

# The Root and Branch

Wholesome living in the northeast of Scotland



30 pages of articles and services including:

## CLEAN SLATE

Banishing clutter to achieve serenity

## CLEANSING YOUR SPIRIT

Finding solace in the outdoors

## BALANCE

What does it mean to lead a balanced life?

## MEDITATION

Exploring different techniques

## EATING FOR ONE

How to eat well if you're single

**Celebrating  
our first issue!**

Sept/Oct  
**2020**

# Welcome to The Root and Branch

Wholesome living in the northeast of Scotland



**Managing Editor:**  
Anita Bell



**Content Editor:**  
Rachel Beckett



**Social Media:**  
Beth Winbow

Editors **Anita Bell** and **Rachel Beckett** introduce their new magazine and share their vision.

We are excited to share our very first issue of *The Root and Branch* with you and your family. Our mission is to provide you with a wealth of information on how to improve your health, wellbeing and confidence. Based in northeast Scotland, we also have a vision of increasing wellbeing further afield in Scotland and across the UK.

In these challenging times, we want to reassure you that it's still possible to live well. We have articles on relaxation, healthy diet, meditation and yoga, mental health and other ways to enhance wellbeing for you and your family – for example decluttering to free your mind, or foraging to have fun while finding healthy food resources.

As life gets back to something like normal, we're already planning our next issue, where you'll find healthy living blogs, info on natural handmade products, briefings on pet wellness and much more.

We hope you'll enjoy everything we have in store for you in this first issue of *The Root and Branch*. We want to reach out with **a massive thank you to all our wonderful contributors**. Happy reading!

If you have  
any thoughts  
or suggestions  
please get in  
touch via our  
social media.



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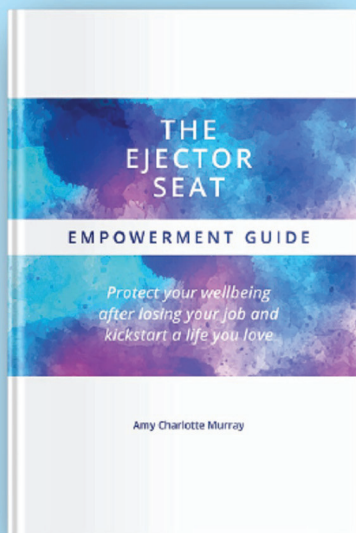
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# Life after COVID

During 2020 our lives have been interrupted in a way never experienced in generations.

Can we learn from this to create a more life-affirming and enjoyable way of living?

Since coronavirus struck, we have had to think a lot more about each other's wellbeing. At *The Root and Branch* we love this new sense of kindness, caring and togetherness, even in separation. So much has changed, and we have thought about which of the new habits we'd like to keep.

For a start there has been much less car travel. Could we do more of the home schooling, home working and home entertainment? Less car travel means less traffic and tranquil evenings. Quieter roads mean safer walks. What about 'green lanes' like they have in the Channel islands, places where it's safe to stroll and for children to dawdle and learn about flowers and insects?

Swapping a featureless office for homeworking could mean saving time, avoiding stress and enjoying our home and garden more, with just occasional in-person meetings to catch up with

colleagues. It would be lovely to see the sense of community continue to be nurtured – perhaps every village with its own little shop.

Back in the quiet spring of 2020, we also loved hearing the birds sing. We hope that when COVID-19 is over the 'new normal' will include listening to the birds, stopping to smell the flowers, and caring for nature very much better than we did before.



# Latte, but not as we knew it

Could it be that things are getting back to normal? **Rachel Beckett** reflects on the great reawakening.

A year ago, we couldn't imagine a time when it would be strange to be allowed to go to pubs, cafes and restaurants – or to go for a haircut. Yet now that lockdown restrictions have been eased, we are getting used to all this again, taking our cautious first steps into the social spaces.

It has indeed been a joy seeing small businesses awaking from their slumbers and stretching, like the Sleeping Beauty from her 100-year sleep. The economy seems to have survived its ordeal, at least in part. So are things back to normal?

It's certainly comforting to know that (for us lucky ones) there is life after COVID. When I had my first coffee-shop latte, socially distanced was fine, because I like quiet reflective time with my thoughts or a puzzle. A day or two later, my elderly Dad and I ventured into a supermarket cafe, beautifully redecorated and reorganised, and enjoyed a peaceful meal.



However I feel less confident about 'distanced' fun with friends. We still can't go to a spa or go dancing. Friendly intimacy is still off the menu.

So can we make the best of this? For sure: by taking

a 'glass-half-full' approach! Let's support businesses by enjoying the new ambience they are creating: safe, peaceful, restorative. Soft colours, relaxing music, space to chill. Now *that* I can get used to.



# Balance

What does balance mean for you? Life and transformation coach **Tess Day** explores.

When thinking about my life I always took this to mean I needed to find that perfect balance between life and work. My weight and personal goals came into it as well. This heavy feeling of needing to pursue perfection continuously prodded my thoughts.

Over the years and many client experiences, plus loads of research, it has become apparent, delightfully so, that 'balance' has nothing to do with the scales being perfectly aligned. Our bodies are designed to achieve a specific pH level in our blood and keep us well, so nature takes care of that aspect of balance.

