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Issue 17

26 April 2018 69p

# Pick Me Up!

Register office agony

**FULL OF GREAT PUZZLES!**



**I learned my groom was DEAD**



How dare he?

**MY BABY'S KILLER CALLED THE COPS ON ME!**



**MY HUBBY GOT THIS WOMAN PREGNANT**

**Why I'll raise HER BABY**



MY MESSAGE TO BULLIES...

**Leave my boy alone!**



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# Woman's Own

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# You're One in a MILLION!



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## This week's blooms go to Lauren Ford. Her best friend Zoe wrote to say...

I'd like to nominate my best friend Lauren Ford, 26. My beautiful best friend has been there for me through one of the hardest times in my life and I can't thank her enough.

We've been inseparable for seven years and she's practically a sister to me.

She's stood by me through thick and thin and helps those around her.

After a car accident and collapsing down the stairs, I was diagnosed with severe nerve damage.

I couldn't walk at all and was completely devastated.

Lauren stood by me from day one, stayed with me on the day I was admitted to hospital and visited every day after that.

She was my rock when I needed her to be.

Her bubbly personality puts a smile on everybody's face and I really needed her.

She helped me when I was wheelchair bound and

encouraged me every step of the way to build up my strength to walk again.

I'm still not walking right now, but I know that if I need to lean on somebody then it's most definitely her.

She really deserves some flowers just to say thank you for always catching me when I fall.

She means the world to me, and these flowers are just one way of saying thank you!

Never apart: Me (left) with Lauren



With over 30 years' experience of helping celebrate life's special moments, FREE delivery by post and a FREE pop-up vase, a gorgeous bouquet from Flying Flowers is a lovely way to say, *I'm thinking of you*. See [flyingflowers.co.uk](http://flyingflowers.co.uk)

#### To nominate someone

Tell us who you think deserves to receive some lovely blooms and the reason why. See page 4 for details of how to get in touch with us.



WORDS: EMMA ROSSITER

## Sneaky peek at this week!



My boy's beautiful smile... p14



Cat's a bit spooky! p22

### A quick word!

**£25!** WIN PUZZLE 1

Unscramble our word of the week. Clue: What Zoe and Lauren are. (You'll find the word somewhere on this page!). Enter on page 45.

**PEARSINBALE**

# Your Wild week...

Having a good one? Share your pics and get **£25 CASH**



Just look at my little scarecrow! All dressed up for World Book Day. Shelley Barrett, Sheffield

There was something not quite right about this zebra at the zoo, but we couldn't put our finger on it... Vivian Acheson, Rochester



My daughter loved looking around this Roman amphitheatre in Amman, Jordan, on holiday recently. Rebecca Lunt, London



## GET IN TOUCH

Send us your stories and photos, including all names and ages, a daytime phone number and full address.

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Ashton loved his visit to the park this week. The swing is definitely his favourite - just look at that smile! Ellen Warren, West Midlands



**It's not often we get to eat at the Savoy, but this evening we did!**  
*Jessica Ward, via e-mail*



**I climbed up the Sydney Harbour Bridge – it was a fantastic view before I came back down to earth!**  
*Donna Gray, Cleveland*



**Erm... Lucas... There's something behind you! It was a beary good day at this natural history museum in Bulgaria.**  
*Lindsey Smith, via e-mail*



**Egg hunts are always great fun! William, 4, and Phoebe, 5, are total chocoholics!**  
*Caroline Marsden, Nantwich*

**I think he thought I had something in my pocket... I didn't, honest!**  
*Mike Joseph, Essex*



**This pool seemed to go on forever... Here's my husband and I playing around in the Portavadie infinity pool.**  
*Samantha Mckibbens, via e-mail*



**REDGRAVE**

# BABY KILLE

## behind the ba

**Karly Hopson, 29, from Cleethorpes, will never forget her son – why should the man who took him away from her?**

**A**fter I gave one last, exhausted push, the nurse placed baby Ethan on my chest. 'He's beautiful!' I sobbed.

Cuddling my newborn, I'd never felt love like it. I drank in every bit of him – his button nose, mop of red hair, blue eyes – 8lb 2oz of perfection.

I'd become pregnant at the end of a short relationship and his dad wasn't around.

I'd be a young, single mum, but I couldn't wait.

My mum Julie, then 50, had helped me decorate the nursery in sunshine yellow.

When Ethan and I came home, I took to motherhood like a duck to water.

Ethan was a dream, sleeping through by six weeks, happy, with a cheeky grin.

Then, one day in October 2011, an old mate, Jason Redgrave, then 24, messaged me on Facebook.

*How are you?* he asked.

I'd known Jason briefly, lost touch when he'd joined the Army. After we'd messaged a

bit, I asked him over for tea.

Jason was funny, kind – and good with Ethan, then 4 months.

He'd entertain him while I whipped up a spag bol, and romance bloomed.

That December, I'd been invited to a mate's birthday and Jason offered to babysit.

We'd only been together a few weeks, and I'd only ever left

Ethan with Mum.

But the pub was just round the corner and I'd only be gone two hours.

I fed and bathed Ethan, put him to bed, kissed him goodnight and, at 9pm, headed out.

A little later,

Jason sent a text to say that Ethan was still sleeping. But, at 10.50pm, he sent another.

*Ring me now*, it read.

Worried, I called at once.

'Ethan's not breathing properly!' Jason gasped.

My stomach dropped, and I felt sick and terrified.

'Call an ambulance!' I yelled.

Racing home, flying through

the front door, I saw Ethan on the sofa, lifeless – paramedics trying to resuscitate him.

Ethan was bundled into an ambulance, and we were whisked to Grimsby Hospital.

My frantic Mum met us there, as Ethan was rushed into Intensive Care.

As I paced the waiting room, it suddenly occurred to me...

*Where was Jason?*

I'd been so focused on Ethan, I'd not spotted Jason in the chaos.

While we waited anxiously, I phoned him.

'What happened?' I demanded.

'I don't know,' Jason spluttered.

He told me he'd checked on Ethan and found him floppy in his crib.

Shortly after, Jason arrived, looking shocked.

'I'm sorry,' he muttered. 'I should've checked him more.'

Only, as we sat in terrified silence, the police turned up.

I watched completely stunned as Jason was arrested,

handcuffed and led away.

*They think he hurt Ethan!* I suddenly realised.

'He wouldn't...' I gasped. But before I could take it in, a doctor arrived.

'Ethan suffered a severe brain bleed,' he explained.

If he survived, he'd be seriously brain-damaged.

I broke down in Mum's arms, my mind racing with questions.

*What'd happened? Had there been an accident?*

I couldn't believe that Jason would hurt Ethan.

The next morning, Ethan was transferred to Sheffield Children's Hospital, where a specialist delivered the news I'd dreaded.

'Ethan is brain-dead,' he said.

I was in bits – but there was more. Ethan had a hand-shaped bruise on his face.

The truth finally sank in.

This was no accident – Jason had viciously attacked my baby.

Now I was faced with the agonising decision to turn off his life-support. My heart shattered, I had to let Ethan go.

Family came to say goodbye.

The doctors switched off his life-support, and I cradled him as his breathing slowed.

'I'll always love you!' I wept, kissing him goodbye.

Ethan, 6 months, slipped away on 22 December 2011.

Overwhelmed with grief,

**I'd never felt love like it. I drank in every bit of him**

R  
r



With baby Ethan - he was so gorgeous



I don't know how I carried on

texted me some photos of him working at a bar in a restaurant 45 minutes way, under a different name again. 'I was there recently!' I cried. Part of the restaurant was even called Ethan's. Again, I posted his pics online, and friends reported Jason to managers. Then two police officers showed up at my door. Jason had complained - about me! 'He says he's trying to move on with his life,' an officer said. But now he'd lost his job. 'He's lost his job?' I cried, disgusted. 'I've lost my son! How does that even compare?' The officers were understanding, but warned me that, if I did it again, I'd be arrested for harassment. I couldn't believe it.

how I carried on. In June 2012, Jason Redgrave, 26, appeared at Hull Crown Court charged with murder, and an alternative charge of manslaughter. He denied hurting Ethan. Said he couldn't explain how his injuries were caused. But the court heard that Jason lashed out in 'anger and irritation', because Ethan started crying while he was sending sexually charged text messages - to a man. I was horrified, stunned. Jason was found not guilty of murder and convicted of manslaughter. He was jailed for eight years. 'That's nothing!' I sobbed. Afterwards, I felt lost. Then, in Summer 2013, I met someone, fell pregnant. And, when baby George arrived in October 2014, I was overwhelmed with love once more. A year on, Frankie was born. Both boys reminded me of Ethan - same cheeky smile. Sadly, it didn't work out with their dad, but the boys were my world. I was protective, they kept me going. Then, on 22 December 2015 - exactly four years after Ethan

died in my arms, I got a call. After serving half his sentence, Jason was being released. I was furious. Especially when, the following summer, friends spotted him on a dating website using another name. 'He's just getting on with life as if nothing's happened, as if he didn't kill my baby!' I sobbed. In anger, I took a screenshot of his profile, and splashed it over Facebook. *Don't meet this man*, I wrote, explaining what he'd done. I wanted to warn other mums what he was capable of. His profile soon disappeared, and so did Jason. Until friends

Apparently, Jason's changed his name by deed poll several times, so people don't find out what he did. Four years behind bars is nothing compared to the life Ethan lost. I should be planning his 7th birthday party now. He should be playing with George, 4, and Frankie, 2. Jason Redgrave snatched all that away. Why should he get to simply 'move on'? He killed a defenceless baby and he should never, ever be allowed to forget that.

I moved in with my parents. In May 2012, the postmortem results came back. Ethan had suffered bruising to his face and head, blunt-force trauma to his skull. The facial bruising was consistent with a slap, there was bleeding between his brain and skull, and in his eyes. The pathologist concluded Ethan had been shaken, hit on the head, or his skull struck against another object. 'My poor boy,' I wept, distraught and disgusted. Guilt and hate consumed me, I blamed myself for trusting Jason. We buried Ethan in a tiny, white coffin. Afterwards, I was broken - I don't know




Me with Frankie, left, and George

**WIN  
PUZZLE 2**

# Follow it!

Solve the puzzle to spell out a term related to the picture. The arrows show you where to put your answers. The answer is spelled in the yellow squares. Enter on page 45.

# £1,000!



		Gin mixer (5,5)		Billy 1980s singer		Hideout		Goodyear product		Retiring		Strait-laced		Gain by merit
		Strangely						Of plant-based remedies						
		Young mares		Scul or sweep				Blub		Mineral-bearing rock		Fanning, actress		Soap bubbles
									Warning signs					
		Did the crawl		Pub drink		Hoodwink		Henchman		Amounts (of money)		Passports or driving licences, eg		Sign up for a course
Matted woollen fabric		Speciality food shop		Slim, skinny				Came down a rock face						
					<b>A</b>									
		Defence of being elsewhere			<b>A</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	First man		Hidey-holes		
Cable-free internet (2-2)		Abhors			<b>E</b>			Titled ladies					Omit	Notices
				TV studio sign (2,3)		West Yorkshire city				Dec's partner		Cry for help (imits)		
Go on at		Scandinavian						Puts a ceiling on		Stubbs, actress		Foot joint		
		See photo		Racing boats		Sharpness of mind						Smartphone program		Greek sun-god
Ancient English kingdom		State				Level in judo			Theatre play	Spanish snacks				
						Rear part of the foot		Notebooks				Put money by		Greases
														Blemish
Old Russian ruler		Curve over						Ironic (smile)		Bon Jovi, rock singer		Parody		
				Cut, carve				Large Indonesian island					Unwell	
Rounded handle		Vestibule										Large country house		
				Artful				Christen					Boar's mate	

PHOTO: ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



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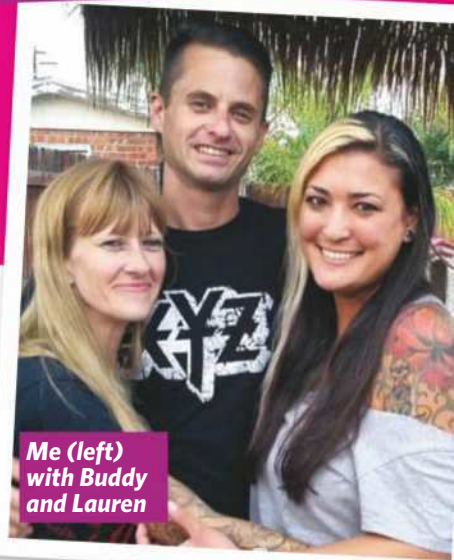
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# ONE dad, TWO m FOUR kids and A

Would you share your fella with another woman? Rose Sullivan, 33, from San Diego, can't recommend it highly enough



Me (left) with Buddy and Lauren

**A**pproaching my hubby Buddy, I felt sick with nerves. What I was about to say would probably change our relationship forever...

We'd been together since we were 18, got married in June 2010 and, that same year, our son Owen was born, followed by James, two years later.

Our sex life was great, too. But I was falling for someone.

My ex Lauren. I'd dated girls, as well as boys, before settling down and Lauren had got in touch with me on Facebook.

She'd visited, got on really well with Buddy and the boys and she'd become a fixture in our lives.

But the chemistry was still there and I had to admit to myself that I no longer saw her as just a friend.

Although I didn't want to leave Buddy.

So I'd come up with an idea. I just had to get him to agree.

'Lauren's great, isn't she?' I said to Buddy in bed one night. 'She's brilliant,' he agreed.

So I took a deep breath. 'What would you think about us all living together? And the three of us being in a relationship?' I ventured.

To my relief, Buddy wasn't

shocked – we'd spoken previously about bringing someone into the bedroom to spice up our sex life.

He knew my history with Lauren and they'd got close.

'Let's ask her,' he said, keen.

So we spoke to Lauren. Next time she visited, we sat outside, while the kids played.

'Buddy's a great guy, and I know you want children,' I said to her.

'Would you be interested in seeing how it works as a family, with us?'

'Yes,' Lauren said immediately, clearly thrilled.

She'd always wanted a family, and had developed feelings for both of us, so it made sense that she join ours.

Keen to make sure that it was what we all wanted, we started spending time together, dating.

We kept it between the three of us at first, in case it didn't work out.

Taking things slowly, it was four months before we all slept together.

As our clothes came off,

everything felt natural.

We weren't nervous or awkward – it felt right.

After that, we decided to be honest with family and friends about the polyamorous relationship we had.

We wanted them to see there was nothing seedy going on, that we were all in love with each other.

Most people were positive, although some were shocked.

After six months we all moved in together – Buddy, me, Lauren, Owen, then 4, and James, 2.

We sat the boys down and explained Lauren was moving in, we'd be a family of five now.

They took it so well, didn't ask any questions.

We got a king-size bed in one bedroom, a queen in another.

We alternated sleeping arrangements – sometimes it'd

be Buddy and I, sometimes Buddy and Lauren, other times Lauren and I – our very own sex schedule!

It was the same went when we organised date nights.

We'd take turns to babysit, so we could have couple time. I never felt jealous.

