

## FOR GETTING OUT OF A RELATIONSHIP BUT CONSCIOUS RELATING

You've heard of 'conscious uncoupling' (thanks, Gwyneth), but conscious relating is about delving into your deepest-held beliefs about sex, sensuality and relationships to find out what's holding you back from getting what you want.

'Being conscious in a relationship is about being self-aware, so you can spot old patterns,' says therapist Jan Day. Done in groups, there's an emphasis on role-play (you might practice an honest conversation you'd like to have), but how much personal stuff you share is up to you. Groups are a mix of singles and couples, with a 50-50 balance of sexes.

'I suddenly realised why I'm terminally single,' says Anna, 31, from York. 'I've had a string of short-term relationships and wasn't aware the extent to which I mould my personality to fit in with a new man. I get trapped into pretending to be someone I'm not. This workshop gave me the courage to be myself.'

Jan Day's weekend workshops cost from £160 ([janaday.com](http://janaday.com)). Or search 'conscious relating' at [counselling-directory.org.uk](http://counselling-directory.org.uk).

## FOR RELEASING STRESS CRYING THERAPY

In therapy rooms throughout Japan, groups of professionals meet to watch video clips designed to make them cry, as research suggests a regular blubbing session is good for our wellbeing.

'Crying can be an effective emotional release, but when it's not appropriate we hold back tears,' says clinical psychologist Dr Caroline Schuster ([atchange.co.uk](http://atchange.co.uk)). 'Unexpressed emotions can build up and affect you physically as well as emotionally.'

A group cry is also bonding, as it taps into our innate drive to care. As a bonus, watching a tearjerker boosts happiness levels by making you appreciate what's going well in your life, according to a study from Ohio State University. *Crying therapy has yet to hit the UK, but there's no end to the tearjerkers you can watch with good friends. Pass the tissues!*



**1978**  
**The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth** by M. Scott Peck (Rider Books)  
A book that begins 'Life is difficult' is bound to reject any quick fixes. Advocating self-discipline, Peck offered a refreshing no-nonsense approach to self-help, stating that personal growth is 'a lifelong task'.



**1987**  
**Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway** by Susan Jeffers (Ebury Press)  
So popular it was reissued 25 years on, this classic helped millions confront their anxieties about work and love. The message? Life will throw lots of scary stuff at you – the only way to tackle it is to get stuck in. Celebs and business leaders swear by it.



**1992**  
**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus** by John Gray (HarperCollins)  
It's as if we're from different planets. Considered by many to be the ultimate guide to co-habiting with the opposite sex, Gray doesn't dwell on the why...



How many therapists does it take to change a mindset? Seven, if writer *Amy Molloy* is anything to go by. And they don't even have to be in the same country

# MY EMOTIONAL ENTOURAGE

I'M SITTING IN MY LIVING ROOM AND HOLDING A cushion to my face as I scream intermittently. A voice from my laptop, which has a tea-towel draped over the screen to cover the camera, says in a soothing tone, 'That's it, Amy. Let it all out, I'm here...'

By 'here' my life coach Elli actually means 9,460 miles away, in South Carolina. Welcome to my weekly Skype therapy session, which has been a part of my life since my break-up six months ago (the tea-towel is to give me some 'privacy' – as if 9,460 miles isn't enough space between us).

And Elli isn't the only stranger I turn to for emotional nourishment. In Sydney, where I now live, I regularly see a psychologist for face-to-face sessions. When I'm in London, I visit my spiritual healer, and I occasionally see a meditation teacher, a hypnotherapist and a Reiki master. I've also seen a break-up coach and divorce mentor.

You could say this emotional entourage is excessive but, after a relationship résumé that includes two marriages (widowed at 23, divorced at 30) and an A-type personality that leaves me with a constant sense of longing, I credit these strangers with the fact that, at the age of 31, I've finally found contentment. Hiring help to find happiness has been worth every penny.

My first experience with a psychotherapist was back in 2012, when on paper my life seemed pretty perfect (recently emigrated from London to Sydney, editor of a fashion mag, newlywed). One evening, after my staff left, I sat on the floor and stared at the wall for four hours. When I eventually prised myself off the carpet, I googled 'psychotherapy + Sydney', telling myself I would just have one session. I'd never felt comfortable sharing

my concerns with friends, for fear they'd think I was boring. I was expecting to hate telling all to a stranger.

But I soon discovered that therapy is a bit like Bikram yoga: you come out drained... and totally addicted. I wasn't 'fixed' instantly, but with every session I felt a small shift in my psyche, as I learned new coping strategies that made me stronger. And when a friend recommended a six-week course called Perfectionist Rehab, run by Elli Boland, I emailed to ask if she'd consider coaching someone in another country. She replied to say she actually prefers it.

Research shows that people are more likely to open up over the phone,' Elli explains. 'This process requires awareness, willingness, vulnerability and compassion. Perhaps, it's far better to lie on your own couch at home for it.' I quickly found that it's easier to lower barriers when confiding via Skype – and you can wear pyjamas.

Three years since that first psychotherapist's appointment, my emotional entourage now consists of seven experts on speed dial. I love that I can restrict my 'me-me-me' time to these one-hour sessions, so that during the rest of the week I can focus on my career, friendships and social life. At certain stages in our lives, we could all do with a bit of a reboot.

The answer to happiness is effort. I put time and money into learning to look on the bright side, but it's probably no greater an investment than other women put into their haircuts or wardrobes. I'd never let my best mate cut my hair when I can afford a stylist, so why, when it comes to my psychological wellbeing, would I expect my friends to have the skill set I need? Especially when emotional salvation is just a call away... ■



**1997**  
**The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment** by Eckhart Tolle (Hodder & Stoughton)  
Tolle's message was that happiness comes from living in the 'now'. Oprah's endorsement led to worldwide success.



**2006**  
**Fat: A Feminist Issue** by Susie Orbach (Arrow)  
First published in 1978 and re-released, Orbach explored how to break out of the dieting cycle.



**2010**  
**Headspace**  
With the explosion of the mindfulness movement, came apps like Headspace. Daily meditations are offered as a route to better sleep and relationships.



**2014**  
**7 Cups of Tea: Kindly and Graciously**  
Because your circle of friends may not always be enough, Kindly allows you to message strangers with your problems or, if you prefer to phone, there's the 7 Cups app.

## 5 LESSONS FROM THE QUEEN OF SELF-HELP

Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project* and new book *Better Than Before*, gives her five tips for making real life changes

**1. KNOW WHO YOU ARE**  
Change isn't going to happen if you're trying to do things in a way that doesn't make you happy. Once I realised I'm an 'upholder', someone who feels compelled to meet expectations, it helped me to see things more clearly.

**2. JUST DO SOMETHING – ANYTHING**  
It's so important to take that first step – it doesn't matter what it is. Want to start eating healthier? Pack a healthy lunch for work if you like small steps – or give up sugar for a month if you want to make a grand gesture.

**3. IGNORE ADVICE YOU DON'T LIKE**  
Stop and ask yourself, 'does this ring true for me?' Your friend may give several reasons why you should get up early and go running but if that sounds like an impossible dream to you, choose a class after work instead.

**4. FORGET MOTIVATION, FOCUS ON GOALS**  
There's little you can do about motivation but one thing you can control is your behaviour. Keep working towards your goal regardless of how you feel, and eventually the act will become second nature.

**5. ANSWER TO SOMEONE (EVEN YOURSELF)**  
External accountability is crucial, and once you have that, you'll be equipped to do everything you set out to do. Don't concern yourself with low self-esteem; work towards your goals. Once achieved, your self-esteem will rise.