As a transformation coach, for me balance is about our brain, our thoughts, words, beliefs, fears and limitations that impact our life experience.

We move through a series of stages in our life. At the beginning of something it is natural to expect a more immersive approach – we eat, sleep and breathe the new situation, from babies to



Photo: La Miko / Pexels

business. As we transition, the momentum of our earlier effort allows us to step back slightly, so things flow and we see the fruits of our labours. Yet the fact is that things will not remain this way. There always comes a time, perhaps in a new area, where we are required to step it up a little.

We always dream about peace and balance. But would we be satisfied if every day was predictable, the same? Probably not. It's more helpful to ask how far away we are from our perceived ideal, and what

effort it would take for us to achieve it – designing our own definition of balance.

If you have challenges in this area, get in touch and I will send you some tips and advice. Just include the hashtag **#therootandbranch** with your message.

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# Clean slate

A decluttered home declutters your mind, giving you room to breathe, says **Debbie Junior**.

Do you feel overwhelmed by your clutter? We live in an era where we own lots of 'stuff'. Living with clutter can be extremely stressful and has the potential to affect our health, wellbeing and general happiness in life.

The need to declutter can sometimes be at a point in your life where you are dealing with difficult emotions such as going through a separation, children moving out, losing a family member, or simply feeling overwhelmed by life pressures. Tackling this can be an emotional process but will give you freedom from the past and allow you room to move forward. In fact it can have a domino effect leading to better living. When items have a specific organised place they are more readily available and this leads to healthier habits in your life.

People who declutter are motivated by the

sense of fulfilment they will experience as a result. Once you have regained your space, you will have a clearer mind and a home you are proud for people to see.

Clearing clutter enables you to feel calm and in control of your life, as you will be inspired by the new space that surrounds you. You will find yourself breezing through the morning, smiling, feeling

confident and ready to take on your day.

My biggest passion is helping people find freedom from their clutter. I truly believe that decluttering can lead to greater things than just having an organised home. It has the power to improve wellbeing and benefit so many aspects of people's lives, from relationships to simply having time to spend with family.

Debbie can help declutter.

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We all lead busy lives, juggling work, families and daily jobs which leaves little time for organisation. Once your possessions have been organised they become much more manageable, enabling you to keep on top of things.

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*Tessa Williams*



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hormone) are in the gut, its health is imperative. Simple carbohydrates such as refined sugars and lactose from dairy products cause blood sugar to peak and dip, making a person feel on edge. These should be avoided, along with processed foods, alcohol, sugar and caffeine.

Foods that help to reduce symptoms of anxiety include those rich in magnesium, such as leafy greens, legumes (such as peas or lentils) and nuts; these promote a feeling of calm. Foods rich in zinc such as red meat, shellfish, seeds

When you are feeling out of sync and anxious, boost your gut health to boost your mental health! (Always check with a medical professional before making any drastic changes to your diet).

<https://www.facebook.com/happilyhealthilyholistically>

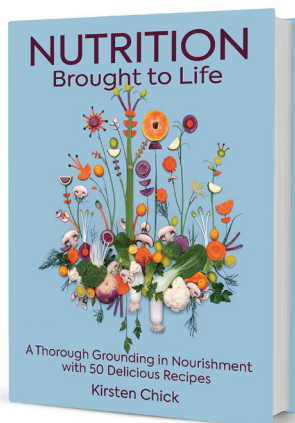


# Nutrition brought to life

**Kirsten Chick** introduces her practical guide to nutrition which provides encouragement, helpful insights and delicious recipes. There are chapters on improving digestion, hormone balance, the immune system and more.

It's been 17 years since I started working as a nutritional therapist and lecturer, and it was a challenge getting everything I wanted to say into a book. Judging from the reviews so far, I think I've achieved what I set out to. One of my favourite reviews described my book as 'a different kettle of fish'. I didn't want to write the same kind of nutrition book as everyone else. There were five things I did want the book to be – as explained below.

**Kind and non-judgemental.** I aim to help people develop a healthier, more enjoyable relationship with their food, rather than make healthy eating seem restrictive.



There's already too much self-judgement attached to eating.

**Meaningful.** I'd really like this book to actually inspire and help people – whether it's regarding their health, their relationship with food,

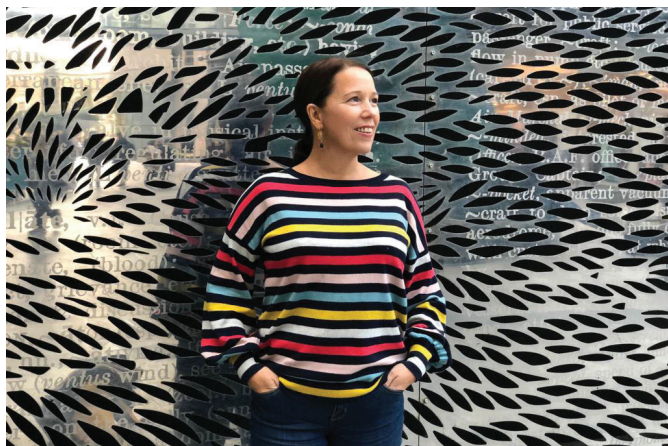
their cooking skills or other aspects of self-care.

