



with trained counsellor Fiona Caine

### MY BOYFRIEND AND I HARDLY EVER SEE EACH OTHER

I've lived with my boyfriend for three years, but I don't know where our relationship is going. We both have busy jobs that require lots of long days and business trips away. Last week for example, I was only at home for one night, which happened to be the night that he had to work late. We ended up having a takeaway, quick sex and a few hours of sleep before he was away for a four-day conference the next day.

This has been going on for ages and I hate the fact that we just don't seem to have any time for each other and, even when we do, we hardly ever talk. Can our relationship last if we continue to work such long hours apart?

My other problem is, I think a guy at work is interested in me. I spend a lot of time with and he's great to be with. We've only had lunch together, but I can't stop thinking about him. I don't know what to do for the best.

### FIONA SAYS: IF YOU STILL LOVE EACH OTHER, EFFORT FROM BOTH SIDES IS NEEDED

You probably can't stop thinking about this other guy because, as things stand, you seem to spend more time with him than with your boyfriend. Whether this is because you no longer love your boyfriend or because circumstances force you to see so little of him, only you can decide.

I'm concerned by the fact that, even when you do have time together, you don't talk much. Given this, the key question is, do you still love your boyfriend? If you answer this with a positive 'yes', I think you need to talk with him soon to explain that you are unhappy.

If your relationship isn't already coming apart at the seams, it is close, and you need to find ways to re-connect with each other before it is too late. Many couples struggle to find a balance between the needs of work and a relationship. One way is to set some routines that work for you both. For example, on days when you both start your working day at home, eat breakfast together.

Similarly, on days when you're both not working, make sure that you relax and forget about work, and, if one of you is travelling, try to set aside time each day for a 15 or 30-minute phone or FaceTime chat. The routines you establish are up to you, but they do need to be applied consistently. Hopefully, things should improve.

However, if they don't or you're still unhappy, or it proves impossible to make these changes, perhaps you should consider calling time on this relationship. This might be a painful process but what's worse, a short, sharp break, or the lingering pain of an unhappy and slowly-unraveling relationship? If you feel you need to talk about this further, please contact a Relate counsellor (relate.org.uk).

### MY HUSBAND DOESN'T WANT ME TO LEND MY SISTER MONEY

My sister has always helped me when she can, so when she asked if I could lend her some money recently, I agreed. When my husband found out, though, he got angry. He said I should have cleared it with him first, especially as our family finances are far from secure now. I admit we've got a bit of debt, like most people, and there is some talk at my company that there may be staff layoffs, but these may never happen. I'm due to visit my sister next week to hand over the cash but my husband is still saying it's a bad idea and that I should tell my sister we can't afford it. Now I'm really confused because, whatever I do, one of them is going to be upset.

### FIONA SAYS: IF THIS IS JOINT MONEY THEN A JOINT DECISION IS ONLY FAIR

If you're planning to use joint family funds for this loan your husband has a point. After all, how would you feel if he used money in this way without first talking it through with you? That said, if you're planning to use your own money, your husband will have to accept that you have the right to use it as you see fit. However, if you are in debt and your job prospects are a bit shaky, should you be making a loan anyway? Would it not make more sense to use this money to pay down some of your own debt, or save for a rainy day while you're able to do so? You need to talk this through more with your husband and reach some sort of agreement. If you don't, this issue is likely to fester and cause resentment, even if you are using your own funds.

**WRITE TO FIONA CAINE:** If you have a relationship, sexual, marriage or family problem. You can email her at: help@askfiona.net. All letters are treated in complete confidence. Fiona regrets that she cannot enter into personal correspondence or pass letters on to other readers.

# How walking netball helped Vicky after cancer

WHEN Vicky Dennis was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer and underwent chemotherapy surgery and radiotherapy, her life was turned upside down.

Everything she had taken for granted - her health, her mental and physical wellbeing - crumbled. Just walking was excruciatingly painful and the impact of the cancer and its life-saving treatment left her physically exhausted and with limited use of her arm due to scar tissue and lymphedema (swelling caused by her treatment).

Having lost all her hair and unable to return to her career, the once-active 47-year-old was at an all-time low. An advert for walking netball at a local sports centre was the lifeline she needed. Despite her obvious concerns, Vicky contacted the netball group and went along to her first session.

Almost a year on and Vicky feels like her old self, the woman she was before cancer. Her fitness

### Sally Churchward



levels have improved and she has regained her confidence.

Inspired by the positive impact sport has had on her recovery, Vicky has now trained to become a walking netball host as part of Eastleigh Borough Council's 'This Girl Can Eastleigh' campaign. She hopes to encourage other people going through a similar experience to take that first step towards a new chapter in their life.

Speaking about her experience, Vicky says: "When I was diagnosed with breast cancer it was a complete shock. I'd gone to work in the morning; I left in the afternoon to go to my hospital appointment and never went back. My whole world was turned upside down.

"I was so ill through my chemotherapy surgery and radiotherapy, I couldn't do

anything. Some days I was even struggling to walk - it impacted on me that much. It was exhausting. The way I was feeling I knew high impact sport was not an option. I had always loved netball and it just so happened that I was flicking through our local parish magazine when I saw an ad for walking netball sessions, which I hadn't even heard of before.

"I rang up the netball development officer to say 'look, I'm not really sure if this is for me, I've done no exercise for a long time, I'm recovering from cancer, I have a frozen shoulder and lymphedema in my arm. Can I even turn up or is it just going to be impossible?'"

