



Dr Linda's life skills

Some words of wisdom from Cosmo's psychologist, Dr Linda Papadopoulos...

Newsflash!

WEIGHTY ISSUE

Girls whose mothers are classified as clinically obese are more likely to struggle with weight problems themselves. But the same trend does not exist between mothers and their sons.

DR LINDA SAYS "THIS SUGGESTS

BEHAVIOUR – NOT GENES

– IS THE CAUSE. SO YOU

CAN BEAT YOUR DIET DEMONS"



HOW TO...

Confront a liar

BE COURAGEOUS Confronting a liar isn't easy, but ultimately the only way forward is to deal with it head-on, so pluck up the courage and be firm.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE TRUTH and stick to it. Remember, lies can't stand up to the truth, so if you're confident and follow this rule, the liar will eventually have to 'fess up.

BE FIRM AND CONTROLLED You don't have to raise your voice or lose your temper. Instead, be concise about what the lie was and how it made you feel. Make the point that your relationship – whether personal or professional – will suffer unless you can be honest with each other.

OUTLINE EXPECTATIONS Explain that you expect both of you to have enough respect for one other to move forward, but only on the assumption that you won't have to deal with any more lies.

FINALLY, if they refuse to confess or acknowledge the impact their dishonesty has had on you, you can either accept the relationship for what it is (one you'll never be able to fully trust), or walk away before you're let down again.



Help!

'I don't like my stepmum'

Q My dad has remarried but I don't get on with my stepmum. It's not anything specific, but I always compare her to my late mum, who I miss. It's causing a lot of awkwardness at home.

A One of the hardest things about acquiring a stepparent, no matter how old we are, is the feeling that they're going to replace the parent we lost. I suspect that your father's moving on has made you feel that he's forgetting your mum, or even being disloyal to her. As a consequence, you may think you're sticking up for the memory of her or being loyal to her by rejecting your stepmother. It may also feel as if you're losing your remaining parent to her. It's clear you're still grieving, but avoiding a relationship with your stepmother will not benefit anyone. Talk to your father about your feelings; getting them out in the open will make it easier to deal with. When it comes to forging a relationship with your stepmum, take it slow. Having a healthy, supportive relationship with her and your dad may make the pain of your loss easier to deal with.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANTHONY ONG; ALEX MILLER (POSED BY MODELS). LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY



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Allow time to process your feelings

Newsflash!

SHARE'S FAIR

Research shows that when parents take time out to talk with their children or give advice about dating, their offspring tend to have warmer and closer romantic relationships.

DR LINDA SAYS "BEFORE COMPLAINING

ABOUT HOW YOUR PARENTS MEDDLE,

REMEMBER THAT A LITTLE WELL-

DIRECTED ADVICE COULD BE JUST

WHAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP NEEDS"

HOW TO...

Deal with grief

TAKE YOUR TIME. There is no guideline on how long it will take for you to feel better, so don't pressure yourself. Allow yourself to mourn, be less organised and even make mistakes.

GET SUPPORT. Whether it's from family, friends or a bereavement counsellor, studies show that getting good emotional support can help you cope better.

BE AWARE OF 'TRIGGERS'. You'll find that the most innocuous things have the capacity to cause huge emotional surges, from songs to certain foods and smells. Remember, thinking about the good times can be painful but it can also be healing.

