

ROCKING YOUR ROLE

The 'how to' guide to success for female breadwinners

Jenny Garrett

Rocking Your Role

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Praise for Rocking Your Role

“A rare and powerful book covering an immensely important subject in a personal, practical and very moving way. I was inspired by reading it and left breathless by the achievements of the author and the women whose stories she tells.”

DR ANN LIMB OBE DL, CHAIR, SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS
LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

“Reading this book lifted the clouds of expectations, guilt, imaginary limitations.... it liberated me to pursue my own personal dreams while still providing for my family.”

NADINE JUIGNET, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
ADVISOR AT HEWLETT PACKARD

“This is a well researched book, that I think will meet a real need, the practical exercises are welcomed, much better than just a pile of theory. Perfect for those women struggling with being breadwinner.”

HEATHER MCGREGOR, AUTHOR,
CAREERS ADVICE FOR AMBITIOUS WOMEN

“Jenny’s insightful work is clearly founded on a deep understanding of the dynamics of relationships and careers, and on the ways in which people develop and learn, as well as on her interviews with women specifically for this book. I wish Rocking Your Role well; a book like this, should it become a top seller, will do more to transform the lives of women, and those of their partners and families, than any number of Government commissions.”

PHILIP WHITELEY, BUSINESS AUTHOR

“Jenny has a great writing voice and has brought a human touch to a taboo subject with great sensitivity and creativity.”

JACKEE HOLDER, COACH, AUTHOR,

“Jenny Garrett charts the rise of the female main earner (ME) in her highly engaging exploration of female breadwinners. That a fifth of women in the UK now earn more than their partners is significant, yet we hear little about this. This book is an invaluable and inspiring source for those who will, either through choice or by chance, embark on this exciting route. She offers advice and space to reflect and challenges one of the modern day taboos.”

MARY HONEYBALL MEP, LONDON MEP AND
LABOUR EUROPEAN SPOKESPERSON ON WOMEN

“From the moment I started reading *Rocking Your Role* I was totally absorbed, recognising so many of the issues that Jenny refers to within this clearly written and practical book. She takes the reader on a journey which makes you question yourself in a way that energises you to step back and think about your work life balance, and the importance of being honest with yourself and those around you. It will resonate with successful women, especially those who are the female breadwinners, in all areas of life.”

PIM BAXTER DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

“Jenny is an inspirational role model and her book provides a practical guide to huge possibilities if we heed her liberating advice. I felt hugely empowered as I worked through the exercises and loved her “ego check” section. A must read book for every woman which I will buy for my dearest girl friends.”

LYNNE SEDGMORE CBE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE 157 GROUP OF FE COLLEGES

For Sunshine and Bear.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the women who I interviewed as part of this research. You are an inspiration; my modern day heroines who have made this book possible.

Immense gratitude to Rose who nurtured the seed and Mindy who helped me make it a reality.

I am so grateful to my husband Rob, daughter Leah and many friends and family for your encouragement.

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Introduction

I feel that I need to start this book by introducing myself as I might do at an AA meeting. Hi, my name is Jenny Garrett and I am the main earner (or ME as I will refer to it in this book) for my family. It's not because being ME is an addiction, but because it is perhaps one of the last taboo subjects in society and, as such, something that you don't usually declare publicly.

There are, of course, a growing number of single parent families where often, but not always, the mother brings up the children. There are also an increasing number of women who don't have children and are solely responsible for their households. Both of these circumstances have their difficulties and opportunities.

However, the situation which is least spoken about is when a couple is co-habiting or married, with children and the woman is the main or sole income earner. *Shhhhh, don't tell anyone, it is one of the last taboos* and the one that we will focus on together.

It is difficult to find career women who have young children and are married or co-habiting. They might disclose two of the three things to you, but not all three.

You may wonder why it matters. Well, I think it's because anything that is unsaid and kept in the shadows doesn't get the light of examination and scrutiny placed upon it and, as such, doesn't get supported, challenged, celebrated or denigrated. Instead assumptions will be made, statements left unchallenged and life goes on; or does it? My experience is that you will be dealing with

the internal and external issues of being ME in isolation and unsupported.