**Engaging and accessible.**

There's no point writing a book that no one wants to read! The customer reviews confirm that I've succeeded in ensuring that they do.

**Grounded in science and experience.** I've spent years checking that everything I've written is as accurate and up-to-date as possible and aligned with what my experience shows actually works.

**Beautiful.** I love beautiful covers and designs; I think they are a key feature in people's experience of a book. The images throughout the book, the cover design, the subtle rainbow of tinted pages on tactile matt paper and the eye-friendly font are all designed to work with the words on the page to help you enjoy the book. And I really hope you do!



[www.connectwithnutrition.co.uk](http://www.connectwithnutrition.co.uk)

**Nutrition Brought to Life** is available from all good booksellers and also direct from the publisher at [alchimiapublishing.com](http://alchimiapublishing.com).

# Eating well for one

Many people will experience a time when they are on their own. In addition to potential loneliness, there is the challenge of eating well when you may not always feel like it.

Living alone can lead to loss of self-esteem and a self-neglectful approach to eating – beans on toast in front of the TV or half a warmed up ‘ready meal’.

It can be painfully apparent that most fresh foods are

packed to suit families of four – or couples. To make a rainbow salad you end up buying family packs of several different things.

At *The Root and Branch* we have come up with some ideas for lone eaters! Firstly, to overcome the problem of wasteful ‘family packs’, it’s good to shop somewhere offering loose fruit and veg – a market stall or independent greengrocer, as well as some large stores such as Waitrose. With COVID-19 still around, you may need clean gloves, but it’s legitimate to pick out one of each item you



want. For my rainbow salad I might go for one beetroot, one green apple, one yellow pepper and a beef tomato...

Leafy salad like rocket is the biggest challenge as it only tends to lasts a day. One solution is to grow your own in trays on a sunny windowsill, then harvest as needed. Or you can buy living salads – cress in a tub, parsley or basil in pots – or Cos lettuces with a good solid stem, where you can pull or cut off leaves in single portions, while the rest of the plant remains hydrated on its stalk.

What about protein?

Again, local small shops such as health food stores or butchers, as well as fresh food counters, will often sell exactly the quantity you want, and it can work out cheaper.

For vegetarians and vegans, a stock of dried lentils and pulses is useful. Beans need to be pre-soaked, but you can use just the amount you want. Or you can batch-cook and freeze some portions (labelled and dated). If you do this though, don’t eat the same thing three days running! Have a change and return to your frozen dish when you fancy it.

One-pot meals are great for quickness. A favourite of mine is risotto, and there are so many ways to be creative with it. When pre-frying the onions and rice, I often toss in some chopped red pepper, sundried tomatoes (pre-soaked), quartered button mushrooms or prawns.

If you’re short of ideas, there’s a classic cookbook by Delia Smith – *One is Fun* (Coronet Books, 1987). Or you could visit the BBC web page [www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/meals-one](http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/meals-one).

Be inspired by Mark, who said: ‘I enjoy cooking for myself. I make it the focus of my evening. It’s creative. I take my time, follow a recipe and enjoy the meal I’ve made.’ Happy eating!

# Late summer forage

This has been a year for simple pleasures, and none simpler or more pleasurable than wild berries, baked in a delicious recipe – fun to gather, making wholesome food for the family, says **Chloe Caustin**.

During the month of August my regular forage resulted in a haul of succulent berries from the hedgerows including wild raspberries and blackberries. These are among my favourites, along with gooseberries from a flourishing bush in the garden.

The berry creations of choice this season are blackberry jam (add apple or pectin to help it set) and cordial, both of which are sweet but tangy. Gooseberry and redcurrant jam is a good condiment to go alongside a fine cheese. Wild raspberry, cherry and almond cupcakes were another easy baked delight, perfect with a nice cup of tea. This bake is a colourful yet simple recipe to use for children who enjoy helping out in the kitchen.

Feeding my hungry family means it's fair to say nothing foraged is wasted.

I feel an immense sense of accomplishment when family and friends can enjoy meals and refreshments made with goodies I have foraged.

The main draw for me to continue foraging and making new recipes is that, having both harvested the ingredients and made the food myself, I know it is all safe and full of goodness for my one-year-old.

As a newbie to foraging I have found that I am able to make so much more than I ever imagined, from jam and ice cream to tea powder, cordials and champagne! There are still so many creations to discover and try.

The benefit of basing recipes around fresh

ingredients, whether foraged or bought locally, is that the food you make is much higher in genuine nourishment than processed foods from the big brands. I also noticed that foraged alternatives have an enhanced flavour – a delicious benefit to wild foods. Admittedly, as a busy first-time mum I have found that foraging, although simple, does require extra work; but as in everything, you put in hard work to reap the rewards.





# Go veggie!

Eleven-year-old reader **Reuben Doran** of Hillside School Portlethen tells us why he tried going vegetarian and decided it was a great idea.



When my parents decided to try going vegetarian for a week during lockdown, at first I was not too sure about it, but I decided to try it with them.