We'd go out as a threesome when we could, too.

Lauren was brilliant with the boys and, in March 2015, she made a decision.

'I want to have a baby,' she told Buddy and I.

'Why don't we both have a baby, together?' I grinned.

'I'd love that,' Lauren agreed.

Buddy was thrilled, too. We began monitoring

It's not seedy, we're all in love with each other...



This is the ideal set-up

# ums, BUMP!



**Kids are the most important part of our special family**

our cycles and having sex with Buddy, separately, when we were ovulating.

That May, Lauren fell pregnant and I was so happy for her. And I knew it was just a matter of time before I had some good news, too.

That moment came, five months later, in October 2015.

'We're pregnant again!' I announced happily.

Excited, all three of us went along to the midwife and doctors' appointments.

'We're in a polyamorous relationship,' I'd explain.

They'd look at us, confused.

'I'm in a relationship with Lauren and Buddy,' I'd explain. 'We're all intimate together, and all three of us parent the kids.'

Once I'd explained, the doctors accepted it.

Lauren and I loved being pregnant together, shopping for baby clothes, comparing growing bumps.

In November 2015, Buddy and I took Lauren to a beautiful spot overlooking San Diego, and both got down on one knee.

'Will you marry us?' we beamed.

'Yes!' Lauren gushed tearfully.

With two newborn babies to think about, we decided to wait before planning our wedding.

Lauren suffered placenta praevia – a low-lying placenta, which can cause haemorrhaging during labour.

This meant that, when the time came in February 2016, baby Damien had to be delivered by planned Caesarean.

Buddy was in the delivery room with Lauren, while I was waiting outside with the boys.

All went well, and Lauren and Buddy shared the first

cuddle with Damien, before I went in for mine.

'He's gorgeous,' I grinned, cradling little Damien, who weighed 7lb 3oz.

The rest of my pregnancy went smoothly, and everyone pitched into help with Damien as my due date neared.

Five months on, baby Ryan arrived, weighing 6lb 3oz.

Lauren waited outside with the boys, then they all piled in to meet our latest addition.

Back home, we got into a routine.

Buddy and I slept in one room with Ryan, Lauren in the other with Damien.

The boys call me Mum, Lauren is Mumma, and Buddy is Dad.

Buddy and Lauren both work full-time, while I'm a stay-at-home mum.

It's a perfect set-up, and we're dedicated to providing our boys with the stability they deserve.

Now our families are just happy we're so happy.

Buddy, Lauren and I make time for intimacy, too – usually together, but sometimes also as couples – it's never boring in the bedroom!

In July last year, we got

more good news when Lauren fell pregnant again.

Our latest little one – another boy – is due any day now and we can't wait.

With a house bursting with boys, we're sure to have our hands full – even though there are three of us!

Now we've launched landmark legal proceedings to have all three of us named on Damien's birth certificate.

If we're successful, we'll do the same for the rest of our boys.

Owen, 7, James, 5, Damien, 2, Ryan, 1, and our unborn bundle, are the most important part of our special family.

We'll make sure they know how much Mum, Mumma and Dad love them.

We know our polyamorous relationship might not be very conventional.

But, to us, it's beautiful and perfect.

And there's certainly plenty of love to go around.

● **Buddy says, 'Our situation may be unique, but we're just normal people. Our goal as a family is the same as everyone**

**Hello, baby! A kiss for Lauren's bump**



*else's. We want to raise our children to be good people and be successful in life and have their own families.'*

● **Lauren says, 'People always assume I love one person more than the other, but I don't. We all love each other equally. That's what makes our relationship different. When we're all together, holding hands, people do a triple-take as they don't expect to see three people together like that. We're not in an open relationship, it's just the three of us and that's how it'll stay. Everything is equal – we call it polyfidelity.**

**We know it's not conventional but, to us, it's beautiful and perfect**

# Your Deals of the week

We've done the research – so that you can save the **CASH**



## Dress those curves

Plus-size fashion brand Curvissa is offering *Pick Me Up!* readers 20% off. Just visit [curvissa.co.uk](http://curvissa.co.uk) and enter the code PWKP at the checkout.



## Bag 'em quick!

Hippeas organic chickpea puffs are light, crunchy and airy, and just 90 calories a serving. They're also low in fat, gluten-free and vegan-friendly, and contain absolutely no preservatives or additives. The sharing bags are only £1.39 (usually £1.86) in Waitrose until 15 May.

## SAVING OF THE WEEK

### Going nuts

Kind snack bars have delicious, high-quality ingredients, while also being rich with wholesome nutty goodness. They're only 99p in Tesco (usually £1.29) until 11 May.

### Help for mums

When you have a child, costs can add up. So check out [topcashback.co.uk](http://topcashback.co.uk) – new members to the site can get up to £16 cashback at Mothercare until 29 April. There are also cashback deals for certain theme parks.



## OUR TOP TIP

### Sitting pretty

Furniture Choice is offering £100 off its Mission silver crushed velvet sofa suite (RRP £699.98) until the end of April. Visit [furniturechoice.co.uk](http://furniturechoice.co.uk)

## OFFER OF THE WEEK



### Spice boost

Curcumin, found in the spice turmeric, has been used for a myriad of health problems, including joint pain. You can get 25% off Bioglan Active Curcumin (RRP £24.99) until 26 April when bought at [bioglan.co.uk](http://bioglan.co.uk)



### Mine's a wine

I Heart Rosé is a fresh and fruity rosé that's bursting with the flavours of red berries and has a lovely fruity aroma. It pairs well with spicy food. Try it with chilli-marinated salmon or spicy prawn skewers. This refreshing wine is down to £5 (usually £5.50) in Tesco until 7 May.



### Chill-out zone

These healthier fruit-flavoured yogurt lollies from Cloudy & Fin are loved by kids and adults alike! They're deliciously creamy, low in calories and only £2.10 in Sainsbury's (usually £2.60) until 25 April.

# Your Brainwaves...

You're a clever bunch! Earn **£25 CASH** for your brilliant tips!



**Tip of the Week**

## All tied up

Whether you're moving house or just changing your wardrobe around, keep your clothes on hangers, place in drawstring bags and voila! No wardrobe worries.

*Zowie D'Souza, Southampton*



**Light-bulb moment!**

## Bright idea!

Make your own novelty lamp using an old coffee jar, battery fairy lights, and an old picture or card cut up. The perfect night light for your little ones.

*Tina Williams, via e-mail*



**Top Mum's Tip!**

## No ice-cream chaos

Cut a slit in a cupcake case and slide it under your child's ice lolly, for mess- and hassle-free ice-cream enjoyment.

*Gemma Davies, Gloucester*

## Stainless steal!

Fight troublesome sweat stains on your clothes by rubbing lemon juice on the area before washing - lemony-fresh and effective!

*Angela Garvin, Romford*



**No sweat!**



## Pint-sized palette

Make your kids feel like the next Picasso by glueing bottle lids on to an old CD and filling with paint. Perfect for tiny, albeit messy, hands.

*Karen McGuire, Lincolnshire*



## Recyclable icicle

Use old chocolate boxes to make quirky ice-cube shapes - sure to liven up any drink. Pretty cool!

*Sharon Carey, Cheshire*

# The little boy with BIGGEST SM

**With a poorly newborn, life was terrifying. Until a wonderful photo gave Nicky Bradshaw, 28, from Swadlincote, hope...**

**M**y baby bump was so big, you'd have thought I was carrying twins. 'It's all fluid,' the sonographer said. 'Your baby's swimming around in there!'

'As long as he's OK,' I said. Soon after falling pregnant, I'd been diagnosed with polyhydramnios – meaning I had too much amniotic fluid.

Thankfully, scans showed that although our baby was small, it was healthy.

And it always had its legs crossed in scans, so we were kept guessing about the sex!

The birth, in November 2010, was difficult, though.

The baby got stuck, so I was rushed into hospital for an emergency Caesarean.

At 4.30am, my partner Chris, then 22, was with me as they delivered our son and took him away to clean him up.

I felt relieved.

He was here at last, safe.

Then a nurse pulled the red emergency cord.

Suddenly, doctors and nurses swarmed in.

'What's going on?' I asked.

'It's just precautionary, but...' the midwife began.

'Don't lie to me, I cried.

'What's wrong with him?'

'He has a facial deformity,' she explained gently. 'We're taking him to Neonatal.'

'You can give him a quick

kiss before he goes,' she added.

As she carried 6lb 9oz Jayden towards me, all I noticed was how swollen his body was.

I kissed him gently, then he was quickly whisked away.

The doctors fought to stabilise me as I haemorrhaged.

Barely conscious, I was too weak to think of anything else.

Two hours later, the bleeding had finally stopped and I was back on the ward.

'Are you Jayden Bradshaw's mum?' a nurse asked, handing me a photo.

Gazing at it, I gasped. In the photo, in an incubator, was our boy – so small, so vulnerable.

But it looked as if he was smiling.

And, amid all the worry and the

fear, I felt a prickle of hope.

'All I want to do now is see him,' I said.

The doctors didn't know exactly what was wrong with Jayden, and I was so worried for him.

The four hours I waited to see him felt like the longest in the world.

Then finally, at 10.30am, Chris and I went up to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), to meet Jayden.

There was a doctor waiting.

'CT scans and X-rays confirm that Jayden has Treacher-Collins syndrome,' he explained to us.

'What's that?' I asked.

'It's a genetic condition,' the doctor explained.

'It's affected Jayden physically, not mentally, and means when he was growing in your womb his eyes, ears and jaw stopped growing properly.'

Suddenly, I had so many questions – *was it my fault? Did I do something wrong..?*

And I was so dazed that I didn't even cry.

The doctor explained Jayden would probably need surgery as he grew.

And, because he had no ear canals, he'd need hearing aids.

His eyesight might

also be affected.

*Heartbreaking.*

I also found out the extra amniotic fluid is common in Treacher-Collins pregnancies.

So much to take in.

I clung onto Chris for support.

Jayden needed a feeding tube, but I spent every waking minute with him, changing his nappies, talking to him, bonding with him.

As the initial swelling went down, I noticed how his face was different.

I could see that his eyes

were sloping downwards because they didn't have lower lids and proper sockets and his eyes were small.

And his ears were really tiny and underdeveloped.

But Chris and I certainly didn't

love him any less.

In fact, we couldn't have loved him any more.

All that I worried about was my son's future.

*Would kids tease him? Would he be bullied at school? Would he need to have lots of operations?* I wondered.

By the time we came home a week later, Jayden was feeding without the tube and doing well.

He was such a happy, placid little baby.

All of our friends and family accepted him, loved him.

There were days, though, when it did all seem a little too overwhelming for me.

'How am I going to cope?' I'd sob.

And then, when Jayden was just days old, I was diagnosed

**We couldn't have loved him any more. But would kids tease him?**



the

SMILE



Tiny Jayden - could it be a smile?!



Recently with me - and that show-stopping grin!

with postnatal depression.

Some days, when everything felt too much, I'd just look at Jayden's huge smile and remember exactly how lucky I was.

As the months passed, Jayden didn't make much noise and could only hear things that were very loud.

At 6 months old he had hearing aids fitted, and we taught him sign language for some basic words, like milk, food, tired.

And what he lacked in communication skills, he certainly made up for physically.

Jayden was walking by the time he was 9 months old.

And he was smiling the entire time, too.

However, once he was out of his buggy and walking around, other children noticed that he looked different.

'Why does he look funny?'

they'd question me, and also, 'What's wrong with his eyes?'

I fought back the tears.

'His eyes didn't grow like yours, that's why he looks different,' I'd explain to them.

Chris and I separated

when Jayden was 9 months old and, in time, I met Jason, 28.

He loved Jayden to bits.

By March 2012, I was expecting.

It was exciting, but I was worried.

*What if this baby has Treacher-Collins?* I thought.

We had extra scans to measure his face and skull and it all looked fine.

Before the baby arrived, Jayden went into Birmingham Children's Hospital to have an operation on his eye.

Surgeons pulled his right eye up so it wasn't so droopy. After,

Despite my fears, everyone wanted to play with Jayden...

it broke my heart to see his little face so swollen.

Thankfully, though, it soon went down.

And in January 2013, his baby brother Fletcher, arrived.

Jayden was excited to have a brother and they grew close.

When Jayden was 4, he started going to mainstream primary school.

Part of me wanted to keep him at home, to protect him from the world.

But teachers gave a talk to his class to explain why Jayden looked different.

And, despite my fears, Jayden was popular - everyone wanted to play with him.

Inevitably, there were times when people made comments.

'I don't like these ears. I want some like you and Fletcher,' Jayden told me one day after he got home from school.

'But you've got such lovely

ears,' I reassured him.

And soon I saw his face break into that smile.

'Mummy, I do like my ears,' he agreed.

Now Fletcher, 5, and Jayden, 7, are practically the same height and some people think they're twins.

Being older, Fletcher's started noticing more, too.

'Why does Jayden look different?' he asked me the other day.

'Because when he was in my tummy his eyes and ears stopped growing,' I told him.

'He's no different to you or me, though,' I explained.

'OK,' he said, accepting it. I love them both so much.

It really breaks my heart thinking about what Jayden might be up against, as he gets older.

Kids can be so cruel and I worry about him starting secondary school.

And, when I went to the cinema last year to watch *Wonder*, about a young boy called Auggie who has Treacher-Collins syndrome, I broke my heart crying.

The bullying scenes brought home just how tough things could be for Jayden.

So now I'm telling our story to ask that people try to see him through my eyes.

Jayden might look different, but he's like any other little boy.

He loves tearing around the house with his brother.

Getting up to no good.

Every day, Jayden shows me that show-stopping smile I saw on the day that he was born.

And it still gives me hope that everything is going to be OK.



Jayden and Fletcher get up to no good!

# Your Health

## INSTANT appointment

With Doctor Arabella Onslow



**Q** I have fibromyalgia and sleep poorly. The worse I sleep, the worse my pains, but my GP isn't keen to give me sleeping tablets, as they're so addictive. What can I do?  
*Jacqueline, Moorgate*

**A** Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition causing pain all over the body. It causes sleep problems because, even if you get enough hours, the quality of sleep's poor. Some types of anti-depressants can help, so they may be worth considering.

**Q** I'm waiting for a disc-repair op and I've been advised to take time off work completely. But I'm not fully disabled, so is there some kind of activity I can do

safely without making my condition worse?  
*Sarah, Banbury*

**A** Ask your doctor for a certificate that specifies working conditions that include gentle mobility without bending, stooping or lifting, or prolonged standing or sitting.

**Q** My husband died unexpectedly and I'm getting worried about my 7-year-old. She still chats to her dad all the time, saying he's in her room, talking to her. What should I do?  
*Katie, Preston*

**A** This is just part of the normal grieving process for children, who retain connections in many different ways with a lost loved one, while they're coming to terms with their loss.