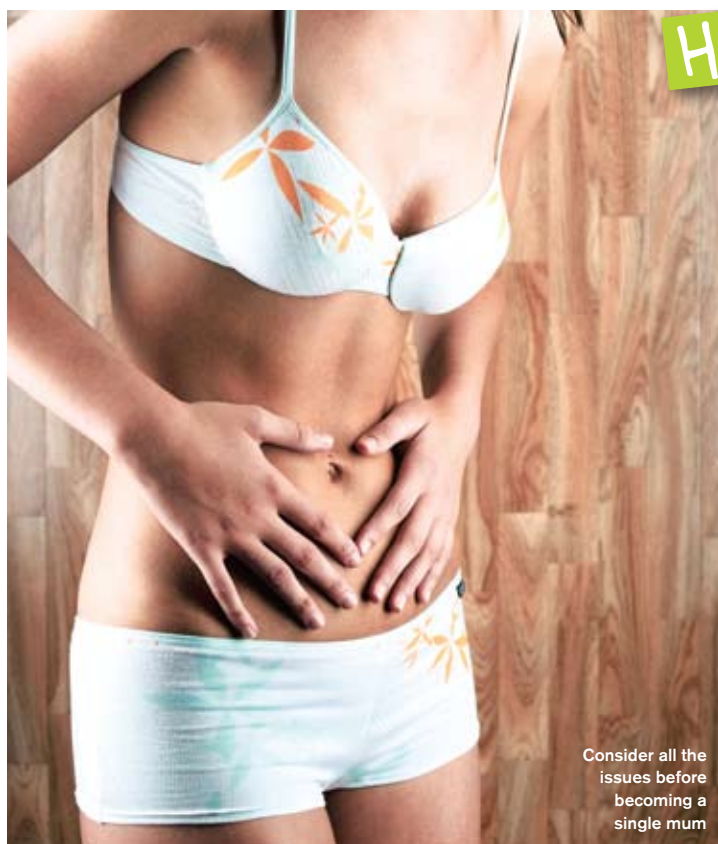
DON'T RUSH TO THROW THINGS AWAY. Although it may seem cathartic, it's best not to give away your loved one's possessions until you feel genuinely ready. The first few weeks after bereavement will probably go by in a blur, so avoid making any serious decisions that you may regret later.

DELAY MAKING MAJOR CHANGES. Avoid moving house or starting a new job, for example, for at least six months. You've just suffered a huge loss, and need time and space to adjust.

Help! I want a baby

QI've wanted to have a baby for as long as I can remember but I don't have a boyfriend, nor do I want one. I'm considering using a sperm donor and raising the baby as a single mum but I'm afraid people will disapprove.

AThe urge to be a parent is for most women one of the most primal desires they will ever experience. But in most cases this will inevitably be weighed up against the ideas of the society they inhabit, and I think that's the position you find yourself in – balancing what you want with what you've been told you should have by people around you. Whether you're a single mother or not, being a parent can be one of the most challenging, but rewarding, experiences of your life. What you need to do before you go ahead with finding a sperm donor is ensure that you're completely clear about what you're getting yourself into. Think carefully about practical issues such as finances, living space and career; emotional issues like support and significant relationships – not to mention the impact on the child of growing up without a father. Once you're clear about these issues, it's a matter of being honest with yourself about what you really want.



Consider all the issues before becoming a single mum

PHOTOGRAPHS CAMERA PRESS; STEVEN CHEE; LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY



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Newsflash!

HELLO HAPPINESS

According to a study, women tend to overtake men in the happiness stakes as we get older.

DR LINDA SAYS "HAPPINESS LEVELS

CHANGE BUT, IN MY EXPERIENCE,

THE MORE POSITIVELY WE APPROACH THINGS IN LIFE, THE HAPPIER

WE WILL BE"



HOW TO...

Create a work/life balance

BE CLEAR about the importance of balance. The more you understand how crucial this is for your physical and emotional health, the more likely you'll be to make the changes required.

TIME MANAGEMENT is one of the greatest tools you have. So many times we feel stressed simply because we don't know how to organise our time. Learn to set realistic goals and deadlines. Once you get into a pattern, you'll feel more in control, less stressed and more productive.

LEARN TO DELEGATE. Sometimes we feel we're the only ones capable of doing something, but that's usually not the case. Enlisting help and support from people around you is a great way to maintain a healthy balance.

TALK TO YOUR BOSS. If they recognise your value, they may be willing to find ways to help you strike the balance you need. Whether it's flexi-time, job sharing or working from home, exploring ways of modifying your current work situation may really help.

SIMPLIFY THINGS. It's human nature to try to do too much. Learn to say no when you have too much on.

Help! 'My friends are richer than me'

Q I have a great group of friends but they all earn more than me and always want to go to fancy places that I can't afford. It's getting to the point where I end up broke every month.

A Sadly we now live in a society where money plays a big role in what we do. But if we communicate our feelings, it doesn't have to interfere with relationships. Be honest about what you can afford – it may be that they're unaware of your position. Instead of keeping your feelings to yourself, suggest an alternative plan. Try, "That sounds fun but I need to watch how much I'm spending, so why don't we go to X instead". It will make them aware of the issue but not in a way that makes them feel blamed for being financially better off. You all need to acknowledge that you have different financial obligations and must be sensitive to each other's needs. Real friends will understand and, like other areas where you may be different, the key to a healthy friendship is making room for those differences, being sensitive to them and working together to accommodate them.