Through this book, I aim to supportively challenge you, help you generate ideas and be inspired to make your experience of being ME work for you.

My story

I am sharing a bit about me, so you can understand my history and perspective when writing this book. This is what forms my experience of being ME and no doubt your history will inform yours. I was born in 1971 to a teenage mother in north west London. Both my parents emigrated to the UK from the Caribbean at an early age. Some, or should I say most, would have predicted that the future didn't look bright for me. My father was not absent, but didn't live in the same house from when I was about 2 years old, though he was always available to me and visited on a regular basis. However, I wasn't missing male role models; my mother has three brothers, and my grandfather was always around.

At the age of 8, the best brother I could have wished for came along and my stepfather had arrived some time before that. I lived in council accommodation, starting off in an estate with flats twenty stories or so high; if it was the US, you would call it the projects. I have distant memories of the smelly lift and the rubbish chute, which always intrigued me.

I am not sure at which point in my childhood I became acutely aware that it was me and Mum against the world, but I think I was still in single digits. I know from that point onwards I was fiercely independent, not wanting to burden my Mum with asking for things and definitely not demanding anything that cost money because I knew it was tough for us.

From the age of fourteen, I worked in a newsagents on a Sunday morning to try to buy the things I wanted. I held the ethos that I would need to work very hard to get anything and even then there might never be enough. This was not seen by me as negative. I didn't feel like a victim at the time nor have I done so since. It was just the way it was.

In the late 1990s, I became interested in leadership coaching, thanks to a strong, inspiring and determined female colleague and friend, also a ME. Training as a coach was the catalyst for a transformational change in my life, helping me to be more self-aware, confident and live life to the full.

This change created space for me to encourage my husband, who had been unhappy at work, to seek opportunities more aligned with his values. He did this successfully and became a college lecturer, during which time my work took off as a leadership coach and facilitator and I completed a part-time Masters degree.

This shift and change is at the heart of me as ME. The balance shifted; my husband was happier in his role, although his salary was lower than he had earned previously while my work took off, making me happier as well but now in the new role as ME. So why bother to analyse the experience? Because there were many internal and external challenges that I had to overcome - my own thoughts and feelings about my role as ME in the family - dealing with others' perceptions and finding ways to make it work for everyone - that you may be facing too.

I have learnt some lessons along the way and hope that my experience and that of the other women MEs in this book will help you avoid them, or at least become more aware in order to make the very best of your current situation.

I don't apologise for this book being from a woman's perspective; I believe this is the voice that is least heard. But this is not only a book for women, as it can also help men to understand the female experience of being ME.

Rising MEs

Increasingly in my work coaching leaders in the UK and US and facilitating leadership programmes, I come across women leaders who are MEs in their family. You may be ME because your partner has been made redundant, laid off, retired, is unwell, or perhaps it is down to circumstance and choice.

Figures from a government commissioned report into economic inequality, published by the National Equality Panel in 2010 show that one in five women in the UK are the breadwinner, earning more than their spouse or partner. This equates to around 2.7million women and the number is likely to have grown since then. The growth of female breadwinners is not unique to the UK, it is higher in the US, which Reuters reported to be one in three in the same year. A recent Twitter response to my question, 'What has been the most significant change for you over the last 12 months?' was: 'Only one of us is employed and we have had a significant decrease in our overall income and now it's all down to me!' Often juggling work, life and family in secrecy, this growing number of MEs rarely discuss or seek coping strategies for their complex role in the world.

This dynamic is new to Western society, but not new to the world as a whole. Women were, and still are in some African tribes, accepted hunter gatherers. They go out and hunt the dinner while the men tend to the chores at home. I have used a thimbleful of their wisdom in this book and have interspersed African proverbs to inspire and guide you.

So what?

The shift to ME can fundamentally challenge your identity and the assumptions made by those around you. For a successful career and family life you must examine and address these challenges.

