNITY**



factors that positively affect your immune system are within your control. Take them seriously, Leng urges. While you may not be able to stop decreased immunity as you age, any slowdown you can produce means a higher immune reserve at any given time. That’s critical when it comes to infections.

When we talk about vulnerability in older adults, says Leng, there are two important parts: “One is incidence—whether you get the infection or not. But the other part is severity. Even if you don’t have the incidence outcome you want, having a stronger immune function may determine how badly you’ll be infected.” In other words, every ounce of prevention helps, including the following:

### MOVEMENT

Regular workouts boost immune function and lower inflammation. A 2019 study in *Nature Reviews Immunology* noted that skeletal muscle is a “major immune regulatory organ” that generates anti-inflammatory and immunoprotective proteins called myokines. A 2018 study found that higher-intensity workouts may blunt immune-system decline in older adults. “Exercise strengthens the body and may be the most important lifestyle intervention you can add,” Kang says.

### SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Butte suggests that people gain a



## KEEP STRESS IN CHECK TO PREVENT IMMUNITY DECLINE



better understanding of where their health is right now.

For example, those with asthma may want to start measuring their peak airflow to know what their normal lung function is. “The more we can use digital devices and tools, the more we’ll understand,” he says. “If something changes, you’re not just going to the doctor and saying, ‘I’m having trouble breathing.’ You can say, ‘My airflow has dropped eight per cent.’” Staying on top of whatever chronic conditions you have will allow you to spot declines quickly, so you and your doctor can decide on a better course of therapy.

### NUTRITION

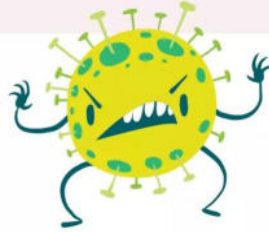
Eating right and avoiding obesity,

which is deadly when it comes to inflammation, are common sense. But research also reveals specific nutritional effects on immune function in older adults. A study reviewed in the journal *Nutrients* in 2018 showed that basic nutrients like vitamins A, C, D, E, and the B vitamins, along with folic acid, iron, selenium and zinc, are essential for “immunocompetence,” with deficiencies causing lower T cell production and an inability to resolve inflammation. Strive for balance, Kang says: “Eat not just vegetables but also good proteins and fibre.” The latter is important because it feeds the good bacteria in your gut and can help lower inflammation. “We have a lot of immune cells in the gut that help regulate health. Dietary fibre may have more than the single effect of making the bowel move.”

### CALM

Research shows unregulated stress can accelerate immune-system decline. It comes down to a chronic immune response to whatever’s stressing you, with the resulting rise in inflammation. Self-care in this area becomes critical—from anti-stress activities (meditation, mindfulness, exercise) to asking for help in unresolved stressful situations (work, money, care giving). People don’t talk enough about the effect of stress on immunity because it’s not as tangible as factors such as hours of exercise.

## IS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM VULNERABLE?



Certain health conditions can mean your immune system is less able to fight off a viral infection. If you have been diagnosed with any of the following conditions, take every precaution to protect yourself, and talk with your doctor about whether it's necessary to adjust your treatments.

**OBESITY** Adipose tissue (fat) is now recognised as an active endocrine and immune organ that can directly inhibit metabolic immune function, according to emerging research. A 2018 study of influenza patients over three flu seasons found that obese adults took 42 per cent longer to fight off the virus than non-obese people.

**DIABETES** High blood sugar (hyperglycemia) is an inflammatory condition that tends to inhibit the immune response and raise your risk of infection. People who have uncontrolled high blood sugar are particularly vulnerable.

**CANCER** Cancer and its various treatments can reduce white blood cell

counts and make patients more open to infections, while at the same time making it harder to fight any infection that they do get. If you are a cancer patient or a cancer survivor, you should discuss your situation with a doctor who is familiar with your specific medical history.

### **ASTHMA, COPD, AND OTHER RESPIRATORY DISEASES**

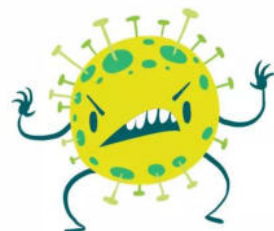
Viruses love to attack the lungs, so people who are living with existing lung conditions are at risk of more severe symptoms when they do get sick. COPD patients are particularly vulnerable to lung infections, which can further damage the already-compromised air sacs.

### **HEART DISEASE**

Hypertension and underlying cardiac issues raise infection risk for older adults, according to the American Heart Association. Based on early data, as many as 40 per cent of COVID-19 patients who required hospitalisation had existing cardiovascular disease, according to the American Heart Association.

### **AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES**

Not only can an infection trigger a flare-up of autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, or psoriasis, the treatment of those conditions often involves immunosuppressive drugs that can raise your infection risk. Also, autoimmune conditions can cause interstitial lung disease, which is a dangerous condition that can cause scarring of the lungs.



## VACCINES

Age takes its toll on vaccine effectiveness as well as immunity. Vaccines are designed to provoke the production of antigens—the influenza vaccine is made of influenza cells—but our ageing immune reserve doesn't respond as robustly as it did in our earlier years. None of that should make you lazy about vaccines.

"It's true they become less effective as people get older," Kang says. "But even if you do get infected, the disease will be less severe. People should get whatever vaccines their doctors recommend."

## MEDICATIONS

Certain prescription medications may inhibit your immune system. For example, oral and inhaled corticosteroids (common for arthritis, allergies, asthma, and inflammatory bowel disease) may increase your risk of fungal infections. The same is true for TNF (tumor necrosis factor) inhibitors that treat autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis.

"Even antibiotics could kill gut bacteria and trigger some kinds of infection," Kang says. If you're on any ongoing medications, talk to your doctor about possible immune-system side effects and how to address them.

## COVID-19 Lessons

Aside from a deeply ingrained knowledge of handwashing and precisely how far away two metres is, the COVID-19 pandemic will, in the end, teach us more about our health vulnerabilities—individually, and as an ageing population.

Butte believes it will usher in a new era in immunity research. "We're going to learn a lot in a hurry." Leng foresees a large push into learning more about ageing and immunity by studying the older adult population and unlocking the unknown mechanisms in the immune response. He's already part of a massive National Institutes of Health initiative into geriatric science involving hundreds of researchers.

"The traditional medical model focuses on individual disease," he says. "But we'll try to see if we can find an underlying mechanism in immunity, something upstream in the process. Then we can do a wider search rather than chase after individual diseases. If we can do that, the older population will handle all immune challenges better." ■



FROM AARP (APRIL 4, 2020), COPYRIGHT ©2020 BY AARP, AARP.COM



# 12 DAYS OF WELLNESS

*We all need a few quick ways to boost our health and wellbeing at this chilly, turbo-charged time of year*



Susannah Hickling is twice winner of the Guild of Health Writers Best Consumer Magazine Health Feature

**1 Run a bath** Turning a soak in the tub into a night-time spa experience is a simple treat to organise. Fill the bath with essential oils, then read a book, or listen to music or a podcast while you relax. There's researched evidence that having a warm bath for as little as ten minutes one or two hours before you go to bed improves your sleep.

**2 Jot your feelings down** Writing a diary and noting what makes you angry, sad, happy or worried is a great stress-buster.

**3 And s-t-r-e-t-c-h!** Your muscles need to be flexible, especially as you get older. Go out or go online and invest in a resistance band, then use it every day. This will improve mobility and



strength, and ensure you maintain your range of motion.

**4 Wash your face** Do this before you go to bed to rid yourself of a day's worth of grease, pollution and any products you put on your face. It will keep your skin healthy and allow nature to do its repair work overnight.

**5 Put on your dancing shoes** Partying is another activity that's been curtailed most of this year, so now's the time to put on your favourite Spotify or Amazon Music playlist and dance on your own. Music has a powerful feel-good factor and the exercise will boost health and fitness.

**6 Go for a winter walk** Breathing that bracing fresh air in the local park or on a hiking trail will help both fitness and mental wellbeing. Spending time outdoors reduces your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and calms stress, according to numerous studies.

**7 Do a jigsaw** Puzzles are good for your brain, allow you to switch off and score highly on bringing you satisfaction. What's not to love on a dull winter's day?

**8 Become a birdwatcher** A UK study found that watching neighbourhood birds eased depression, stress and anxiety. In

some parts of the country you can watch amazing murmurations of starlings which fly in whirling formations at dusk in the winter months—guaranteed to be good for the soul.

**9 Shop sustainably** Reuse carrier bags, buy secondhand and local goods—you'll feel good about helping both your community and the planet.

**10 Break open the pickles** Not only are they amazing with cheese and cold meats, but one study found pickle juice brought quick relief for cramps.

**11 Eat a rainbow** Be sure to pack the maximum amount of colour onto your plate—the brighter the better. Colour in fruit and veg indicates that they are rich in phytochemicals, which keep your body healthy. And there are different benefits from different colours.

**12 Buy the next round** It's official—spending your money on others brings greater happiness. Or so a study from Harvard Business School found. And if you can't be generous over the festive season, when can you be? ■

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*For more weekly health tips and stories, sign up to our newsletter at [readersdigest.co.uk](http://readersdigest.co.uk)*



# Sing Song Merrily!

More people are joining choirs than ever. Contemporary choirs mean you often don't have to be able to read music or do an audition—you just have to want to use your voice to have fun. Even the pandemic hasn't stopped the warblers among us, with Zoom choirs taking over from real-life musical encounters.

So why do we love singing and what benefits does it bring?

**Singing makes you happy** Music has often been associated with enhanced wellbeing, but the act of singing—rather than passively listening—releases neurochemicals such as endorphins, dopamine and serotonin, making it a feelgood activity.

**Belting out a tune improves mental health** A University of East Anglia study found that group singing helped

improve or maintain the mental health of people with conditions such as anxiety and depression.

## Choirs give you a sense of community

A University of Oxford study found that singing together helped people bond more quickly, compared to other activities. What's more, research has consistently found that having a good social network is good for mental and physical health.

## Choir-singing boosts immunity

A study by Welsh charity, Tenovus Cancer Care, and the Royal College of Music discovered that singing reduced stress hormones in cancer patients, while boosting cytokines, which are proteins of the immune system. This was likely to help their ability to fight their illness.

## Crooning is good for your breathing

Singing strengthens the muscles you use to breathe, so you can breathe more effectively and control your breathing better. This makes it great for conditions such as COPD and asthma. It also increases lung capacity.

**And one last thing...** Don't despair if you believe you can't hold a note. American research from Northwestern University indicates you just need to sing more often, as singing in tune might be a learned skill rather than a talent. So, if you like the idea of a good singsong, go for it! ■

# Ask The Expert: Eating To Improve Digestion

*Dietitian and chef Jane Clarke is the founder of  
Nourish by Jane Clarke*

**How did you become a nutrition expert?** I went into dietetics through a passion for food. My great aunt was a fantastic cook and my dad is a retired chemistry teacher, so I was brought up in a household of science and food. After my degree I set up my own private practice when I was 25.

**What are some common digestive problems?** Indigestion, bloating and uncontrollable bowels—either constipation or going to the bathroom too often—can really upset you, yet it's taken reasonably lightly by the medical profession.

They say, "It's just your gut," but it can impact your self-esteem, mobility and mental health.

**What causes them?**

Indigestion is caused by too much acid coming from the stomach into the oesophagus. That can be because of too much caffeine, too much rich food, too much alcohol, if you smoke, or are taking too much food in one go and then lying

down afterwards. When you get anxious, that also increases acid secretion. Bloating can be down to bad bacteria in your gut or not eating well, for example, too much rich, fatty food and too little fruit and vegetables, or even too much raw food. An overactive bowel can be caused by too much fibre.

**What should people do to improve their digestion?** Take down the rich food, go for something cooked—like fruit puree—rather than raw, look to a probiotic, and make sure your hydration is up to help with constipation. Keeping a food diary to see how well you are eating can be enlightening. And bread is easier to digest if toasted. An organic aloe vera juice can help soothe the gut.

**Can you offer any other tips to enhance digestion?** Meditation, sleep, reducing stress, taking time to exercise—they all have a positive impact on the gut. ■

*For more information, visit  
[nourishbyjaneclarke.com](http://nourishbyjaneclarke.com) or  
buy her book, *Nourish**





## A Helping Hand

*This month, Dr Max extols the incredible generosity of the general public*



Max is a hospital doctor, author and columnist. He currently works full time in mental health for the NHS. His new book, *The Marvellous Adventure of Being Human*, is out now

“WHY WOULD YOU do something like this?” I asked as the woman

put her blouse back on. She looked at me, surprised. “I mean, I’m very grateful,” I added hastily. “We’re all very grateful but it can’t be very nice having dozens of stressed medical students examining you.” She shook her head and I helped her get off the bed as she straightened her skirt.

“It’s my way of saying thank you,” she replied and sat back on the bed. “This hospital saved my life. I owe them. You’ve heard what I went through—if it wasn’t for this place, I wouldn’t be here now.”

I looked down at the woman’s medical history, which I had written down in my notebook. She had first been diagnosed with breast cancer 15 years ago. The tumour was removed and she received radiotherapy. Seven years ago the cancer had returned

and she had undergone a mastectomy and later, reconstructive work. This was during my medical school finals and a bell sounded. I said goodbye and made my way to the interview room where I would then present her history and my findings from the examination to a panel of consultants.

“YOU’VE HEARD WHAT I  
WENT THROUGH.  
**IF IT WASN’T FOR THIS  
PLACE, I WOULDN’T  
BE HERE NOW”**

It still seemed surprising to me that someone who had been through so much would be willing to subject themselves to the humiliation of baring her body to complete strangers, let alone the tedium of having to repeat her medical history time and time again. Yet over the course of her treatment she had become a regular at the hospital and felt indebted to the medical staff that had helped her. Her way of repaying the debt she felt she owed them was by volunteering to be a patient for medical school finals. She and the other volunteers received nothing for this selfless act except the gratitude of the consultants and medical students and a cup of tea and a few biscuits. Yet these sessions form a vital part of medical education in assessing the competence and

clinical skills of medical students and would be impossible without people like this woman volunteering to be interviewed and examined.

Looking back, I now realise that throughout my entire medical education, I was on the receiving end of remarkable generosity from members of the public who were essential to my training.

**IT’S EASY TO FORGET THAT BEHIND** each doctor is a legion of people who have contributed to them being able to stand there with a stethoscope around their neck. These people are the unsung heroes of medicine without whom we would not have a medical workforce. It’s not just those who volunteer at exam time. There are those that donate their bodies for dissection and the families that sanction this and patiently wait before they bury their loved one, for example. There are the people who are living with chronic illnesses who come into tutorials to share their experiences. There are the people in clinics who allow medical students to examine them and perform procedures on them, often for the first time. Often what these people have to endure is undignified or tiring or uncomfortable and yet they receive no public acknowledgement for their remarkable altruism. While doctors might help people, they wouldn’t be in a position to do so if people hadn’t helped them first. ■

# The Doctor Is In

*Dr Max Pemberton*

**Q: I've been vegan for five years. My parents passed from a stroke and heart attack and I thought this diet would give me a better chance. But now I'm reading that vegans are at higher risk of haemorrhagic stroke. Should I return to meat and dairy? Or is it a hopeless case?**

**-Anon**

**A:** It's certainly not a hopeless case and well done for trying to take positive steps to reduce your risk. Your email touches upon several things so let's take them in turn. There are two main type of strokes—those caused by clots, and haemorrhagic—which is caused by a weakened blood vessel in the brain rupturing. Strokes caused by clots are more common. One of the main things that triggers clots is furring up of the blood vessels with cholesterol. They can also cause heart attacks, where the clots get lodged in the heart blood vessels.

There's conflicting evidence about whether vegan diets cut cholesterol

or reduce the risk of strokes or heart attacks. You certainly don't need to have a plant-based diet to be healthy. I think the research you're referring to is a study published in the medical journal the *BMJ* in 2019. It found apparent increased rates of haemorrhagic stroke in people following a vegan diet. This was just one study though, and doesn't show that being vegan *causes* this type of stroke—just that the two seem to be associated in some way. It's an interesting finding from a scientific point of view, but I wouldn't act on it. As for being vegan, it's difficult to get a balanced diet this way, and it's certainly not essential to reduce your risk. Whatever you decide, make sure you get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and exercise regularly. Watch your weight and don't smoke. ■



Got a health question for our doctor? Email it confidentially to [askdrmax@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:askdrmax@readersdigest.co.uk)



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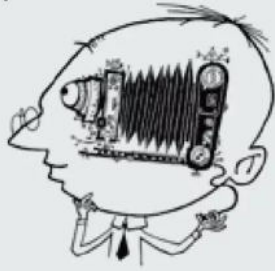
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## Memory's Magic Number

Know the limits of your learning, then smash them, says our memory expert, Jonathan Hancock

**I**F YOU WANT to learn a quick lesson about your memory, read this line of letters aloud, then cover it up:

**B Z F M R P Y L W Q N V**

How much of the sequence can you remember? My bet is seven letters. Because seven seems to be the magic number for most people's memory.

Back in the 1950s, US psychologist George Miller published an influential paper called *The Magical Number 7—Plus or Minus 2*. In it, he demonstrated that most people's natural limit for learning new things is between five and nine, with seven being typical. And when we take tests like the one above, most of us prove that he was right.

Knowing about Miller's magic number can help us to be realistic about our memory, and not too surprised if we struggle to hold onto more than seven new things. After all, forgetting unimportant

details is an essential function of the brain, and our fairly small short-term memory span helps us to stay mindful and alert.

The seven items that you remember don't have to be single things, like numbers or letters. For example, your brain is just as good at holding seven complete words.

So why not make some of those words memory-jogging clues about much larger sets of information? That way, with a bit of mental trickery, you can start encoding impressive amounts of knowledge within seven manageable "chunks".

Try it now. Say this sentence to yourself a few times: *Kids prefer cheese over fried green spinach*.

The sentence makes sense, which helps with recall. It also stops at seven words, the sensible limit for your memory. You can hold it in your head, repeat it a few times to imprint it there, and keep it in place for long enough to start using it.

In this case, that meant turning it into a famous list: the seven parts of the Order of Taxonomy. Your memorable sentence gives you the letters KPCOFGS, for Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species—the categories for organising all living things.