### CONTACT US

For advice, contact us via one of the methods below. Letters and e-mails are selected randomly for publication. Sorry, Dr Onslow can't reply personally. **WRITE TO:** Pick Me Up!, 161 Marsh Wall, London E14 9AP. **EMAIL:** pickmeup@timeinc.com

Health On Twitter Follow me @DrBellyButton



**TRUE** or **FALSE**

### Non-gonococcal urethritis (NGU)

- 1** It's the inflammation of the urethra.  True  False
- 2** The term 'non-gonococcal urethritis' is used when the condition is caused by an STI.  True  False
- 3** It's rare in men.  True  False
- 4** Women rarely experience symptoms.  True  False

**1 TRUE** It's the inflammation of the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body, and is usually caused by an infection.

**2 FALSE** The term is used when the infection is not caused by the sexually transmitted infection gonorrhoea.

**3 FALSE** It's the most common condition diagnosed and treated among men in sexual-health clinics in the UK.

**4 TRUE** NGU rarely causes symptoms in women but, in men, it can cause cloudy discharge, a burning sensation when urinating, and soreness.

# UNBE SPI

Emma Clay-Burley, 25, from Cannock, has a fiancé and son who share the same rare disease

**W**hen you know, you know. And, when I met my fiancé

Jason, 45, in July 2015, I just knew he was The One.

We moved in after only a few months and, that November, there was an even bigger surprise...

'I'm pregnant!' I beamed. It wasn't planned, but we couldn't wait to start a family.

There was one cause for worry, though.

Jason had been born with a rare genetic disorder called osteogenesis imperfecta, or brittle bone disease.

The incurable condition left his bones extremely fragile, meaning even the slightest knock could cause them to fracture or break.

Jason had spent most of his

## 3 in 5

...that's how many of us are likely to take up smoking after just one cigarette, according to a recent study by researchers from Queen Mary University of London and the University of Glasgow.



# UNBREAKABLE

# RIT

Our newborn, with two broken legs



childhood in hospital and had suffered around 50 breaks in his lifetime.

He was anxious about passing on the faulty gene.

'What if our baby has it, too?' he asked, panicked.

'We'll cope,' I told him.

We wouldn't know if our little one had inherited the condition till after they arrived.

It was a worry, but nothing could hold back our joy.

Our beautiful baby boy Harry arrived on 25 July 2016.

He was born with a broken right leg and arm.

To make matters worse, his left leg snapped shortly after.

And an X-ray also showed that he'd somehow broken a rib

while he was in my tummy.

It was clear that our boy had brittle bone disease.

Jason felt terrible.

'It's my fault,' he groaned.

'Of course it's not,' I told him.

A specialist team from Birmingham Children's Hospital came to talk us through Harry's care.

The slightest thing could cause a bone to shatter.

We couldn't pick him up normally, instead we had to hold him under his head and back, supporting him with open hands.

Changing nappies was a two-man job.

Harry wore a harness to help his broken legs heal.

One of us had to remove that and hold his hips, while the other did the wiping.

When we finally brought him home after 10 days in hospital, I was terrified that

somehow I'd break him

But, with each passing day, it got easier.

Harry's now 19 months and he's doing great.

He hasn't suffered a single break since his birth and he's now talking and walking.

In fact, he's running!

But he won't be able to do some things other kids can.

He can only go to soft-play

centres when it's not busy.

And his bedroom has to be kept neat and tidy so that he doesn't trip over anything.

While we want to protect Harry from harm, we don't want to hold him back.

He's grown into such a happy, clever little boy.

Harry's bones may be fragile, but our brave tot has an unbreakable spirit.



Harry's doing great now!

## FACT FILE

Osteogenesis imperfecta, otherwise known as brittle bone disease, is a rare disorder that causes the bones to become fragile and break easily. The condition is lifelong, and is caused by a genetic mutation affecting the production of collagen. As there is currently no cure, treatment aims to prevent and control symptoms. Visit [brittlebone.org](http://brittlebone.org) for more information.

WORDS: JAMES HANMAN, KATIE PEARSON

## Men's health

With Dr Arabella Onslow



**Q** Dementia has affected many of my family and I'm scared I'll get it, too. I eat well and exercise, but can I do anything else to keep my brain healthy?

Martin, Cornwall

**A** Eating healthily, exercising regularly and continuing to learn new skills is preventive, but there may also be some benefit from B12 and folic acid, available over the counter.

## Give yourself a lift

### Spinach

**S**pinach is low in fat and has no cholesterol, plus it packs plenty of zinc, protein, fibre and magnesium. Its high iron content is vital to efficiently transport oxygen around the body, too. Add it to your evening meal for a real health boost.



# NAMED & SH

## MANCHESTER

**Daniel Woolf, 36, Manchester**

**P**redatory Daniel Woolf has been jailed for 19 years for raping a woman in a tent in Hale. Woolf had been sleeping rough in the woods in October 2017, when he approached the woman, in her 30s, at Altrincham train station around 1am.

He led her away from the station, before launching his vicious attack, punching and kicking the woman and then dragging her into a tent. He raped her during an ordeal that lasted hours, until she eventually managed to flee to a nearby shop. Woolf was arrested shortly after. A jury found him guilty of rape, false imprisonment and assault at Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court. He'd pleaded guilty to breaching a sex offender notification at a previous hearing.



## KENT

**Cee Jay Kirkwood, 20, Folkestone**

**O**n 16 April 2017, at around 1.30am, Kirkwood went on the rampage, carrying out an unprovoked hammer attack on a man in his twenties, in Old High Street, Folkestone.

Kirkwood hit his victim on the head with the hammer and the man was taken to hospital suffering

a fractured skull.

The police found Kirkwood brandishing the weapon and arguing with a large group. He ran from officers, dropping his hammer as he fled. However, he was detained and arrested.

At Canterbury Crown Court, he admitted causing grievous bodily harm, affray and possession of an offensive weapon and was jailed for five years.



## NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

**Terrence Jones, 64, Far Cotton**

**A** man who 'preyed' on a youngster has been jailed for three-and-a-half years. Terrence Jones pleaded guilty to two counts of sexual activity with a child.

Speaking after the sentencing, DC Kirstie Brooks said, 'I am delighted with this result. This was a dangerous man who preyed on a young child, and I'm

really proud of the victim, as well as her parents, for being so strong and supporting police action.'

Jones will remain on the Sex Offenders Register for life and was handed a Sexual Harm Prevention Order, which restricts his contact with children and electronic devices.



# NAMED

Take a long, hard look at this month's rogues' gallery of criminals...

## WEST YORKSHIRE

### Lee Martin Patterson, 51, Huddersfield

Lee Patterson has been jailed for three years, four months, after defrauding a local charity of £216,000. Patterson committed the fraud while employed as Project Manager for Leeds-based Christian charity Bramley Family Support Project (BFSP), and another related project called Wildfire.

He 'stripped' the charity of thousands that would've been used to provide emotional and practical support to disadvantaged children and their families. Between 2008 and 2012, he abused his position to authorise payments from charity bank accounts, disguising the misuse of funds by creating a fake financial report.

He pleaded guilty to two counts of fraud by abuse of position and two counts of fraud by false representation.



## DERBYSHIRE

### Philip Cunningham, 48, Chaddesden

Thirteen years after he first attacked a woman, DNA left on a bottle allowed detectives to snare a rapist.

In May 2004, Philip Cunningham attacked a woman. DNA was taken from the victim at the time, but no-one was caught. He struck again in September 2017, assaulting a 16-year-old student.

This time, Cunningham left a bottle on the ground at the scene and, when it was sent for analysis, DNA matched the 2004 case. Cunningham pleaded guilty at Derby Crown Court to one count of rape and another for sexual assault. He was jailed for 13 years.



## ESSEX

### Jay Henry, 35, Lowestoft

Described as a 'calculating and experienced thief,' Jay Henry has been jailed for 12 months for stealing bags and frozen food from a Southend care home.

At 2.40am on 16 September, workers at the home called the police to report their handbags - containing

bank cards, cash and phones - had been stolen. Later that day while preparing meals, workers also realised frozen meat - worth a three-figure sum - had been taken.

Police reviewing CCTV identified the offender as Henry by the distinctive tattoo on his face.

He was arrested at his home and, at Basildon Crown Court, Henry pleaded guilty to two counts of burglary. He was ordered to pay £140 victim surcharge.



## SURREY

### Daryl Vase, 25, Guildford

Victims of a recent burglary had a shock as they drove through a village near their home - when they saw another of their family cars being driven towards them.

The stranger behind the wheel of their silver Mercedes was prolific burglar

Daryl Vase. Despite the stunned victims trying to give chase, Vase escaped with the vehicle.

The family arrived home to discover a break-in and the keys to the Mercedes and jewellery had been stolen. Vase was identified by forensic evidence from blood found at the scene, and later arrested. He was sentenced at Guildford Crown Court to three years in prison.



# Genius or TOTALLY BONKERS?

We put some truly original products to the test...

**Champagne Flute Baby Bottle, £11.99, prezzybox.com**

Now no-one's suggesting giving bubbles to a baby - but, for a bit of fun next time you're raising a glass for a toast, here's a flute/bottle for your tot's milk or juice. It's dishwasher-safe, too.

**Verdict: BONKERS!**  
But quite a photo opportunity.

**Quadrapan, £39.99, highstreettv.com**

Save on washing-up time by cooking your entire fry-up in one pan. Great for small hobs and cookers, this is non-stick, so you can cook bacon and sausages with no need for added oil or butter.

**Verdict: GENIUS!**  
Saturday mornings just got even better.

**Swish To Go, £3 for 6 sachets, Boots**

You can freshen your mouth without water with this clever powder that dissolves into an ingestible mouthwash. Pour a sachet on to your tongue, let it dissolve, then swish around your mouth for 10 seconds and swallow for minty-fresh breath. Voila!

**Verdict: GENIUS!**  
Great for daytime refreshes and nights out.

# WIN PUZZLE3 £300!

## Crack it!

Work out which letter each number represents. When you've filled the grid, put the correct letters into the Prize Answer boxes at the bottom to spell out a word. Enter on page 45.

19	6	13	7	7		19	26	13	4	1		1	
26		5		17		4		10		18	11	13	20
22	25	17	1	18	25	17	16	3		4		7	
25		1		9		7		4	11	1	3	17	16
11	20	13		7	24	22	26	26				13	
		7		18		23		22	9	7	13	19	16
18	11	7	13	1	14	13		7		16		16	
	26		5			1	13	8	1	4	2	16	
25	22	7	16	22	25	13			4		3		
	7		1		22		19	4	16	12	4	26	24
4	7	7	4	22	26		6		1		15		
	2				26	26	4	25	4		18	17	16
25	3	13	7	26	22		22		22		9		1
	26		13		9	18	9	13	9	16	22	16	20
2	26	13	4		13		13		13		7		7
	20		26	3	1	13	8		13	21	13	19	16

A B C D E F G H ~~I~~ J ~~K~~ L M N O P Q R ~~S~~ T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

### PRIZE ANSWER

16	1	4	19	24	13	8
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# Your Dilemmas

Can't make your mind up? Write to us at Pick Me Up! for good advice



## Do I leave lover?

**Suzanne, 49,**  
Blackburn

Last year, my husband suddenly died. It was horrendous for me and my kids – a son in his teens, and daughter in her 20s.

I've been there for them in their grief – except I couldn't mourn like them. My last years with my husband were unloving as he preferred to drink.

Since his death, I've become close with an old friend who's been in my life for 10 years and also has kids. This relationship feels like a breath of fresh air. It was exciting when we made love. I felt like a new woman.

When I told my kids, my daughter took it well. But my son was furious. He says it's 'him or me' and is refusing to speak to me. Do I ditch my new love to keep my son happy?



**YES**

**Pick Me Up!** reader Gemma Summers says, 'Your son's still

**grieving. It's too soon and very raw. And your children should always come first.**

**'Your son may see this man as trying to replace his dad.**

**'You need to set aside your relationship with your new love until your son comes round to the idea of him being around.**

**'Yes, it's your life. But would you be happy if your son wasn't?'**



**NO**

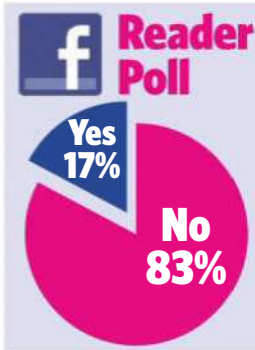
**Pick Me Up!** reader Ingrid Ross says, 'It sounds like

**your boy is having trouble processing his dad's death.**

**'Have a chat about how important his dad was to**

**you, but gently remind him your own happiness is as important as your kids'.**

**'Your son will most likely fly the nest at some point. He will realise how selfish it was for him to expect you to be alone and unhappy.'**



## Tell her to be fair?

**Bethany, 62,**  
Cornwall

**R**ecently, I've noticed my daughter favours one of her girls over the other. It's heartbreaking.

One's 5, the other 7. They're close but so different. The younger one is very girlie – like my daughter. However, the eldest is a real tomboy.

My daughter buys her youngest more gifts, dresses her up, compliments her. But her sister gets left out.

Should I tell my daughter to rethink her ways?



**YES**

**Pick Me Up!** reader Nicola Green says, 'I would ask, not

**tell her! Ask if it's possible your older granddaughter could feel left out with her not spending as much time with her and buying her gifts.**

**'Your daughter may be offended at first, but she'll eventually realise she's got to be fair.**

**'Otherwise, your older granddaughter will start to resent the younger one – that's harder to sort out.'**



**NO**

**Pick Me Up!** reader Chrissy Russell says, 'Maybe your

**daughter doesn't know how to play with her eldest as she has more in common with the youngest.**

**'I wouldn't tell her direct as this could cause tension between you and her.**

**'Why not suggest you do something as a family? Let the eldest child choose an activity the first time, and the youngest the next time.**

**'See if that helps mum and daughter to bond.'**

### ADVICE LINES

● Relate offers relationship advice, whether LGBTQ+, sexual, family or friendship

– call 0300 100 1234.

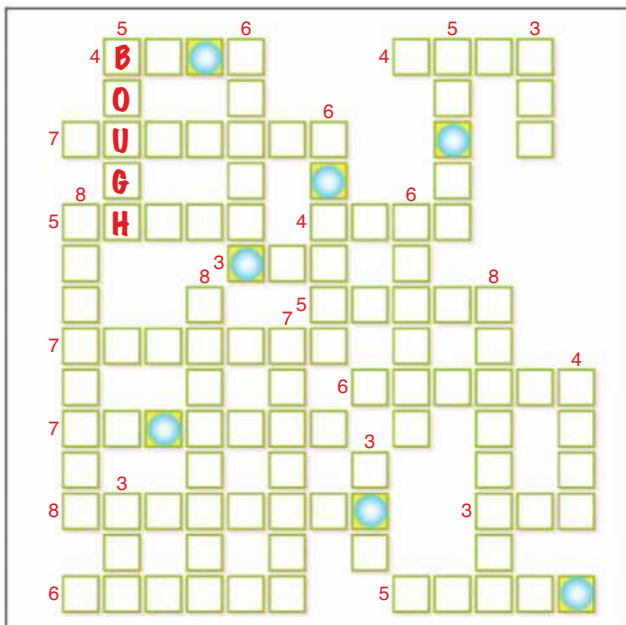
● NSPCC stands up for all children and keeps them safe. If you're worried about a child, call 0808 800 5000.