Being ME is not the issue on its own, but it is the trigger, catalyst, and cause for many complex internal issues that you have to manage. These must be addressed for your physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

I value an understanding of the social and political factors that impact women's lives, and have read widely around the subject of female breadwinners, but often find the literature lacking when it comes to translating it into action. There are some interesting references at the back of this book so that, if you wish, you can engage in further reading and research on the subject.

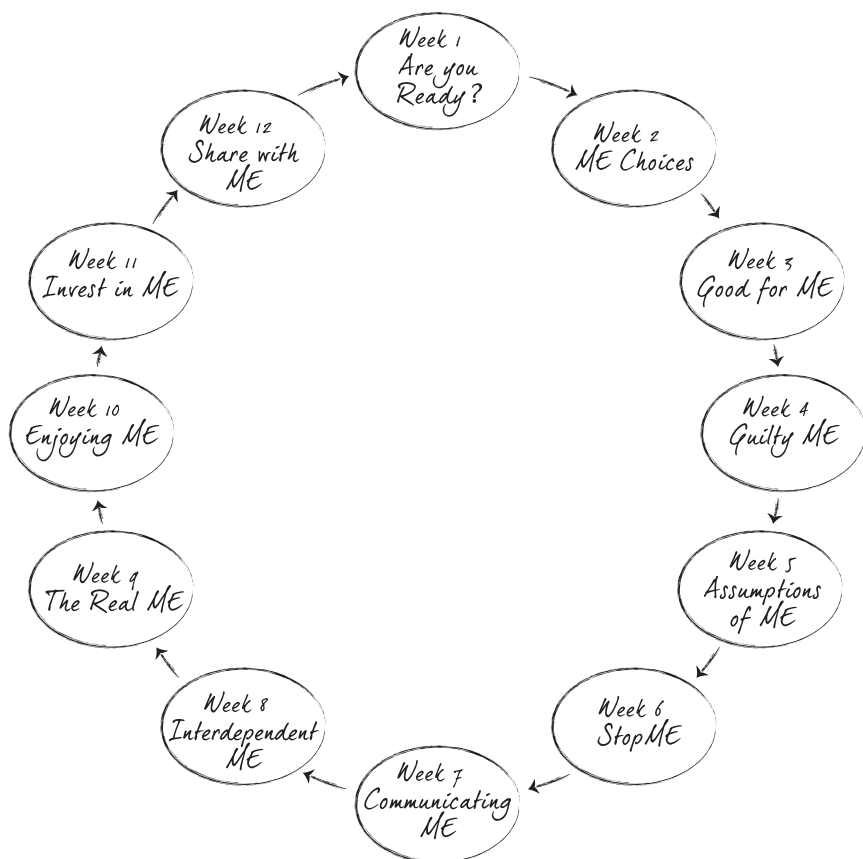
However, this book is concerned with *you* designing *your* best life in *your* current and unique situation. It is not just designed to be informative; rather it is designed to be transformational, so it's intensely personal and practical.

Guidance

This book is created as a guide for you in your life as ME. It is carefully designed to supportively challenge you through the internal and external issues and opportunities you face, in order to make the most of your role and make your corner of the world work for you.

Each chapter is focused on an area that you will need to work on as ME. Based on the experiences of women MEs, the book was written as a sequential developmental

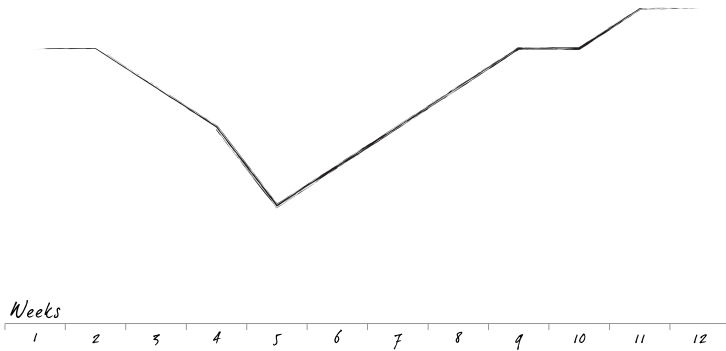
process to engage in. To make the most from the book, you should take a chapter a week and engage in the twelve week process. At the end of that time you can chart your progress and plan how to sustain it. However, I know whichever way you engage with the book will be the best way for you.