So, whenever you can, spot clever ways to code and condense your subject matter. That way, the magic number seven is only the beginning of what your brilliant brain can do! ■





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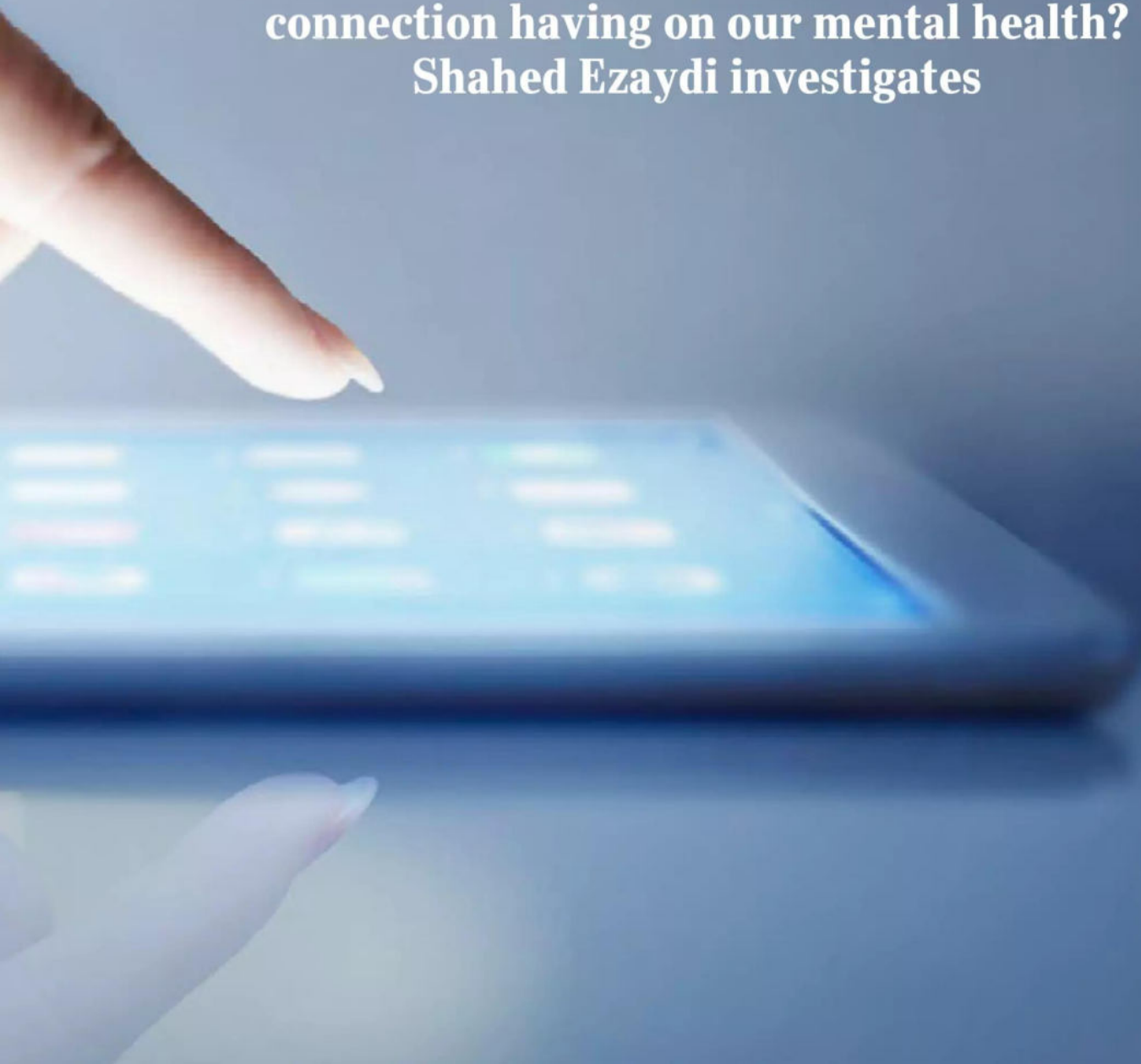
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# INFORMATION OVERLOAD

In our social media age, we have constant access to news cycles, accessing global information at the touch of a button. But what effect is this constant connection having on our mental health? Shahed Ezaydi investigates





THE WAY NEWS IS PRESENTED TO US LEADS US TO FEEL THAT IF WE AREN'T CONSTANTLY PLUGGED IN, WE'RE MISSING VITAL INFORMATION

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**THE NEWS IS EVERYWHERE.** It's on our TV screens, on the radio, and on the social media apps we scroll through on our phones. It's simply never been easier to access and consume news—we can read about any headline, any topic, in most parts of the world 24/7. So, with the rise of the 24-hour news cycle, it's no wonder that our news consumption has rapidly increased over the years.

According to Ofcom, the average adult watched 98 hours of TV news in 2019. They also found that television was the most used platform for news (75 per cent), followed by the internet (65), and social media (45).

Due to the fast-paced nature of the news cycle, it's not uncommon to feel an ever-present need to stay in the loop. Chris Cooper, life coach and founder of Life Complete, has worked with a number of clients regarding news consumption. He



XINHUA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

says that, “the way news is presented to us can create and feed our addiction, leading us to feel that if we aren’t constantly plugging into the news, we are missing out on information that is vital and we need to know right now.”

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 only further illustrates our constant need for the news. The daily press briefings given between the months of March and June brought in high viewing figures, with

Boris Johnson's televised address on March 23 drawing in a record 27 million viewers. At the very height of the pandemic, a lot more of us were accessing the news, and on a much more regular basis. But it seems our interest and need for all this news might be waning, as levels of news consumption have come back down again. Are these falling figures due to a lack of interest, or a case of news fatigue? I’ve always been the kind of person to check the news throughout





the day, and this increased during the early months of the pandemic. Increased consumption definitely led to higher anxiety levels, and a sense of fatigue.

**MILLICENT THOMAS, 22**, has also been dealing with news fatigue, and it's hugely impacted her mental health. She consumed news for a large proportion of the day and would spend around five hours on Twitter each day. Millicent says that she checks in with the news for two

reasons: a fear of missing out and a fear of being ill-informed or unaware of significant stories.

"I would be [connected] every day and late into the night, trying to keep up with the Black Lives Matter protests, COVID-19, the climate crisis, and more terrible things. It made me feel so hopeless that it would paralyse me," she says. The effect her news consumption was having on her mental health escalated to the point that her parents began to notice, and even confiscated her phone.



**EVIE MUIR, 26**, reached her tipping point with news fatigue while studying for her degree. “I studied a social science degree that demanded that I was not only consistently up to date with the news, but that I was consistently thinking critically about it—it was exhausting and depressing.” She felt as though she cared too much about everything and regularly burned out from it. She says the news made her feel “disenchanted with the world and it reinforced a lot of pre-existing mental health issues, built on

"I WOULD CRY EVERY SINGLE DAY ABOUT WHAT WAS ON THE NEWS... IT MADE IT HARD FOR ME TO FUNCTION"

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the constant belief that life is pointless and painful”

**LINDSEY EVANS, 30**, checks the news once every two hours at a minimum. She needs to stay up to date with current affairs as her job as a podcast host is reliant on this knowledge. However, the coronavirus pandemic has left Lindsey feeling drained and depressed from all the news consumption.

“I would cry almost every single day about what was on the news. All of the pieces hurt individually and once put together made it hard for me to even function”

**SALLY BAKER, A THERAPIST**, outlines how news consumption can affect us and our mental health. She says there

are two ways in which people consume news. The first method is when a person chooses to tune in or watch a scheduled news broadcast to update themselves on current events. They may choose to consume their news across several platforms and even numerous times per day. But the second way a person can consume news is through "doom scrolling"—this takes place in a zoned out, compulsive way that is used as a distraction from real life. Sally says that “the more people 'doom scroll',

**"DOOM SCROLLING"  
TAKES PLACE IN  
A ZONED OUT,  
COMPULSIVE WAY  
THAT IS USED AS A  
DISTRACTION FROM  
REAL LIFE**

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the more vulnerable they are to lowering their mood, experiencing news fatigue, and increasing symptoms of depression and anxiety.”

Chris also points out that most of the news that we take in is "bad news", which means we're usually confronted with something terrible that's happening in the world. "This can lead our minds to focus on the negative and construct an internal narrative that we live in a bad and dangerous place," he explains. Both Chris and Sally have worked with clients reporting news fatigue.

**SO, WHAT CAN** we do to avoid feeling so fatigued from the news? Chris advises a few things. The main thing is to read rather than watch the news. Reading the news gives a person that bit more choice in what stories they're consuming, plus "this way you won't be exposing yourself to so much distressing imagery and the process feels less involving". He says we should also avoid checking the news early in the morning or late at night, and getting sucked into the rolling news on 24 hour news channels.

Sally recommends picking one or two news platforms a day and sticking

to them. She adds that the "best antidote for bad news is looking for content that lifts your spirits and makes you laugh, hence why kittens are such an online favourite”.

Millicent, Evie, and Lindsey have all had to set some boundaries when it comes to tackling news fatigue and its impact on their mental health. They all now dedicate time to checking the news in chunks, instead of endlessly scrolling or constantly listening to the news. This way, they're still up to date with current affairs but aren't constantly engaged to the point of detriment.

The 24 hour news cycle has resulted in a lot more of us becoming fatigued by the endless barrage of news stories. It can make us feel hopeless, and can cause stress and anxiety. Although it's important that people stay informed about what's happening in the world, we simply don't need to be consuming so much news all the time. As Evie says, "In such a technological age, engaging with news on our own terms and enforcing our own boundaries should be seen as an empowering form of self care, and not a rebellious act." ■

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## The Drop of a Hat

**Vikings never wore horned helmets. This image came from the costume design for an 1876 performance of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen***

Source: [vox.com/2016/4/29/11526568/vikings-horned-helmets](https://www.vox.com/2016/4/29/11526568/vikings-horned-helmets)

# CHRISTMAS AT HOME

*With COVID-19 changing the ways we celebrate, we asked our readers what the words "Christmas at home" mean to them*

MY  
Britain



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Seeing my family using Skype, Zoom, Instagram and FaceTime for Christmas will mean so much more to me during these socially distanced times.

**Sue Markham**, VIA FACEBOOK



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**CHRISTMAS AT HOME MEANS FOUR CRACKERS EACH, BUT FEWER PEOPLE TO LAUGH AT THE BAD JOKES. PLUS, NOBODY TO HELP WITH THE WASHING UP!**

**Peter Walker**, LIVERPOOL



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**THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE SPENDING A GOOD 95 PER CENT OF THE FESTIVE SEASON IN PYJAMAS. I LIKE COMING IN FROM A BRISK WALK AND JUMPING STRAIGHT INTO SOMETHING COSY, MAKING A CUP OF TEA AND WATCHING WHATEVER CHEESY MOVIE IS BEING RERUN ON TELEVISION.**

**Javier Goose**, HALIFAX

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*Christmas is about being with the ones you love but also reflecting on how special life is. Even if you can't be together, your memories of being together cannot be taken away, so celebrate and hold onto those memories and your soul will be filled with love.*

**Louise Gorrell**, HERTFORDSHIRE

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Christmas is about books—jolly books, about postmen and laughing so hard, "like a bowl full of jelly."

**Rosie McCabe**, VIA TWITTER



**FOR ME, IT'S ALL ABOUT HAVING A REAL CHRISTMAS TREE WITH THE SMELL OF PINE AND A COAL FIRE CRACKLING IN THE BACKGROUND, WHILE I HAVE A CHRISTMAS FILM ON, EATING CHOCOLATES.**

**Andrea Harrison, VIA FACEBOOK**

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*"Christmas at home" reminds me of making mince pies with my children on Christmas Eve. All gathering to share in the cooking festivities together and decorating the tree with a new special ornament purchased each year. Then, enjoying a turkey and chutney sandwich on Boxing Day cuddled up with a good film.*

**Wendy Stevens, BEDFORDSHIRE**

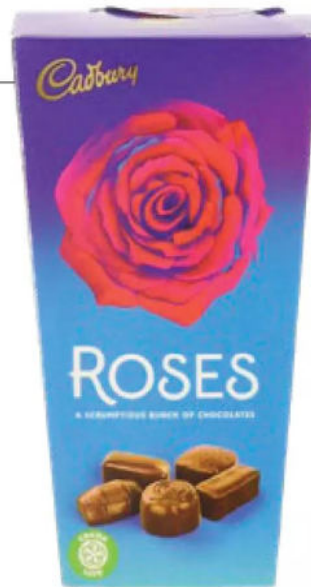


I have very happy memories of Christmas at home with my dad, roasting chestnuts on a shovel over an open fire.

**Catherine Ann Cumming, VIA FACEBOOK**

Long chats by the fire while Christmas music plays in the background, and indulging in one too many Cadbury Roses.

**Jane Evans**, VIA TWITTER



MY FAVOURITE THING ABOUT SPENDING CHRISTMAS AT HOME THIS YEAR WILL BE DEDICATING ALL THAT TIME THAT I WOULD USUALLY HAVE SPENT DRIVING ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO EATING TWICE AS MANY CHOCOLATE BISCUITS.

**Henry Jones**, Cardiff

*I love Christmas. I start in January buying in the sales. When my girls were young, a week before Christmas we would have a "deccy run". My two girls and I would pile in the car, they would have a notebook each. We'd drive round the city giving scores to all the decorated houses. We would stop and buy some chips and drinks, look who had the most points and then drive round the rest of the houses. It was always anticipated with excitement and we had great fun.*

**Gerry Belmore**, VIA FACEBOOK



Christmas has always been made up of a mix of family traditions. You grow up with the schedule of what happens when and how, and then you get married and you have to fit in both families' traditions. What if they are opposites?! You compromise where you can, but still you get irritated when the other family don't do it right! And then the children grow up and make their own traditions, and meet someone from another family and that means even more traditions to fit in. That's probably why some people just make a clean break and go away for Christmas, or decide to eat at a restaurant.

This year we will all have Christmas at home and the current restrictions will make everything look different. I vote that we try not to make such a big thing of Christmas this year, and then we won't be too disappointed.

**Karen Stephens**, HERTFORDSHIRE

**I HAVE ANXIETY, WHICH ALWAYS FLARES UP AROUND THE FESTIVE PERIOD, WHEN THERE'S PRESSURE TO BE PERFECT. I'M EMBARRASSED TO SAY IT WHEN IT'S SUCH A DIFFICULT TIME FOR SO MANY, BUT I'M RELIEVED THAT THIS YEAR I WON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH MY NERVES AND WORRY ABOUT GETTING EVERYTHING RIGHT. CHRISTMAS AT HOME WILL MEAN ZERO PRESSURE AND STAYING IN MY COMFIES ALL DAY.**

**Anonymous, BELFAST**

**AS I'M A CHRISTIAN, CHRISTMAS IS A CELEBRATION OF JESUS' BIRTH ON EARTH. BUT ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT TRADITIONS AND, "BUT WE USED TO HAVE STOCKINGS, AND THOSE MISMATCHED DECORATIONS, AND EATING BRANDY BUTTER SITTING AT THE FRIDGE!" I HAD TO LET GO OF THOSE WHEN WE HAD TO HAVE CHRISTMAS AT MY DAD'S HOSPITAL BED OR TAKE IN MY FRIEND AND HER BABY. SO I WANT TO FOCUS ON WHO RATHER THAN WHAT IS IMPORTANT THIS YEAR—THOUGH I'LL TRY AND INCORPORATE SOME FESTIVE TREATS WHERE I CAN!**

**Chloe Rachel, VIA FACEBOOK**



*Christmas at home means warmth, comfort and a return to childhood in the most exciting way. It's hectic, it's loud, it's arguing with your siblings over charades only to make up 30 seconds later, glass of eggnog in hand. It's feeling the rustle of small presents on the end of your bed in an unspoken agreement that Father Christmas put them there. It's giving your mother the shoes she's had her eye on all year. And Gramps falling asleep promptly at 4pm.*

**Sylvia Austen, DEVON**

*Usually I fly to my home country for Christmas, so this year, with COVID restrictions in place, "Christmas at home" will mean embracing everything that makes my adopted country special while connecting with family in a different way. Perhaps it'll mark the start of some brand new traditions.*

**Jeanie Müller**, MANCHESTER



Spending the festive season at home will be difficult this year. I will miss visits from my grandchildren, but I am focusing on gratitude—the ones I love are happy and healthy. I couldn't ask for a better Christmas present than that, could I?

**Evelyn Ward**, CAMBRIDEGSHIRE

**CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN! IS IT REALLY A YEAR AGO THAT I LAST RUMMAGED AROUND IN THE LOFT FOR THE DECORATIONS? NO DOUBT WE'LL BE WATCHING LOVE ACTUALLY AGAIN FOR THE 100TH TIME! IT'S THE COSY, FAMILIAR SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND TRADITIONS THAT MAKE IT SUCH A WONDERFUL TIME OF YEAR AND THE CHANCE TO SPEND PRECIOUS TIME WITH MY FAMILY AND LOVED ONES.**

**Kevin Walker**, SUFFOLK



The longest-serving *Blue Peter* presenter of all time, Konnie Huq, is now a much-loved children's author

# If I Ruled The World

## *Konnie Huq*

**I would get rid of all billionaires.**

When you're really rich, you need to think of things to spend your money on. That's why suddenly one car isn't good enough, you have to have 50, when really a car is just there to get you from A to B. There are hotels that cost thousands of pounds a night, but there are good ones that cost much less and I think, *How much better can the return be?* It's crazy that we have people who have very little, and then we have billionaires. I'd implement a cap and all that money can go to good causes instead.

**I'd invent a healthy chocolate.** I love chocolate, but in general anything sugary or salty or buttery is bad for you. It just seems like all the tasty stuff is bad, so I'd dedicate lots of research into turning all the tasty stuff into super foods that are really healthy.





### **Key workers would be better paid.**

I think through COVID we've suddenly acknowledged the importance of NHS workers, bin men, postmen... all the people we've taken for granted in the past. Really, the people working in city jobs are surplus to requirements during COVID. When you strip it back, key workers are the backbone of society and they should be paid accordingly.

### **Every country would have a tree planting quota which directly corresponded to their carbon footprint**

in order to compensate for all the bad stuff they're doing. Weirdly there's no particular tax for being bad to the environment. People who take more flights or drive a gas guzzler don't get penalised. So maybe it's up to my kingdom to sort that out! We need more focus on the idea that every person counts. If every person believed they mattered then we could solve the crises of the world in about two seconds.

**GP surgeries would always offer online appointments.** During COVID some surgeries have done this and it's been great. Normally it's so hard to get an appointment. You ring and it's engaged and engaged because they're so over-stretched. Having appointments from home saves the hassle of going somewhere, the carbon footprint of going somewhere and the time it consumes.

For doctors it seems like a win-win, as patients don't have to sit in the waiting room for ages as each appointment runs over and everything gets behind. Actually, my husband [*Black Mirror's* Charlie Brooker] always says not to let the kids play with the toys in the doctor's waiting room, because they've probably got loads of germs on them, and it's true! I do think after COVID maybe some of our new online living might stay.