● Any parent can get relationship or family advice without being judged by calling Family Lives on 0808 800 2222.

# WIN £25!

## Cross it!

Solve the puzzle to find a word. Fit the words back in the grid and the letters in the highlighted squares spell out the answer. We've put in one word to help.  
Enter on page 45.



- |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>3 letters</b> | <b>4 letters</b> | Eagle            | Maroon           | Oxidise          |
| Nod              | Barm             | Lapel            | Muddle           |                  |
| Rap              | Dine             | Scene            | Nipper           | <b>8 letters</b> |
| Sty              | Espy             | Shako            |                  | Academia         |
| Woe              | Yelp             |                  | <b>7 letters</b> | Leapfrog         |
| Yaw              |                  | <b>6 letters</b> | Brocade          | Slyboots         |
|                  | <b>5 letters</b> | Bedaub           | Buckram          | Swimsuit         |
|                  | Bough            | Legacy           | Disturb          |                  |

# WIN £25!

## Sudoku!

To solve the puzzle, each 3 x 2 box, each column and each row must contain the numbers 1 to 6. Solve the puzzle, then read down the numbers in the highlighted squares for the prize answer.  
Enter on page 45.

			1		
		2		3	
2		3	6		
		1	3		5
	2		4		
		5			

# The a WHIS

When Ruth Bradshaw, 41, from Essex, started hearing voices, she couldn't believe who was trying to reach her...

Sitting playing with our family cat, I suddenly got a weird feeling. *She's cold*, I thought. So I leapt up and grabbed a blanket. 'There you go, Clancy - now you'll be warm,' I smiled, as she curled up in it. Clancy purred back at me, as if saying thank you. It was 1985 and I was 8 years old. I'd always had a strong connection to our pets. Actually, I'd always connected with any animal. It was almost as if I knew exactly what they wanted, as if they spoke to me. 'Don't be silly. You've just got a wild imagination,' my mum Thea, now 70, would say. *Animals can't talk, you've*

*just got good instincts*, I'd tell myself. I grew up, and got a job in marketing. Only, I'd often get a weird feeling creep over me. Once, I visited a friend's farm, and I just knew what the animals were thinking - if they were happy or sad. As if they were talking to me. *Can't be...* I thought. In September, 2006, I started a side business offering holistic aromatherapy, spent years juggling two careers. My heart was more in helping others. And so, in October 2008, I went on a conservation project in Madagascar. Trekking through the blistering jungle with a team



# Animal PERER

With my  
happy cat  
Zanzibar



I can talk to the animals - even this bearded dragon!



of people, I suddenly went cold. Everything around me felt darker and hostile.

I couldn't shake the feeling someone was looking at me.

Then...

'Leave our jungle!' I heard a voice shout.

In shock, I looked up and locked eyes with a lemur.

*You're imagining it,* I thought.

But I couldn't shake the feeling we weren't welcome.

Back home, I told Mum.

'Well, what do you expect?' she laughed. 'I'm sure animals hate it, when humans come poking around.'

'You're right,' I sighed.

It was just my overactive imagination again.

Except, I kept hearing voices whenever animals were near.

In January 2012, I adopted my rescue cat Zanzibar, and whenever I went away, I'd come home to a mess.

One day, I started to tell her off, only then I heard a little voice...

'I'm not happy,' it said.

I hated the thought of my poor cat being sad.

I needed answers.

I called in an animal psychic,

who told me that Zanzibar felt neglected.

'Just talk to her, tell her where you're going and why,' the psychic explained.

So, whenever I went away, leaving Zanzi to be looked after by my flatmate Emma, I'd explain everything.

I'd tell her where I was going, and when I'd be back.

And it worked!

After that, Zanzi was a perfectly behaved little kitty.

But now I'd realised something else, as well...

It would seem those weird feelings and voices I'd been hearing weren't so strange, after all.

I looked into it further.

I took online classes, tried to understand what I was feeling and hearing.

Then I watched an amazing video about a panther.

Simply by listening to him, animal communicator Anna Breytenbach transformed the aggressive, wild hunter into

a calm, domesticated cat.

After that, I was hooked.

And I wanted to use my gift to help people and animals, just as Anna had.

I continued studying different techniques to build trust, started offering help to friends and family with problem pets.

I'd sit down with the pet and ask questions to gain the animal's trust.

'What's your favourite food?' I'd ask. Or, 'What's your favourite toy?'

The pets'd soon relax, then I'd be able to explain the problems for the owners and help them to solve them!

It didn't matter if the animal was misbehaving, depressed or even dying, I helped them all.

I worked with one owner whose dog was really feisty.

I helped calm the animal down, as she was bored and not challenged enough.

Socialising the pup with bigger, active dogs helped her

run off energy.

She became calmer, happier.

Sometimes, it was the smallest detail that made a huge impact.

From the things that the animals ate, to the owners talking to them.

Business rocketed.

I got rave reviews online, too.

*Within a day, my girl seems happier,* one read.

It took years to come to terms with my gift.

Of course, some people still think I'm bonkers.

But, once they've seen what I can do, they usually change their tune.

Animals, like humans, have souls and emotions.

I don't know why I have this gift, but I connect with them, can hear, see, and sometimes taste what they need or want.

I've learnt to tap into this sixth sense, because that's exactly what it is.

It turns out I'm a real-life Doctor Dolittle.

An animal counsellor!

And helping animals feel better is the best part of my job.

The voices I'd been hearing weren't so strange after all

# DROP DEAD GORGEOUS

**Slimmer Angela Reid, 48, from Barking, Essex, was looking fab but her diet had unleashed something deadly**



Stitched up after my op

**W**alking into the living room, I slumped onto the sofa. I'd just got back from a salsa class and muscles I didn't even know I had were aching.

'Mummy's knees and back are sore,' I groaned to my son Joshua, 6, as he looked up at me.

'If your weight fit your height, Mummy, I don't think you would hurt so much,' he replied, and went back to watching telly.

*Ouch!*

Joshua had a point.

A size-22 and weighing 15st 7lb, I'd never felt ashamed of my curves.

I'd had three kids, after all – Lucian, 15, and Jada, 9, as well as Joshua.

And my hubby David, 49, wasn't complaining, either!

I'd even celebrated my big booty and ample hips by entering a few beauty pageants for larger ladies.

The contests were all about loving yourself, no matter your size.

But recently, I'd

started to think about all the chocolate and takeaways I scoffed. I wasn't actually being that kind to myself...

I was feeling tired all the time. Just running upstairs left me huffing and puffing.

And my weekly salsa class had totally wiped me out.

'I need to get healthier,' I'd already told David, and I'd threatened to go on another diet.

But I just hadn't got around to it yet.

Now, though, I took Joshua's words to heart.

Over the next few days I researched different diets.

I'd tried so many in the past, from the 5:2 to Weight Watchers – and everything in between.

You name it, I'd tried it!

So I knew I needed something new, if it had any chance of working.

Looking on Facebook, I spotted some incredible before-and-after snaps of women who'd ditched the fad diets.

They were simply exercising regularly, eating a healthy,

balanced diet and cutting out all the rubbish.

'Wow!' I gasped.

It would mean swapping my usual diet of Chinese takeaways, pizzas and large roast dinners for salads, soups and lots of fruit and veg.

'I'm going to do it,' I announced to David.

'If you're sure, love,' he said.

I started it and, for the first week, I stuck to the plan rigidly.

I made sure the cupboards were empty of junk and threw the kids' leftovers straight in the bin, rather than gobbling them up myself.

And stepping on the scales a week later...

'I've lost 10lb!' I squealed.

By the following week, I was a full stone lighter. And, over time, the weight continued to drop off me.

I went from a size-22 to a 10.

Weighing 10st, I was the slimmest I'd been since I was at school.

I had a killer new look and felt full of life.

'Now Mummy can dance without getting sore knees,' I teased Joshua, as I showed him some of my salsa moves in the kitchen one evening.

Determined to maintain my new weight and healthy lifestyle, I took up running and boxing.

I'd never looked or felt better, and I had so much more energy.

That's why I was really

surprised when I woke up one Sunday morning in April 2016 feeling exhausted. My whole body ached.

And, as the day went on, I noticed that I was drenched in sweat, and I started to shiver.

I was at home with my mum Lucy, 74, at the time.

'Is this how the menopause starts?' I asked, wiping the sweat off my brow.

I was 46, after all...

But, by that night, I was suffering with stomach cramps and started vomiting.

It was horrific.

'I need to see a doctor,' I groaned to David, on the way back from another dash to the loo.

When I saw my GP the next day, he told me there was a virus going round and I'd probably picked it up.

He prescribed painkillers for the cramps and sent me home.

But the tablets didn't help. Barely moving from the sofa, I'd never felt so ill.

By the Wednesday, my mum was so worried she said she'd take me to A&E.

Waiting to be seen at King George Hospital, Ilford, I felt unsteady on my feet.

'I think I need some fresh



Before my weight loss



S



Me and my hubby David

**No regrets: I went from a size-22 to a 10**

air,' I told Mum. Wobbling towards the door, I didn't even make it outside. Next thing, I was crashing to the floor. My vision became blurred as a haze of white coats floated above me. Coming round on a hospital bed an hour later, I was dosed up on morphine. David, my mum and Joshua were by my bedside. I was terrified. After losing 5st 7lb, I'd never been so healthy! So why did I feel as though I was dying? Soon, I had the answer. 'A scan has showed your contraceptive coil has dislodged and punctured your bowel,' the doctor told me. I was stunned. I'd had the coil fitted six

years earlier, after having Joshua. It had never given me any bother. In fact, I'd loved it. It meant that David and I didn't have to worry about any little 'accidents'. I'd almost forgotten that it was there. Until now... The doctor explained that the coil had moved, migrating to the bowel, piercing it and causing dangerous toxins to leak into my body. I couldn't believe it. And it wasn't over yet. I was told I needed specialist, life-saving surgery to remove the coil and repair my bowel and Fallopian tube. I was rushed by ambulance to Queen's Hospital, Romford. David took Josh home as it was so shocking, and Mum stayed there with me. 'You're going into septic shock,' the doctor warned. Without surgery, my life was at risk. He said there was a chance that my bowel couldn't be repaired and I'd need a colostomy bag for the rest of my life. 'Why has this happened?' I sobbed, devastated. 'We suspect that losing so much weight is what triggered the coil to start to move,' the doctor replied. My diet - all that hard work and effort - had left

me fighting for my life? Tears streamed down my face as I said goodbye to my mum and was wheeled into surgery. Coming round five hours later, I felt groggy and my body ached. The first thing I thought of was the colostomy bag. Feeling around my body, I panicked. 'You were lucky,' the surgeon told me. They'd managed to repair my bowel, so I wouldn't need one. I cried with relief. But they'd had to remove an ovary, my appendix and the Fallopian tube that had also been damaged by the coil. The biggest risk had been the life-threatening sepsis. I was lucky to have survived. The doctor said what happened was incredibly rare. I spent two weeks recovering in hospital. But I needed three months of bed rest back at home. I put on 2st over that time. But, once I was back on my feet, I restarted my healthy diet and the pounds soon fell off again. I decided not to have another coil fitted and we use alternative contraception. I had a close call with death - but do I regret having the coil or losing weight? Nope, I've no regrets at all. Despite everything I've been through, my life has been changed for the better.

**I was going into septic shock and, without surgery, I could die**

# Your style



**£12.99**  
TK Maxx

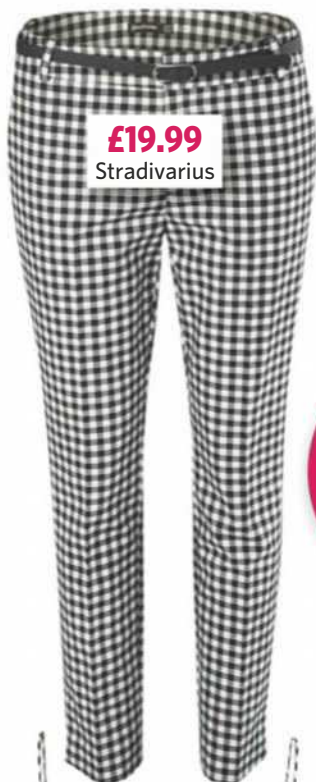


**£26**  
Bonmarché



**£35**  
Simply Be

**Dress,  
£18**  
George  
at Asda



**£19.99**  
Stradivarius



**£28**  
Very

**Pick Me Up!  
Loves...**  
*...a mini mac in  
this classic print. Pop  
it on and you'll  
be singing in  
the rain!*



**£45**  
Marks & Spencer



**£25**  
Miss  
Selfridge

**£12**  
Matalan



**£14**  
Matalan

# This week Gingham



**£17.99**  
H&M

**PickMeUp!  
Loves...**  
...peplum tops.  
They enhance your  
waist and look  
fabulous with jeans  
or skirts.



**£14**  
George  
at Asda



**£28**  
Miss  
Selfridge



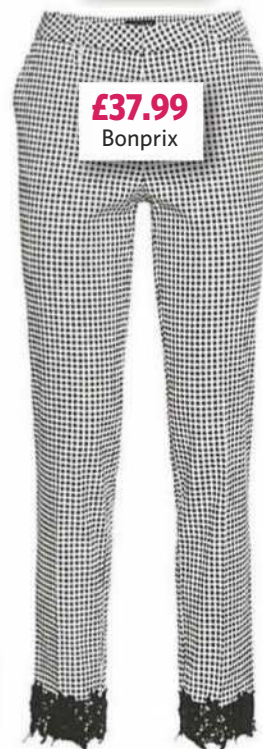
**£25**  
Very



**£22.99**  
Bonprix



**£29**  
Red Herring at  
Debenhams



**£37.99**  
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**£22**  
Bonmarché



**£42**  
Wallis

**£20**  
Tu at  
Sainsbury's

COMPILED BY: JESS BECH

**HELLO  
BABY!**



Celebrate your new arrival and get **£25 CASH**



## Ray of sunshine

Cute! My rainbow baby Ella's just 2 weeks old in this pic, and good as gold.  
*Sarah Jauch, Wales*



## Little prince

The apple of my eye! My Zachary at one day old - look how small he is!  
*Vicky Wood, Bradford*



## Say cheese!

My 2-month-old Molly may not have any teeth, but has the cutest smile!  
*Primrose Lynch, London*

# Till death do us part

It was the day before her wedding and everything was ready, then Danielle Cumberworth, 28, from Tunbridge Wells, Kent, got a devastating call...

It was only 2pm, but already the drinks were flowing.

'When in Crete...!'

I grinned, raising my glass of wine.

It was October 2015, and I was on holiday with my sister Rochelle, 19, and friend Jade, 23.

'Too early for a drinking game?' Rochelle joked.

'Never!' I laughed.

Just then, a tall guy pulled up a sun lounger.

'Mind if I join you?' he asked, with a sexy grin.

