

THE HEALTH CLINIC

Taking care of the physical health and mental wellness of all your family members

THE BIG QUESTION

Q. Every new year I make new resolutions and never keep them. How do I make changes that last?



A: Change is hard
Human beings are naturally self-destructive.

We all know things we should be doing to keep our emotional and physical health well, yet few of us do them.

Our old ways are familiar, comfortable and easy. We know they are not working for us, but they keep pulling us back like a really annoying itch. The new ways can feel uncomfortable, restrictive and like a constant battle at first. This is what makes change hard. But it does get easier, I promise.

Ask anyone what they wish they could change about themselves or their life and they will give you a long list. All of us have things that we want to improve, but change is hard. The process will inevitably have its ups and downs, so try not to criticise yourself for this – guilt rarely motivates us, it's more likely to push us towards more self-destruction. Focus on looking forwards.

Set goals that matter to you

When setting goals, pick ones that are based on what's important to you, not arbitrary goals based on age milestones, not suggestions from family, or ideas from the false reality of what social media suggests we should want.

It's easy to get swept along with someone else's idea of happiness and fitness. Stop and ask yourself – what really matters to me? What would



ABOVE: 2020 has been a challenging year. Lots of us are looking to 2021 as a fresh start. Psychotherapist Hannah Paskin has some top tips on making changes that last

make a real difference in my life? Setting goals that lead to improvements in your mental health, connections with other people or our hobbies and passions can have huge benefits.

Be realistic

Most people falsely believe it is best to pick ambitious goals, which are often out of reach. Unfortunately, this doesn't work as, psychologically, when we fall short of our goals, it makes us feel like a failure, leading to us feeling demoralised and wanting to quit. It is healthier to set yourself smaller goals you can achieve, so it spurs you on to keep going.

Slow and steady wins the race

We can often be impatient, looking

for a quick fix, yet change is likely to take months not weeks or days.

Rather than chasing the quick transformation, take the slow and steady approach. It's much more likely to achieve successful results.

Focus on the step immediately in front of you. Set yourself a realistic goal for week one and take each week as it comes.

Review your progress

Schedule into your diary a review reminder once a month. Ask yourself what has gone well, what has not worked, and implement any changes needed to ensure that your goals succeed.

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Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Suwaree Tangvornpichet

STEERING A COURSE ON MENTAL HEALTH

Say hello to a new you with Cat Williams's online self-help course, with tried and tested methods to feel calm and empowered

It's no surprise that many of us have been feeling overwhelmed with life in the face of Covid, but military wife and mum-of-two Cat Williams is here to help.

Cat, a rapid transformational therapist, strengths psychology coach, author and TEDx speaker, who lives in Holt on the North Wales/Cheshire border, has launched an online, video-based self-help course to encourage people to "move forward".

Minimise Stress, Maximise Resilience launched early December, "aimed at people who might be living with feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, anger, frustration, criticism and stress, and don't know what to do," says Cat, who wrote the course during lockdown after recognising the impact it had on mental health. "It teaches people how to remain calm and empowered, no matter what is going on around you."

Cat's husband, Roddy, is in the Army, and she has likened her experience of isolation and resilience while he is on tour to those feelings felt throughout



Military wife Cat Williams, who has an online self-help course

the pandemic. "As a military wife you can be left on your own, which creates feelings of isolation and loneliness," she says. "You have to live one day at a time because there is always a level of uncertainty about what the future holds. These were all feelings people experienced this year as a result of lockdown."

Cat has lived in 16 houses in 18 years. She's had 11 jobs, two children and lived in six different countries. "That definitely helped build up my resilience," she adds.

The course involves watching

Minimise Stress, Maximise Resilience is priced at £97 plus VAT. Cat has also launched a free, accompanying 'Getting back on track' webinar and self-hypnosis 'Ultimate confidence' download. bit.ly/balloonresiliencycourse

short videos that guide you through Cat's hot-air balloon analogy, with each module taking you through a different part of the balloon: the basket, ropes, flame and the balloon itself.

"The basket represents the stress that weighs us down; the flame is about building your self-confidence and self-esteem, and the balloon is about how to lift ourselves up using concepts such as strengths psychology, reframing and instant resilience building strategies," says Cat.

"It is an easy course to sit down and watch, and once people have taken it, they will have the resilience skills to cope with anything life throws at them."

The good news is, you don't have to share your own story. "People are able to access more than 20 years of my own personal experience and that which I have gained as a coach and therapist, and learn from it," Cat adds.

It is an extension of her book, *Stay Calm and Content*, which was written when Roddy went to Afghanistan in 2012. "I began looking around at all the other military wives and talking to them to learn their coping mechanisms," Cat says. "It taught me a lot about people's resilience."

Photo: Red Shoe Photography

Don't stress about... WHAT 2021 HAS IN STORE

While we can only hope 2021 isn't half as strange as 2020, it is impossible to predict what it has in store, so let's gently steer ourselves into the year ahead by considering what we can control. It is up to us to best support ourselves to make our experience of life as positive and balanced as possible. Try this:

Lockdown taught us all valuable lessons – what really matters to us as an individual and how we want to be spending our valuable time. What did you really miss or realised you most love to do with your time? Make sure you are planning ahead, changing up your habits and making these things your top priority.

Pause before saying 'yes' to anything – ask yourself if it is truly where you want to be investing your resources – time, energy

and financial? Try to say 'no' or 'not now' to anything that doesn't make you feel good or doesn't align with how you want to be living your life.

Did you love the slower pace and quieter agenda of 2020? If so, consider what boundaries or 'mini rules' you can put in place to ensure your schedule has as much space in it as possible.

Step into the new year with a promise to make your health a top priority; so that you can feel your best and be the best version of you for those you love. Consider what works for you and commit – fiercely protect those plans.

Enter the year ahead with deep gratitude, for the big and small things you are so glad you have in your life, for the dreams you have to nudge yourself towards and for



the silver linings of 2020 – those precious lessons learnt.

Laura Bamber and Katy Brown are co-founders of The Vibrancy Hub. For more on their coaching, programmes and events, visit thevibrancyhub.co.uk. Their gift to you is an invitation to a virtual Soul Retreat on Sunday, January 10. Book your place at thevibrancyhub.com/free-retreat for the best possible start to your year ahead.