What is a vegetarian? A vegetarian is a person who only eats plants and dairy. But why shouldn't people eat meat?

There are lots of different reasons to go vegetarian.

1. Did you know that Britain may soon accept chlorinated washed chicken and cows with growth hormones from America, so that they can keep trading with them? Meaning that when people eat the chicken and beef, they are also eating the chlorine and growth hormones.

2. Did you know that every burger that you eat increases the chance of getting cancer?

3. Going vegetarian inspires

you and your family to learn new recipes and add new flavour to your food.

4. It's super healthy - and you can still get all the protein, vitamins, and calcium from being vegetarian!

5. If everyone was vegetarian then fewer trees would be chopped down for cattle and the air would become cleaner and, with more trees, floods would not do as much damage, as the roots would absorb lots of the water.

Why not try going vegetarian? Becoming a vegetarian could help you, your family and the environment in lots of different ways.

I think everyone should go vegetarian, even for a day a week, so that they can help the environment and reduce the chances of getting cancer.

# Stress-free vibes

**Susi McWilliam**, mindset and lifestyle coach, health and wellness enthusiast, shares some simple but effective tools to reduce stress and anxiety naturally.

Stress and anxiety are natural, there to protect us, but when they enter our lives on a regular basis we need to take action.

I want to share with you my top five go-to ways of supporting yourself during times of unease. These tools have been a huge support to me, relieving the anxiety and low mood that crippled me for almost two decades.

**Breathing.** Taking time to focus on our breathing is a super quick way to step out of autopilot and to support our nervous system.

Try now. Inhale deeply for the count of three, then slowly exhale for five. This simple technique will help you shift into that calm state you're seeking.

**Sleep.** Ensure you have a regular sleep routine. This allows your body's rhythms to align – an opportunity to rest, heal and release stress. Aim for around seven to eight hours each night for optimum health, clarity and immunity. You can use tools such as essential oils, a cool, dark bedroom and a

technology-free zone to support this.

**Nutrition and hydration.** When we're stressed we often reach for the high-energy snacks and drinks, but this will only leave us feeling deflated later.

Ensure you're drinking a minimum of six to eight glasses of water a day, and eating nutrient-dense food. Our body requires more support during these times, so think foods high in antioxidants that release energy slowly – and lots and lots of water.

**Meditation.** This is my go-to for sure. Never tried it? Not to worry: start simple. Use something such as a guided body scan. You can find these on Google or on my YouTube channel. Even activities such as walking, running, knitting or colouring can offer a meditative state. You are looking to focus your awareness, breathing and being in the moment.

**Self care and boundaries.** Your health – mentally,

physically and emotionally – is important. Make taking care of yourself a priority.

Say 'no' to things that pull you further away from health and happiness. Start saying 'yes' to things that allow you to feel more like you. Read that book, take that leisurely bath, write a journal or get outside and play in nature. You matter!

It starts with awareness. If you're feeling stressed, anxious, or worried, it's time to create the loving support your body needs. Give this list a try and let me know how you get on.

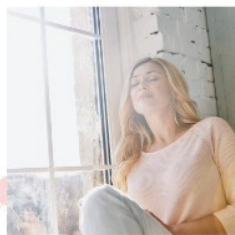
*Love Susi xxx*

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**App:** Insight Timer App



*Find Calm*

A flashback to 2014...

# Voice It!



## Online world - what kids and teens think

This issue we are 'Voicing It' about social media. Students from Cults Academy tell us what they think about the online world. Our **Voice It!** life coach, Theresa Day, shares her thoughts on how to keep online socialising safe and fun.

*Do you really feel like you can express yourself in a tweet?*

Sometimes, but 140 characters is not enough

**Theresa:** What a great challenge in getting to the point

Sometimes you would say things that you would not say in person

**Theresa:** So are you saying this is a platform to try out a comment before you actually say it?

Yes as you can say what is on your mind

**Theresa:** What is on your mind?  
Hey, that's a great tweet!

*What do you love or hate about Facebook?*

Bad, I waste too much time on it

**Theresa:** Well you could use it as reward time once the homework is done

It causes a lot of bullying

**Theresa:** Maybe we could use the information to help the person by telling someone who can put things right

Waste too much time reading rubbish posts

**Theresa:** Take the challenge to post your best most amazing posts every time you read a rubbish one

Great for socialising

**Theresa:** Yes but always be sure you know who you are communicating with



## *How do you honestly feel about social networking online?*

Originally a good idea but now being abused

**Theresa:** We can only take control of our own actions and behaviour and set the standard for others

Not good, fear that you will be judged

**Theresa:** I guess others have the right to their opinion; the choice we have is how strong we feel about our comment and if we need to be affected by their words

It was good but now becoming dated

**Theresa:** Entrepreneurial thinkers are only focusing on the benefits

Easier to get in contact with people

**Theresa:** Absolutely; you could develop a healthy active social life doing a variety of activities

## *How do you and your friends use photo sharing? Is sexting a problem or no big deal?*

Sexting isn't the smartest idea as you never really know who is behind the screen

**Theresa:** When you show too much all the mystery is lost and that's when things can go wrong

Once the pic is out there there is no way of controlling it

**Theresa:** Is it really worth the risk?

Could be peer pressured into sending things that you don't want to

**Theresa:** If you are pressured then think: what would be worse, one friend less or the picture going viral?

## **A flashback to our 'mother' magazine, The Wishing Tree, 2013-14**

Before *The Root and Branch* we published a magazine called *The Wishing Tree*. Its centre **Voice It!** spread featured thoughts from children and teens about their lives and wellbeing. Teen and child health and wellbeing are important themes for *The Root and Branch* too. You can find relevant articles on **pages 18-21**.