'Not at all,' I flirted back.

His name was Ashley Grant-Smith. He was 25, the same age as me, and from

Leicester - 150 miles away from my home in Kent.

He was such a laugh so, for the rest of the week, us girls partied with Ashley and his friends.

'Let's keep in touch,' he said.

Back home, we messaged every day.

Ashley had just moved to London, to work as an account manager.

It meant he lived just over an hour away from me.

'Now we can meet up and go for dinner,' he said.

Soon, we were spending

every weekend together.

Only, we weren't just mates any more.

We were completely crazy about each other.

But, by January 2016, something was worrying me.

Ashley had a livid, red lump on the back of his neck.

'You ought to see your GP,' I said.

Told it was a just cyst, he was given several courses of antibiotics. But

it wouldn't clear up.

Over the next few weeks, it got bigger and angrier - 15cm in size.

Ashley saw a skin specialist, and had blood tests.

'Will you come with me for the results?' Ashley asked.

'Sure,' I said.

With my background as a medical insurer, I was worried it could be something serious.

It was.

'You have blood cancer,' the doctor told Ashley.

Horrified, I glanced at Ashley, whose face had drained of all colour.

They weren't sure what type

**I'd only  
just found  
Ashley,  
I couldn't  
lose him  
now**



**'COLIN' THE TUMOUR**

# HEARTBREAKING REAL LIFE

# h rt



**Together before cancer (above) and after (left)**

fighting this together.

'I'm not going anywhere,' I said.

A few weeks later, Ashley started chemotherapy at University College Hospital in London. Sometimes in hospital for weeks on end, Ashley had to quit his job and move his stuff into mine.

It broke my heart, seeing him lose his hair and grow weak.

But Ashley was still that cheeky joker I'd met in Crete.

'I'll be one of the 25 per cent that make it,' he'd say grinning. 'You'll see.'

I tried to be strong, too.

I'd go to work in the day, then spend each evening with him chatting away.

But, back home from hospital, I'd cry my eyes out.

Months passed, with Ashley having one chemo cycle after the other.

But the tumour – who Ashley nicknamed Colin – continued to grow.

'I wish Colin would sod off!' he'd joke to me.

That was so Ashley – a joker,

but oh-so-strong.

Then, in August 2017, hope. The Anthony Nolan Foundation found a donor to enable Ashley to have a stem-cell transplant.

This was his last option. 'Please let this work,' I prayed desperately.

But, before he could have the operation, Ashley began to deteriorate.

'It's too late,' a doctor confirmed in September 2017.

Ashley's cancer was now terminal.

I couldn't bear to believe it. But my gorgeous man was declining before my eyes.

'I want to go back home,' he said. 'To my family in Leicester.'

I went with him. And one night, as we cuddled on the sofa, I asked if he'd any regrets.

'I'd loved to have married you,' he grinned. 'Maybe we still could...?'

Contacting Leicester

Register Office, they agreed to a short-notice ceremony at Ashley's family home.

So at 9.30am on 9 October 2017, just 24 hours before our wedding was due to take place, I went to make arrangements.

'I love you,' I said, kissing him goodbye.

Then, as I walked into the register office, my phone rang – it was Ashley's parents Richard, 59, and Donna, 48, telling me to return to the house, as fast as I could.

When I arrived, and heard his mum weeping, I knew it was too late.

Running to his bedside, I clasped his hands and sobbed my heart out.

'You waited for me to leave,' I realised. He'd wanted to make his passing easier for me.

So, instead of a wedding, we had a funeral.

Over 300 people came to say goodbye to Ashley.

And there was laughter, as well as tears.

We spent the evening singing all of his favourite karaoke songs.

But now life feels so quiet and empty without him.

I won't give up, though. How can I, when he never did?

So I signed up for various marathons and triathlons in his memory and to raise money for the blood-cancer charity Bloodwise.

Ashley and I didn't have long enough together, and we didn't get to say our wedding vows.

But I can still feel them in my heart.



**Fundraising for a blood-cancer charity**

WORDS: SARAH FINLEY, TRACY GAYTON. PHOTOS: PRIME FEATURES

# Animal magic

Show us what your pets are up to and get **£25 CASH**

**PET OF THE WEEK**



Here's Dennis the Australian frilled dragon showing why he's king of the castle.  
*Tabetha Bennett, Manchester*



Stop, thief! I caught my 9-month-old pooch stealing my slipper. Troublemaker!  
*Patricia Harris, Wisbech*

This is yummy, Mummy!

Are we on the Moon yet?



I always have to check the tumble dryer for our kitten Sky as it's her favourite warm place for a dreamy catnap...  
*Jane Whitaker, Margate*

Have you got my best side?



Here's my little man striking a killer pose with his toy mouse as if for a portrait... Marco breaks hearts everywhere with his reclining stance.  
*Jennifer Johnson, via e-mail*



Paws up! We caught our dwarf rabbit Daisy red-handed devouring our potato plant.  
*Joanne Campbell, Northern Ireland*



Barney is all ready for a day at the races in Mum's blue fascinator.  
*Debb Hunt, Nottingham*

**Pick Me Up!**  
**Bingo**



**PROMOTION**

# I'm so happy with my big

# WIN!

**I won £1,976 a day after I joined!**

**Daniela Rusu, 38, Isle of Wight**

**O**ne Saturday last October, I was due at work in a few hours. I have a 3-year-old lad who is an absolute bundle of fun.

I loved being a mum and couldn't wait for my second baby in January.

We were expecting a girl. Patting my bump, I started up the laptop.

I'd only signed up to Pick Me Up! Bingo a day earlier.

I started with a few different games. Some I even won a fiver or a tenner on!

Then I saw the game Round the Clock Bingo.

You bought numbered tickets, like in a bingo hall, except this game crossed your numbers off, so you could do something else.

So I bought tickets for the next game. They were on a buy-two-

get-one-free offer!

Leaving my laptop on, I got ready for work.

Then, as my son ate breakfast, his dad Colin, 35, woke up.

'Morning!' I said.

I had five minutes before I'd need to leave, so I opening up

the game again, I did a double-take.

My account was up by £1,976 - I'd hit the jackpot!

'I don't believe it!' Colin said when I showed him.

Christmas went by in a flash and the tree was really heaving with gifts.

Then we painted our girl's room and got sleepsuits and toys ready for her arrival.

I can't believe that I hit the jackpot a day after joining. My Pick Me Up! Bingo win has been fantastic for our family.

And my little princess is going to be spoilt rotten!

**JACKPOT WINNER!**

pay: Daniela R

**£1,976**

*One Thousand, Nine Hundred  
And Seventy Six Pounds*

## DANIELA'S WINNING GAME

**W**hat's your favourite time of day to play? Whatever it is, our Round the Clock 75-ball bingo room is open 24/7, with a new game every five minutes. There is a progressive jackpot, and guaranteed jackpots, any of which can be won with a 10p ticket! So, whenever you fancy a quick game, this is the room to join the fun.



**Not a member yet? Register with our latest offer overleaf\***

\*18+. UK only. Registration, deposit & wager required. T&Cs apply.

**Opening up the game, I did a double-take - I'd hit the jackpot!**

**JOIN NOW AT**

**pickmeupbingo.com**

GambleAware 18+

# WE BAGGED

# £4,458!

Phyllis Elliot-Tingley, 63, from Brighton, was absolutely over the moon when she scooped a whopping jackpot...



I burst into happy tears when I won!

Phyllis Elliot-Tingley, 63, Brighton

It was last October and I was having a night in by myself, which was rare.

My husband David, 64, was waiting for his cab as he was going to see our local football team play.

'Why don't you play bingo?' David suggested.

I'd joined Pick Me Up! Bingo in January 2011, and mainly played with the friends I'd made in the chatrooms.

At 7pm, I bought tickets for Bingo Lounge where you match up different game patterns to win.

*Hi, how are you?* I typed to friends in the chatrooms.

Then in the second game, I noticed I needed one more number.

'Come on number 59!' I was cheering to myself. I'd win a £2,150 for a full house if I got that number.

Then another number popped up – it was 59!

My screen flashed and the word *Jackpot!* came up.

I'd won £3,458!

I started screaming.

'What's wrong?' David asked.

'I've won the jackpot!' I told him and then I burst into happy tears.

It turned out that I'd not only won the full house –

but I'd also bagged the progressive jackpot of £1,308!

All of the other members in the chatroom were sending me their congratulations. So kind.

David still went to the game, but said after that he couldn't concentrate while he was there!

That win really did come at the most perfect time for us.

Our tumble dryer had blown up three days earlier!

It didn't sink in until I saw my bank balance three days later.

Safe to say, we went on a bit of a spending spree!

We bought a tumble dryer. And treated our family!

My daughter got a new coat and our granddaughter got designer clothes and lovely perfume.

It was a delight seeing their faces.

We put some by for a holiday, too.

It's been ages since we went away together, so we're planning to head off to Corfu.

We've never been there before and we're both really looking forward to it.

'It'll be lovely being in the sun together,' I told David.

So, it's a massive thank you to Pick Me Up! Bingo.

For my big win and my new friends in the chatroom.

I'll also send you some photos from my sunlounger – with me holding a cocktail in my hand to celebrate!

**'Come on number 59!' I was cheering to myself**



# PROMOTION

Pick Me Up! Bingo

Join today!

Get up to

£50

of FREE Bingo\*

1 Register with promo code **PMUK17**

2 Play £10 on any game

3 Claim up to £50 of FREE BINGO

T&Cs:

\*18+. UK only. New members only, registration and opt in required. Min £10 deposit and wager. Bingo game restrictions apply - £50 value on 25p tickets. 30-day expiry from opt in. Rules apply. Offer on this issue ends 26 April 2018. See full T&Cs at [pickmeupbingo.com](http://pickmeupbingo.com) Pick Me Up! Bingo is part of the Jackpotjoy.com network. For 24-hour support, freephone 0800 458 0770. Please play responsibly. BeGambleAware.org

**JACKPOT WINNER!**

Ms. Jill J  
One Thousand Pounds

£1,000

A grand in my hand!

It was priceless being able to create such special family memories!

Jill Jones, 55,  
Weston-super-Mare

**A**s I nattered away with my pals, I just couldn't stop giggling.

You see, we'd all got chatting in the chatroom of my favourite bingo site - *Pick Me Up!* Bingo.

Over the years I'd had a few small wins on the site.

For me, though, it was all about having fun.

In July last year, I'd pre-bought bingo tickets to play on a Tiki Bingo game that was coming up later on.

A day or so after that, I logged back in...

Then I saw that my account balance showed £1,000!

I'd won the jackpot with one of my advance-buy tickets.

*Incredible!*

I was home alone, so I did a silly dance around the kitchen!

When

my husband Phil, 57, got home later, I told him the good news.

'Well, that's really made my day!' he told me, smiling.

My daughter, 22, had recently moved to Lynmouth.

So I paid for myself, Phil and our son, 24,

to go and stay there for the weekend.

We had some lovely lunches and meals out, and I also treated the children to a few bits and pieces.

In fact, we all had such a great weekend away.

And I really can't thank *Pick Me Up!* Bingo enough for making it all possible.

Being able to create those wonderful, special memories with my family was really priceless to me.

**I was home alone, so I did a silly dance around the kitchen!**

**ANY TIME... ANYWHERE**

The great thing about *Pick Me Up!* Bingo is that now you can play any time, anywhere you want. Choose from a huge range of games including favourites like *Bingo Lounge*, *Emerald* and *Sapphire*. You can start playing from 10p and you'll easily find your favourite game. Will you be our next big winner?



22

JOIN NOW AT

**pickmeupbingo.com**

GambleAware 18+

# Beauty and THE BEAST

**When Apollonia Llewellyn, 18, from Barnsley, became a finalist in a beauty pageant, she was delighted. Then her life began to unravel...**

**H**ands on my hips, I tossed my long, mousey-blonde hair and pulled my very best pout.

'Such a little poser!' my mum Paula, now 47, giggled, snapping away.

Just 6 years old, I loved pretending to be a catwalk model and posing in front of the camera.

With two brothers – Asa, then 10, and Arista, 5 – rough and tumbling round the house, I had to make my own girly fun. So Mum's high heels and lippy were forever being plundered.

'I want to be pretty, like the ladies in the magazines,' I told Mum and my dad John, now 58.

By my teens, I was more concerned with doing well at school. But I still liked to try to look pretty, too.

So for my 13th birthday, Mum arranged a special treat.

'I've booked us a mother-and-daughter photo shoot,' she beamed. 'At a proper photographer's studio!'

It was an amazing day. We had our hair and make-up

done, giggling as we strutted our stuff in front of the camera.

I loved every second of it.

'You're really photogenic,' the photographer said after. 'Have you thought about signing with a modelling agency?'

I was stunned. Yes, I loved posing for pics, but did I really have what it took to be a model?

'Go for it!' Mum encouraged, as the photographer gave me a list of recommended agents.

Before long, I was signed up. That's how I also discovered beauty pageants.

Representing West Yorkshire, I entered the Miss Teen Great Britain competition.

And, weeks later...

'I'm a finalist!' I squealed to Mum and Dad.

'Well done!' Dad grinned.

The final was a year away. Each contestant would be judged on their achievements during those 12 months.

So I threw myself into doing as many photo shoots as I could, started fund-raising for The Christie cancer charity and appeared at local events.

But not everybody was happy

about my activities. There were girls at school who delighted in taking cruel jabs at me.

'You're too ugly to be a model,' some would sneer.

'You're just in love with yourself,' others hissed.

Every day, there was a new insult. And it wasn't just girls. Some boys joined in, too.

Only in Year 7, I was still young, and small physically. And so hurt and scared.

'They're just jealous,' Mum said. 'Try to ignore them.'

It was easier said than done.

When the final rolled around in October 2014, I was nervous.

But the moment I stepped out onto the stage, I was fine.

There were so many rounds, like dance and fashion. And the outfits, such as the cocktail dress and long evening gown I got to wear, were amazing.

In the end, I won the popularity category, with my social media accounts clocking up the most likes and shares out of all the contestants.

'I'm so proud of you!' smiled Mum, hugging me.

I was on cloud nine, especially when I learnt that my victory won me a place representing England at the Face of the Globe pageant in Paris, in April 2015.

The competition also led to me getting more modelling work for clothing brands and catwalk events.

But the downside was that the bullying got even worse.

Every day, I was tormented

by relentless name-calling and cruel comments.

Once, a group of girls pinned me against a tree and screamed abuse in my face.

It got so bad, I couldn't even leave the house, or else I'd be bombarded with hate... Ugly, fake, attention-seeker, vain.

I was none of the things the bullies said I was. But it was hard not to begin to believe them, when that was all I heard.

Furious, my parents complained to the school, who said it was just girls falling out.

And outside of school, they couldn't do anything. So whenever I went out, Asa, then 17, would come with me.

He was big for his age, and well-built, so nobody bothered me when he was around.

But he couldn't be there all the time.

My social media accounts were full of horrible messages and comments, too.

I used Instagram a lot to share photos from shoots or fund-raising activities I'd taken part in.