PHOTOGRAPHS NICK LEARY, INC (POSED BY MODELS). LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY

"Charlie's Angels have nothing on us"



Dr Linda's

LIFE skills

Cosmo's psychologist, *Dr Linda Papadopoulos*, gives you a mind makeover

NEWSFLASH!

A *Cosmo* survey found that almost 10% of those questioned felt being overweight would affect their chances of getting a promotion or pay rise

DR LINDA SAYS, "Put your self-esteem in your capabilities and ambitions, not your dress size. Your boss doesn't share the negativity or insecurity you feel, so practise your speech, put on your favourite 'I-mean-business' suit and go ask for that pay rise."

How to... be more creative

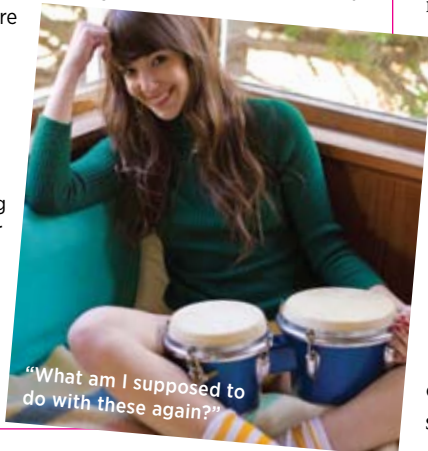
1. SIGN YOUR NAME IN ALL DIRECTIONS. Try writing right to left, upside down, backwards... Repeat this until you can sign every which way. Simply moving your hand backwards stimulates the right side of the brain, where the creative bit lies.

2. TEACH YOUR BODY SOMETHING NEW. From learning a new dance step to trying a new yoga move – even a variation in the way you walk. By mastering a new skill, you'll build your overall right-brain facility.

3. LET YOUR TWO BRAIN HEMISPHERES 'TALK'. Take a pencil and write: "How am I?" With your left hand write whatever

pops into your mind. Then do the same with your right hand. You'll notice that your two hemispheres have different personalities.

4. LOOK AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY. Think of a problem that's had you stumped for a while. Read a few paragraphs in several unrelated books, relax, go for a walk and then come back to the problem. This process encourages creativity and moments of insight. Once you begin encouraging the right side of the brain to help with creativity and solutions to problems, it'll begin to do so more effortlessly.



"What am I supposed to do with these again?"



"Let's talk seriously... Oh look, a ladybird"

HELP!

Are we too different?

My boyfriend and I have been together for over a year. I love him and we get along really well – we've even discussed marriage – but we come from such different religious backgrounds that I'm worried we don't have a future together. Most of us live in such a culturally diverse society that it's inevitable many will end up with a partner who holds different views or beliefs. Whether it's culture, politics or religion, our beliefs are an important part of our identity, but they aren't necessarily the most important part. I think you need to separate out what particular issues regarding religion you anticipate being problematic. Perhaps you're worried about what kind of wedding ceremony you're going to have or what religion your children are going to be? Whatever it is, it's important you articulate exactly what your anxieties are so you can address them. By doing this, you'll be able to address obstacles practically and constructively. I realise it's complex but, at the same time, getting through this is going to come down to you being tolerant enough of each other's differences so you can enjoy and value each other – and your relationship.

PHOTOGRAPHS CORBIS (POSED BY MODELS). LINDA REGRETS SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY.

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NEWSFLASH!

A study found that hostile behaviour from men towards their wives increases the chances of depression long-term for women. The same does not apply when roles are reversed.

DR LINDA SAYS: "This suggests women are more sensitive than men when picking up on other people's behaviour. It's important to maintain a confident sense of self and clear emotional boundaries when in a relationship."

How to... make a speech

1 PREPARE. The more prepared and comfortable you are with the material, the easier it'll be to feel relaxed and assured when you present.

2. SMILE AND MAKE EYE CONTACT. This shows warmth for the audience and it allows you to relax and relate to people in a manner you're more used to and comfortable with. If you're too anxious to look straight at individuals, start by looking at the spaces between them.

3. PROJECT. The best way to hold someone's attention is to project energy and passion. Believe in what you say

and the audience will sense your conviction and engage with you more positively.

4. PACE YOURSELF. If you speak too fast people won't understand you; if you speak too slowly they'll get bored. Try to vary your pace to inject excitement or punctuate particular points.

5. BODY LANGUAGE. Keep gestures natural. Try practising in front of a mirror, focusing on posture, hand movements and your facial expression. Good luck!