# Teen self-esteem

Self-esteem fortifies children against negative pressures and prepares them for tackling the conflicts and challenges of growing up.

Photo: Helena Lopes / Pexels



Children with healthy self-esteem are comfortable with their strengths and weaknesses and have realistic expectations of themselves. A child with healthy self-esteem, when faced with a problem, might say 'I need help to understand this.'

Conversely, those who lack self-esteem tend to be dismissive of their abilities and focus on their perceived failings. They may have a more negative interpretation of difficulties: 'I'm too stupid to do this'. Self-limiting beliefs, linked to a fear of not being good enough can lead to anxiety and frustration. Low self-esteem can be socially isolating and result in depression and other difficulties such as

eating disorders.

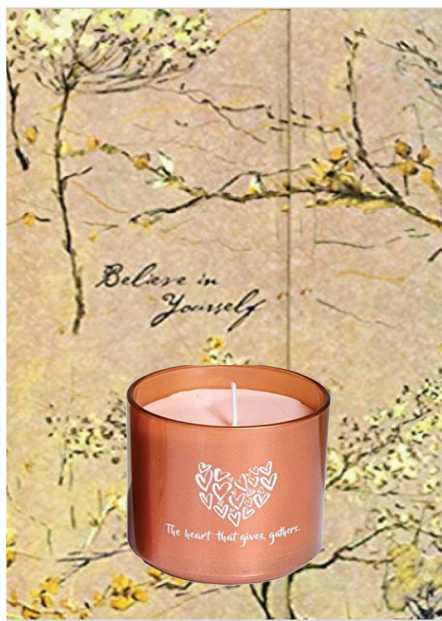
The foundation of a healthy self-esteem is feeling capable and loved. The key is to recognise and accept that we all have different strengths and weaknesses. Often we are quick to focus on what we can't do, or our (often trivial) shortcomings; for example, thinking we're bad at sports or have a funny shaped nose. Maybe we *aren't* too amazing at sports and don't look like a film star – but we are empathetic and a good listener. Having realistic expectations of ourselves is critical.

It's especially crucial that children feel secure and loved while they develop their sense of self. Learning all the basic skills, from

making friends to tying shoelaces, poses huge challenges. Ensuring our children know that failing is normal, trying is key, and they are loved regardless, makes them comfortable with facing challenges and helps them build resilience.

Show appreciation of your child as they partake of different activities. Placing too much worth on one area of a child's life can lead them to equate their sense of self-worth with success in that activity. By all means reward them for doing well in a test, but balance this by praising them for having good manners, being kind, or persisting in something they find difficult. With young children, it's especially important to vocalise positive observations, for example: 'I noticed how politely you spoke to the lady in the cafe today; it really made me happy.'

Talk with your child about their strengths, and let them know that it's okay not to be good at everything. Tell them about your own experiences and explain how everyone is different, and nobody is perfect. Tell them what you love about them, and ask what they like about themselves. Positive self-perceptions are not the same as bragging. It does each one of us good to remember and value what makes us unique.



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# Growth, mood and hormones

Teenagers are famously hyper-sensitive, but is there a genuine link between grumpy moods and growth spurts? **Rachel Beckett** investigates.

Childhood growth is controlled by the **endocrine system**. Glands produce hormones, which send messages around the body. Two tiny organs, the almond-shaped area at the base of the brain called the **hypothalamus**, and an even smaller, pea-sized nearby gland called the **pituitary**, control growth. Both also have a big effect on our emotions.

The pituitary is the king of glands – it creates hormones that make new things happen. The hypothalamus, in response to outside stimuli or to chemicals in the body, tells it what hormones to make.

Growth spurts happen when the pituitary produces the main **growth hormone** (GH). In response, the child's body builds new tissue, using molecules called **amino acids** obtained from proteins in the diet.

The pituitary also tells the adrenal glands to make

**steroids**, which generate heightened activity in reaction to stress or danger and also control the body's use of glucose for energy.

It's tempting to assume a direct link between these two functions of the pituitary. However they're both linked to the body's overall balance or 'homeostasis'. The hypothalamus regulates and responds to key aspects of basic functioning – growth, hunger, thirst, tiredness. These depend upon the same limited resources of energy.

When growing fast, a child needs extra calories. Lack of glucose may lead to tiredness and inattentiveness, but the hypothalamus detects the shortfall and tells the pituitary to set it right



Photo: Cottonbro / Pexels

through steroid production. As a side effect, the stress hormone can lead to irritability.