But when I posted anything, between the likes and supportive comments, there'd be floods of venomous insults from girls I knew.

*You think you're so much better than everyone else*, one of them read.

It hurt, because I didn't think anything like that all. I was just trying to do something I loved, but everybody seemed to hate me for it.

'I just don't understand it,' I wept to Mum and Dad.

At school, I was put into

**They pinned me against a tree and screamed abuse in my face**

d  
TS

## CRUEL REAL LIFE



I had to make a stand



isolation for my own protection, but that just made me feel like I'd done something wrong.

As for the cyber bullying, my teachers suggested deleting my accounts.

But that was my way of communicating with the world, one which could be really positive and supportive.

My family became very protective, especially Asa.

He'd hit back at anyone who slated me online.

But though I'd cry myself to sleep most nights, I never once thought of quitting modelling. It was my escape, a place for me to be someone else.

Anyway, I wasn't going to let the bullies win.

In March 2015, I led an anti-bullying campaign to show the effect bullying has on victims.

I took all of the insults that had ever been hurled at me, and covered my body with them, while a make-up artist created bruising on my skin.

The response on social media was amazing.

*You're so brave for speaking out,* said one comment.

I had countless messages from people struggling with bullies, who said the campaign had encouraged them to speak to their parents and seek help.

Just what I'd hoped for.

Things got better for me, when we moved to a new house in Barnsley in January 2016.

Walking into my new school on the first day, I was petrified, but everybody was so friendly.

Some kids knew who I was,

as I had over 15,000 Instagram followers. So it was daunting.

Knowing I was new and nervous, Billy Mole in the year above messaged me on that first day.

*If you need a friend, message me,* he typed.

We became mates, had a laugh. And he didn't sneer at my modelling.

That summer, we became an item.

Some of my old bullies didn't like that either, started making comments.

But now, I was older, wiser.

They were just jealous, bitter. I didn't need their approval.

Now I've left school, modelling is my full-time job.

In November 2017, I won the World Teen Supermodel England competition, earning me a place at the international pageant in Vietnam this year.

'I'm proud of you, well done!' grinned Billy, hugging me.

Winning this has been a high point of my career. I'm excited to see where I go from here.

I still get the odd nasty comment, but I don't let it bother me. The more abuse bullies gave me, the more determined I was to succeed.

That's why I'm sharing my story. To show others they don't have to let cruel people stamp all over their dreams.

Be yourself, do what you want to do with your life, and let no-one stand in your way.

Don't let the bullies win

# Look Amazing!

This week: Beauty faves

Sweet scent



**Ted Baker Sweet Treat EDT in Mia, £18 for 10ml, Boots**  
If you weren't already sold on the pretty pink and rose-gold bottle alone, this gorgeous floral scent of rose blooms and freesias will win you over at first sniff.

**Benefit Bad Gal Bang! Mascara Travel Mini, £10.50, escentual.com**  
You can't say Benefit doesn't put the effort into its products. Infused with aero particles and derived from space technology, this mascara builds serious volume without flaking or clumping. This travel-size version is a great way to try it before splashing out on the real deal.



**Bioderma Photoderm Max SPF50+ Tinted Aquafuild, £13.72, amazon.co.uk**  
It's important to wear SPF every day, especially as we head into summer. This cream is really light, blending into your skin easily with a shine-free finish. The hint of colour means you can wear it alone or as a base.

**Knight & Wilson PurePlex Revolutionary Hair Repair System, £12.99, Superdrug**  
If you've recently bleached your hair, chances are it's in need of a little TLC. This treatment offers salon-quality results at a high-street price, repairing each strand from the inside to leave even the most frazzled locks silky and shiny.



**Elegant Touch London False Nails in Fiery Fuchsia, £8.95, Superdrug**  
They've redesigned their packaging, but rest assured Elegant Touch falsies are just as good as they've always been. These nails really last so you can enjoy a hot-pink mani for up to 10 days.



Beauty sleep



**Oh K! Sleep Mask, £7.50, feelunique.com**  
Smooth this mask all over your skin before bedtime to enjoy all the benefits of a nourishing sheet mask without scaring the kids. A little goes a long way, so you can easily get more than the recommended five to six uses.

**Herbal Essences Bio Renew Arabica Coffee Fruit Shampoo, £5.99, Superdrug**  
This shampoo smells delicious and the results get better with every use, purifying and protecting locks against damage, and boosting hair from the roots for free-flowing volume.



Great for flat hair!

**Eylure False Eyelash Blender, £10.95, Boots**  
Anyone who loves strip lashes knows that the gap between your false and natural lash line can be a giveaway. This clever wand gently blends and hides the line. It also contains ingredients that strengthen natural lashes.



**No4 Freesia & Pear Luxury Hand & Body Wash, £2.99, Aldi**  
After the success of its Jo Malone-inspired candles, Aldi has added fragrance, body cremes and body wash to the line. While the scent's not quite as strong as the real deal, it is 90% cheaper. Not bad, eh?



**Lift Re-Hydrating Night Cream, £9.99, Boots**  
This cream works on any skin type to smooth the appearance of fine lines in just four weeks. Apply nightly after cleansing, all over your face and neck.



WORDS: JESS BECH

# Your telly Pick of the week

You definitely won't want to miss these TV treats



**DON'T MISS**

## The Woman in White, BBC1

The famous supernatural tale by Wilkie Collins stars former *EastEnders* actor Ben Hardy. He plays Walter Hartright, who investigates strange goings-on in a country estate after he encounters a mysterious woman dressed entirely in white. But how is she linked to his sweet young student Laura Fairlie (Olivia

Vinall) and her fiery sister Marian Halcombe (Jessie Buckley)?

'Marian has such a strength and rooted integrity and is undefined by her sex,' says Jessie. 'She's the Janis Joplin of her time.'

Dougray Scott is Laura's fiancé Sir Percival Glyde, and Charles Dance and Art Malik also co-star in this very creepy five-parter.



## Genius, National Geographic

Hollywood actor Antonio Banderas brings to life the world-famous painter Picasso and portrays his artistic career in this 10-part drama. Samantha Colley plays the surrealist photographer Dora Maar, one of Picasso's many muses, who was also his mistress.



## The Split, BBC1

Nicola Walker (left) is Hannah Defoe, a divorce lawyer in this six-part drama. Hannah quits the family practice after her mother refuses to promote her and joins a rival firm. She represents Goldie (Meera Syal), who's divorcing rich hubby Davey (Stephen Tompkinson). Davey has appointed her family as his lawyers!



## I Am Elizabeth Smart, Lifetime

In 2002, Elizabeth Smart, 14, was abducted. This one-off drama is narrated by Elizabeth herself. Religious fanatic Brian David Mitchell (Skeet Ulrich) held Elizabeth (played by Alana Boden, above) for nine harrowing months before she was rescued.



## The Queen's Birthday Party, BBC1

It's the Queen's 92nd birthday, so there's a big bash at the Royal Albert Hall! Performers are from around the Commonwealth and include Aussie pop princess Kylie Minogue, Canada's Shawn Mendes, plus Brits Tom Jones and Sting and Jamaica's Shaggy.



## Westworld, Sky Atlantic

The sentient robots are still running amok in the futuristic Wild West theme park as the sci-fi thriller returns for a second series. Rogue robots Dolores and Teddy (Evan Rachel Wood and James Marsden, above), Maeve and the Man in Black return. Plus, new additions include Gustaf Skarsgard and Jonathan Tucker. It's also rumoured that there will be glimpses of other theme parks.

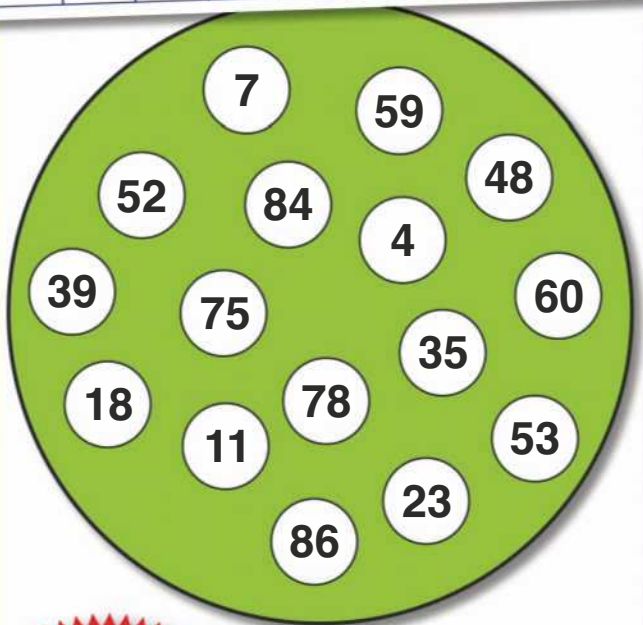
# WIN £100!

## PUZZLE 6

### Strike it!

On your bingo card, cross out all the numbers that appear on the balls. Read the letters beside the remaining numbers on your card from left to right to spell out your answer word. To enter, complete the coupon on page 45.

	H	D		E	R	F		D
	12	23		45	52	60		84
I	4	16	U			A	T	
		29				66	71	
	N		S		M		E	E
	18		33		58		78	90



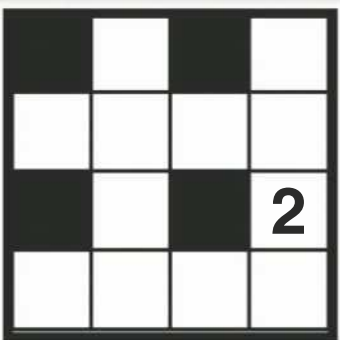
# WIN £25!

## PUZZLE 7

### Number fit!

Which one of the listed numbers won't fit in this mini grid? Enter on p45.

- 2937
- 8928
- 7328
- 9827
- 8329



# Someone to watch over her

She wouldn't let her baby out of her sight. But Marina Jervis, 38, from Lidlington, Bedfordshire, had good reason to be so worried...

**T**hey say that childbirth gets easier with every baby you have. I wish! In labour with my fifth, the pain was so intense, I couldn't take it. 'Give me an epidural now!' I screamed to the midwife. She barely had time, before baby Amelia popped out. Born on 8 June 2014, weighing 8lb 15oz, she was gorgeous. My partner Gareth, 43, and I fell in love. I couldn't wait to take her home to meet my other four - Shannon, then 17, Bradley, 16, Libby, 11, and Callum, 7. But later that day, I was holding Amelia when her top lip turned blue and her eyes rolled back into her head. She'd stopped breathing. 'Help!' I yelled. A nurse came at once and

checked her over. 'All babies do that,' she assured me. Gareth and I looked at each other. We had our fair share of kids and had never seen anything like it. But the doctors didn't seem worried, either, and we were discharged shortly after. 'Maybe it is normal?' I said to Gareth when we got home. It certainly seemed normal for Amelia. Up to 15 times a day she'd stop breathing for as long as 20 seconds. Each time, I'd put my hand on her chest and shake it gently until she'd take a breath. I told myself not to worry, that she'd grow out of it. After all, the doctors hadn't seemed concerned. But, when the midwife visited 10 days later, and

**I waited in the car outside playgroup every day for a year**

# One ch er



*I want our Amelia to live a normal life*

witnessed Amelia have an episode... 'Get her straight to hospital!' she insisted. 'That's not normal!'

Doctors diagnosed reflux.

Then, one morning when Amelia was 4 months old, I found her blue and floppy in her cot.

But this time she didn't stir. 'Amelia... Amelia!' I cried. Nothing.

Hysterical, I called the Emergency Services.

'My baby's not breathing!' I screamed.

Gareth was at work and I was home with the kids, when two paramedics arrived and started working on our baby.

Unable to watch, I waited on landing.

'We can't bring her back,' I heard one say.

I felt as if I'd left my own body.

*Please, no...* Then, all of a sudden, I heard Amelia take a deep breath, and start crying.

'She's OK,' a paramedic said, giving me a cuddle.

At hospital later, a doctor read in her notes Amelia had been pronounced clinically dead by the paramedics.

It was a miracle she was still with us.

But the breathing problems didn't go away.

Amelia was referred to Great

Ormond Street Hospital, London, where the doctors discovered a hole in her heart.

She also had a rare form of epilepsy, which meant she could stop breathing for 20 seconds at a time.

Terrified, I wouldn't leave Amelia for a minute.

She slept in our room, or I'd sleep in a chair by her bed.

I wouldn't even leave her to have a wee, so I put a baby bouncer in the loo.

Of course it affected mine and Gareth's relationship.

We no longer had any time alone together.

But Amelia was our priority and, somehow, we just muddled through.

Despite her problems, Amelia never really cried and always had a big smile.

The whole family adored her, but we were on eggshells.

An attack could happen at any time – in shops, on public transport.

I was living in fear.

I hoped things would get easier, as Amelia became a toddler, but the

attacks continued.

Only now, when she came round she'd feel frightened and confused, and start screaming in terror.

'I wouldn't stand for those tantrums,' one busybody tutted, thinking my girl was being naughty.

'I hate feeling judged,' I'd sob to Gareth.

But, most of all, I hated that I couldn't make Amelia better.

I couldn't make my anxiety disappear, either.

When Amelia was 2, she started playgroup.

I left her in the class, happily

playing with all of her new friends.

But, sitting in my car outside, I just couldn't drive home.

I waited there all day, in case she needed me.

'I'd never forgive myself otherwise,' I told Gareth.

I did that every day for a whole year.

But, no matter how stressful it was for me leaving Amelia, I wanted her to live as normal a life as possible.

That's why, now aged 3, she's started pre-school.

There are three teachers in the class, and they know what to do if she has an attack.

Despite her difficulties, she's happy and outgoing.

'I'm a big girl, Mummy,' she says, chuffed with herself for being in school.

It's me that struggles. I still flinch when the phone goes.

And I still sleep by her bed.

Amelia always keeps me chuckling, though.

Recently, we took her to Circus Starr – a special circus that provides free seats for families who have children with special needs.

After watching her favourite clown Chico Rico juggling potatoes, she started taking a potato to bed, wrapped in her favourite blanket!

And her bedroom walls are covered in Chico posters – she absolutely adores him!

Seeing my precious daughter happy is all I want.

Despite having regular check-ups, the doctors don't know what the future holds for her.

Amelia still has episodes – sometimes up to 15 a day.

She's 'died' thousands of times now.

All that I can do is be there to bring her back.

Amelia will always have someone to watch over her.

It's what any mum would do.

WORDS: SALLY BECK, CHER HEASMER



*My brave girl at the circus*

# Easy eats...

## YES, YOU CAN!

Canned foods are cheap and versatile store-cupboard essentials

Treat of the Week

48p per serving

### Cherry lattice pie

Serves: 8 Prep: 20 mins Cook: 55 mins

- 375g packet puff pastry
  - 1 beaten egg, to glaze
  - 1-2tbsp granulated sugar
- FOR THE FILLING:**
- 2 cans pitted cherries
  - 4tbsp caster sugar
  - 2tbsp cornflour
  - Finely grated zest of 1 lemon

Custard, to serve

- 1** Heat oven to 220C/ Gas 7 and place a baking tray inside to heat up.
- 2** Roll out  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the pastry and use to line a pie dish around 25cm in diameter,

leaving some pastry hanging over the edge. Roll out the remaining pastry and cut into strips 2-3cm wide.