I fancy Mum's boyfriend

My mum and I have always been a bit competitive – she is only 17 years older than me and we're close. She recently met and got engaged to someone who I really fancy. I know the idea of fancying my stepdad is awful, but I can't help it and I think he might feel the same way. Should I tell him how I feel?

Competition between family members is common. However, there's healthy competition and there's the unhealthy kind – and that's the kind you're headed for. Regardless of your feelings for this man, you need to take a moment to think this through. Does the fact that you're attracted to him really justify your both breaking your mother's trust and damaging your relationship with her? What if he was to say he didn't share your feelings? This could be hanging over you for a very long time. And even if he did share the attraction, how realistic would it be to develop the relationship in a healthy way, given his history with your mum? The fact is, before you make a move, you need to ask yourself why you're willing to risk so much. If it's to prove a point to your mum, that point is better made in other ways.

PHOTOGRAPHS SCOPE BEAUTY. LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY

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NEWSFLASH!

The Christmas cards you buy say a lot about you! Modern, striking cards mean you're extroverted and easily upset; simple cards, introverted and organised.

DR LINDA SAYS "Researchers think this is down to pre-set levels of arousal. Introverts have high pre-set levels, so they tend to avoid further stimulating their brains, preferring quiet evenings - and calm, simple card designs. Extroverts are the opposite. Time to take notice as the Christmas cards land on your doormat!"



"Oh, you are so funny, clever, beautiful..."

How to... decode your boyfriend

is all in how we ask the question. Asking, "What on earth's wrong with you?" is going to elicit a very different response than, "Is everything OK? You don't seem yourself lately. I understand if you just need to be alone to think, but I'm here if you need to talk."

4. ACCEPT THAT MOODS ARE NORMAL. Remember, we're all human - we have good days and bad days, and part of being in a healthy relationship is giving each other the space to experience feelings, even unpleasant ones...

1. DON'T MIND-READ. Making assumptions about what he's thinking is an all-too-common error. When we do this, we're much more likely to project our own insecurities on a situation, rather than really getting to the bottom of what's going on.

2. TRY NOT TO COMPARE. Just because you'd act a certain way in a situation doesn't mean others would do the same. Manage your own expectations about what specific behaviours mean, and remember that we all behave differently under stress.

3. DON'T BE DEFENSIVE. The way we approach the issue of someone's mood



Hannah was an expert in the art of nose-reading

HELP!

I've got a girl-crush

I'm 19 years old and have always dated boys. I've only ever had one serious relationship, which lasted nine months. I recently started a new job - and I've developed a girl-crush on someone I work with. Could I be gay?

Answering the question "Am I gay?" is not easy, as sexuality is very rarely black or white. Dreaming or fantasising about someone of the same sex doesn't necessarily make you gay; studies have found most people have some degree of attraction to both sexes. Be aware that this uncertainty is a normal part of many people's sexual development, and it's important to give yourself time to figure out your sexual orientation. The girl-crush you have may just mean you admire her or want to be like her, and obsessing about her is a way of making sense of these feelings. It may, however, be a genuine attraction. Ultimately, the only person who can determine your sexuality is you. I know it can be hard, but it's great that you're taking the time to explore your feelings. Whatever your sexuality, it's knowing what you really want out of a relationship that will dictate how healthy and happy you are within it.

PHOTOGRAPHS JUMP FOTO. SCOPE BEAUTY. LINDA REGRETS SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY

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Newsflash!

CRAVING CONTROL

New research has found that bingeing increases 'happy chemicals' in the brain area that controls food intake.

DR LINDA SAYS

"THOSE PLEASURE

CHEMICALS ARE ALSO RELEASED

WHEN YOU EXERCISE, SO BEFORE

YOU GRAB THAT FAMILY BAG OF CRISPS,

TRY GOING FOR A RUN INSTEAD"



"I told you I'd make the boat rock"

HOW TO...

Have a perfect first date

FEEL COMFORTABLE From the clothes you wear to the topics you discuss, the more comfortable you feel during your date, the more fun you'll have. So think carefully about those skyscraper heels and that rib-crunching push-up bra...

KEEP THINGS LIGHT First dates and deep conversations don't mix. Keep the conversation light, share things that are interesting but not too intimate and get to know each other slowly.

LISTEN First dates can make you feel nervous and nerves can make you talk too much. So, make a point of being a good listener. Lean in, make eye contact and let him know you find him interesting (fingers crossed you actually will!).