For healthy development, resources have to be shared in a balanced way. A diet with plenty of protein, fruit, vegetables and slow-release carbohydrates ensures the body has the right nourishment to regulate itself.

A child who eats well and healthily is better able to cope with the strains of growing fast at the same time as meeting the mental demands of school and other emotional challenges. Then there is enough energy to go round – with some left over to enjoy life.

# Counselling in schools

Children can be remarkably resilient at recovering from events that hurt or upset them – with the right support. When something is particularly difficult to handle, however, counselling can make all the difference.

Counsellors can help to guide children through bereavement, trauma, stress, illness, family changes, neglect, abuse, bullying, low self-esteem and a huge spectrum of other challenges. When these problems are not addressed, children can turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as becoming withdrawn, truanting from school, self-harming and challenging behaviour.

When children first meet with a counsellor, they often cannot verbalise their difficulties. They might not have the vocabulary or be able to organise their thoughts, or they simply might not know what the problem is at all – just that they feel upset, frightened or angry. Counsellors let the child take the lead and set the pace, and work intuitively to allow the child to explore their feelings

in a non-confrontational, safe and supportive environment. This can happen through the use of art therapy, play therapy, using books and film, and other media in which children are comfortable to express themselves.

Early intervention and support are crucial in helping to minimise the impact that stressful situations have on children's lives. Schools provide an ideal environment for problems to be picked up and addressed, being a hub for parents, counsellors, teachers and other professionals to work together with the child to find the best solution to their problem.

Much as parents, teachers and other

adults would like to think that our love and support is enough, sometimes a child will need a trained professional to help them through tough times. Scotland had lagged behind England and Wales in provision of counselling in schools, but following a report by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy there was increasing pressure for counselling to be offered in all secondary schools in Scotland. For the latest developments see [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk).

Photo: Mohamed Abdelgaffar / Pexels



# Forgiveness



**Mia Middleton** explores the healing power of this gentlest of all virtues.

We love to dwell on things, don't we? We ruminate over experiences and situations that made us feel good or, more often, bad. We even mull over stuff that is bland. We dissect the scenario over and over in our minds. We end up focusing on the things that separate us rather than on what connects us.

Loren L Toussaint and Everett L Worthington Jr (2017) researched what makes a good marriage. You'd think it would be good communication; however the authors suggest that this is the *product* rather than the cause of a good marriage. Rather, they believe **forgiveness** is the key to the longevity and quality of a marriage.

Forgiveness is the ability to maintain close bonds, strengthen them and, crucially, repair them when damaged. (That does not mean, however, that we stay in a violent or cruel situation.)

Lack of forgiveness leads to problems in all types of relationship including work situations. What is the most common reason for people leaving their jobs? Relationships issues: conflicts with co-workers or the boss.

The whole process of life is about unlearning and re-learning. We need to forgive ourselves for believing the stories we had no control over when we were younger, and for the natural physiological processes of

the body as we get older. At an atomic level we are like the air, made of atoms and space with no boundaries between things. Even our skin is porous. We interact with the environment and recreate with it. Everything we think, do and say causes reactions within us and around us.

The act of forgiveness creates a chemical reaction in the body, transforming pain to peace, first within yourself and then within another.

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# Inspiring reads

Our editors **Anita Bell** and **Rachel Beckett** share with you their go-to books for inspiration and support – more important than ever in this strange year of 2020.

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## Anita

My favourite read is *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior* by Dan Millman – such a thought-provoking read, encouraging us to look within to find the real answers that help us to travel the journey of life more easily.

Another really inspiring book is *Dying to Be Me* by Anita Moorjani. This is



a fascinating read, based on her personal journey.

Having had cancer for four years, the author ended up in hospital where she went into a coma for thirty hours. She talks the reader through her near-death experience, which gives solace to those seeking to come to terms with the loss of a loved one or worried about passing themselves. It is a thought provoking read and a beautiful book.

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## Rachel

Years ago, when I suffered a period of profound anxiety, I discovered a most helpful book by Gael Lindenfeld called *The Positive Woman*. This helped me to recalibrate my

thinking, stop bottling things up, stop blaming myself, and build a more affirmative attitude.

A self-help book that's useful in a more pragmatic way is *How to Get Lucky* by Max Gunther. This expertly explains how what we often perceive as bad luck can actually be rectified with better strategy and habits.

For a fictional tale of sheer plucky determination I still love *The Adventures of the Little Wooden Horse* by Ursula Moray Williams. Equivalent inspiration in adult life can come from autobiographies, including Ellen Macarthur's *Taking on the World*, describing how she coped with the

huge challenges of sailing single-handedly around the globe. Similarly uplifting was *The Diary of Fanny Burney*, a talented novelist and intellectual who held her own in the man's world of the late 18th century.

In this strange year, as an antidote to the pretence of reality that is Zoom, I've also betaken myself off to revisit an earlier reality, through favourites by Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, Ellen Wood and Katharine Mansfield. Similarly, it's comforting to return to the beauty of poems such as *Ode to a Nightingale* (Keats) and hymns such as *Jesu the Very Thought of Thee* (Caswall, St Botolph).

# Cleanse your spirit

‘Keep close to Nature’s heart and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.’