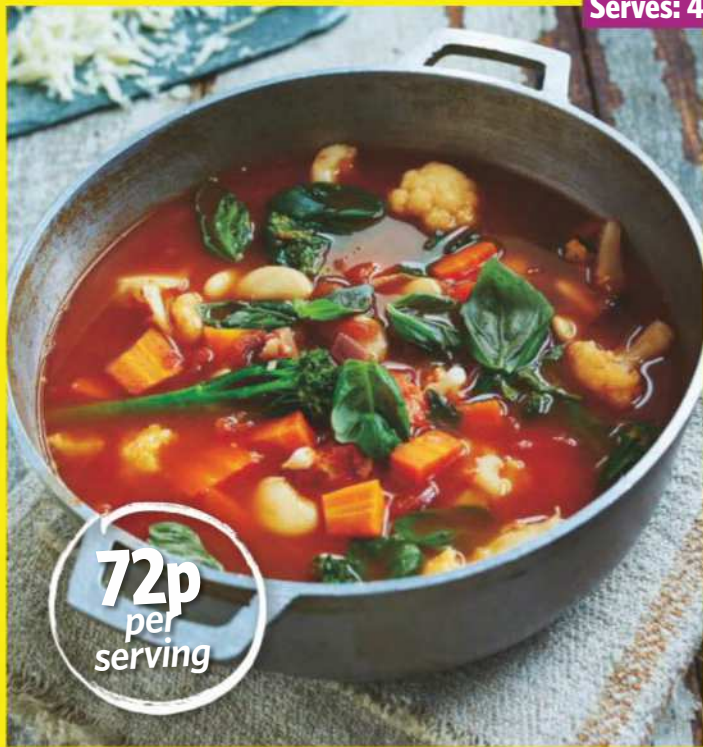
- 3** In a large bowl, mix together the cherries, caster sugar, cornflour and lemon zest. Tip the mixture into the pastry case.
- 4** Brush a little water around the pastry on the rim of the dish and put the pastry strips on top, pressing them down well at the ends. Trim

- away excess pastry around the rim and press with your thumb to pattern around the edge, then make cuts into the pastry using a small knife.
- 5** Brush the pastry top with the egg and sprinkle over the granulated sugar.
  - 6** Put on the hot baking tray and bake for 15 mins, then reduce temperature to 180C/ Gas 4 and bake for a further 40 mins, until pastry is golden. Serve with hot custard.



# Chunky bean and veg soup

Serves: 4 Prep: 10 mins Cook: 25 mins



72p  
per  
serving

- 2tbsp olive oil
- 2 small red onions, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 1ltr hot vegetable stock
- ½ cauliflower, broken into florets
- 3 carrots, cut into chunks
- 4 pieces Tenderstem broccoli, halved
- 400g can butter beans, drained
- Small bunch basil leaves
- Grated cheese, to serve

**1** Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the red onions for a few mins, to soften.

**2** Add the garlic, canned tomatoes and vegetable stock. Season generously and bring to the boil.

**3** Add the cauliflower and carrots, return to the boil and simmer for 15 mins, then add the broccoli and butter beans and cook for 5 mins. Serve sprinkled with basil leaves and grated cheese.

**WIN** £50  
PUZZLE 8

## Bitesize!

1	2	3	4
5			
6			
7			

### ACROSS

- 1 Electrical resistance units (4)
- 5 Feeble (4)
- 6 *Superman's Lois* (4)
- 7 Cook slowly in liquid (4)

### DOWN

- 1 Night birds (4)
- 2 Warm on hob (4)
- 3 *Lion's hair* (4)
- 4 Oblique angle (4)

Read down the shaded squares for the prize answer. To enter, see p45.

# Sweetcorn fritters

Serves: 4 Prep: 10 mins Cook: 10 mins

- 2 x 198g cans sweetcorn
- 2 free-range eggs
- 125g plain flour
- 1tsp baking powder
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 1tbsp chopped coriander
- Oil, for frying
- TO SERVE:**
- 100g Greek yogurt
- 1 avocado, chopped
- 2 red chillies, chopped
- Fresh coriander and lime wedges

**1** Put 198g sweetcorn in a blender with the eggs, flour and baking powder; blend. Remove to a bowl and mix in the rest of the

sweetcorn, plus the red onion and coriander. Season.

**2** To cook, heat a little oil in a non-stick frying pan and fry ladles of the mixture in batches over a medium heat until lightly browned on both sides. Keep warm until they are all cooked. To serve, top with the yogurt, avocado, chilli and coriander. Serve with a squeeze of lime.

£1.12  
per  
serving



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# Your Stars

19-25 April 2018  
7 days of hope & happiness with Claire Petulengro

## ARIES

21 March-20 April

You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. The dreams you have are only half of what you can really achieve. Saturn promises you that money you need. Try not to tell any tales on others this weekend or it'll come back on you.

Call: 09058 170 710\*

## TAURUS

21 April-21 May

You've been waiting for others to lift you up, but first you must put yourself somewhere they can see you! Time wasted on a certain person wasn't actually wasted. You've learnt what you don't want and that's one of the most valuable lessons...

Call: 09058 170 711\*

## GEMINI

22 May-21 June

A lack of confidence is stopping you from doing all the things you want to with your life. Think outside the box. Venus pushes you to take the next step in love, and rightly so. Take a deep breath - there's an adventure out there just waiting for you.

Call: 09058 170 712\*

## CANCER

22 June-23 July

You're your own person, but we know those of your sign are also easily emotionally manipulated. The written word's more important than the spoken one - so make sure you get what needs to be confirmed in an official form. It'll save you problems later.

Call: 09058 170 713\*

## LEO

24 July-23 Aug

Unshared happiness is not true happiness. Deep down, you know you need someone to share the many experiences to which your sign can look forward to. Family time helps you discover why a certain person's been acting so distantly towards you.

Call: 09058 170 714\*

## VIRGO

24 Aug-23 Sept

Past and present will now combine to make you feel more at ease and honest with those from whom you've been keeping secrets. Never be afraid to be yourself, Virgo. Time spent with old friends helps you reach an important emotional turning point.

Call: 09058 170 715\*

## LIBRA

24 Sept-23 Oct

Don't just talk, but listen. It's the only way you'll fully understand what someone close to you wants. The need to let off some steam could see you mixing with people of whom loved ones don't approve. Know how far is too far to push - you're already on shaky ground.

Call: 09058 170 716\*

## SCORPIO

24 Oct-22 Nov

There's a bit of a greedy feel to your stars in the days ahead, Scorpio, which could see you asking for things you don't really need, just to see if you can get them. Slow down - what you want is yours and it's not going anywhere, as long as you don't try to ruin it.

Call: 09058 170 717\*

## SAGITTARIUS

23 Nov-21 Dec

You thought you had to tell half-truths to save someone's feelings, but it's your life to live as you see fit, and it's up to you to let others know this! Saturn gives you strength and allows you to feel more confident about the things you do and say. Grasp this help and use it.

Call: 09058 170 718\*

## CAPRICORN

22 Dec-20 Jan

Financial matters come to the fore, and you begin to look at options for your future that previously weren't a possibility. Make sure those to whom you're giving your attention are as free as you think they are - or you could end up with egg on your face...

Call: 09058 170 719\*

## AQUARIUS

21 Jan-19 Feb

Avoid falling out with those close to you now - many of the star signs are looking for a fight! Put any excess energy into tying up loose ends from last week. From Friday, you begin a more satisfying chapter, thanks to words of confirmation that a close one offers you.

Call: 09058 170 720\*

## PISCES

20 Feb-20 March

You think you don't know enough about a certain person to let them into your life, but don't forget that you are the most psychic sign in the Zodiac. Trust those instincts - they were given to you for a reason. New friendships formed at this time will be the lasting kind.

Call: 09058 170 721\*

\*Starlines updated every Thursday. Calls cost 80p per min plus your telephone company's network access charge and last approx 4 mins. Callers must be 18+. You must have bill payer's permission. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

# Best mates? No, SOULMATES!

**When Lisa Gates, 46, from Redmile, Nottinghamshire, made a new friend, she got the strange feeling they'd met before...**



**Lisa (right) and I may be past-life pals!**

**A**fter finishing university in 2004, I was in need of a way to unwind. Going online, I came across a local well-being centre, named Get A Life!, run by a woman called Lisa Whitehead.

Another Lisa, I thought to myself, smiling.

Lisa ran regular meditation classes, so I called to find out more. As we chatted, it felt as if we'd known each other for years.

'I'd love you to come along and try a meditation class tonight,' she said.

I agreed. And, later, looking on her website, I saw a picture of Lisa.

*I know that face,* I thought.

She looked so familiar, but I couldn't quite place her...

That night, when we met, we clicked straightaway.

'I feel like we're old friends,' I laughed.

'We have the same first name, too,' Lisa noted.

'And blonde bobs,' I added. Something told me there was more to it, though

I couldn't put my finger on it. Regardless, it felt like a connection I needed in my life.

So, the following week,

I dropped into the centre one afternoon on a whim.

'Hello!' Lisa grinned, coming to greet me.

We chatted for ages about all sorts. Things I wouldn't normally share with a new friend.

Except Lisa felt like an old, trusted mate.

It's said soulmate relationships often reveal coincidences – and the more Lisa and I met, the more I realised how many there were.

As kids, Lisa, now 49, and I lived in the same small Lancashire village of Milnrow. Even more incredible, we'd lived only a few streets away from one another.

'I can't believe we were so close and never knew each other,' I said.

We went to the same school – Roch Valley High School – although we were three years apart. I had a career in fashion-textile design, Lisa worked in high-street fashion management.

And then we had both moved to Redmile.

'There are too far too many

coincidences to deny that something strange is going on,' Lisa said one day.

But it didn't end there – soon after that, inspired by Lisa,

I retrained in counselling and psychotherapy, and developed my spiritual gifts.

We saw or spoke to each other most weeks. And, in 2012, I decided to look at our astrology charts.

It was uncanny.

The charts suggested we may have worked together in a past life, then been pulled apart, and unable to finish our project.

Even more exciting, they showed we were both free spirits, with a special destiny to fulfil together – to help others.

'That's amazing,' Lisa said,

smiling, when I told her what I'd discovered. 'We're soulmate sisters.'

I couldn't be happier to have found my spiritual sibling.

There's room in our lives for other soulmates, of course, but right now we're both happy.

I can't imagine my life without Lisa now. Although I still can't believe it took so long for us to come across each other.

Just like our astrology charts suggested, we now run spiritual workshops together, helping other women awaken their intuition.

It's great to have found Lisa again. Whatever life – past or present – throws at us, we'll never be separated.

● **For details of workshops and consultations, visit [lisagates.co.uk](http://lisagates.co.uk)**

**We have a special destiny to fulfil together – to help others**

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# Puzzle entry

Issue 17, 26 April 2018 Closing date for all entries: **2 May 2018** (three working days later for postal entries)

## Puzzle 1 A quick word! p3

Final answer

## Puzzle 2 Follow it! p8

Final answer

## Puzzle 3 Crack it! p20

Final answer

## Puzzle 4 Cross it! p22

Final answer

## Puzzle 5 Sudoku! p22

Final answer

## Puzzle 6 Strike it! p38

Final answer

## Puzzle 7 Number fit! p38

Final answer

## Puzzle 8 Bitesize! p41

Final answer

**GOOD LUCK TO ALL OUR READERS!**

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## PRIZE PUZZLE ANSWERS

Issue 15, 12 April 2018

### Cross it!

STUBBLE SKIP  
EUI SH A  
SMUG SOFTBALL  
P L Y K  
O TEE VENTIAL  
T A  
I NTIMACY E V  
T S L B O R G Y  
H O S T E L R Y B  
I U E L R Y S O B E R  
R H E S U S S I U  
S E O S U M  
T E X T U R E H  
Y T Y

### Crack it!

SYRUP RISKY R  
E E R A Q O P A L  
I M P R O M P T U K M  
Z R V I A V E R S E  
E G O E N D E D H  
O R R L R A S C A L  
A F F A B L Y O A C  
R P U N A L I K E  
T O R P E D O V L  
W L O E N J O Y E D  
U N S E E N N A E  
I A T T I C A L L  
I N F E C T I K R E E  
G X I N C I D E N C E  
F L E A O E A E C  
Y M I N E D W I D T H

LEZRUNFSDKCAP  
XQHGYOBIITVJMW

**A quick word!**  
Supportive

**Bitesize!** Roar

### Follow it!

A S T O E F  
R E E D S P O T I O N  
C T E A T N R  
C H A S E R S E A S E D  
D D E D G A A  
S F E E S D E M O C R A T  
S L E D A M U S E I O K R A  
A O C C U R F A K E D I D  
H U N S O M I T R E N E E  
G H A N O I A M A I N S  
N H S L S O M B R E C S  
T D I M E V A T O K Y O  
G E N E V A E N V Y I O  
R M E L T N O C L O G S  
L I L O A I M A L T O N U T  
N T O W E R I N G L A U R A  
O G L E I D S T A U T S I T Y

### Win without finishing!

S V W I C D  
S T R I P E D U N T A M E D  
O C L V P L  
B R I T T L E D E F I C I T  
E O D S N T  
T H E R M O S T A T A L S O  
O N A L A  
H U S T L E A N D B U S T L E  
S A D A M  
K E R B S Q U A R E M E A L  
L L P G E H  
S O M E H O W G E T A W A Y  
U M U D D Y  
S C R A T C H B I G O T E D  
H T H N W K

**Sudoku!** 6, 3, 4

**Crack it!** Chemise

**Strike it!**

Quickened

**Number fit!** 530

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## IS YOUR NAME HERE?