HAVE FUN By showing him that you have a sense of humour and are happy to be yourself, he'll feel he can relax and you'll find yourselves connecting more easily.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, LET HIM KNOW The end of a date is the time to make your intentions clear. If you had fun, tell him. If you'd like to see him again, let him know. And be brave! If you feel like it, go in for that all-important kiss...



"I wonder if that giant Toblerone will make me feel braver..."

Help! 'I'm really scared of flying'

Q I'm going backpacking around Asia with friends this summer, but I have a real fear of flying and I'm already starting to feel really anxious about it. What can I do?

A First of all, you're not alone – most of us have some degree of 'aerophobia' or fear of flying. For some it's about being in closed spaces; for others it's about the height or the crowds, and for many it comes down to the fear of not being in control. The key to getting over it is actively changing the way you think about it. There are some concrete things you can do to confront your fear. Learn to challenge irrational thoughts: remember flying is infinitely safer than driving, so it's more rational to be worried about getting to the airport than on the plane! Second, let the flight crew know how you feel at check-in, or even the person sitting next to you. Talking about it and getting support is a great boost and will keep you distracted. Avoid caffeinated drinks as these may exacerbate feelings of anxiety. If you can, attend a fear of flying course a few weeks before. Finally, let yourself daydream and get excited about your trip! This is one of the cases in life where it's probably more useful to focus on the destination rather than the journey...

PHOTOGRAPHS SCOPE BEAUTY; CAMERA PRESS; LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY



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NEWSFLASH!

According to new research, less than a quarter of us who make New Year's resolutions actually manage to keep them because we dwell on the negatives and worry what will happen if we don't achieve our goals.

DR LINDA SAYS: "When making this New Year's resolutions, give yourself a head start by making them manageable, staying positive and patting yourself on the back for sticking to them!"



"So, about that love declaration..."

HELP!

My best friend's in love with me

He's just told me he loves me and, although I love him as a friend, I don't share his feelings. How do I tell him I'm not in love with him, and is there any hope our friendship can survive?

Your dilemma is one many of us have been in. I think the problem arises because whereas we have social scripts for being in a romantic relationship, or in a friendship with a same-sex friend, our society doesn't have 'scripts' for mixed friendships. We expect them all to have a sexual subtext.

In reality, sexual attraction can suddenly enter a male-female friendship and, depending on how you navigate it, it'll have an effect on how your friendship progresses. You need to handle it sensitively, but also be sure not to make such a big deal of it that your friend feels too embarrassed to continue the friendship.

Tell him that, although you love him and value your friendship, you don't have romantic feelings for him. Explain why you think you're so good as friends, and once he's accepted where you're coming from, make a pact to move on without making a huge issue of it. He's bound to feel rejected and embarrassed, but the more he sees his confession as something you're taking in your stride, the easier it will be for him to deal with.

How to... be confident giving a presentation

1. KNOW YOUR STUFF. The better you know your material, and the more comfortable you feel about the subject matter, the more confident you'll be.

2. BE ORGANISED. Your presentation should tell a clear story, with a beginning, middle and conclusion. The more clearly organised it is, the easier it will be for your audience to follow. Use aides. Things like PowerPoint and handouts are great tools - not only to help clarify your points but to give the audience something (other than you) to focus on.

3. PRACTISE. As with most things in life, practice makes perfect. Go over your

speech, both in front of the mirror so you can be aware of your body language, and in front of friends who can give you feedback.

4. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE. What you say, how you say it and even what you wear should be dictated by your audience. Find out as much as you can about them. This will give you a greater sense of confidence and control.

5. BE HUMAN! People want you to succeed and probably won't notice if you make a mistake. Be relaxed, make a joke early on (if appropriate) and enjoy yourself.



"Moving on to our next... ooh, look, he's naked!"

PHOTOGRAPHS PAMELA HANSON/TRUNKARCHIVE.COM, ALEXA MILLER; LINDA REGRETS SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY

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NEWSFLASH!

Those planning a trip are happier than those not going away but, after the trip, there's no difference between the happiness levels of the two groups.

DR LINDA SAYS "As with many things in life, the anticipation is the best bit. So make sure you keep planning new things to do."



Adoption can raise many tricky questions

How to... cope with feeling low

1. KEEP A THOUGHT DIARY.

An effective way to deal with depression is to understand how your thoughts relate to your mood. Make notes of your emotions and the thoughts that trigger them.