### **Every school would have a library.**

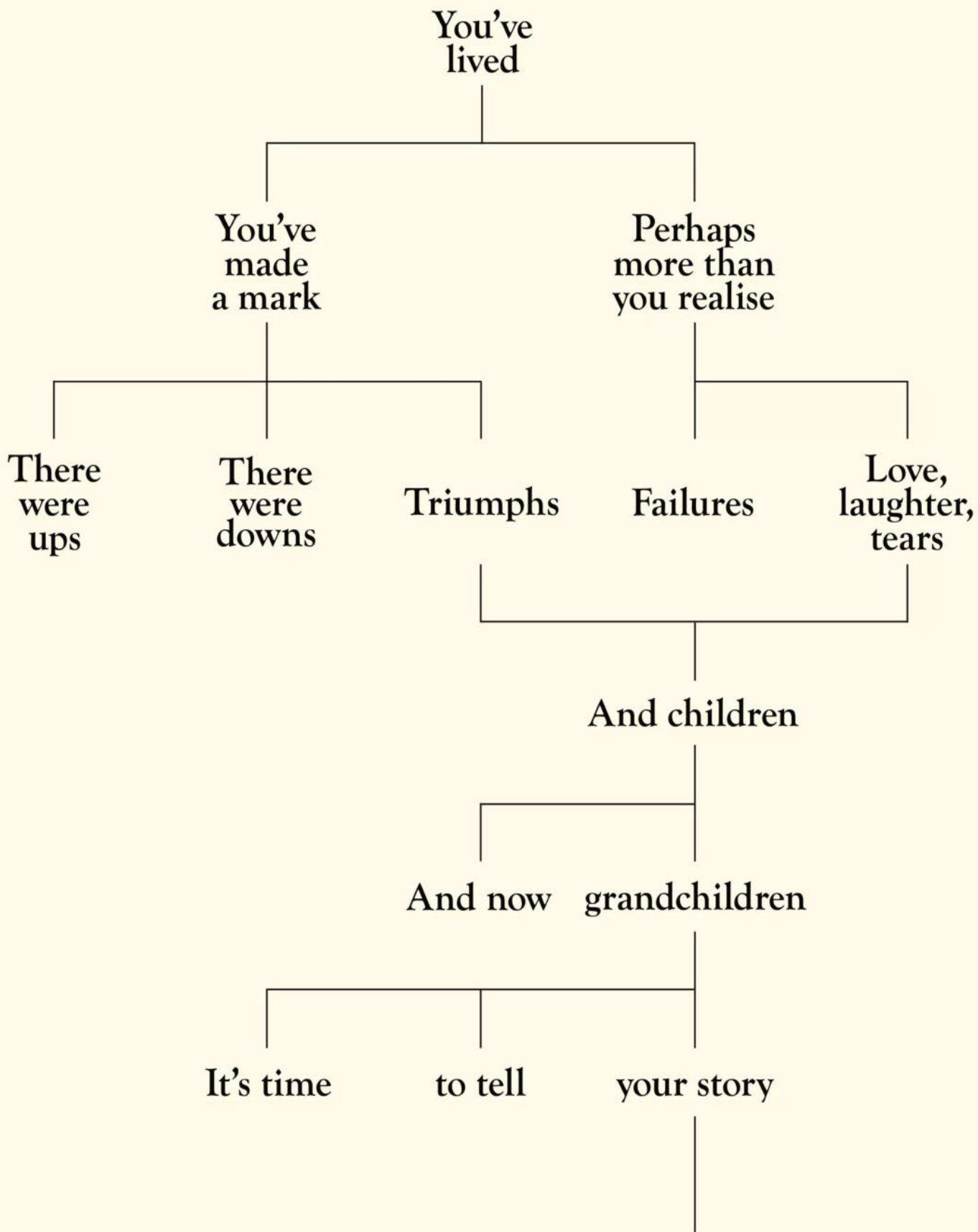
I don't think people realise that loads of schools up and down the country don't have a library. It's the law in the UK that every prison has one, because books develop empathy and understanding, but not for schools, though studies have shown that the more children read, the further they go in life. There are kids who come to school without even having breakfast, so to be able to get your child a book is a luxury in some places, and it really shouldn't be.

**It would be illegal to build on green space.** You should only be able to build on brown land. We can build up, or redevelop stuff, but let's not build on green space ever again. ■

### **As told to Anna Walker**

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*Fearless Fairy Tales* by Konnie Huq and James Kay, illustrated by Rikin Parekh, is out now published by Piccadilly Press



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# Finding Light This Hanukkah

We speak to three activists about the importance of fighting the good fight this Hanukkah

BY Molly Lipson

**H**ANUKKAH, OR CHANUKAH, is the Jewish festival of light celebrated every December. It commemorates the rebuilding of the Second Temple that was almost destroyed by the Greeks in an attempt to forbid people from practising Judaism. When they started repairing the Temple, they only found enough oil to light their lamps for one night. However, a miracle occurred and the oil lasted for eight nights. The Jewish community celebrates this miracle and its metaphorical connotations of endurance and freedom over the eight days of Hanukkah. Each night, people

light the menorah, an eight-pronged candelabra, adding a candle each night of the festival. Families share traditional food like latkes (potato pancakes) and doughnuts, play games of dreidel, and exchange gifts.

Hanukkah is usually a time of light, warmth and joy for Jewish people around the world. This year, most will struggle to celebrate with their loved ones due to COVID restrictions. Despite the difficulties 2020 has presented, however, in the spirit of Hanukkah, Jewish people from different backgrounds and denominations are still managing to find light and bring light to others.







## ANDREW

---

Andrew is a Haredi-Orthodox member of the Jewish community from London who set up the protest group Jews for Uyghurs 18 months ago. In China, the minority Uyghur Muslim community is being targeted by the country's regime for cultural erasure and genocide. Over 1 million people are believed to have been forced into concentration camps, and thousands of children have been separated from their parents. Chinese authorities are yet

to admit what is truly taking place.

Andrew first came to hear about the situation when satellite images of the industrial detention facilities were released. "I couldn't just sit at home and do nothing," he says. He began holding weekly protests outside the Chinese Embassy's Cultural Attaché in February 2019. Now, on Tuesday evenings, a small group of protestors can be seen lining the street outside the building holding signs stating, "Stop Uyghur Genocide" and "Honk for Uyghur Justice!" As cars go past, many do hoot; some drivers pound

their fists out the window to show their solidarity.

Andrew recognises that there are many issues around the world that deserve attention. What stands out to him about this one is the horrifying parallel it draws to Jewish history. He speaks calmly, but with a pained edge to his voice as he explains that, between the time the Nazis came to power and when the genocide of the

## IT WAS THE WORLD DOING NOTHING FOR THOSE NINE YEARS THAT ALLOWED THE FINAL SOLUTION TO HAPPEN

Jewish people was well underway, not only did the world stand by and do nothing, it took part in cultural events alongside Germany like the Berlin Olympics. “It was the world doing nothing for those nine years that allowed the 'Final Solution' to happen,” he points out. “At the moment, the concentration camps [in China] are not extermination camps. But nothing like this has ever happened on this scale with millions of people—except once before, and that was the Holocaust. As Jews, we said, 'never again' and it's happening again.”



Andrew is clearly driven by a great sense of urgency and desperation, but he is also optimistic: “Hanukkah is all about miracles, about showing us that our actions can make a difference.” He continues to protest (according to COVID safety guidelines) every Tuesday and hopes to grow the group and inspire change.

You can keep up with Jews for Uyghurs on their Facebook page

## MORGAN & JOE

Morgan and Joe identify as queer, anarchist, atheist Jews. Morgan, who is also non-binary, is originally from Chicago and Joe from Yorkshire, but they both now reside in a culturally diverse suburb of Glasgow where they have set up Pink Peacock—עוואַפּ עוועזאַר יד ("di rozeve pave" in Yiddish)—a bilingual, anarchist space with a vegan, alcohol-free, pay-as-you-can, kosher and halal cafe. After a successful crowdfunder, it is due to

open its doors this month. Perhaps the most surprising element of the whole endeavour is the duo's commitment to Yiddish, the traditional language of Eastern-European (Ashkenazi) Jews. It's largely considered to be a dying language, having been almost eradicated in the Holocaust, and is predominantly spoken nowadays by some small, ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities. Pink Peacock will be the first Yiddish institution in the UK. "It's a really under-resourced language," Morgan explains. "We also want to bridge the gap between





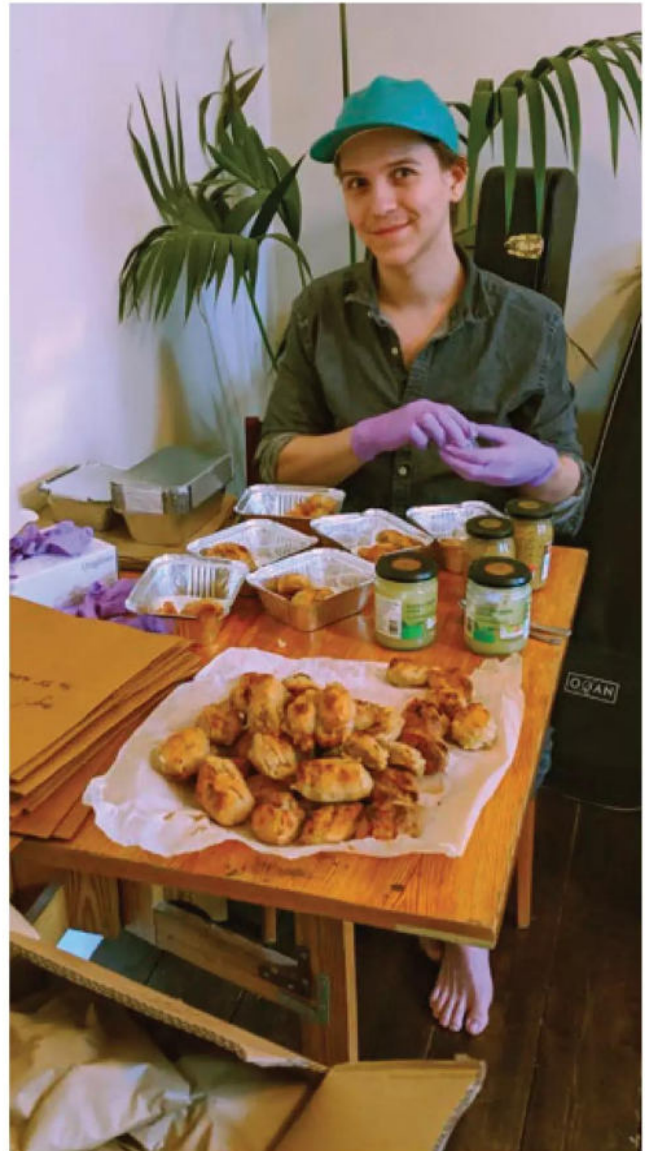
the Hasidic and secular worlds,” he adds.

Pink Peacock also fills another need: a queer space in Glasgow that doesn't revolve around nightlife and alcohol: “In terms of physical spaces for a 14-year-old queer person to find their community, where are they going to go?” questions Joe. The space is also designed to be accessible for those with physical disabilities and neuro-divergency and staunchly upholds anti-capitalism as one of its core guiding principles. “We will be encouraging people to loiter and be there without

## WE WILL BE ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO LOITER AND BE HERE WITHOUT SPENDING MONEY

spending money,” Morgan outlines. The pay-as-you-can scheme ensures that high-quality, healthy food is on offer to anyone who wants it, regardless of their income. The system is fully anonymous: “We don't know who's paid what, so there's no concern of being treated differently,” Joe explains.

Alongside the cafe, the community centre will host events including



film screenings, skill-shares and language classes. Like the food, these events will be priced on a sliding scale down to zero. Morgan and Joe hope that Pink Peacock will inspire more cafes and restaurants to offer a pay-as-you-can option and consider accessibility, inclusivity and radical politics as grounding values.

You can donate to the Pink Peacock to assist Morgan and Joe in opening the physical space and funding running costs



## TALIA

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Talia Woodin is a climate and social justice activist and mental health advocate from Oxford. She currently lives in a tree. Various trees, to be precise, because they keep getting cut down to make space to build HS2, the UK's £150 billion, high-speed rail service that is deemed by many to be an environmental catastrophe. Talia, along with a group of other dedicated protesters, has been blocking the destruction of ancient woodlands in Colne Valley,

just outside London, by occupying its trees for the past five months.

It's no surprise that she's ended up there. Both her parents were environmental campaigners and she describes being aware of the climate crisis from a young age: "I never really had a before and after moment, it was just part of my upbringing." Her father was diagnosed with lung cancer when Talia was four and sadly passed away. He was otherwise healthy and a non-smoker, leading Talia to link his death to the high rate of air pollution where they lived. Every

year, an average of 64,000 people die in the UK due to air pollution, and Talia states simply, "I've grown up knowing that my dad was one of those statistics." This makes the issue personal as well as systemic.

Talia's activism is not only inspired by her parents. She recently found out that her great, great grandfather was a Jewish anarcho-communist who escaped

## EVERY YEAR, AN AVERAGE OF 64,000 PEOPLE DIE IN THE UK FROM AIR POLLUTION

from a Siberian, Soviet-run prison and eloped to the UK with the daughter of a Hasidic rabbi. With a few arrests and a pending court case to her name, Talia laughs, "I'm destined to do this work!"

You'll rarely find Talia at a protest or action without her camera. Since her teens she has documented the world around her, particularly the strenuous and joyful practice of activism. She's amassed a solid social media following and shares regular updates on what she's up to, as well as explaining the interconnectedness of climate,



social and racial justice. Previously, she was the Media Coordinator for Extinction Rebellion Youth, the youth branch of the social movement that made headlines throughout 2019 for its roadblocking climate protests. For now, though, she's sticking to her treetop abode.

Talia's Hanukkah plans for this year involve making latkes in the Stop HS2 camp's makeshift kitchen to share with other protestors. She's also caught wind of a doughnut company nearby that discards hundreds of sweet treats at the end of every day, so like any good camper, she may well go foraging for those.

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You can keep up with Talia's activism on Instagram and YouTube

# FOOTPRINTS

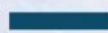
She was an experienced hiker.  
She knew that the tracks

# IN THE

ahead meant  
someone was in trouble.

# SNOW

But she had no idea they would lead to  
a rescue mission that has become legendary.



BY *Ty Gagne*

FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER



**P**AM BALES stepped onto the snow-covered Jewell Trail. She planned a six-hour loop hike through New Hampshire's Mount

Washington State Park. She had packed for almost every contingency and intended to walk alone.

A piece of paper on the dashboard of her SUV detailed her itinerary: start up Jewell Trail, traverse the ridge south along Gulfside Trail, summit Mount Washington, follow Crawford Path down to Lakes of the Clouds Hut, descend Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail, and return to her car before some forecasted bad weather arrived. Pam always left her hiking plans in her car, as well as copies with two fellow volunteers on the Pemigewasset Valley Search and Rescue Team.

It was just before 8am, October 17, 2010. She'd checked the higher summits forecast posted by the Mount Washington Observatory before she left:

*In the clouds w/a slight chance of showers. Highs: upper 20s; windchills 0-10. Winds: NW 50-70 mph increasing to 60-80 w/higher gusts.*

Based on her experience, Pam knew her hike was realistic. Besides, she had two contingency plans and extra layers of clothing to regulate her core temperature as conditions changed; the observatory had described conditions on the higher summits as "full-on winter."

Pam felt excited as she walked up into snowy paths. At 8:30am, still below the tree line, she took the first in a series of on-the-trail selfies; she was wearing a fleece vest and hiking trousers, and no gloves or hat because the air was mild. The sun shone through the trees and cast a shadow over her smiling face.

Less than an hour later, she took another photo, after she'd climbed into colder air and deeper snows. She now donned a quarter-zip fleece top and gloves. An opaque backdrop had replaced the sunshine, and snow shrouded the hemlock and birch.

Pam still smiled. Above her, thick clouds were dropping below Mount Washington's summit, where the temperature measured -4°C and the winds gusted about 50 mph in fog and blowing snow.

**A**T 10:30AM, THE weather was showing its teeth. Pam added even more layers to shield herself from the cold winds and dense fog. She made her way across the snow-covered ridge toward Mount Washington and began to think about calling it a day. Then she noticed something: a single set of footprints in the snow ahead of her. She'd been following faint tracks all day and hadn't given them much thought, because so many people climb Jewell Trail. But these, she realised, had been made by a pair of trainers. She silently scolded the absent hiker for violating normal safety rules and walked on.

By 11am, Pam was getting cold, despite moving fast. She put on an extra top. Good thing I packed heavy, she thought. She decided to abandon her plan. Summiting Washington was just an option. Returning to her SUV was a requirement.

Strong gusts of wind attacked her back and left side. The clouds had transitioned from canopy to quicksand, and the only thing keeping her on Gulfside Trail were the tracks in the snow. As she fought the wind and heavy sleet, her eyes searching for some type of shelter, the tracks made a hard left-hand turn off the trail.

Now she felt genuinely alarmed. She was sure the hiker could not navigate in the low visibility and was heading straight toward the challenging trails of the Great Gulf



**Pam Bales took selfies at 8:30am (left) and 9:15am to document her climb up Jewell Trail on Mount Washington, which is known for its extreme weather swings**

Wilderness. Pam was stunned—darkness was mere hours away. If she continued to follow the tracks, she'd add risk and time to the itinerary she'd already modified to manage both. But she couldn't let this go. She turned to the left and called out, "Hello!" into the frozen fog. Nothing. She called out again: "Is anybody out there? Do you need help?"

The strong winds carried her voice away. She blew into her rescue whistle. For a moment she thought she heard someone reply, but it was just the wind. She walked cautiously in the direction of the single set of tracks. Her bailout route would have to wait.

**P**AM FOLLOWED the tracks gingerly struggling to remain upright. She rounded a slight corner and saw

a man sitting motionless, cradled by large boulders. He stared in the direction of Great Gulf, the majesty of which could only be imagined in the horrendous visibility. She approached him and uttered, "Oh, hello."

He didn't react. He wore tennis shoes, shorts and fingerless gloves. His head was bare. He looked soaking wet. Thick frost covered his jacket. As his eyes tracked her slowly, he barely swiveled his head.

A switch flipped. Pam stopped being a curious and concerned hiker. Her informal search now transitioned to full-on rescue mission. She leaned into her wilderness medical training and tried to get a firmer grip on his level of consciousness. "What is your name?" she asked. He didn't respond.

"Do you know where you are?"

Nothing. His skin was pale and he had a glazed look on his face. It was obvious that nothing was connecting. He was hypothermic and in big trouble. Winds were blowing steadily at 50 mph, the temperature was  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and the ice pellets continued their relentless assault on Pam and the man who was now her patient. The prospect of having to abandon him for her own survival was horrifying, but she'd been trained in search and rescue; she knew not to put herself at such risk that she would become a patient too. She also knew she didn't have much time. As he sat up against the rocks, she stripped him down to his T-shirt and underwear. Because he wouldn't talk, she gave him a name: "John." She placed adhesive toe-warmer packs directly onto his bare feet. She checked him for any sign of injury. There was none. From her backpack, Pam retrieved trousers, socks, a hat, and jacket. She pulled the warm, dry layers onto his body. He couldn't help, because he was so badly impaired by hypothermia.

Pam next removed a bivouac shelter from her bag, holding it firmly so the winds wouldn't snatch it. She slid it under and around his

motionless body, entombing him inside. She activated more heat packs and placed them in his armpits, on his torso, and on each side of his neck. Pam always brought a thermos of hot chocolate and electrolyte cubes. She dropped a few into the flask, then cradled the back of his head and poured the sugary drink into his mouth.

**PAM  
FOLLOWED  
THE TRAINER  
TRACKS.  
HER BAILOUT  
ROUTE  
WOULD  
HAVE  
TO WAIT**

**O**VER THE NEXT hour, John began to move his limbs and speak. Slurring, he said that when he'd left it had been 15 degrees. He'd walked the route several times before, but lost his way in the poor visibility and just sat down. Even as he warmed up, he remained lethargic.

Pam recognised that he would die soon if they didn't get out of there. She looked her patient squarely in the eyes and said, "John, we have to go now!" She left no room for argument. She was going to descend, and he was going with her.