Prize Winners, Issue 9, 1 March 2018

**A quick word!**  
D Smith,  
Powys.

**Cross it!**  
S Magowan,  
Belfast.

**Number fit!**  
C Webb,  
Stafford.

**Follow it!**  
A Welch,  
Newton Abbot.

**Sudoku!**  
K Hamilton,  
Northwich.

**Bitesize!**  
P Bond,  
Rhyl.

**Crack it!**  
T Belcher,  
Romney Marsh.

**Strike it!**  
L Graham,  
Durham.

**£25 an answer!**  
I Day,  
Nottingham.

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**WIN**  
PUZZLE 9

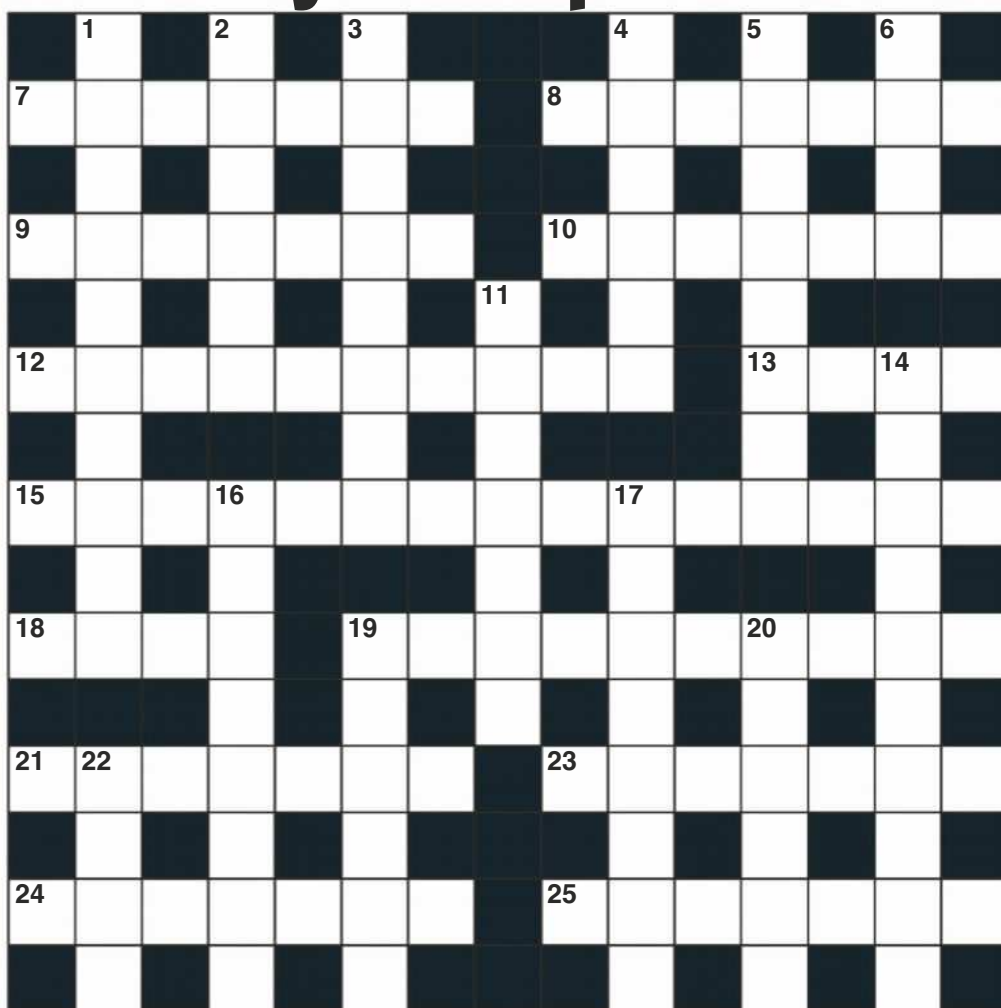
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## ACROSS

- 7 Upper arm muscle (7)
- 8 Gossip, rumour (7)
- 9 Accuse (the President of a crime) (7)
- 10 Become rigid (7)
- 12 Nastily, unkindly (10)
- 13 Pastime that involves guessing words (1-3)
- 15 Pub snack (4,11)
- 18 Speciality food shop (4)
- 19 Rubber boot (10)
- 21 Putting money on (a horse) (7)
- 23 Ancient woolly beast (7)
- 24 Large storage cupboard (7)
- 25 Pepper mill (7)

## DOWN

- 1 Record player (10)
- 2 Take (what is offered) (6)
- 3 Less general (8)
- 4 Soldier guarding a gate (6)
- 5 Wall drawings (8)
- 6 Tool for gathering leaves in a garden (4)
- 11 Evidently (7)
- 14 Of a person, with feet that turn inwards (6-4)
- 16 Pants, briefs (8)
- 17 Gentlemanly conduct (8)
- 19 Opening for light (6)
- 20 Betting money at a casino (6)
- 22 Ship \_\_\_\_, pirates' cry (4)



The **only** prize crossword in the world you don't have to finish to win!

# Kentucky BRIDE chicken

When planning her wedding, Cherish Simms, 35, from Worcester, decided to wing it



We know the secret recipe to love!

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN, CHARLOTTE NISBET. PHOTOS: CATERS NEWS AGENCY

I clapped as my son Jenghis, 10, clambered over the play-centre obstacle course.

'Well done!' I beamed. Then I noticed another parent across the room smiling at me.

Blushing, I smiled back. He was cute! We got chatting, realised our kids went to the same school.

Edward, then 43, was a single dad, with his daughter Ellie, 11, at the same birthday party as me and Jenghis.

Before the day was done, we'd exchanged numbers. One thing soon led to another – and, by July 2013, Edward and I were an item.

Both spontaneous, we didn't take life too seriously. Then, on Christmas Day 2014, while I was busy making the dinner, I noticed Edward

was acting strangely. 'You're up to something!' I laughed as he ran upstairs.

'I don't know what you're talking about,' he yelled back. But moments later, Edward walked into the living room and got down on one knee.

'Will you marry me?' he beamed. 'Course I will!' I squealed. I didn't want a long engagement, but time flew.

Before I knew it, six months had passed and we hadn't planned a thing.

When a friend got married on the cheap the following summer, I was inspired.

'Let's keep ours simple, too,' I said to Edward. Looking online, seeing some people in America had married in McDonald's, I was tickled.

'What about Kentucky Fried Chicken?' I said to Edward.

'What, for dinner?' he asked. 'No! For our wedding breakfast!' I replied. 'Perfect!' he laughed.

So we went to KFC at our local retail park, asked if they would host our wedding meal. The manager admitted he'd never had a request like that!

'We couldn't close the restaurant,' he warned. 'The more, the merrier!' I shrugged.

Telling family and friends was hilarious. 'Trust you two!' my mum Senal said.

Every few weeks, I'd call the restaurant, make sure they were still expecting us.

What if they ran out of chicken? Or thought it was a wind-up? *It'd be chucking disaster!*

On the day, 3 August 2016, I was so excited. I wore a £35 long, strapless, pink dress.

After a register office do in Worcestershire County Hall, we took our 60 guests to KFC. There were buckets of chicken and chips and soft drinks on each table, and the place was decorated with red KFC balloons.

It was perfect: loads of fried chicken, and no fuss! We spent about £100 on all the food. With that, my dress, and Edward's new £150 suit, we spent barely £300!

*Bargain bucket!* That meant we could pay for a honeymoon, and jetted off for two crazy weeks in Amsterdam. I know most brides wouldn't be seen dead getting married at a fast-food restaurant – but if I had the chance to do it all over again, I'd still choose KFC.

The whole thing was finger lickin' good!



Edward and a guest tuck in



Jenghis was happy!

# What's the BEST AGE to become A MUM?

## If health experts can't decide, how can you?

**T**wenty years ago, Britain had the dubious honour of being crowned the teen-pregnancy capital of

Western Europe.

Back then, in 1998, there were 47.1 pregnancies for every 1,000 women under 18 – a figure many felt was scandalous.

Fast-forward to 2010, and that figure was continuing to rocket – as was social disapproval.

Concerned, the

Government launched a campaign to tackle the number of teen pregnancies.

Sex education in schools was improved, and further health

services offering contraception and family planning advice were funded.

“Teenage pregnancy ruins lives,” cried the politicians, who emphasised the risks to

the health of young mums and their babies, as well as the social impact, claiming teen pregnancies are often

**Since 1990, the number of women over 40 having babies has doubled to 15 in every 1,000.**

linked to problems such as poor housing and a reliance on State benefits.

The general consensus was that young mothers, particularly those still of school age, were simply not emotionally or financially ready to become parents.

The campaign turned out to be a huge success.

Just eight years after its launch, teenage pregnancy in the UK is now at an all-time low, with just 21 in 1,000 women under 18 getting pregnant, according to

the Office for National Statistics.

And now the concern about the age of mums has flipped – with fertility experts warning women of the dangers of starting a family ‘too late.’

The risks of a difficult pregnancy or foetal abnormalities including disability increase dramatically after the age of 30, and that’s if you even manage to get pregnant at all.

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer for England, says she’s concerned about the ‘steady shift’ towards women choosing to postpone starting a family until their late 30s and early 40s, reducing their chance of conception,

## YOUR RIGHTS AS A TEEN MUM

**E**ven if you become pregnant, you’re still expected to go to school until the end of Year 11. If this isn’t possible, your local authority must provide alternative education.

Your school shouldn’t exclude you or treat you differently and you’ll be

allowed up to 18 weeks off before and after the birth.

After Year 11, you’re entitled to stay in full-time education or begin an apprenticeship until you are 18. Your college, uni or employer are not allowed to treat you unfairly because you’re pregnant or a mum.



**Having a baby young was the making of Shaneece**



**HOT TOPIC**



**The happiest time in your life?**

and increasing the associated medical risks.

So, if having a baby too young will 'ruin your life', and waiting too long has its own risks, when is the 'right time' to become a mum?

Jo, from Essex, became a first-time mum at 40.

'You're never really going to be ready,' she says. 'But I didn't meet anyone I wanted to settle down with until I was 35, and then once I'd met my husband Pete, 41, I struggled to get pregnant.'

'We started IVF on the NHS. The whole process was tough, it was a lot of pressure and because of our age we knew it would be our only round. It put a strain on our relationship,

but thankfully I did get pregnant and we had our daughter, Millie, now 2.

'I'm glad I waited in the end. We have our own home and financial stability, plus the life experience for parenting.'

Deborah Talbot, 51, from Colchester had her 8-year-old daughter

Miriam when she was 43.

'Having a child in your 40s feels like a wonderful gift, but is also much more tiring than having them at a younger age,' she admits.

'The benefit of being older is that you are more emotionally settled, which really matters to kids as they deal with the complications of life.'

Teenage parent Shaneece

Chambers, 18, from Manchester, had a very different experience.

Becoming pregnant at 16, she had her daughter Masie-Jane on her 17th birthday. 'So many people told me having a baby at my age would ruin my life, but she's been the making of me,' Shaneece says.

Life as a single teen mum at the home she shares with her dad and siblings was tough, but Shaneece says she was happy to miss nights out with pals for night feeds.

Now the proud mum has gone back to college to train as a nurse, so she can work on the ward that saved Masie-Jane - who was born 10 weeks premature.

'Looking after a premature baby is especially hard, because they feed little and often. I was up all night but, at my age, I have lots of energy, so it wasn't a problem for me,' she said.

Shaneece is living proof that being a young mum doesn't have to mean giving up a career or not enjoying life.

In fact, for many, it's just the beginning.

It may not be easy but, for determined young mums, there's no reason they can't fulfil their own ambitions as well as having a baby.

Although there's a lot to be said for being able to afford a roof over your head first, admittedly!

It would seem then, according to science, that the best age to start a family is somewhere in your mid-20s.

But, as the women we spoke to show, life doesn't always work out like that.

Maybe the real answer is actually far simpler.

Rather than worry about the age that science suggests is the right time to start a family, it's something each woman has to decide for themselves.

## Here's what You say...

**'I had my first son at 19 and my second at 20. I feel as if I missed out on so much and it was hard work. I struggled during those times money-wise and I felt so alone. I had my daughter at 27 and enjoyed every milestone. I wish it'd been like that with my sons. And I wish someone had told me to wait.'**

*Michelle Underwood, 42, Woking, Surrey*

**'I had my boy when I was 16, and he's 15 now. I wouldn't change him for the world.'**

**It was a real challenge, but he's so worth it. I wouldn't be who I am now without him.'**

*Laura Diggle, 31, Greenwich, London*

**'I fell pregnant at 18, which gave me something to live for. But, as I got into my 20s and had my second, I watched my friends travel the world, go out, get married... I now have my third, who's 2 this year, and I wouldn't change any of them for the world. I'll still be able to go travelling when they're older, as I won't be too old myself!'**

*Kerrie-Anne Rothwell, 25, Dover, Kent*

**The most popular age for women to become pregnant in England and Wales is 25-29.**

## Support for older mums

**M**umsnet has advice for what to expect medically, as well as success stories from other mums who started a family later in life. Check it out at [mumsnet.com/pregnancy/pregnancy-over-40](http://mumsnet.com/pregnancy/pregnancy-over-40).





**Sausage surprise!**

**YOU'VE GOTTA LAUGH!**

# This little PIGGY...

**A trip to the play centre had Sonya Heard, 37, from Leicestershire, squealing with laughter**

WORDS: JAMES HANMAN, CHRISTINA WOOD. PHOTOS: MERCURY PRESS

**P**ulling on my coat at the front door, I called to my daughter Florence. 'Time to go!' I said. Florence, 2, ran towards me with a big grin on her face. 'Are you excited?' I cooed as I helped her on with her shoes. 'Yes!' she chirped, with a smile. It was February this year, and I was about to take her to the play centre. My husband Paul, 43, came, too. We were also parents to Josh, 21, Ethan, 14, and Oliver, 8, and Paul and I loved taking

Florence to the play group. They ran so many fun activities, including soft play, colouring and sing-alongs with children's TV characters. Staff members would dress up – so, in the past, Florence had boogied along with Fireman Sam and the *Paw Patrol* crew. 'I wonder who you'll be dancing with today?' I said to Florence on the way. When we arrived, a staff member greeted us. 'Peppa Pig and her brother George will be joining us today!'

**The costume seemed to have something 'extra' attached!**

she smiled to us. 'Did you hear that, Florence? Peppa Pig!' said Paul. 'Yay!' she cried. Florence adored Peppa Pig. She watched the show every morning with her breakfast, and had all the soft toys. While the kids got on with their activities, us parents chatted with a cuppa. Suddenly, just before lunch, the music kicked in. We all looked up to see Peppa and George

waddling into the room. Florence squealed with joy. She dropped her colouring and ran over for a cuddle with her favourite pigs. 'OK, boys and girls, let's do the hokey cokey!' said a staff member. As Peppa and George led the children in the sing-a-long, I took out my phone to record it, for Florence to watch later. Then I gasped. *What the...?!* It looked like George's porky 'privates' were hanging out! Not the one belonging to the person inside, of course! But the costume seemed to have something 'extra' attached! Eyes goggling, I peered closer and realised the person wearing it had pulled their costume on back-to-front. The dodgy-looking todger was actually George's little tail! Unable to contain myself, I burst out laughing. 'George has got a little piggy willy!' I giggled to the lady next to me. 'Oh, no!' she laughed, her hand over her mouth. It wasn't long before all the parents had noticed George's wardrobe malfunction, then the whole room was in tears. Of course, the kids were none the wiser.

They were just enjoying the dancing and singing. But, with George's cocktail sausage on display, the words to the hokey cokey proved too much for us parents. 'In, out, in, out, shake it all about!' they sang, plunging us into hysterics. But George and Peppa didn't seem to notice. 'I bet they're wondering what we're laughing about!' chuckled Paul. When it was time for the pigs to go, the adults in the room were still sniggering like little kids.

We tried our best to keep our composure as we shuffled out. Later that day, our boys cracked up after watching the video. We still laugh about it now. Watching Peppa over brekkie will never be the same!



**Florence just loved meeting her hero!**

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