2. LEARN TO IDENTIFY NEGATIVE THINKING by examining your thoughts and by challenging negative/irrational ones, such as "I'm not good at anything", with more positive alternatives.

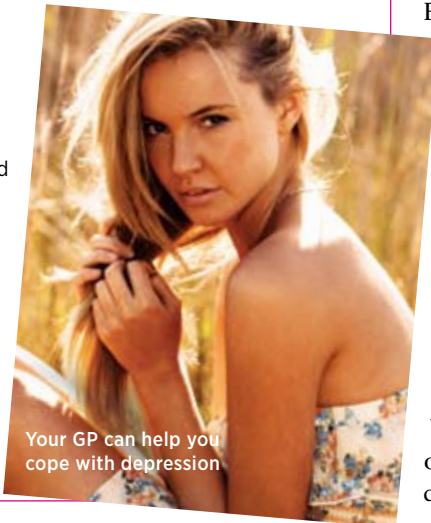
3. KEEP ACTIVE. Exercise boosts feel-good chemicals in the brain, so even going for a walk can help to lift your spirits.

4. EAT HEALTHILY. Research has shown that

even your diet can affect your mood. Sugary foods and certain carbohydrates can make your metabolism sluggish, making you feel low, while fresh fruit and leafy veg can have the opposite effect.

5. KEEP AN EYE ON YOU.

Monitor your mood and stress levels. If you feel increasingly low, consult your GP, who can get you the support you need. Remember, sometimes the best way of coping is acknowledging you need help to cope. Trying to see the positives will make it a smoother transition.



Your GP can help you cope with depression

HELP!

I've just learnt I'm adopted

I'm 19 and just found out I'm adopted. I love my parents but I'm upset they kept it from me for so long. Now I can't stop thinking about my biological parents. What should I do?

Finding out you're adopted in adulthood can make you feel a range of emotions. And no doubt you have many questions you want answered, from why your birth parents gave you up, to why your adoptive parents didn't tell you sooner. It's natural to want to know more about your biological parents, even if you're close to your adoptive parents – who will understand and, hopefully, be able to share information on your adoption or birth parents. Ultimately, it's important you feel you have the right support to deal with this news, and that'll come from sharing your honest feelings with your parents. It's natural to feel confused and guilty about seeking out your birth family, and it's natural for them to be concerned about you. So keep them in the loop and remember they may be finding it just as hard as you to deal with. Finally, be aware of expectations: the more open you are to what you may discover about your history, the easier it will be to deal with it.

PHOTOGRAPHS SCOPE BEAUTY, REX

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Newsflash!

Scientists have found a way to turn promiscuous animals into monogamous ones by inserting a gene that changes the way the pleasure centre in their brain works.

DR LINDA SAYS "HUMAN MALES HAVE A SIMILAR SYSTEM SO IT OPENS THE DOOR TO THE POSSIBILITY OF MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR MEN WHO HAVE TROUBLE COMMITTING TO RELATIONSHIPS. ARE YOU LISTENING JOHN TERRY?"



"Funny, I tell them my boyfriend's coming round and this is how they dress..."

How To...

Choose a suitable flatmate

BE AWARE OF WHAT YOU WANT. Everyone's idea of a perfect flatmate will differ, so be clear about what your basic wants are, such as gender, age, and smoking and drinking habits. **INTERVIEW PROSPECTIVE ROOMMATES.** Make notes on their personality traits that may affect you – if they work night shifts or if they're very extrovert and entertain a lot. Different likes and dislikes can cause conflicts and disruptions within a household, so having some interests in common is a good thing. **BE CLEAR ON STAY-OVERS.** If any of you is coupled-up, how often will partners be staying over? No one wants to feel like a gooseberry in their own home. The sooner you do this the better, so everyone knows where they stand and what's acceptable. **BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THINGS TO DO WITH MONEY,** food, cleaning, entertaining and noise levels. Sorting rules out ahead will avoid problems arising later. **BE FLEXIBLE.** Living with someone new is never easy, so approaching the situation with positivity will make it a smoother transition – and a lot of fun!



"If I jam my board through her bike spokes..."

Help! 'I only fancy coupled-up men'

Q I'm not sure why but I always go for guys who are attached – most often with girlfriends, but one was even married. I don't want to hurt anyone, so I don't know why I'm so attracted to unavailable men.