The wind roared over and around the boulders that had protected them during the 60-minute triage. Pam braced John as he stood up, shivering, and with a balance of firmness and concern, she ordered, "You are going to stay right on my a\*s, John."

This wasn't the way she usually





spoke to people, but she had to be forceful. He seemed moments away from the path of least resistance—stopping and falling asleep. That was not going to happen on her watch.

She figured that the only viable route was back the way they'd come. Visibility was so bad that the pair inched along. Pam followed small holes in the snow her trekking poles had made earlier. Leaning into the headwinds, she began to sing Elvis Presley songs to keep John connected to reality—and herself firmly focused.

She was trying hard to stay on the trail, and even harder not to let John sense her growing concern, when he dropped down into the snow. She turned and saw that he was giving up. He curled in a fetal position. He told her he was exhausted. She should just

continue on without him. But Pam would have none of it.

"That's not an option, John. We still have the toughest part to go, so get up, suck it up, and keep going!" Slowly he stood, and she felt an overwhelming sense of relief.

Pam and her reluctant companion had travelled just under half a mile when they arrived back at the junction of Gulfside Trail and the somewhat safer Jewell Trail. It had been around 2pm when they'd started down. The sun would set in three hours. Although the trees would protect them from the wind, it was darker under the canopy. Pam switched on her headlamp, but with only one light between them, she had to move slowly, then turn to illuminate the trail so John



**By 11am, the weather had turned and Pam was about to turn back. Fortunately for one distraught hiker, she wouldn't quit**

could follow. She offered continuous encouragement—"Keep going, John; you're doing great"—and sang songs from the 1960s.

Their descent was arduous, and Pam dreaded that he would actively resist her efforts to save him. Just before 6pm, they arrived, exhausted and battered. Her climb up had taken about four hours. Six had passed since then. Pam started her car and placed the frozen clothing inside so the heater could thaw them. She realised he had no extra clothing.

"Why don't you have extra dry clothes and food in your car?" she asked.

"I just borrowed it," he told her.

Several minutes later, he put his now-dry clothes back on and returned the ones Pam had dressed him in.

"Why didn't you check the weather forecast dressed like that?" she asked. He didn't answer. He just thanked her, got into his car, and drove across the empty lot toward the exit. Right around that time, at 6:07pm, the Mount Washington Observatory clocked its highest wind gust of the day, at 88 mph.

Standing there astonished and alone in the darkness, Pam said to no one, "What just happened?"

**P**AM WOULDN'T GET an answer until a week later, when the president of her rescue group received a letter, with a donation tucked between its folds. It read: *"I hope this reaches the right rescuers. This is hard to do but I must try, part of my therapy. I want to remain anonymous, but I was called John. On Sunday October 17, I went up my favourite trail, Jewell, to end my life. Weather was to be bad. Thought no one else would be there. I was dressed to go quickly. Next thing I knew this lady was talking to me, changing my clothes, giving me food, making me warmer. She just kept talking and calling me John and I let her. Finally I learned that her name was Pam.*

*"Conditions were horrible and I said to leave me but she wouldn't. Got me up and had me stay right behind her, still talking. I followed,*

*but I did think about running off—she couldn't see me. But I wanted to only take my life, not anybody else's, and I think she would've tried to find me.*

*"The entire time she treated me with compassion, authority, confidence, and the impression that I mattered. With all that has been going wrong in my life, I didn't matter to me, but I did to Pam. She*

*probably thought I was the stupidest hiker dressed like I was, but I was never put down in any way—chewed out, yes, in a kind way. Maybe I wasn't meant to die yet. I somehow still mattered. I became very embarrassed and never really thanked her properly. Please accept this small offer of appreciation for her effort to save me*

*way beyond the limits of safety. 'No' did not seem to be in her mind. I am getting help with my mental needs. They will also help me find a job and I have temporary housing. I have a new direction thanks to wonderful people like yourselves. I got your name from her pack patch and bumper sticker.*

*My deepest thanks, John."*

**I**N THE NINE years since she saved John, Pam has become something of a hiking legend. It's a title she never sought, but one she has

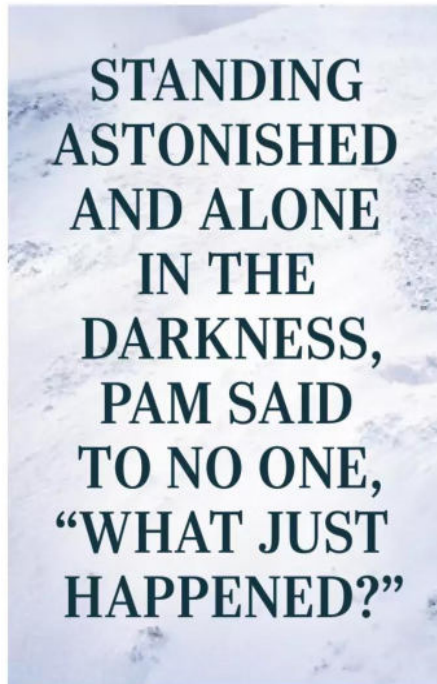
certainly earned. All that matters to Pam is that she was moved deeply by the man's gesture and his reference to the fact that she made him feel that he mattered.

Some people have asked me whether I, in finally recounting this story for the public, tried to find John. The thought of searching for him felt

wrong. As I've reflected more on this story and its relation to mental health, my response to that question has evolved. I have in fact found John, and he is very close by me. John is my neighbour; he is my good friend, a close colleague, a family member. John could be me.

At some point in our lives, all of us have found ourselves

walking with a sense of helplessness through a personal storm. Alone, devoid of a sense of emotional warmth and safety and smothered by the darkness of our emotions, we've sought that place just off trail where we hoped to find some way to break free of our struggles. Sadly, some do follow through. Many are able to quietly self-rescue. Others, like John, are rescued by people like Pam. ■



FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER (JANUARY 5, 2019),  
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A close-up profile of a camel's head, facing right, with a rope halter around its neck. The camel is on a white sandy beach. In the background, a person in a red shirt is walking on the beach, and the ocean is visible under a clear blue sky.

# HOW AUTHENTIC WAS YOUR LAST HOLIDAY?

In a world dominated by capitalism and social media, how authentic are our trips abroad? Not very, says **Julie Olum**

**D**URING OUR SCHOOL holidays spent on the white sands at the coast of Kenya, as a child I didn't immediately question the number of Maasai men on the beach selling beaded jewellery, boat tours and other holiday spoils to the gathered European and US tourists.

That is until one morning, on a beach walk, my dad greeted a man cloaked in red with the most basic Maa greeting, “*sova*”, and got a response in Kiswahili, the national language and dominant lingua franca of the coastal region. Dad tried again to no avail and turned

with “that rich, exotic culture to immerse yourself in on a visit to Kenya and Tanzania” along with your wildlife safari. With tourists happy to pay for native-looking crafts, a dance or jumping show and even a photograph, why wouldn't one try their hand at playing a part in this economy?

**Years later, working at the front desk of a South African hostel, two peppy German backpackers approached to ask where in Cape Town they could try some African food. Dissatisfied with my recommendations of shisa nyama**

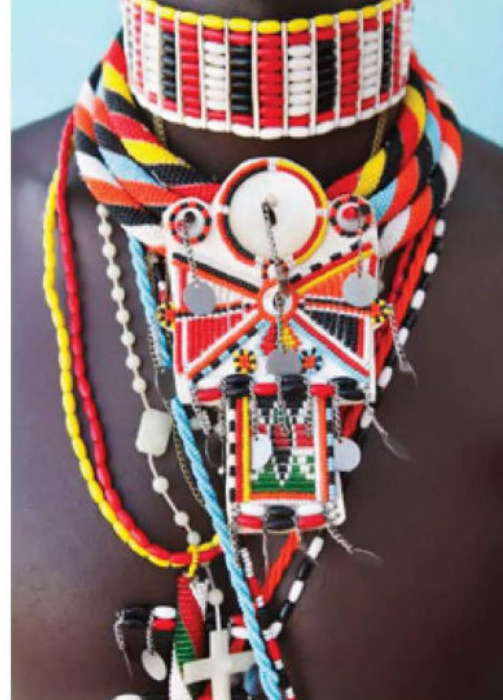
## “WITH TOURISTS HAPPY TO PAY, WHY WOULDN'T ONE TRY PLAYING A PART IN THIS ECONOMY?”

to me with a smirk saying, “See? They're not even really Maasai”. Come to think of it he didn't have the stretched earlobes that many adult Maasai men do. And, although they're semi-nomadic people, generally those who choose to live a more traditional pastoralist life will be found moving between the central highlands down into Northern Tanzania. This far East, not so much.

**The iconic existence** of these tall, dark, lean people, who have so well preserved their traditional dress and way of life is by now synonymous

[South African barbecue] and Cape Malay [an ethnic group in South Africa] cuisine, they specified that they wanted to try “buffalo meat and crazy stuff like that”.

A concept restaurant along these lines has existed since the 1980s in my hometown, Nairobi, where patrons could—up until it was banned in 2004—try meats from the various animals they may have just spotted on a game drive: ostrich, crocodile, impala, giraffe, the works. You'd be hard pressed to find any Kenyan of the last five or six generations (if ever) to have served







any of that, even as a joke, in their home. Who decided game meat was what “African food” consisted of? The short answer is European colonialists and settlers who pushed out indigenous food and other cultural customs from many regions while simultaneously painting the people in the lands they invaded as savage, unintelligent and quirky characters in the backgrounds of their safaris and various expeditions. But that’s an even longer story for another day.

**Things are taken a step further** in the souvenir business. Many of the diverse and colourful wax print

place—may have been overtaken by the commodification of cultures in the name of tourism. That often includes many packaged offerings of “authentic” travel experiences.

But that doesn’t mean they can’t be enjoyed or at least chuckled at. After all, anyone who has spent time around the Colosseum in Rome knows that it isn’t actually a gladiator or the Pope posing for pictures. And maybe you’re just hearing about this, but pad Thai isn’t quite traditional cuisine—it was pushed as the Thai national dish in the late 1930s in efforts to encourage national unity and cultural cohesion following the

## “PAD THAI WAS PUSHED AS THE THAI NATIONAL DISH IN EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE NATIONAL UNITY”

fabrics that light up market stalls in Ghana and other West and Central African nations actually owe their origins to a Dutch textile company, and are increasingly competing with versions made in China. Most of those breezy *dashiki* shirts? Also China. Even other Africans don’t always catch that one. But they’re so fun, and now you can have your own custom “African-print” dresses, trousers, even bum bags made.

It might be time for the traveller-not-tourist brigade to relax their shoulders and accept that sometimes a place—or ideas of that

move from absolute monarchy to democracy. A well-made bowl is still hearty and delicious; no need to stop ordering it in Thailand or elsewhere.

**Many, myself included,** have been guilty of rolling our eyes at today’s visual-centred social media obsession which seems dead set on homogenising life as a whole and travel experiences in particular. A beautiful image of meticulously arranged flowers in a spa bath in Bali has often led to a booking for that suite and a photograph/hop in that bath with the flowers. In Bali.

But how different is that really from posing with a lei of leaves and flowers presented by a Hawaiian “hula girl”, like you’ve seen in the postcards and ads for decades?

In her essay, *Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture*, Haunani Kay-Trask writes, “Hula dancers wear clown-like makeup, don costumes from a mix of Polynesian cultures... In hotel versions of the hula, the sacredness of the dance has completely evaporated while the athleticism and sexual expression have been packaged like ornaments.” But where there’s a seller, there’s a willing and often insatiable market of travellers, who have more likely than not come for the image they have of the place, and not necessarily to experience the culture as it is today.

Once again social media, while seemingly spiralling out of control, reveals itself to be a mirror for society. People have been doing this for *decades*—consuming designed media and marketing about a destination, its people and their culture and not questioning much, even while on the ground, experiencing the place themselves.

**The difference perhaps lies in the increased accessibility of travel and with it, the growing number of destinations open to receiving tourists.** Now not only can more people hop on a plane than ever before, but they can all be photographers and travel writers at the touch of a button too. And many of them grab at the chance to instantly share their new discoveries for the rest of us to scroll through and judge.

The way that capitalism is set up, it was bound to happen. The “authentic travel” business is just that. A business ripe to be branded and sold to consumers.

Personally, I’m team support-local-enterprises. Tourism has drastically improved the lives of people around the world in ways they wouldn’t have dreamed plausible in simpler times.

Now travel presents fewer true opportunities for bragging about all the culture you’ve soaked up when you know how much of it is for show, perhaps the lessons you learned in sales from that persistent hat vendor in Hanoi would make for a more solid story at your next party. ■

### He's Lovin' It

**In the ten days when he competed at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Usain Bolt ate over 100 Chicken McNuggets per day and nothing else.**

Source: <https://olympics.nbcsports.com/2020/04/21/usain-bolt-beijing-olympics-2008-chicken-nuggets/>



*My Great Escape:*

# Heaven In Devon

*Our reader Jo Hibberd  
extols the delights of  
a staycation*

**G**OLDEN SANDY BEACHES and wild swimming in hidden coves, laced with never-ending views of the immense Atlantic Ocean and miles of coastal paths. My soul is full to the brim with the beauty of the great outdoors.

The stresses of day-to-day life are washed away every time I dip my toe into North Devon. We came to explore the coastline and Exmoor. We parked our campervan in Woolacombe, made a brew and gazed at Lundy Island in the distance wondering if there really are puffins there. The vast beaches of North Devon, including Woolacombe, seem to suck in avid surfers, walkers and those who simply want to sit



and enjoy the vista. We dined at Barricane Bay where Sri Lankan curry was served to us on the beach as we watched the sun set.

After a few days of stunning coastal walks between Lee Bay and Baggy Point, stopping for tea and cake en route at every opportunity, we drove north past Combe Martin for the walk of a lifetime. Who knew? Hangmans Hill is the highest sea cliff in England and we certainly felt it! All the huffing and puffing to get to the top is worth it. As we flopped to the ground and watched a fishing boat bob about hundreds of metres below us, the drop really was staggering.

We pottered along the coast, stopping for a dip at Woody Bay and Lee Bay, both quiet and



untouched by commercialism.

At Lee Bay, a tiny chapel is quite literally carved into rock, with candles twinkling and rows of tiny pews. It is beautiful. The dramatic path from Valley of the Rocks to Lynmouth is not for the faint-hearted as it clings to the cliff edge. We ate huge pasties on the sea wall and reflected on what it might have been like during the devastating flood of 1952.

After a day of rest at a tiny campsite, where we over-indulged in their home made cider, we headed inland and spent the day walking around Pinkery Pond up on Exmoor,

before ending the afternoon with a wild swim. It is certainly not a pond, much more akin to a lake and it really is in the middle of nowhere!

We hit the town of Barnstaple on Friday and the locals were out in force as it was market day. We had a hilarious morning chatting to a local RNLi volunteer who was never able

to finish a sentence as he had to say hello to almost everyone. It seems to be a place where people just know each other.

For our last day, we explored Arlington Court and its walled garden, packed to the edges with produce. We took in the circular walk of the grounds and

learned about the Chichester Family who had once owned the property along with Morte Point and much of the land around Woolacombe.

The mental health benefits of wild swimming are well documented. Even if you are not a wild swimmer, North Devon will definitely cleanse your mind and swallow you up into its wild and stunning coastline. ■



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Tell us about your favourite holiday (send a photo too) and if we print it, we'll pay £50. Email [excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk)

HIDDEN  
GEMS

**D**ubai is hardly an obvious birdwatching spot. The glitzy Emirate famously excels at record-breaking buildings, blissful beaches, shopping malls and superb restaurants, but nature?

Well, yes, actually. About five miles from the city's main attractions, beside the E66 highway, sprawls the fenced-off Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary—2.4 square miles of peaceful wetlands hooking around a broad Dubai Creek inlet. And amid its mangrove trees, mudflats, scrubland, lagoons and reed beds are three viewing hides in which visitors can observe the locals.

Come in winter, and those will include greater flamingos, many of whom migrate here in a beautiful pink mass. As you might guess, the westerly Flamingo Hide is the best spot

# RAS AL KHOR

*Wildlife Sanctuary, Dubai*

to observe their roost: aim to be in situ for about 9am to beat the (relative) crowds who arrive at feeding time between 10-11am.

Other regular sightings include grey herons, great egrets, cormorants, stilts, spoonbills, sandpipers and ospreys. In all, there are an estimated 67 species.

The other two huts face the lagoon and mangrove ecosystem respectively; the latter also affords stellar photos thanks to downtown Dubai's skyline providing an incongruous, glittering backdrop. With the birds likely to be a good

few metres away, bring binoculars—a pair are provided per-hide, but they may be taken—and a telephoto-lens camera if possible.

Finding Ras Al Khor's entry road can prove tricky, so consider enlisting a taxi. Entry is free and visitors can just walk in—but guides must be booked online in advance. The reserve usually closes on Sundays. ■

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By Richard Mellor



# Spending Dos And Don'ts For A COVID-19 Christmas

*One thing's for certain—we're set for a Christmas like no other. Here's how to prepare financially*



Andy Webb is a personal finance journalist and runs the award-winning money blog, *Be Clever With Your Cash*

**J**UST LIKE EVERY part of our lives since March, Christmas in 2020 is going to be disrupted. And the knock-on effects will be seen in your bank balance.

This list of things to do and things to avoid will hopefully ensure you don't end up out of pocket.



**DO** **plan your shopping** Writing a list of who you need to buy for and how much you can afford to spend on them will help massively. Make sure to do the same for food and drink.

Not only will this list make the whole process less stressful, you'll also be able to properly keep on top of your spending.

**DON'T** **overcompensate** You might feel that this year has been so bad that splashing out is the only way to give yourself a boost. This could be by showering loved ones with more expensive gifts as a replacement for hugs. Or doubling down on luxury food and drink treats.

This might make you feel better in the short term, but you could regret it in January when you've got bills to pay. Christmas is already a time people feel pressured to spend more than they can afford, so don't make it worse!

**DO** **Get it done early** I know some people like to leave their festive shopping late, but this is a bad year to do that!

There's always a chance you could find yourself isolating or in lockdown, preventing you from getting to the shops. And we're likely to see an increase in online shopping, which puts a greater demand on deliveries.



## WRITING A LIST OF WHO YOU NEED TO BUY FOR AND HOW MUCH YOU CAN AFFORD TO SPEND WILL HELP MASSIVELY

So the sooner you get to the shops or order gifts (and post them on to friends and family), the higher the chance that you'll have what you need for the 25th.

**DON'T** **borrow money** Going back to that list and budget, if you don't have enough cash to cover what you plan to spend it's better to reign it in than put it on a credit card or go into your overdraft. The latter will likely cost you 40% in interest charges!

**DO** **check the returns policy** As much as we try, gifts we buy aren't always going to be perfect. Maybe that jumper doesn't fit, or perhaps that action figure is already in the toy chest.



Though many shops will offer up to 30 days to return an item, and often extend this at Christmas, they don't have to. Legally you've only got 14 days to return items if you buy online, while brick-and-mortar shops can refuse to give a refund (unless there's something wrong with it).

So check the terms before you buy. If that means you change what you buy or where you buy, then so be it.

Also, if you're buying anything that costs more than £100 then use a credit card as you'll get added Section 75 protection if something goes wrong. Just make sure you pay off the card before interest is added.