JOHN MUIR

I have always found solace in the outdoors, usually walking in the hills but sometimes in a forest or in a park. As a young mum, I would regularly take my four children to Haddo House and Country Park near Ellon, in every season and in all weathers! Yes, the kids got some exercise and fresh air, but it was just as much for me. The walk down to feed the ducks and back around the paths would leave me refreshed and revitalised.

Being a parent has always been challenging, but these past few months have seen challenges none



of us ever anticipated. Our lives have been turned upside down, and just as we figured our way through lockdown, we realise that we still have to manoeuvre our way through the unlocking of lockdown, and IT IS HARD! Living on high alert (which we have all been doing for the past five or six months) has left us drained and exhausted.

There has never been a more important time to look after our family’s mental health and wellbeing, especially as there are lots more changes to get used to over the coming winter.

I am trained in Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)/ Tapping, mindfulness, reiki, 16 Guidelines and

Forest Schools, with a background in education and music. This year I am back at Haddo, working with families and individuals (teenagers and adults), sharing mental wellbeing skills that help create resilience in the whole family.

We build dens, cook outdoors, make fires and create 3D environmental art using natural resources, interspersed with a splash of mindfulness, mindful movement or EFT. Most of all, we have fun. Come join us!

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### ***'Health is a state of mind. Wellness is a state of being'***

*Feeling the effects of the last few months? Stressed? Anxious about the future? Supporting others? You are not alone!*

*There's never been a more important time to look after our mental health and wellbeing. We might not recognise it, or want to acknowledge it, but the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have had an impact on all of us.*

*Gillian shares tools to alleviate stress, anxiety, grief, and tension, leaving us resilient and better equipped to meet the challenges of our 'new normal'. Her tools include Mindfulness, EFT, 16 Guidelines and Reiki, using the outdoors whenever possible. She currently works online or in the outdoors, with individuals, families, schools, businesses and other organisations.*

*It's good to have these skills BEFORE we need them, so follow AndBreathe123 to keep your toolkit well-stocked!*



## AndBreathe123

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# Introducing Debbie Bolton

## Debbie will be writing on wellness topics for us each month.

My name is Debbie Bolton and I shall be writing monthly articles for this much needed *Root and Branch* magazine, on various health and wellbeing topics. This is an exciting phase of my life as alternative and complementary health therapist as health and wellbeing are increasingly coming under focus in our society.

I was raised in Scotland and moved to Northamptonshire after studying. Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire became my homes for fifteen years, where I worked, married and was introduced to meditation. I attended a meditation group to support a friend, and then later a

reiki course. I was an angry corporate executive and my heart was softening and opening. I felt true peace for the first time in my life.

The next twelve months were a whirlwind of workshops and courses in London and America, and I became friends with like-minded people throughout the world.

In July 2014 I was hospitalised with a rare illness; then, one week later, my mother suddenly died. In response to these monumental experiences I created a daily visualisation to tell my body how to repair itself (the mind cannot tell the difference between what is real and not real) as well as taking the therapeutic oil frankincense. I used what I learned to help get myself off immunosuppressants and have now managed without them for four years.

My husband and I moved

to Scotland at the end of that difficult year, where I began to work with others to help with their own health and wellbeing.

In my business I offer herbology, reiki (having studied to Advanced Reiki Teacher Master), mindfulness, guided meditation, crystal therapy, angel intuitive therapy, oracle card readings and journal therapy.

I also organise health and wellbeing exhibitions around Scotland. If you do not see one in your area, I am happy to fill that void.

I also enjoy writing articles in the health and wellbeing field and have co-authored seven books, including the recently released *Reluctantly Psychic* which is a collection of stories exploring the experience of being psychic.

[www.loveandabove.co.uk](http://www.loveandabove.co.uk)

# Guided meditation

**Debbie Bolton** provides insights into different styles of meditation. This month, the focus is **guided meditation**.

In guided meditation, a person talks you through a meditation. It is effectively a guided daydream. A feature of these meditations is that they relate to the different senses throughout.

The person talking sets a scene and talks you through a little mind journey. Your mind may take these words and visualise them. It may also create sensations for your other senses, so you may hear birds chirping in a forest or the swooshing of grass in a field. You may feel the warmth of the sun on your skin or a pleasant breeze on your face. You may smell an apple freshly picked off a tree or a smoky scent of a bonfire. You may even be able to taste refreshing water or the tartness of a lemon.

If you have had a stressful long day and your mind is still racing, you may not be able to focus on the words or capture any images

or sensations in your mind, but when you come out of the meditation you will still feel a little more relaxed than before you started.

A remarkable aspect of guided meditation is that it gives your mind permission to relax in whatever way suggests itself. So when the guide is asking you to walk, your imagination might take you skipping down a forest trail; or when invited to visualise a beach you may paddle in the water instead of walking along the sand.



Guided meditation is a wonderful and enlightening experience. You can start today! Search for guided meditations on YouTube. There are many different topics, ranging from relaxation and gratitude to sleep and even colours. If it's your first time, choose one of 15–30 minutes. Find a safe and tranquil place to listen, and open up to a sense of greater wellbeing.