A There are several reasons why you may be attracted to attached men. It may be that getting someone unavailable signifies a triumph of sorts, or even an ego boost – if he's willing to take a risk for you, you may see this as indicative of your worth. It could also be that you have such little faith in men that, rather than being on the receiving end of an adulterous relationship, you 'choose' it, so you feel like you have more control and are less likely to get hurt. But it could be that you just aren't thinking about the impact of your actions on the girlfriends – or yourself. It's vital to get to the bottom of why you're doing this. You can achieve the sense of control, safety or self-worth that you crave, without compromising your integrity. Why not be single and invest in yourself for a while? Address what you feel is lacking by starting a healthier relationship with yourself.

PHOTOGRAPHS FOLIO-ID.COM, SCOPE BEAUTY, LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY



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Newsflash!

Research shows that blondes (even dyed ones) are more ambitious and aggressive than brunettes or redheads. Blondes are more likely to be treated better and are willing to get angry to reach their goals.

DR LINDA SAYS "AS BLONDES ARE OFTEN STEREOTYPED AS 'DITZY', WHO CAN BLAME THEM FOR GETTING ANGRY WHEN THEY'RE NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY?"



HOW TO...

Not sweat small stuff

SAY NO. The problem with saying yes all the time is that you prioritise other people's needs over yours, having a negative impact on your own self-worth. Trying to please everyone all the time leaves you overwhelmed, stressed and tired.

GIVE YOURSELF MORE TIME. Rushing makes us anxious – giving yourself an extra 10 minutes to prepare for your day, your meeting or your date will make you feel more in control.

SELFISH ISN'T ALWAYS BAD. When we feel satisfied emotionally, giving to others is easier. Hone your self-care skills by doing things that you enjoy, even if it's just for an hour a day.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO JUST 'BE'. You're a 'human being' not a 'human doing', so have time away from phone calls and emails. Set aside a certain part of the day when you put the phone on silent and don't pick up unless it's an emergency.

LET YOURSELF OFF THE HOOK. We spend so much time berating ourselves for what we haven't done that we lose perspective. You're not supposed to be perfect – keep a clear frame of mind and if you're going to be self-critical, make sure it's constructive!



Help!

'My best friend loves me'

Q My best friend is in love with me. We've known each other since we were kids and I care about him deeply, but only as a friend. How do I tell him I don't love him, and can our friendship survive?

A The age-old question of whether men and women can really have a platonic relationship is one that I often get asked about. It's not easy. Women develop an attraction based on intimacy, whereas for men it's based on proximity. So a girl will respond to the fact that her friend is there for her and that's where the attraction will begin. For men, attraction will begin with a woman who is a 'constant' in his life – the one he sees most often and shares jokes with. The problem is that sometimes the attraction is one-sided, so you need to be upfront. Explain that you love him as a friend and explain why. Tell him why you value him and the relationship the way it is. To help him not feel embarrassed, show him you're OK with this and that it won't affect the way you see him. Finally, change the topic to something unrelated to highlight that you want your friendship to continue and that this is something you can get through together.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SCOPE BEAUTY, KANE SKENWAR (POSED BY ANDREAS). LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY



Dr Linda's

LOVE skills

Cosmo's psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos gives you a mind makeover

NEWSFLASH!

In November about 5% of the population will be affected by seasonal affective disorder (SAD), prompting depression that can lead to increased food cravings.

DR LINDA SAYS: "Don't be hard on yourself - SAD is a real condition and you can help combat it by getting outside during daylight. We often turn to food for comfort, but you can avoid this by exercising instead, which will release endorphins to boost your mood."



"Hot man at 2 o'clock, please come talk to me"

HELP!

Will I ever meet a man?

I'm the only single girl in my group of friends. I worry that I'll never meet anyone because they all just want to stay in with their boyfriends or have cosy dinner parties, so I rarely go to places where I might meet someone. How can I get my social life back on track?

It's important to remember that our friendships change as life moves on, and sometimes getting used to your friends pairing off can be difficult. However, there is plenty of room for compromise here. You must be clear with your friends that you have different needs to them, and explain that even though you're at different stages of your life, it doesn't mean you can't meet in the middle. Maybe a good compromise would be to arrange a dinner party where your friends invite other single people? Then you can meet available men to socialise with. It may be that you also find yourself having to widen your group of friends to include some single girls who you can go out with - ask around at work to see if anyone fancies a drink. Or perhaps you need to find something you enjoy doing and join a club or class to meet like-minded people.