**DON'T** give gift cards Always the easy option when you don't know what to buy someone yet they're actually one of the riskiest gifts to get.

This is because if a retailer goes bust, gift cards suddenly become worthless. And this year that danger has gone up. You're better off sending cash or a cheque—or even just asking someone what they'd like.

**DO** make room in the freezer The uncertainty of who we will be able to see on Christmas Day won't just impact *us*, it's a major inconvenience for supermarkets too. Already we've heard that they're planning to sell smaller turkeys for socially distanced dinners, but it's going to be hard for them to plan how much festive food to stock.

I could be wrong here, but I think that means a high chance of big reductions on supermarket shelves just before and after Christmas, letting you buy cheap food and freeze it to see you into 2021. ■

# On The Money

*Andy Webb*

**Q: I agreed to a coronavirus payment holiday on my credit cards back in May, and extended it for another three months in August. I'm worried how I'll deal with this debt when that ends in November. The payments are going to be higher and money is still really tight. Can I get any more help?**

**A:** You aren't the only one to pause payments during all this financial uncertainty. More than a million credit cards have been deferred, yet interest will have continued to pile on (making payments higher once the break ended).

The good news is that your credit file won't have been impacted by this authorised COVID-19 "holiday", which could help you, as one option is to look for a 0% balance transfer credit card. Make sure you go via an eligibility checker to assess your chances of acceptance. If all goes well you can move your debts across and without interest adding to your balance it's easier to clear the debt. You'll

need to make at least the minimum repayment each month, but it's better to pay as much as you can.

However, your credit score isn't the only indicator used by lenders, so you might not be able to get one of these cards. Or it could be that even those payments would become a struggle.

If so, talk to your credit card providers. They can do things such as cancel fees or interest, or reduce your payments for an indefinite period. They might even remove the interest that was added during the break. But these solutions will hit your credit score.

You don't say whether you've still had an income throughout this period. If you have, and the credit card debts and other essentials

are bigger than what is coming in then

it makes sense to talk to a free and independent debt advice service such as **StepChange** and **National Debtline**. They can look at the whole picture, including other debts, and help with a single debt management plan. ■



## A TASTE OF HOME: TURKEY LEFTOVER RECIPES

*For many, no time of year evokes the “taste of home” more than Christmas. Our readers share some of their favourite Christmas leftover recipes...*



### BOXING DAY TURKEY STIR-FRY

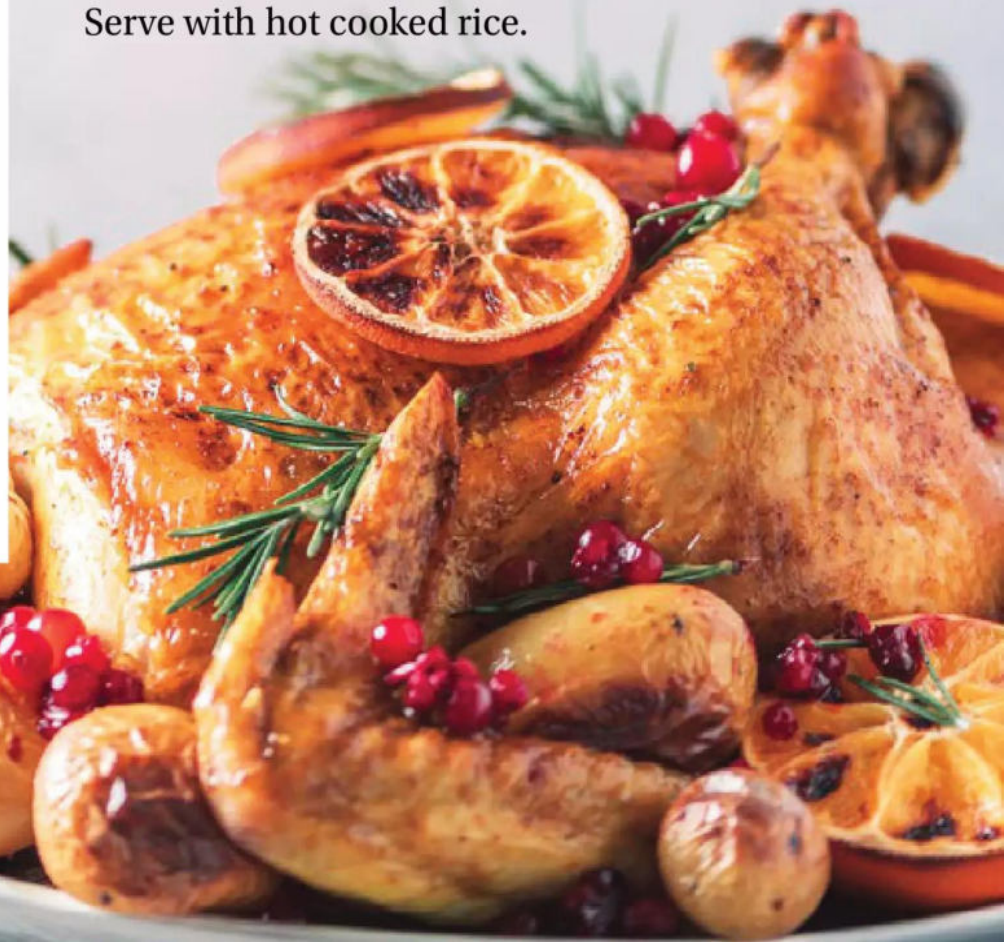
*I work for a priest who loves to cook. He shared this recipe with me. It's for Boxing Day, encompassing the holiday spirit with an added twist.*

**Stefan Lovelace**

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup cut-fresh green beans
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp peanut or rapeseed oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2tbsp whole-berry cranberry sauce
- 1tbsp soy sauce
- 1tsp white vinegar
- 1/8tsp salt
- 1/8tsp pepper
- 1-1/2 cups cubed, cooked turkey breast
- 2tbsp cashews, chopped
- 1tbsp fresh coriander, minced
- hot cooked rice

1. In a large skillet, sauté beans and onion in oil until tender. Add garlic and cook for another minute.
2. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the cranberry sauce, soy sauce, vinegar, salt and pepper; pour over bean mixture.
3. Add turkey; simmer, uncovered, for 4-6 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with the chopped cashews and coriander. Serve with hot cooked rice.





## BISTRO TURKEY CALZONE

*Turkey, cheddar and bacon harmonise well with the apple in this family-friendly fare.*

**Donna Marie Ryan**

### Ingredients:

- 1 tbspcornmeal
- 1 pound frozen pizza dough, thawed
- 3/4 pound thinly sliced, cooked turkey
- 8 slices cheddar cheese
- 5 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
- 1 small tart apple, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/2tsp Italian seasoning

1. Sprinkle cornmeal over a greased baking sheet. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 15-inch circle. Transfer to prepared pan. Arrange half of turkey over half of the dough; top with cheese, bacon, apple and remaining turkey. Fold dough over filling and pinch edges to seal.
2. With a sharp knife, cut three slashes in the top. Brush with egg and sprinkle with Italian seasoning. Bake at 200°C for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand for 5 minutes before cutting into wedges.

## MEATBALLS WITH CRANBERRY SAUCE

*With their cranberry dipping sauce, these no-fuss appetiser meatballs make use of traditional Christmas ingredients, so they're ideal around the holiday or anytime you're craving those favourite seasonal tastes.*

**Ann Baker**

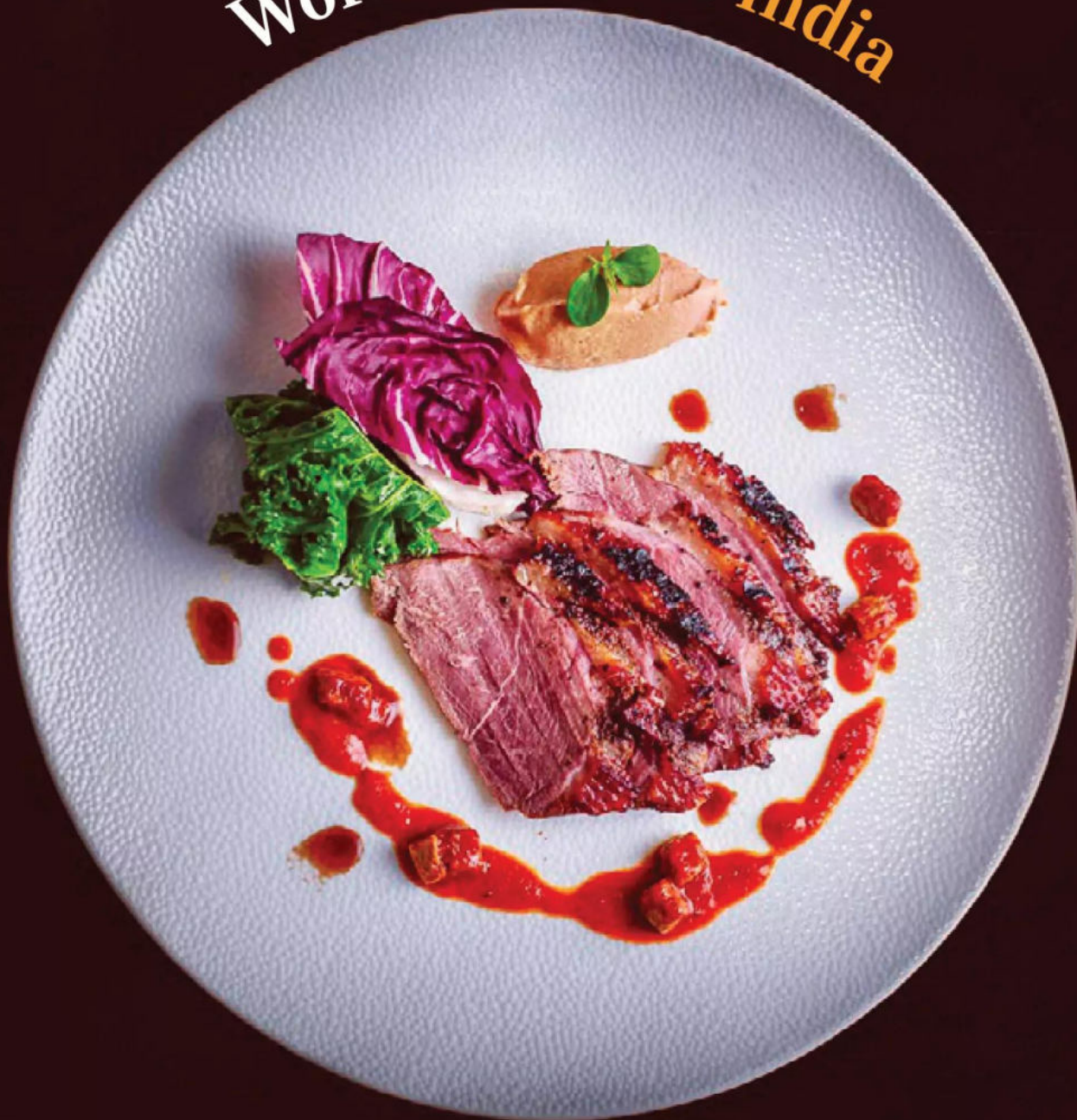
1. Place the stuffing in a large bowl. Crumble the ground turkey and pork sausage over stuffing and mix well. Shape into 2-inch balls. Place on a greased rack in a shallow baking pan.
2. Bake at 180°C for 15-20 minutes or until no longer pink. Drain on paper towels.
3. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine the remaining ingredients; heat through. Serve over meatballs.



### Ingredients:

- 3 cups leftover cooked stuffing
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 pound bulk pork sausage
- 1 cup jellied cranberry sauce
- 1/2 cup chili sauce
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 3tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1/2tsp grated orange peel

## World Kitchen: *India*



## Ghee Roast Goose With Fermented Quince And Tempered Kale

*This month, chef Nikhil Mahale of Farzi Café in London, offers an Indian-inspired alternative to your traditional Christmas dinner: a very achievable, aromatic, spiced goose with fermented quince and kale*

## METHOD:

### Goose:

- 1 Clean and dry the goose well.
- 2 Grind the whole spices into a powder mix. Rub  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the spice mix evenly inside and out of the goose and season well with salt. Grate the zest of the lemons and oranges and spread inside and outside of the goose. Halve both and insert them into the goose to impart flavour and steam whilst cooking. Leave to marinate in the fridge for at least 3–4 hours or overnight.
- 3 When ready to roast, take the goose out of the fridge and let it come to room temperature for at least 30 minutes. Preheat your oven to 180°C. Place the goose on a wire rack over a tray and cover tightly with foil. Put the goose in the oven, after 40 minutes remove the fat from the tray, baste the goose with it lightly and return to the oven with the foil on until it has been cooking for 1hr 30 minutes in total. Remove the fat again as well as the foil.
- 4 Increase the heat to 220°C. Cook for a further 30 mins to colour. Probe the goose halfway through colouring—the internal temperature should not go over 73°C. Once cooked, rest for 30 minutes before carving into thin slices, removing any bones.
- 5 Warm ghee and the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the spice mix and spoon over the top of the goose slices. Keep warm.

### Fermented quince:

- 1 Mix the apple juice, cinnamon, sugar, lemon juice. Combine the quince and the pickle liquor in a jar. Store at room temperature for 2–3 days.
- 2 Remove the slices from the jar, ensuring all the liquid is drained. Cook in 150g butter on a low flame, adding water if needed to stop it from sticking. Once soft, add the cream and sugar (if needed). Blend to a thick puree.

### Kale:

- 1 Blanch kale, drain well and keep aside. In a pan, heat the butter, mustard seeds, cumin, and garlic until garlic is lightly coloured. Combine it with the kale.



## INGREDIENTS:

### The goose:

- 1 goose, weighing 4–5kg, oven-ready
- 50g star anise
- 30g aniseed
- 25g cinnamon
- 15g cloves
- 2 lemons
- 2 oranges
- 4tbsp ghee

### Fermented quince:

- 500g quince, peeled, cored and sliced into 3cm-pieces
- 200ml apple juice
- 15g cinnamon
- 75g sugar
- 75ml malt vinegar
- 1 lemon (juice only)
- 75ml double cream
- 50g sugar (optional)

### Kale:

- 500g kale, roughly chopped
- 4–5 garlic cloves, depending on size and preference, finely chopped
- 100g unsalted butter
- 1tsp mustard seeds
- 1tsp cumin seeds

# The Expert Guide To Decorating Your Christmas Tree

*Follow these top tips on how to create an effortlessly layered look for a show-stopping festive centrepiece*

**1** Start by considering the type of tree you'd like at home this year. If you're sticking with a traditional fir or pine, be sure to choose one with sturdy needles and an even green colouring. Or for a hassle-free alternative, opt for an artificial design. Modern faux trees have improved drastically over recent years, with realistic soft-touch needles, well-spread branches and even frosted or coloured tips.

**2** The first step to decorating any tree is to secure the fairy lights in place, so they can be interwoven amongst the branches as the first layer of your styling. Start at the base of the tree and work your way upwards, ensuring they are evenly spaced. Some faux trees now come pre-lit, with bulbs already dotted in place, to save on the annual untangling of regular fairy lights.



Homes and gardens writer and stylist Cassie Pryce specialises in interior trends and discovering new season shopping

**3** Next, hang any string decorations such as tinsel, beads or garlands, being careful not to cover too many of your lights. Push these back into the middle segments of the branches so they don't overwhelm the tree. This is also a good time to insert any decorative sprigs, such as feathers or berried twigs

**4** Your larger baubles should be hung next, and kept well-spaced from one another. Working in a large zig-zag shape from bottom to top can help create a visual flow of these decorations and ensure even coverage.

**5** Finally, smaller and more delicate ornaments should be the last adornments to your tree. These can be positioned near the tips of the branches so that they stand out from your base design. A tree topper is a beautiful and effective way to complete the look and this can be fixed in place using green wire if it's too heavy to stand upright. ■





# Environmental Inequality

*Women's struggles and ecological troubles are unfortunate partners in crime*



**T**HE GLOBAL IMPACT of climate change has a contagious effect on all existing world problems, and no country is exempt from its rage. Perhaps most notable though, are the misogynistic systems upheld by burgeoning damage to the planet. UN figures show that 80 per cent of people displaced by climate change around the globe are women.

Women are more likely to live in poverty, have less access to basic rights and are subjected to violence exacerbated in unpredictable times—all these factors are inflamed as climate change intensifies. In Malawi, the repercussions from climate change are expected to generate 1.5 million child brides. This pattern is by no means limited to developing countries. Research shows that in the wake of bush fires and droughts (occurring more frequently and getting more destructive), domestic abuse spikes—as has often been the case in Australia.

This disproportionate burden hasn't gone unnoticed and the 2015 Paris Agreement made specific provisions for empowering women in these

situations, however, women often struggle to find appropriate support in the immediate aftermath of extreme events—as was the case after Hurricane Katrina when emergency shelters didn't stock enough sanitary products.

The displacement of girls and women often means they're unable to continue with education, instead reverting back to stereotypical gender roles. These roles often lead to death as women are expected to travel further to collect water, or—as during flooding in Bangladesh—opt to stay in their huts rather than go to emergency refuge centres, where they would be in close quarters with men. These patriarchal standards don't limit their harm to just women, as male suicide rates increase alongside the loss of jobs, due to pressures to maintain “masculinity”.

Despite these setbacks, women are not helpless victims. Women play a critical role in conserving the planet. Female economists are more likely to invest in ecological matter and female voters are more likely to support environmental policies. We're going to need women for the task ahead. ■

by Jessica Lone Summers

# Expert Q&A: Ursula Miniszewski

*Director of Gender and Equity for Global Greengrants*

**How did you become an authority in conservation?** My father was a river conservationist and activist and as soon as I was old enough, I was going to community meetings and participating in marches. Now, I have seen first-hand how indigenous peoples, women, youth, people with disabilities, who have been excluded from decision making about their homes, their land, and denied basic human rights, are working to fight for their rights to land, sustainable livelihoods, and to a life unimpeded by government and private corporations.

**What are the biggest environmental challenges women currently face?** Unequal gender roles often relegate natural resource management to women, but deny them access to these same resources. Women have less access to land rights than men, are excluded from decision-making about the ecosystems they depend on for survival, and have less access to information. Yet simultaneously, women are designing, leading, and implementing projects that mitigate climate change and create low-carbon local economies and alternatives to livelihoods dependent on an unsustainable development.

**What does Greengrants do to help our planet?** Since 1993, Global Greengrants Fund has supported grassroots-led efforts to protect the planet and the rights of people. Our network of dedicated volunteer experts—who act as our eyes and ears on the ground—connect our resources to local expertise and solutions that promote environmental justice. As a result, we are able to work in some of the most remote corners of the world, with groups and individuals who lack access to money through other means.

**What changes need to happen to tackle misogyny and ecocide together?** Environmental injustice, racial injustice, gender injustice, and other forms of oppression are driven by the same capitalist, patriarchal systems that drive the globalised extractive, carbon-based development economy, which lies at the root of climate change and environmental damage. In order to change these destructive systems, we must recognise the intersections of social and environmental injustices and collaborate to address the root causes and structures in place. ■

Visit [greengrants.org](https://greengrants.org)



# Finding Joy During Christmas 2020

*Lisa Lennkh muses on the importance of finding a little Christmas cheer to hold on to*

**T**HIS YEAR WILL be a very different Christmas for all of us. This is a time when we are traditionally with family, friends, and colleagues, enjoying much-cherished time relaxing together. How do you do that while social distancing, not mixing households and limiting travel? What does one even wear for a very COVID-19 Christmas?