Your experience of this process will be unique, but it is best to start it when you are feeling well and able to cope, as your energy levels may dip through the process. Typically during the first three weeks, you will be

energised, but the following three weeks can prove very draining and you will need to take extra care of yourself. During the final six weeks, your energy levels should build again.

Typical Energy Levels



Women's voices

I formally interviewed eight women MEs as part of my research and spoke informally to twenty others. Of the eight women, one was American living in the US and the rest were based in the UK. Those based in the UK were not all born there; while some were from Scotland, the North and South of England, others were from France, Jamaica and Africa. Their ages ranged from mid thirties to late fifties. Two were no longer married, all were in heterosexual relationships. They came to me through my work, friendships, chance meetings and online interaction. You will hear their uncensored voices extensively through this book in quotes and also have more in-depth stories of their unique experiences. I have anonymised their contributions and used aliases to protect their identities.

I chose to interview a small group of women because I wanted to understand and illuminate the uniqueness of how women MEs made sense of their lives. Even in this relatively small group, experiences and views are very different. Very much like children born to the same parents, their personalities, perspectives and experiences can diverge, even though their backgrounds are inherently the same. If I had taken a sample of hundreds, my fear is that the uniqueness and difference would have been drowned out by what was common to all, instead I wanted to give the difference a voice.

My hope is that even if your life, background, nationality, sexual orientation or heritage is different to these women, elements of their story will still resonate with you.

This is a practical and interactive guide with tried and tested transformational questions to reflect on and activities to undertake in every chapter. You will see them labelled with icons representing:



REFLECTION

or



ACTION

Your first step is to invest in a journal or notebook to capture your responses.

This book is not meant to be read and placed back on the shelf; keep it with you and let it guide you into becoming the best ME you can be.

Chapter 1 - Are you ready?

*Through wisdom I have dived
down into the great sea,
And have seized in the place of her depths
a pearl whereby I am rich.
I went down like the great iron anchor, whereby men
anchor ships for the night
on the high seas,
and I received a lamp which lighteth me,
and I came up by the ropes
of the boat of understanding.*

QUEEN OF SHEBA

As your guide I see it as my responsibility to ensure that you know how to equip yourself for your adventure through this book. In this chapter, I introduce you to the essential tools you will need: Reflection, Small Steps and Support. I help you to reconnect with what is important to you and why you would embark on this adventure in the first place through visiting your values and the impact of your happiness on others. Lastly, we ensure that your wellbeing and energy levels are right for you to start this adventure right now.

I am encouraging you to take a good look in the mirror and gaze with clear fresh eyes at what underpins your thinking and behaviour. This might be the first time you've really thought about being ME or it may be something you have long celebrated. Where you are in your thinking will affect what you take from it. It may be a reaffirmation of what you know in order to help you feel resourceful and build on what you have achieved, or it may bring some new realisations for you. Both are great places to start.

It's so easy for me to encourage you to examine all of the challenges and opportunities associated with being ME right now; I am not walking in your shoes - especially when you've taken the time to wear them in. I imagine that they're now comfortable and they go with everything; why would you replace them with new ones or question if they are right for you?

Rhonda sums up the challenge of being ME eloquently: "By being a working career woman or career mum, whatever you want to call it, I'm trying to get the best out of both worlds. I'm trying to be true to who I am, not to who other people want me to be or what I think people think I should be. And that is difficult and, you know, none of this is easy."

The idea is that you understand what informs your decisions, reflect on what's important to you and become more aware. From this place of uncensored honesty with yourself, you can start to design your best life as ME.