How to... keep your tears under control

- 1. I'M A FIRM BELIEVER THAT CRYING ISN'T A SIGN OF WEAKNESS,** so don't apologise if you get emotional. By showing someone you feel passionately about something, you'll automatically give yourself some of the control back.
- 2. TO COMBAT THAT DREADED FEELING OF TEARS APPROACHING,** take deep breaths and try to concentrate on the facts of your situation rather than the emotions.
- 3. IF YOU'RE GETTING READY TO CONFRONT SOMEONE,** try to focus on what you want to say - this should give you a feeling of control.

- 4. DON'T BE AFRAID TO GO HOME AND HAVE A GOOD CRY TO YOUR BOYFRIEND OR FLATMATES.** If it helps you to get through a hard day at work, picture being able to go home and let it all out.
- 5. WHEN YOU KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO SEE SOMEONE YOU DON'T WANT TO,** keep the conversation short and simple. Be aware of what you want to say and, if you begin to feel emotional, go to the toilets to compose yourself.



"Sob... I just can't believe *Lost* isn't on any more..."

PHOTOGRAPHS CAMERA PRESS (POSED BY MODELS), DR LINDA REGRETS THAT SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY

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Dr Linda's

LIFE skills

Cosmo's psychologist *Dr Linda Papadopoulos* gives you a mind makeover

NEWSFLASH!

Studies have found that 71% of women feel the most important factor in having a close friend is that they are 'someone you can be yourself with'.

DR LINDA SAYS: "Women often feel the pressure to live up to other people's expectations, whether it's through their appearance or accomplishments. The ability to be yourself with someone is a sign that you're truly accepted on your own terms."



HELP!

"Your mum's coming for lunch again? Can I eat mine in the garage?"

He won't hang with my parents

My parents aren't aware that my boyfriend really hates spending time with them – they have nothing in common but they're always asking to come round. Now I'm caught in the middle trying to please both sides!

It's never easy when you find yourself in the middle of a situation like this. But *your* feelings also factor into this, so you're going to have to take the time to consider those too. First, speak to your partner about how things could be easier when your parents visit. Whether it's the fact that they stay too long or that he finds their questions too intrusive, look at what you can do practically to make it easier for him. However, it's also important to make the point that it's hard for you to be caught in the middle and that he needs to understand you want to spend time with them – even if he doesn't. Then speak to your parents and explain that even though you enjoy spending time with them, you're part of a couple now and need to share your time with your boyfriend a bit more. This will give you a chance to put some of the changes you agreed with your boyfriend in place.

How to... always feel beautiful

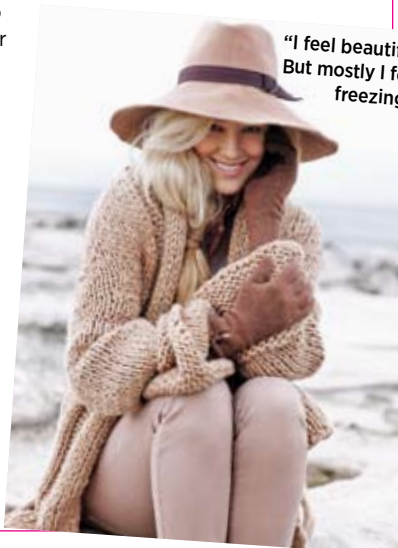
focus on things we don't like. Focusing on things we *do* like will help with body confidence.

4. LEARN TO LOVE YOURSELF

Don't distil your self-worth down to what you look like – learn to like *who* you are as an individual.

5. DON'T COMPETE

Women are socialised into feeling their value is in being desired and that other women are rivals. But you're in competition with no one but yourself, and the sooner you celebrate your own beauty, the prettier you'll feel.



"I feel beautiful. But mostly I feel freezing!"

1. DON'T BUY INTO THE BEAUTY MYTH

Being 'model gorgeous' isn't the route to happiness – increasing your self-esteem by valuing yourself for your accomplishments and beliefs *is*.

2. STOP COMPARING YOURSELF

We're bombarded with more images than ever before, and the majority of these are professionally altered, making them unrealistic. Keep perspective and don't try to measure up to ideals that don't exist.

3. LIKE WHAT YOU SEE

We've been conditioned to look in the mirror and

PHOTOGRAPHS SCOPE BEAUTY; DR LINDA REGRETS SHE CANNOT ANSWER YOUR LETTERS PERSONALLY

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