Since I will not be travelling anywhere and our family overseas are unlikely to be able to visit, I'm



Lisa Lennkh is a banker turned fashion writer, stylist and blogger. Her blog, *The Sequinist*, focuses on sparkle and statement style for midlife women





doing as much as I can to make our Christmas time at home as special as possible. I'm a candle lover, so this is the year where I will splurge and buy several really fabulous ones, so my house feels extra festive. I'll put the tree up early this year, to enjoy many more evenings having a warming drink in front of it. I'll make extra effort to go and see Christmas lights in places I might normally not bother. I'm not going to buy any new clothes, but I will definitely make the effort to wear a few of my sparkly jumpers, even if I'm just wearing them with loungewear trousers at home.

The only clothing purchase I've made this winter is a soft-as-cashmere merino wool jumper from new online brand **sheepinc.com**, which I highly recommend. Their sweaters come with a "for life" guarantee, meaning they will repair it as best they can if anything happens to it. Each jumper comes with its own sheep, which you can name and track online (my son loves this!). Five per cent of the revenue from each jumper is donated to biodiversity projects to offset the carbon impact of making each jumper, tenfold. It is somehow made without seams, and feels even softer than some of my old favourite sweaters. I find myself reaching for this warm hug of a jumper again and again to wear at home or for rare outings (I have the V neck in cloud blue). I enjoy it so much that I'm buying my husband one in a different colour for Christmas; it makes a luxurious, unusual, and sustainable gift.

For me, making time to get outside this time of year, no matter how early it gets dark or how cold it is, improves my mood. "Outdoorphins"—or that uplifting feeling of connecting with the natural world—help us process the unusual circumstances this holiday season. I try to make getting outside into an event and wear a gloriously stylish coat, like this sweeping tartan one, so that being out feels like a real occasion to look forward to. I've always loved my statement coat collection... now more than ever. If you don't have a coat that turns a walk outside into a stylish occasion, then now is the time to find one!

I wish you a wonderful holiday season. Make opportunities to dress up, celebrate the small things at home, and enjoy your health and loved ones. ■

# Sleep Silky

*Jenessa Williams lays her head among luxury in a bid for silky locks*

## What are they?

Within afro-textured hair communities, the silk bonnet is a haircare tip handed down through generations, but it seems that the wider beauty industry now want a slice of the action too, as silk hair ties, turbans, wraps and even pillowcases are selling by the bucketload.

## What are the supposed benefits?

Designed to create less static or friction, silk hair products work to reduce the impact of tossing and turning at night. Keeping hair in one place, they are said to minimise moisture loss and breakage, allowing hair cuticles to glide against each other rather than becoming entangled. You should notice a lack of "bed head" when you wake in the morning and, over time, may even find that you need to wash your hair less as it adapts to better oil retention.

There's also an aesthetic bonus, a brightly coloured silk scrunchie easily adds something extra to an outfit—perfect for low-key holiday celebrations. Silk pillowcases also feel like a particularly luxurious gift.



## Do they actually work?

In short, yes! As a means of additional protection, a silk sleep bonnet will do wonders to keep your hair looking nourished and smooth.

As a mixed-race woman with afro curls, I found that by following my normal weekly wash routine, applying an overnight oil every ten days and wearing my silk bonnet at night, my hair was noticeably less dry and tangled at the ends, with much less frizz or breakage at the roots. If Santa is listening, I'll take one in every colour. ■

**We are fearful of the present, uncertain of the future and longing for the past that used to be.**

Even in the Blitz of World War 2 people went about life as best they could. But, the country fell silent to Covid-19

**How did lockdown affect you?**

People lost their jobs and incomes, children's schooling was interrupted, weddings were postponed and even funerals could not occur in the usual manner.

Unable to bid farewell to a loved one was one of the saddest events in lockdown. Death lives long in the minds of those who are left behind.

We saw 'the good, the bad and the ugly' of human nature being played out during lockdown.

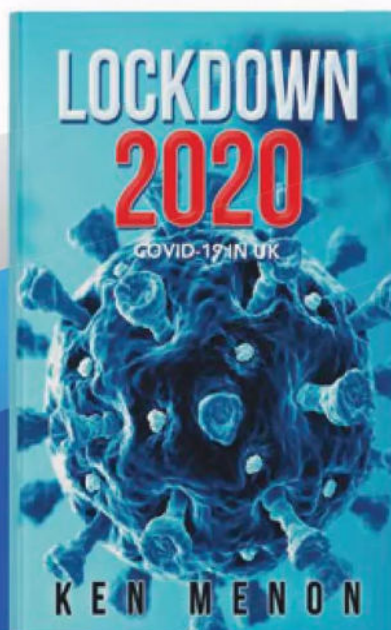
**Could things have been done differently? Would they have made a difference?**

Would you have chosen to be in the shoes of the Prime Minister in handling this crisis?

**LOCKDOWN 2020** touches the lives of most people. Read it and identify your life in the words of the author.

We have to accept the new normal and look after ourselves. We would then be able to return to a semblance of the quality life we had.

**Will Covid-19 be the last or could it happen again? The answer is in LOCKDOWN 2020**



The book is currently available to order from

[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)  
[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)  
[www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com)



★★★★☆

## ANOTHER ROUND

**Thomas Vinterberg returns with a besotting belter of a film about growing older and getting drunk**

**H**AVE YOU NOTICED you tend to need a glass of wine or two to get that extra oomph and become the life of the party? Well, you're not alone. In fact, you're in pretty decent company: four educated and charming middle-aged high-school teachers who, after hitting a bit of a slump in their personal and professional lives, decide to test out a peculiar theory. According to one Norwegian philosopher, humans are born with a blood alcohol concentration that's 0.05 per cent too low, and maintaining it at that level unlocks optimum productivity, verve and zest for life (a theory that actually exists, unsurprisingly). For "scientific"

reasons, the foursome undertake this experiment and for a while, it proves to be incredibly effective. The students start to take interest in their lessons, their marriages seem to flourish and life becomes a much more fun activity.

Yet us humans tend to share this unsavoury habit of abusing the things that bring us pleasure, which is of course what happens to our four merry friends. As their shot glasses get fuller, their grasp on everyday realities gets more and more unsteady. As deadly serious as it is ludicrously funny, the film is a complex musing not only on the entire spectrum of alcohol but also our perception of youth and growing into middle age. Featuring blazing performances, punchy dialogue and a stirring soundtrack, *Another Round* is bound to make you thirsty. Whatever you do, though, please watch responsibly.



# The Ghost Of Christmas (Film) Past

Delight in the past this holiday season and revisit the earliest Christmas films in recorded history, made over a 100 years ago...

BY Eva Mackevic



## *Santa Claus*

Directed by British film pioneer, George Albert Smith (who also happened to be a stage hypnotist, psychic *and* a magic lantern lecturer!), this short film is considered to be an enormous technical accomplishment, showcasing such editing techniques as double exposure, jump cuts and superimposition which were completely new at the time. In the film, two children are put to bed by their nanny, as Santa comes down the chimney and leaves presents for them. The children then wake up and discover the presents. Admittedly, it's not the most thrill-packed plot in the history of cinema, yet viewing the 120-plus-year-old footage will still send a chill down your spine.



## *The Christmas Dream*

A somewhat more sophisticated affair, *The Christmas Dream* was the brainchild of the French film visionary, Georges Méliès, famous for his surreal narratives, hand-painted colours and elaborate special effects. The plot is loosely similar to that of *Santa Claus* but includes more varied settings: we shift between a home where children hang up their stockings before bedtime, angels dropping gifts down chimneys, and a choir singing carols in an old church. We then go back to the home of the children who wake up to the joyous sight of their presents. It's a carefully designed, fantasy-like piece, and you can spot Méliès himself in the film twice: as a magician and as a beggar.



## *Scrooge, Or Marley's Ghost*

Perhaps the spookiest of the three, *Scrooge, Or Marley's Ghost* was the first known film adaptation of Charles Dickens's novella, *A Christmas Carol*. The film's director, Walter R Booth, makes heavy use of superimposition, resulting in chilling images like a ghost's face superimposed over Scrooge's door or eerie memories from his childhood superimposed over the black curtains of his bedroom window. No surprise, considering Booth was a magician before he became a film director! Though the film was originally six minutes long, only three minutes have survived and you can view them, as well as the two other films in their entirety, on YouTube.

**A**FTER AN UNSETTLED year, some continuity may be desirable. The big TV headlines of late 2020 have concerned the return of vulcanised satire *Spitting Image* to our screens. Too savage? Nowhere near harsh enough? To these eyes, it's been a welcome revival: toothier than most TV comedy—bolstered by A-list writers and voice artists—with outstanding puppetcraft to marvel at whenever the odd sketch falls flat. Ideally, it'd be striking fear into politicians from a primetime slot; as it is, you'll have to seek it out on the subscription service BritBox.

For its tenth run, the much-loved *Taskmaster* has itself switched channels—from Dave to C4—with no noticeable dip in entertainment value. It remains an unbeatable formula: comedians compete to provide ingenious solutions to varying fiendish assignments, overseen by a stern Greg Davies and sidekick Alex

Horne. This year's ever-inventive contestants include Johnny Vegas, Richard Herring and *This Country* breakout Daisy May Cooper: with time, they might even find a COVID vaccine between them.

Show of 2020? I'm plumping for Series 3 of *Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing* (BBC iPlayer), which continued to cast a spell on viewers, netting weekly half-hours of tranquillity mid-pandemic. Whoever thought of filming Bob Mortimer and Paul Whitehouse messing around by a river deserves the mother of all pay rises. Real magic occurred in the making of this show: in the most fractious of national moments, this series returns us to a becalmed, humane, agelessly beautiful Britain. In this small corner of the world, some hope still floats.

by Mike McCahill



## Retro Pick:

**Quiz** (ITV Player)

Drama of the year—and a national talking-point circa Lockdown 1—was this smart, engrossing revisit of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*'s "Coughing Major" scandal, skilfully pitched by writer James Graham and director Stephen Frears.



• MUSIC

## *Album of the Month:*

### **L.I.T.A.N.I.E.S**

by Nick Cave and Nicholas Lens

**D**URING THE VERY first weeks of lockdown, I was listening to a lot of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. The bleakness and the bottomless existential void that fills their oeuvre were somehow consoling amidst the pandemic, as we were all caught up in anxious, involuntary introspection. I couldn't help but wonder how a man such as Nick Cave, "the prince of darkness", "the deranged preacher", was processing these strange times: was he writing? Was he afraid?

Over half a year later, my questions were answered, as he collaborated with Belgian composer Nicholas Lens on an album of litanies, or "12 lyrical pieces that tracked the birth, blooming, fracturing and rebirth of a human being—petitions to a divine maker demanding some sort of cosmic acknowledgement"—which of course has "Cave" written all over it. The "litanies" are vaguely unnerving, hauntingly transfixing, at times grotesquely ornate, like a tragic, barbarous baroque opera.

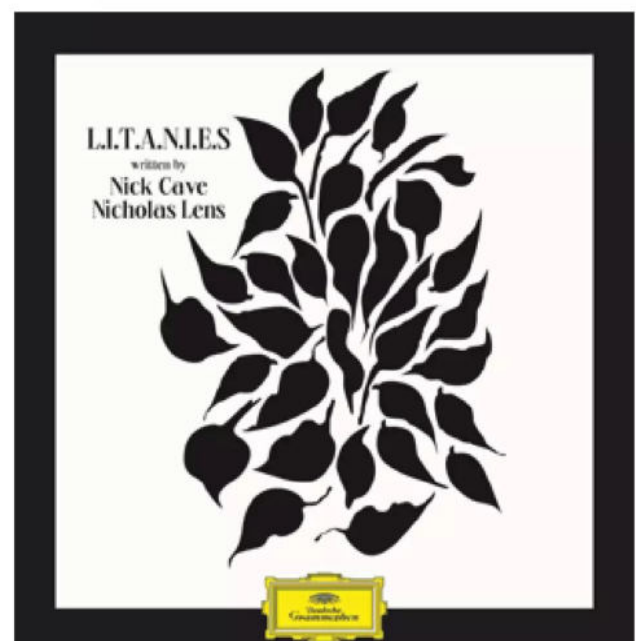
Filled with beautiful strings, stripped down melodies and imaginative arrangements that'll take you aback, the album will certainly pique the curiosity



of fans of minimalist, as well as modern classical music in the vein of Max Richter or Philip Glass. The spiritually charged themes are also a chilling portent for the impending COVID Christmas; for many, an atypically lonely time to contemplate the purpose of our existence and remind ourselves what really matters in this brief ride we call life.

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by Eva Mackevic



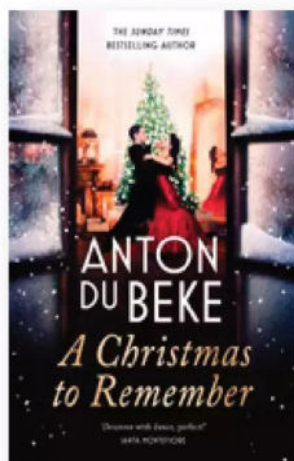
# December Fiction

*Quirky festive tales with plots that reflect the authors themselves take this month's top spot*

## *A Christmas to Remember*

by Anton du Beke (Zaffre, £18.99) This is the third of Anton du Beke's novels set in a luxury London hotel in the 1930s—with particular reference, as you might imagine, to its Grand Ballroom. The head dancer there is Raymond de Guise, who, like his creator, has a more glamorous name than he was born with. He's also good at dancing with the guests, however incompetent they may be. (And just in case that's not enough for *Strictly* fans, at one point the novel makes a sudden trip to Blackpool.)

But Raymond is only one of dozens of characters—most of them with secrets in their pasts—in an incident-packed novel that, as well as being a *Downton*-style historical saga, is a spy thriller, a



murder mystery, at least four romances and a handy guide to the history and practice of ballroom dancing.

Du Beke isn't an especially beautiful writer. The prose is sometimes creaky, the dialogue often stagey, and he has the habit of constantly reminding us of things we

already know. Yet in the end, the sweep, enthusiasm and sheer good-heartedness of all that storytelling are hard to resist.

## *A Christmas Resolution*

by Anne Perry (Headline, £16.99)

Anne Perry has an unusual backstory for a bestselling novelist. In 1954, when she was 15, called Juliet Hulme and living in New Zealand, she and a friend murdered the friend's mother: a crime dramatised in Peter Jackson's 1994 film *Heavenly Creatures*. After release from prison, she moved to Britain, where she changed her name and in 1979 began her writing career. She also became a Mormon. Only when Jackson's film was released did



James Walton is a book reviewer and broadcaster, and has written and presented 17 series of the BBC Radio 4 literary quiz *The Write Stuff*



the world discover that Hulme and Perry were the same person.

I mention all this because it's hard not to read *A Christmas Resolution*—on the face of it, a nicely

atmospheric Victorian mystery story of the kind that Perry produces every Christmas—as a distinctly personal meditation on the necessity of repentance. As the main character explains, to be forgiven you must first understand “what you did that was wrong, ugly, painful... and not who you want to be ever again”.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this double perspective makes for a somewhat peculiar book. On the one hand, the mystery itself is neatly done. On the other, the characters do spend an awful lot of time engaged in heartfelt moral and religious debates.

---

## *Name the author*

**Can you guess the writer from these clues (the fewer you need the better)?**

1. His wife's name was Nora.
2. His most famous book was named after a mythological hero.
3. There's a big family argument over Christmas dinner in his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Answer on p126

## Children's books for Christmas

***Trace the Trails: Follow That Truck*** by Georgie Taylor (Imagine That, £6.99. Ages: baby to toddler). A lorry drives through the city, with grooved trails for small fingers to follow and all manner of fun things to spot. Beautifully produced.

***Perdu*** by Richard Jones (Simon & Schuster, £6.99. Ages: 3-5). A Tale of a lost dog, where the words and illustrations are equally as touching. And don't worry, there is a happy ending.

***Squishy McFluff: On with the Show*** by Pip Jones (Faber, £6.99. Ages 5-9). Delightfully funny rhyming story of a girl and her invisible cat.

***High-Rise Mystery*** by Sharna Jackson (Knights Of, £6.99. Ages: 8-12). Terrific murder mystery—and proper whodunnit—where the sleuths are, of course, children.

***A Snowfall of Silver*** by Laura Woods (Scholastic, £7.99. Ages: 13+). Set in the 1930s, and a thoroughly warm and absorbing novel about an 18-year-old aspiring actress, complete with a story of first love.

READER'S DIGEST RECOMMENDED READ:

# Paternal Parable

*The tender-yet-tough moments of fatherhood and male vulnerability are visited in this thought-provoking read*

**S**IR MICHAEL PARKINSON'S father John William—Yorkshire coal miner, cricket and football fanatic and, it would seem, all-round good egg—died in 1976. Yet, more than 40 years later, the memory of his death was still raw enough to cause Parky to break down when asked about it on *Piers Morgan's Life Stories*. And it was this experience, he tells us, that made him want to write a book exploring why his dad had meant so much to him—and the subject of fathers and sons more generally.

In this, appropriately enough, he's had the help of his own son, Mike, who contributes a particularly powerful chapter on what it was like to be a miner when John William began in 1917 at the age of 14 (essentially very grim indeed). Back then, for example, there was almost



no safety training or equipment—which helps to explain why an average of nine miners a day were killed at work. Mike also gives us his childhood memories of Parky as a father, which, rather bravely on both their parts, portray him as a distant, often forbidding figure, more concerned with his career than with his children.

The whole book, in fact, is something of a jumble of different elements—including plenty of

great anecdotes from the long-lost world of Yorkshire pit villages, sharp pen-portraits of other family members (some of them female) and transcripts from the *Parkinson* show in which famous guests said revealing things about their own fathers. Happily, the overall result is a book that triumphantly achieves its aim of combining the specific with the universal.

But let's go back to where the project began, with that 2019 appearance on *Life Stories*...

“I've been a journalist all my working life and I feel I know every trick of the trade and therefore as an interviewee I'm confident I know how to avoid the inconvenient question. So, despite being advised by those close to me that the sole purpose of the show would be to delve into potentially painful areas of my life in an attempt to elicit the Holy Grail of a celebrity sob, I was fairly certain I could avoid that particular fate. Knowing he likes a challenge, I had even told Piers before the interview that there was no way he was going to make me cry.

The fact is, I've had a charmed life: a largely untroubled upbringing, a strong and enduring marriage, sons who still talk to me and a career that for the most part has been fulfilling and lucrative. The only really difficult times I have had were dealing with my father's death and the

overwhelming grief that threatened to derail me, plus my brief sojourn into the sad backwater of a drink problem. But I have openly talked and written about both, so I had no reason to suspect I would become another entry in Piers Morgan's Hall of Fame sponsored by Kleenex (other brands are available). How wrong I was. When he asked me about losing my father I didn't just cry, I sobbed. I was taken completely by surprise.