# Love yoga like Laura

'I'm so stressed!' is a familiar phrase in modern life and one we throw about as if it's completely normal. Sadly, it really is becoming 'normal'. A frequent flow of stress hormones in the body is the root cause of many physical and mental health problems, but yoga can be the solution, as **Laura Horsburgh** explains.



When I seriously got into yoga it fast became my go-to remedy for stress relief. In fact, in the beginning I was trying to work out why I felt so good after a yoga class.

'Is it all the stretching? Or lying down on the floor at the end!?' Whatever the reason, I found myself on a new path that has opened my mind to a whole host of holistic health tools that I now use to support my own wellbeing. I'm now on a mission to share all this and help others find their inner peace and be free from a life of stress.

Yoga is more than a physical practice to improve flexibility and strength.

Cliché as it sounds, it really is a lifestyle. I was quickly drawn in by the transformational breathing and meditation practices. Yoga is thousands of years old, and the lessons from the ancient scriptures are still as relevant today as ever.

I'm a qualified British Wheel of Yoga teacher and currently training to become a Soul Master Coach. I'm passionate about helping people deepen their understanding of who they are at their core. By recognising the obstacles that hold us back, or the patterns of behaviour that are not aligned with who we truly are, we can work

through these and be free to live the healthy, fulfilling life we all deserve.

To find out about my new online course, yoga classes and health and wellness podcast, find me on **Instagram** @laura.loves.yoga or on **Facebook** @lauralovesyoga.

**The Laura Loves Yoga** podcast can be found on all platforms including **iTunes**, **Spotify** and **Google**.



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# Coping with menopause

Without a doubt the menopausal years can be an emotional and challenging time. Does the way we think have an effect on how we manage this stage of life, wonders **Anita Bell**?

Taking a positive approach to change can be difficult but makes a huge difference to how we manage the ups and downs of the menopause.

Research suggests that women can start to experience physical and mental changes as young as around 37. It is during this '**peri-menopause**' stage that progesterone and oestrogen levels start to drop. This can lead to a range of symptoms.

## Some symptoms of perimenopause

**Irregular periods**

**Spotting in the days before the period**

**Recurrent early miscarriage**

**Blood clots during menstruation**

At the main stage of menopause, usually around the ages of 50-52, some symptoms of perimenopause may ease off but there are a number of symptoms that can be daunting to cope with. Women can also be more vulnerable at this time to such conditions as

osteoporosis, heart disease and some cancers.

## Some general symptoms of menopause

**Hot flushes**

**Night sweats**

**Anxiety**

**Loss of libido**

**Mood swings**

**Allergic symptoms**

**Arthritis**

**Cold hands and feet**

Many women struggle to keep a positive mindset, but doing so has clear health benefits. Healthy eating, exercise and adequate amounts of rest also help many women cope better during this time.

With the amalgamation of menopausal symptoms and these other increased risks, many women look to medication for protection. A GP may suggest a course of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to help alleviate symptoms, but concerns about side effects have led to increased popularity of alternative over-the-counter supplements. Those that have been deemed the most effective in trials are

**black cohosh** and **soy isoflavones** (from soya bean or red clover sources).

Research has shown that these two supplements can lessen such side effects as hot flushes, night sweats and mood swings. The suggested dosage is 40 mg of black cohosh daily for no more than six months at a time, or 50 mg of soy isoflavones daily.

Herbal supplements may interact with other drugs and health conditions, so always talk to your doctor before taking them. Beware also of supplements that give an excessive dosage of their active ingredient. Some supplements of black cohosh, for instance, are sold in 1000 mg form where only 40 mg is necessary.

Whether to opt for HRT, other supplements, or neither, is a choice for each individual woman, taking account of her GP's advice. Sometimes the best therapy is to talk about how you feel, connecting with others who are going through this same natural process.

## Benefits of positive thinking in menopause

**Less stress/depression**

**Better stress management**

**Increased physical wellbeing**

**Better psychological health**

**Longer life span**



# Finding peace in 2020

If this year has taught me anything, it's that the little things mean the most.

I believe we must embrace every moment and every good thing happening just now. Those little moments of silence, the warmth of the sun on our faces, fully stocked shelves in the supermarket, our children's laughter, a cuddle from someone special, a good book or even just a smile from a stranger. Anything to help remind us that we are OK and will get through this.

We must remember that everyone is fighting their



own battles. We are all human and it is this that connects us in the good times and the bad. We all feel, we all hurt and we all worry – whether or not we choose to show it. It is vital we come together and unite as humans with a love for one another, for peace and for life as we know it.

It's safe to say that 2020 has had its fair share of downs and very few ups. The coronavirus pandemic has had devastating effects worldwide. With so many uncertainties, unanswered questions and worries at present, we can't help but wonder how we will get through this in one piece. **Rachael Hunter** looks for some positives in this most challenging year.

Life will always set us challenges but they will pass. Our lives and circumstances may inevitably change but if we continue to be kind, patient and understanding with one another and with ourselves, we can come out of this stronger than before. By aiming to focus on the positives, being grateful for the simple things and embracing our differences we can overcome this. Our challenges may not be over but we can choose to slow up and get through it together.

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