"The coach was really encouraging. When I turned up to the session on my own I was instantly welcomed me. When I put on the bib and started to play I just remember for the first time in 18 months I really felt alive.

"I felt like me again. I wasn't this survivor of cancer: I was Vicky!"



Vicky loves walking netball

"Since then I've got so much stronger, both physically and mentally. What's particularly good is the more exercise I do the less my side effects are. My overall movement has increased and I feel so much happier.

"I would encourage anyone out there who maybe is going through a similar experience to not dismiss the idea of getting involved in a sport or activity. It can be a

daunting prospect but there is an activity for somebody at any level of sport or injury that you can do.

"The most important thing is that you'll never reach your potential unless you move out of your comfort zone to see what you can do. The confidence in doing something new is amazing."

As part of Eastleigh Borough Council's 'This Girl Can Eastleigh' programme, Vicky will host a new

Walking Netball session, starting on tonight, at Wildern Leisure Centre in Hedge End from 8pm to 9pm. Sessions are £4 pay as you go.

This Girl Can Eastleigh builds on Eastleigh Borough Council's Eastleigh Activation Programme, an ongoing physical activity project that aims to get more adults in the area leading a healthy active lifestyle.

# It's not too late for resolutions to work



Carolyne Bennett has resolution tips for you

### Sally Churchward



WE are just a few weeks into the new year, and for many of us, new year's resolutions are long forgotten.

In fact, it's estimated that only ten per cent of us will manage to keep our new year's resolutions.

All is not lost though, there are simple steps you can take to stay focused and instead set achievable goals in 2019.

After all, the first of January isn't the only time of year that we can decide to make our lives better.

"Lack of focus is one of the greatest destroyers of goals, dreams and productivity," says Hampshire-based Life Coach, Carolyne Bennett.

"Constant interruptions lower your performance, burns unnecessary glucose in your brain causing fatigue and makes you waste your valuable time."

"Keeping focused this year means you will drive everything that you

do and help you to achieve your desired outcome a lot quicker."

Here are Carolyne's top ten tips on staying focused:

1. Get distinct on what your daily goals are. Break bigger goals into smaller achievable daily goals.
2. Write down your goals in a powerful declaration of intent!
3. Write down a statement of what you are going to accomplish that day and have a plan of action.
4. Plan your day. Carve out time in your day that you will spend completing your intended tasks.
5. Put a 'DO NOT DISTURB' sign up on your door, or make sure you tell your family or your colleagues that you will not be available between certain times unless there is an emergency.
6. Remove distractions.
7. Mute your phone and turn off notifications on your computer or other devices for email and social media.
8. Boost your focus by using the ancient art of mindfulness.

This helps to reign back an unfocused mind and is soothing for the nervous system, leaving you

feeling more relaxed.

6. Restrict mindless online browsing. Browsing on social media can really rob you of your valuable time and energy.

Save your brain power for tasks that will help you achieve your dreams. This is not to say some level of browsing isn't good because you can find really inspiring things which are great for your personal development.

You know the difference between mindless browsing and life changing content!

7. Stop saying 'yes' to everyone and everything! Say 'no' just at first so that you can check if what you are about to agree to is in alignment with your goals and mission. If you fill your life doing everything for everyone else, when will you have time to focus on your purpose?

Start learning to say 'no' sometimes and make space to concentrate on the things that mean so much to you and help you build your dreams.

This is not to say that you can't help people when they are genuinely in need, it just

means that you establish healthy boundaries, freeing up valuable time to focus on your life too.

8. Exchange phone time for focus time. Set a timer on your phone for 25 minutes at a time.

During these 25 minutes all notifications are off, the 'DO NOT DISTURB' sign is on your door and it is focus time.

Resist the temptation to look at your phone or emails for the full duration of that time.

Then you can reset the timer for another 25 minutes after a short break.

9. Write it down. In order to stay focused on a task, have a pen and paper next to you and write anything you need to remember.

Promise yourself that you'll be able to look at it once your focusing session is over and your break has arrived.



Frankie Duke needs intensive physiotherapy

# Funds to help six-year-old Frankie to walk

A HAMPSHIRE family's fundraising campaign to pay for treatment so a six-year-old can walk has been given a boost.

A head injury in 2014, when Frankie Duke was two, left the youngster from Fareham unable to walk, talk, eat or crawl.

Frankie's family, together with Frankie's Heroes, applied to regional housebuilder Perstimon Homes South Coast to become one of its Community Champions.

Each month, under the match-funded scheme, the housebuilder donates up to £2,000 to help two community groups or people within the region, and has donated £1,000 towards Frankie's treatment.

Frankie's mother Rachel Nesbitt said: "We cannot thank Perstimon Homes enough for its support.

"Frankie has reclaimed most things, except being able to walk due to severe spasticity in his legs. "He finally got accepted for a selective dorsal rhizotomy operation last October, which has taken away the spasticity, but he is now left incredibly weak and needs intensive physiotherapy for the next two years."

The donation will help pay for Conductive Education at the Rainbow Centre in Fareham, which supports children, adults and those caring for them, who are affected by Cerebral Palsy, stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's and head injuries.

Rachel added: "Frankie's Heroes was set up with the support of registered charity, Tree of Hope. In order to share Frankie's journey, which involved fundraising £19,000 for his selective dorsal rhizotomy, and to show people who have helped us raise money for his ongoing physiotherapy needs what Frankie is getting up to on his journey to gain independence and mobility."

Matt Patne, managing director for Perstimon Homes South Coast, said: "We are delighted that we can help in this way and hope it gives Frankie the support he needs."