Piers didn't deal in generalities but asked me specifically to recall feelings that come to mind when I think about the day my father died and into my head sprang a terrible image that had lurked in the shadows for so long.

We had brought my father home to die and when he passed away, I couldn't cope with the organisation of the removal of the body. It meant that I was unprepared for the sight of my beloved dad being removed by two strangers in what amounted to a large zip-up plastic bag. It was this image that for some reason came into my mind when Piers asked the question. As is true of most men

*Like Father, Like Son: A Family Story* by Michael Parkinson with Mike Parkinson. Published by Hodder & Stoughton at £20



of my generation, crying does not come easily, and in my book crying in public is a definite no-no. But the tears came and when they did it was difficult to stop them.

I was overwhelmed by a whole jumble of emotions that came cascading from God-knows-what hiding place. There was grief certainly, and a sense of loss, but also regret and shame, mixed with a sense of wonder that such a man had been my dad. To rationalise, process and express all these feelings at that moment was impossible. I was paralysed. Pinned like a rare butterfly.

To his credit, Piers ensured the moment didn't become too uncomfortable by empathising and by asking me to try to explain why I still felt my father's loss so strongly. I simply answered that it was because he was a much better man than I was. ”

---

### *And the name of the author is...*

**James Joyce**—best known for *Ulysses*, usually considered one of the greatest novels of the 20th century, if not perhaps widely read. (Then again, it is quite hard.)



## Christmas in Yorkshire: more From *Like Father, Like Son*

“To me as a child Christmas was simply a matter of how many points Barnsley took from their three games. Christmas games were special. Everything was different. Behind the goal there were more cigars than Woodbines, the bottles of Scotch flickered twixt hip and lips with the lightning speed of a hummingbird's wings and the crowd rustled in its new clothes. The players were affected too; they even looked different. As a boy I imagined the change was due to the fact that they, like us, were sprinkled with Christmas stardust.

Later, as the layers of naivety slipped from me, I came to know they were simply hungover.

I first came face to face with the truth during a game when a Barnsley full-back appeared quite unable to decide which side he was on or what he was supposed to be doing. The truth dawned as he ran to take a free kick, missed the ball completely and fell flat on his back.”





# Books

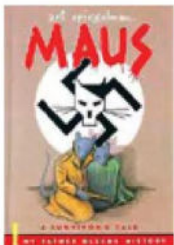
THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Thomas Harding is the award-winning author of *Hanns and Rudolf* and *The House by the Lake*. His books have been translated into more than 16 languages



## *The Long Walk To Freedom* by Nelson Mandela

This book had a profound effect on me. I was in my early twenties and appalled by the Apartheid regime. What I read went much further than a story of politics, injustice and activism. The book spoke of a man of grace and wit who had the courage to call out injustice despite the costs to himself, his friends and family. It captured the arc of Mandela's life, revealing how his emotions and analysis adjusted as the events around him changed. From this I learned that if I was fortunate to live a long life, I might have the opportunity for different episodes, different experiences. I didn't have to do everything at once. As a young man this was a relief. It gave me the freedom to experiment, fail, and move on.



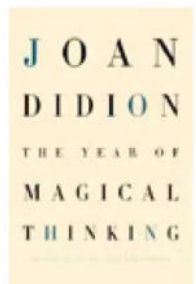
## *Maus I and Maus II* by Art Spiegelman

The Holocaust told through a family of mice, in graphic form, was totally wrong. And yet totally right. The book

deals with the impact of genocide and trauma across the generations and surfaces some of the long-term painful psychological consequences. It is heartfelt, searing and sometimes downright hilarious. As someone whose family is still coming to grips with the horrors of Nazi Germany, this spoke to me deeply. The author also opened my eyes to different forms of non-fiction. Up till then I had only encountered history told through traditional history books.

## *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion

When we lost our 14-year-old son, Kadian, I was desperate for wisdom, a roadmap, on how to cope. I tried various grief books and found them unhelpful. The idea that everyone grieves the same way seemed unlikely to me. Then I read *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion. From this I was given the gift that not only do we grieve differently, but that sometimes madness is part of the journey. Certainly, I felt totally mad at times. Didion takes a curious, even forensic, approach to the death of her husband. This gave me permission to do the same, which led to me writing the *Kadian Journal* which enabled me to spend much-appreciated time with my son and share him with those who had never met him.



# What's The Deal With TikTok?

*James O'Malley on the mystic appeal of the hit social media platform*



**A**S SOMEONE WHO writes about technology professionally, I pride myself on understanding the latest innovations and trends. “I’ll never be old and out of touch!”, I’d tell myself, looking at my increasingly balding reflection in the mirror. And then TikTok happened.

TikTok is a video-sharing app that has taken the world by storm, and for anyone over the age of 20 it is, at first, an utterly baffling experience. The app is basically an endless feed of short videos. And I mean really short—usually less than 30 seconds. You’ll see dancing, kids pulling pranks, and dangerous stunts playing on a loop. You can scroll through them by simply swiping up to go to the next one.

After you’ve watched a few, you’ll find it is strangely mesmerising. Yes,

there are baffling in-jokes and teenagers behaving obnoxiously, but it is also a source of immense creativity. Who would have thought you could fit everything from recipe tutorials to incisive political satire into less time than it would take for the opening credits to roll on a traditional TV show?

Unsurprisingly then, TikTok is now enormously popular. According to one estimate, the app has 3.7m users in the UK alone, and those users spend an average of 41 minutes per day browsing. It has also proved hugely controversial.

So why has TikTok appeared out of nowhere? The success is partially thanks to the genius of its algorithm. Essentially, what developers ByteDance realised is that there’s a difference between what we say we want to watch, and what we actually want to watch.

Other social apps, like Facebook

and Twitter, have us choose what we want to see: we add friends or follow specific accounts, and as a result, the feed we are shown is populated by these: we see our friends' boring holiday photos or the latest political news from the BBC News Twitter account. The stuff that we claim we care about.

TikTok takes a different approach: it learns based on your actual behaviour on the app. If you quickly swipe away from someone dancing to an annoying pop song, it'll learn to show you less dancing videos. If you watch a cooking video all the way to the end, it'll show you more cooking videos when you swipe next. Over time, the app will learn more and more about what you like to watch, so eventually TikTok will feel entirely personalised to you. Crucially, it isn't restricted to choosing from showing you things that your friends have posted, or posts that you claim to be interested in: it's got every TikTok in the world to choose from, so it can easily surface the very best, most interesting videos. It will figure out your guilty pleasures, and then give you more of them. And this, unsurprisingly, makes it all the more addictive, so you'll come back more often and spend even more time on the app.

However, TikTok has not been without controversy. Over the last year politicians and activists have argued that the app should be more

heavily regulated or even banned. Why? Because ByteDance, the company behind it, is based in China. And just as there were political concerns over letting Chinese company Huawei build our 5G mobile phone network, there are also concerns over a Chinese company being such a major social media player.

There's no evidence that TikTok has done anything wrong, but the worry is that the undemocratic Chinese government could conceivably order TikTok to collect data on western users, or that it could use the app to influence western public opinion, similar to how Russia famously weaponised Facebook for this purpose in America's 2016 election.

As a result of the controversy, TikTok has gone to great lengths to reassure western politicians. In the US, it has even partnered with veteran US tech firm Oracle, which usually makes accounting software, to attempt to show politicians, regulators and the public that it is taking these concerns seriously. But as long as the app ultimately remains owned and governed by a Chinese firm, these concerns are likely to persist.

So perhaps we should enjoy the immense creativity and joy on TikTok while we can—because if the political concerns persist, then it could soon be time up. ■

# You Couldn't Make It Up

*Win £30 for your true, funny stories!*

Go to [readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us](https://readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us)  
or [facebook.com/readersdigestuk](https://facebook.com/readersdigestuk)

**Our 80-year-old friend was wondering** what the symbol of two adult figures meant on his new smart phone. We told him that it was a reminder to stand up to keep moving, which he did immediately, catching the table and sending a hot cup of coffee into our friend's lap, who naturally also leaped up. Good job he didn't find the symbol for four!

KEITH LODGE, *Hull*

**Suffering from an unsightly scaly rash**, my friend Denise made an appointment with a dermatologist who happened to be very attractive. After a full examination, the doctor cocked his head and asked, "Denise, did you get your hair done?"

"Why, yes. Thank you for noticing," said Denise, flattered.

"I thought so," the doctor replied. "Because your scalp looks very red and irritated." JANE WHITAKER, *Kent*

**A male colleague told us at work** that it was his wife's birthday.

"What are you getting for her?" enquired another colleague.

"Make me an offer!" he responded.

ANNA HAMMETT, *Cheshire*

**At my preliminary visit for my first teaching practice**, I was in an English class where the students were busy reading parts in a play. After finishing my discussion with the teacher, I got up and turned round to leave the room. As I opened the door and closed it behind me the class burst out laughing—I was in a dark cupboard, which did not have a door handle on the inside.

When the teacher let me out, he said, "Everyone makes that mistake" and showed me out, through an identical door immediately alongside the cupboard door.

VICTOR FLUTE, *Norwich*

**At my best friend Natasha's 50th birthday party**, her son, who was ten at the time, asked his dad why he had married later in life. He replied



**Secret Santa**

that he was waiting to find someone very special.

Natasha looked very happy, until her son asked, “And did you find her, Dad?”

JILL COHEN, *Leeds*

**I received a birthday card from my son this year.** He'd written inside:

“I'm sorry about all those stupid things I did when I was a kid.” And then, “Just be grateful you only know about half of them!”

SHANIE LLOYD, *Denbighshire*

**I was out with my 11-year-old grandson** for a picnic in the park and it was a lovely day. I looked up at the sky and asked my grandson, “Do you

know what clouds are made up of?” Without looking up from his phone, he retorted, “Sure, Nana, music files!”

DAISY TRUBY, *Hertfordshire*

**On a packed train on a day out**

with my mother and my son, Jacob, he asked the question, “Grandma, are you a prostitute?”

She looked horrified as all eyes turned her way. “What do you mean?” she asked quietly.

“You know” he said, “You're either a Catholic or a Prostitute.”

JEENA SUMNER, *London*

**My brother was stopped** for going 20 miles over the speed limit and moaned to the police man.

“Do you *have* to give me a ticket? Don't you give out warnings?”

The cop looked him straight in the face and replied sternly, “We do! They're posted along the motorway.”

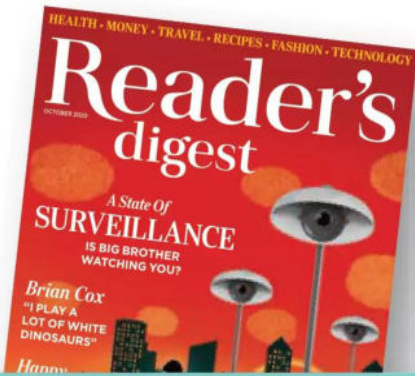
MADDIE DRURY, *Manchester*

**The waitress was not moving much** from the other side of the café, so I waved at her to get attention. When she turned her head towards us, I gave what I believed was the universally accepted hand sign to signal that we wanted the bill—holding out one hand and using the other to simulate writing on it.

A few minutes later she came to our table, smiled and gave us... a blank notepad and a pen!

OLIVER DUVAL, *London*

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*The goose chase for the perfect gift, the crush of crowds, the overbearing family—the holidays can drive us to extremes. Do any of these words match how you sometimes feel?*

BY GEORGE MURRAY

**1. compunction—**

A: inability to concentrate.  
B: guilt.  
C: low energy.

**2. boggled—**

A: loss of sex drive.  
B: distrustful.  
C: bewildered.

**3. roisterous—**

A: noisy in a high-spirited way.  
B: sweaty and dishevelled.  
C: erratic.

**4. jaundiced—**

A: ill-tempered.  
B: cynical.  
C: paranoid.

**5. solicitous—**

A: combative.  
B: strong feelings of distaste.  
C: concerned.

**6. harried—**

A: vindictive.  
B: stressed from too little time.  
C: displaying reluctance.

**7. enervated—**

A: frenzied.  
B: drained of energy.  
C: spiteful.

**8. gluttoned—**

A: filled to excess.  
B: boastful.  
C: apathetic.

**9. uxorious—**

A: emotionally unstable.  
B: believing all is for naught.  
C: doting on wife.

**10. bellicose—**

A: combative.  
B: exhausted.  
C: depressed.

**11. treacly—**

A: overly sentimental.  
B: emotionless.  
C: regarding something as worthless.

**12. mercurial—**

A: imprudent.  
B: volatile.  
C: fearful.

**13. daunted—**

A: worn in appearance.  
B: state of being deluded.  
C: intimidated.

**14. agape—**

A: strong dislike of yourself.  
B: state of wonder.  
C: undergoing drastic change.

**15. implacable—**

A: sleepy.  
B: dismayed.  
C: impossible to appease.

**1. compunction**—[B] guilt. Feeling *compunction* about his snarky comment at dinner, Chan apologised to his sister after the meal.

**2. boggled**—[C] bewildered. Alfonso promised his grandson Pokémon cards but was so *boggled* by the variety of packs that he asked the salesperson for help.

**3. roisterous**—[A] noisy in a high-spirited way. Our office parties always end on a *roisterous* note, as Fyodor leads us in a singalong.

**4. jaundiced**—[B] cynical. Kiri's *jaundiced* view of the holidays was cured when she had her own kids.

**5. solicitous**—[C] concerned. Sadie's *solicitous* mum would always pack a banana cake in her luggage when she returned to university.

**6. harried**—[B] stressed from too little time. Despite being *harried* by the long queue, the cashier handed the little girl a free book of stickers.

**7. enervated**—[B] drained of energy. When the last guest left, Dani flopped, contented but *enervated*, into her chair.

**8. gluttoned**—[A] filled to excess. Uncle Benjamin pushed back from the table and loosened his belt, revealing his *gluttoned* stomach.

**9. uxorious**—[C] doting on wife. The Caribbean cruise that John gave Astrid was seen as yet another of his *uxorious* acts.

**10. bellicose**—[A] combative. The stressed parents became *bellicose* when neither wanted to let go of the toy—the last one on the shelf.

**11. treacly**—[A] overly sentimental. Manuela could never avoid getting all *treacly* when sending out holiday cards to friends and family.

**12. mercurial**—[B] volatile. Since it was his first Christmas with her family, Ebba warned her fiancé about her dad's *mercurial* moods.

**13. daunted**—[C] intimidated. Millie adored seeing her family but felt *daunted* by the amount of dinner planning still left to be done.

**14. agape**—[B] state of wonder. Talya was *agape* when she saw on TV, 80,000 people in St. Peter's Square for Christmas mass.

**15. implacable**—[C] impossible to appease. One year after dropping gravy on my brother-in-law's suede shoes, his *implacable* hostility toward me has started to thaw.

## WORD OF THE DAY\*

**PACHYNSIS**

Thickening

**Alternative suggestions:**

"What you say to your sister when she's being annoying"

## VOCABULARY RATINGS

**7-10:** fair**11-12:** good**13-15:** excellent



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SC008421

# Brainteasers

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles,  
then check your answers on p139

## Pic-A-Pix: Knight

Reveal a hidden picture by shading in groups of horizontally or vertically adjacent cells. The numbers represent how many cells are in each of the corresponding row or column's groups (for example, a "3" next to a row represents three horizontally adjacent shaded cells in that row). There must be at least one empty cell between each group. The numbers read in the same horizontal or vertical order as the groups they represent. There's only one possible picture; can you shade it in?

				2								
				3	6		1	2				
			2	5	8	1	2	8	5	4	2	6
	1	1										
		3										
		6										
2	2	2										
	5	2										
	7	1										
4	3	1										
2	3	1										
	4	1										
	5	1										



## Matching Is So Last Year

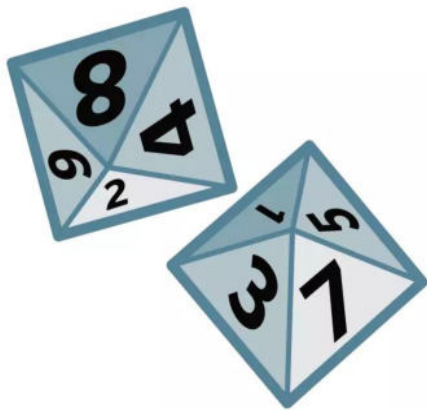
A man has five pairs of trousers (black, blue, brown, green and grey), five shirts (blue, green, red, white and yellow) and five hats (black, brown, red, white and yellow). How many different outfits of a hat, shirt and pair of trousers can he assemble if an outfit cannot contain two garments of the same colour (you may assume that if they have the same colour name, they're the same colour)?

### Fickle Friends

Nisha’s friends want to buy her a gift. Originally, ten friends were going to chip in equally, but then two of them dropped out. Each of the remaining eight friends had to chip in another £10 to bring the total back up to the original amount. How much money did they plan to collect?

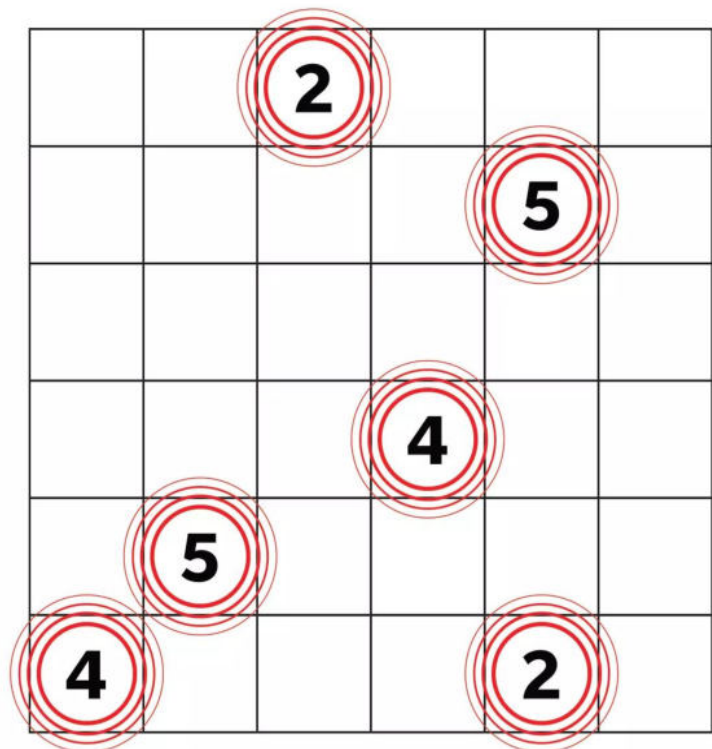


(FICKLE FRIENDS) EMILY GOODMAN; (DOUBLES OR NOTHING) DARREN RIGBY; (SUB HUNT) RODERICK KIMBALL, ENIGAMI.FUN



### Doubles Or Nothing

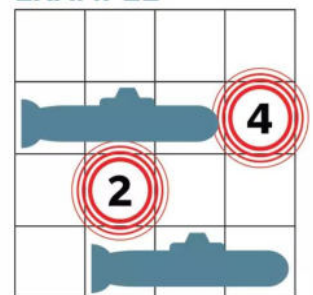
A gambler proposes a game: pay £10 and roll two evenly weighted eight-sided dice with the sides labelled 1 through 8. If you get doubles (two numbers the same), you win £60. The gambler will allow you to set aside one die with any number showing and just roll the other one to get doubles—if you pay £5 more. If you play, should you set aside the die? Should you play at all?



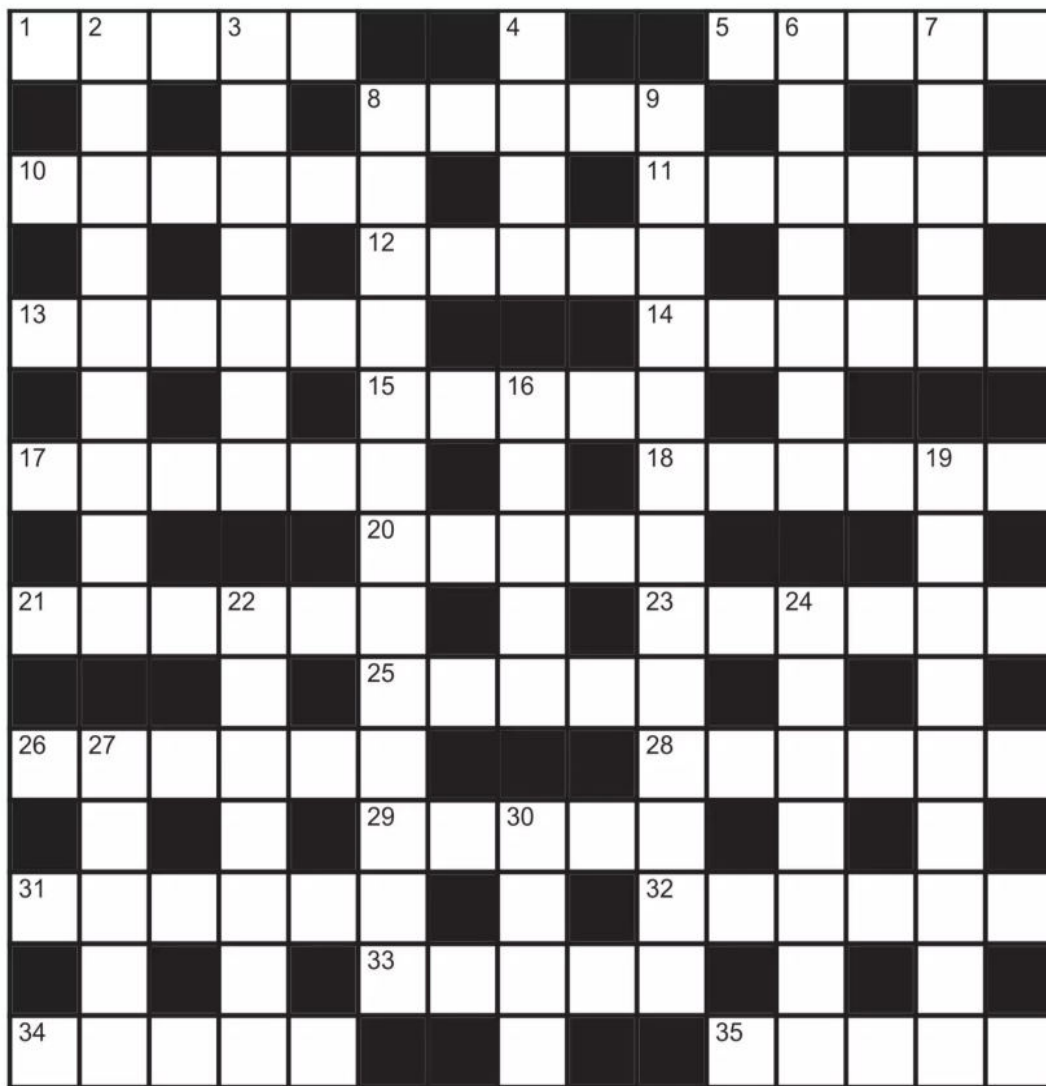
### Sub Hunt

Four submarines must be located. The grid above is a sonar display. The numbers represent sonar sensors telling the total number of sea squares at any distance directly north, south, east and/or west from the sensor that are occupied by submarines. The subs are each three sea squares-long. Can you find all four sneaky submarines?

#### EXAMPLE



BRAINTEASERS



CROSSWISE

Test your general knowledge. Answers on p142

ACROSS

- 1 Frequently (5)
- 5 Divest (5)
- 8 Sag (5)
- 10 Spanish fleet (6)
- 11 Israeli currency (6)
- 12 Bring together (5)
- 13 Dwelling (6)
- 14 Kine (Arch.) (6)
- 15 Moor (5)
- 17 Contaminate (6)
- 18 Resist (6)
- 20 Minor actor in crowd scenes (5)
- 21 Sliding compartment of furniture (6)
- 23 Capital of the Bahamas (6)
- 25 World's largest democracy (5)
- 26 Regular customer (6)
- 28 Departs (6)
- 29 Rotten (5)
- 31 Capital of the Philippines (6)

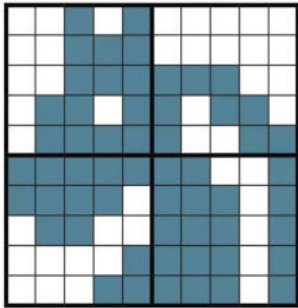
- 32 Scandinavian kingdom (6)
- 33 In what place (5)
- 34 Tale (5)
- 35 Small salamanders (5)

DOWN

- 2 Alien (9)
- 3 Scrutinise (7)
- 4 Central Chinese desert (4)
- 6 Crown (7)
- 7 Standard of perfection (5)
- 8 Wife of your son (8-2-3)
- 9 What shrinks do (13)
- 16 Behaved (5)
- 19 Declaration (9)
- 22 Soldier (7)
- 24 Type of twin (7)
- 27 Behind (5)
- 30 Drug addict (4)

## BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

### Pic-A-Pix: Knight



### Matching Is So Last Year

90.

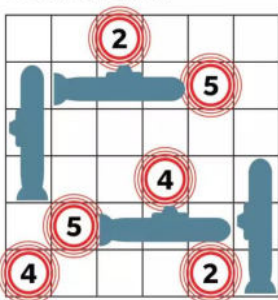
### Fickle Friends

£400.

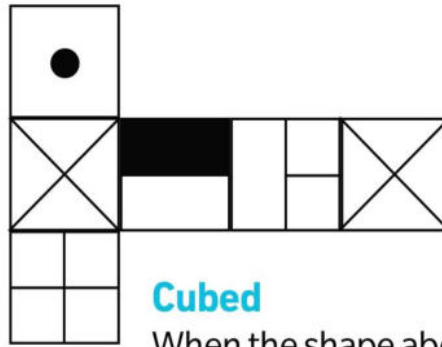
### Doubles Or Nothing

Your odds of winning are  $1/8$  whether you pay to set aside a die or not, so you should not waste the extra £5 to do so. If you win, you get back only six times your bet. With  $1/8$  odds, you'd need the prize to be at least eight times your bet in order for this game to be worth playing in the long run.

### Sub Hunt

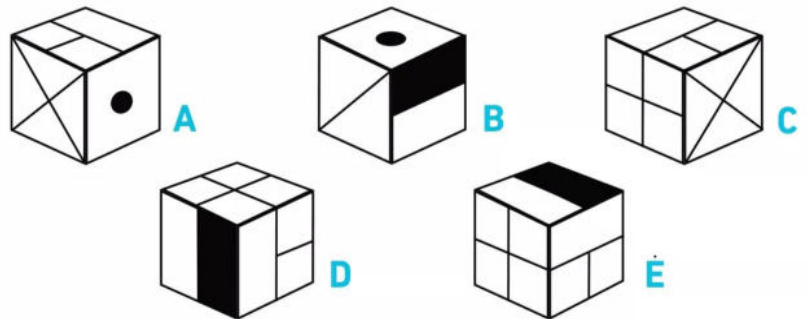


## £50 PRIZE QUESTION



### Cubed

When the shape above is folded to form a cube, which is the only one of the following that cannot be produced?



## THE FIRST CORRECT ANSWER WE PICK WINS £50!\*

Email [excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk)

### ANSWER TO NOVEMBER'S PRIZE QUESTION

**B.** Each line has a green, a black and a white outer circle; a green, a black and a white middle circle; and a small black and a small white inner circle (with one shape having no inner circle). The missing shape must therefore have a green outer circle, a green middle circle (since no other middle circles are showing in the third row it follows that the first must be black and the second white) and no inner circle, hence B.

## AND THE £50 GOES TO...

**WILLIAM CHEUNG**, *Middlesex*

# Laugh!

**WIN £30**  
for every reader's joke we publish!

Go to [readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us](https://readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us)  
or [facebook.com/readersdigestuk](https://facebook.com/readersdigestuk)

**I asked my friend if I could join his online** Scrabble tournament. He wasn't sure, but said that he would put in a good word for me.

KEITH LODGE, *Hull*

**What is the best Christmas present in the world?**

A broken drum. You just can't beat it!

*Seen inside a Christmas cracker*

**My grandfather said, "You wouldn't be so hard on old Gramps if you had to walk a mile in my shoes."**

But then I walked a mile in his velcro orthopedic shoes and they were comfy as hell.

*Seen on Reddit*

**I'm really self-conscious about the holes** in my underwear. It's my own fault though. I shouldn't have bought edible underwear. And I shouldn't have bought them from a Wisconsin cheese shop. And I shouldn't have picked Swiss.

*Comedian JOE CHRISTIANSON*

**It's OK if you fall apart sometimes.**

Tacos fall apart, and we still love them.

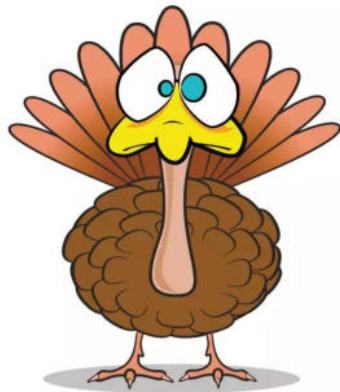
*Seen on Facebook*

**My comedy box sets go on top of the wardrobe,** but I pile my old music magazines under my bed.

I keep my *Friends* close, but my *NMEs* closer. *Comedian SANJEEV KOHLI*

Why did the Christmas turkey cross the road?  
Because he **WASN'T CHICKEN!**

*Seen online*



**Which author steals train sets from underneath the Christmas tree?**

Nick Hornby.

*Comedian MILTON JONES*

**Nightmare. The train announcer** just said to change for Rugby, but I haven't brought my kit.

*Comedian GLENNY RODGE*

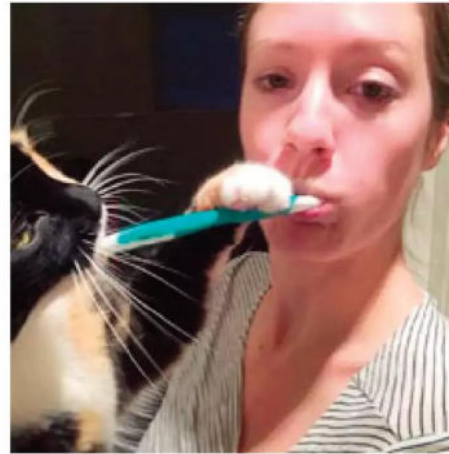
**My grandmother passed away at** Christmas time, so every year the holiday is tinged with a little sadness. I'm plagued with the thought of, you know, *What would she have given me? What didn't I get to open this year?*

*Comedian LAURA KIGHTLINGER*

**Downing Street has ruled that they** can no longer have a nativity scene on display at Number Ten.

It's not for any religious reasons. They just couldn't find three wise men.

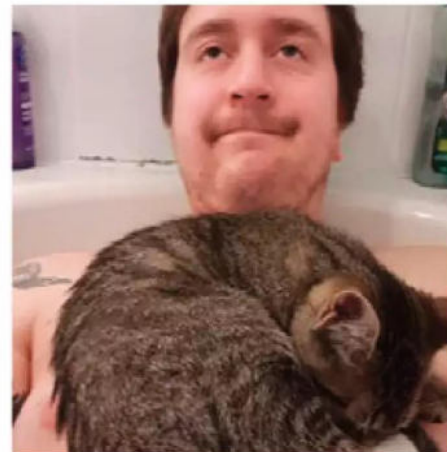
*Seen on Twitter*



### *What Boundaries?*

THESE ATTENTION-SEEKING  
KITTY CATS HAVE  
ABSOLUTELY NO SENSE OF  
PERSONAL SPACE

*via boredpanda.com*



**I heard a whisper that the wise men doubled up on one of their gifts. Well, I say a whisper. It was more of a myrrh-myrrh.**

*Comedian PAUL EGGLESTON*

**Regret is a useless emotion. I wish that I had known that a long time ago.**

*Comedian PAUL BASSETT DAVIES*

**A warning to the man who stole my owl costume: I'd be looking over my shoulder if I were you.**

*Comedian GARY DELANEY*

**I saw a sign in Sainsbury's that said "Be Good to Yourself", so I went to Marks and Spencer .**

*Comedian JOHNNY CANDON*

**Villain: "OK, we've now injected you with the truth serum."**

Tony the tiger: "They're fine."

*Seen on Twitter*

**In Ancient Rome, there were four types of poison.** Poisons I, II, and III would all kill you with varying degrees of pain. However, Poison IV would just make you really itchy.

*Seen on Reddit*

**For my next trick I will disappear.**

"Yuck, this is a terrible pear."

*Seen on Reddit*

## Film Review Fails



**Twitter users construct the worst ways to describe some of our favourite films**

@JusticeForDack: *The Hunger Games* - Girl ruins her sister's chance to be on television

@SquirrelThePam: *Lord of the Rings* - A group spends nine hours returning jewellery

@MrHoratioSanz: *Star Wars* - Daddy issues in space

@JSWilliams1962: *The Wizard of Oz* - Women try to kill each other over a pair of shoes

@ZachMyles: *The Breakfast Club* - They do not eat breakfast.

@SethPanattoni11: *Indiana Jones* - The Nazis threaten world domination, so the US sends ONE MAN WITH A WHIP

## CROSSWORD ANSWERS

**Across:** 1 Often, 5 Strip, 8 Droop, 10 Armada, 11 Shekel, 12 Unify, 13 Living, 14 Cattle, 15 Heath, 17 Infect, 18 Oppose, 20 Extra, 21 Drawer, 23 Nassau, 25 India, 26 Patron, 28 Leaves, 29 Lousy, 31 Manila, 32 Sweden, 33 Where, 34 Story, 35 Newts

**Down:** 2 Foreigner, 3 Examine, 4 Gobi, 6 Treetop, 7 Ideal, 8 Daughter-in-law, 9 Psychoanalyse, 16 Acted, 19 Statement, 22 Warrior, 24 Siamese, 27 Aft, 30 User





# 60 Second Stand-Up

We talked to  
the legendary comedian  
**Omid Djalili**

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO ABOUT GOING BACK ON TOUR?

Being in front of an audience in a theatre again. It's one of those things that I completely took for granted. But now, as a conscious adult during the pandemic, I'm more aware of what a fantastic job this is and how precious it is to have people in a room who have paid to hear you speak, and make them laugh.

**DO YOU HAVE A FUNNY TALE ABOUT BEING A COMEDIAN DURING COVID-19?** Everything now is so

unusual and socially distanced, I did one gig recently where everyone was wearing visors, I didn't know whether I was at a comedy gig or a soldering conference.

## WHAT INSPIRES YOUR COMEDY?

Around 1996 I saw Harry Hill and remember blowing a laughter fuse in my throat—I saw the power in comedy because everyone felt so uplifted. It totally inspired me. And now, when I hear mature women during my sets who have lost it and are crying of laughter, it's the most infectious laugh and has a very powerful effect—that's when I think this is such a worthwhile job.

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ONE-LINER?

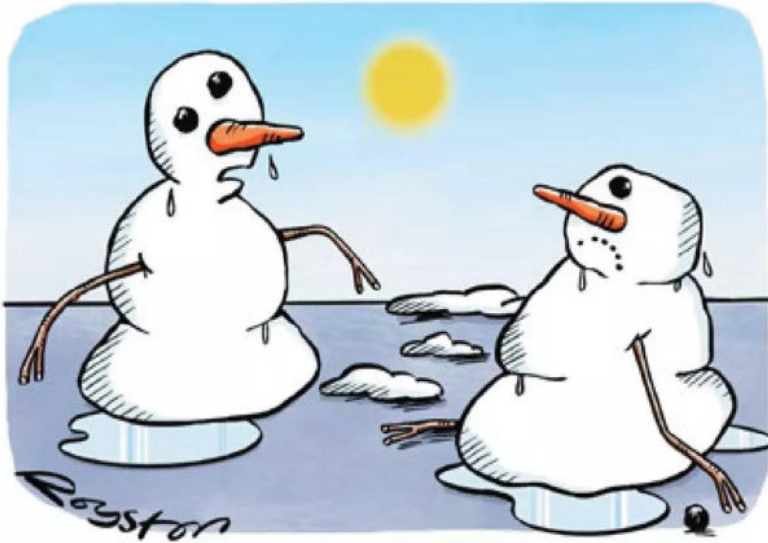
"I hate to offend, it's just a gift." I said that once as the end of a show because three people had left and it got such a huge laugh.

## WHAT SUPERPOWER WOULD YOU HAVE?

I'm lactose intolerant and it would be great if I could shoot a web from my nostrils. I get a lot of sinus problems so whenever I had a blocked nose I'd love to be able to use that for good and to catch criminals. It's horrendous, it's heroic and it would clear my sinuses at the same time. ■

See *Omid Djalili: The Good Times Tour* from March 2021. For tickets and information visit [omidnoagenda.com](http://omidnoagenda.com)

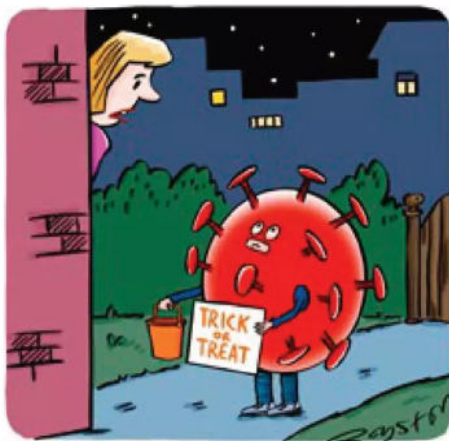
# Beat the Cartoonist!



Think of a witty caption for this cartoon—the three best suggestions, along with the cartoonist’s original, will be posted on our website in mid-December. If your entry gets the most votes, you’ll win **£50**.

Submit to [captions@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:captions@readersdigest.co.uk) by December 7. We’ll announce the winner in our January issue.

## OCTOBER’S WINNER



Just when our cartoonist was getting used to pole position, one of our readers has snatched his crown away. His caption **“You know, you’re the 17th coronavirus I’ve seen”** was no match for Carvell, who won your votes with their caption, **“Pay up or you’ll go viral”**. Better luck next month, cartoonist!

## IN THE JANUARY ISSUE



### Michael Parkinson **I REMEMBER...**

The iconic interviewer looks back on a career of rubbing shoulders with greats

### MONEY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Can our mental health issues make our financial situation worse? Katie Conibear looks into the connection between mental illness and overspending



+

### Gary Numan

The legendary musician on his prolific career and new music



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