Take your time and work through the activities and spaces for reflection I have provided over the coming week; there is no rush, but there should be a rhythm, a movement, a continuous flow. You'll find some resonate with you more than others, but give them all a try.

If you find yourself getting stuck on one activity or reflection, sleep on it, note it and then keep moving and flowing through the process. You can always revisit it at the end of the book, or more likely a realisation will come to you as you work through the guide that eases that sticking-point for you.

The tools

Support

This book is definitely a helpful guide, but, while you peel away the layers you wear on daily basis - starting with that tailored overcoat - I would also recommend finding some additional support before you get as far as the underwired bra. That support could be your partner, a friend, family member or spiritual guide. I have found many professional women come to me in my capacity as a leadership coach to support them. They value the unique space for reflection and empathy, the fact that they are not judged and the focus on moving forward.

Reflection

Reflection is critical to the process. I know ... you reflect all the time, in bed, on your daily commute, in the shower, while exercising. But do you really? Do you really capture those revelations in the middle of an exercise class or out walking the dog? Do you write things down, whether in a book or on a blog, do you capture your thoughts and feelings in their stark reality and actually hear what you are saying to yourself? This is the place to express yourself, uncensored and in glorious technicolour.

You can reflect in the journal you have purchased. A couple of musts; you must do it regularly and you must read it back and, if possible, read it aloud. We speak, but for some reason we don't always hear ourselves. This process of reflection, of being curious and inquisitive about your situation, is what will make this process work and work well.

Reflection will reveal places in which you can make positive changes in your life, help you to develop new ways of doing things and become more aware of how to create the path that will work for you. When you are reflecting you are thinking with a purpose, questioning and inquiring into the way you do things in order to make improvements for the future. Julia Cameron, in her book *The Artist's Way*, recommends writing a stream of consciousness every day, which is all the thoughts that come into your head first thing in the morning before you speak to anyone. Others write in a journal just before bed. You will find your own rhythm.

I read recently that the American actor Tyler Perry used this type of writing to change his life. Writing enabled him to let go of his troubled past and start his career by sharing the stories of his experience through plays and movies.

If writing isn't for you, you have so many other options; you can draw, capture voice notes on a voice recorder, or create short video entries. One last thing; date your reflections, so that you can review the distance you've travelled.



ACTION - Start Reflecting

Time to break in that new journal.

Set an alarm for 5 minutes' time so you don't have to disturb your flow by checking the time. Start reflecting now. Your focused question is: If you were to design your best life being ME what would it look like? Write for 5 minutes, not lifting your pen from the page, not checking for grammar or correcting yourself. Write in as much detail as possible from different perspectives. And when the 5 minutes is up read it back to yourself, aloud if possible.



REFLECTION

- * What surprised you about the process?
- * What was the theme that repeated itself in your writing?
- * When you read what you wrote, what was your overriding emotion?
- * What are you compelled to do as a result of this activity?
- * How will you integrate more reflection in your life?

Small things make a difference

I am going to refer to making small actions and commitments to change throughout the book. When I say small things, I mean small: Things you can do today or tomorrow, with minimal effort that don't take much time; things that you *can* achieve. So if you come up with an action, break it down to the smallest possible action you can do to get it started and do it: This will be a catalyst for more small and successful actions. What is one small thing you can do by tomorrow to reflect more? Start now.

What's important to you?

You may be nervous about looking back, but we are only doing so in order to move forward. I know what it's like, we all bury our heads in the sand sometimes. But you know what? When you lift your head, your skin may be slightly exfoliated and younger-looking, but everything you were hiding from is still there. So let's face it together; you never know, there may be something to celebrate!

Maybe you haven't realised what you are not facing up to or celebrating in your role as ME:

- * Can you talk about being ME without welling up with tears or showing red hot flashes of anger?
- * Are you continuing as if nothing has changed, still doing everything you used to and now bringing in all the money too?
- * Are you managing your life balance, feeling good about work, home and life?
- * Are you proud and happy being ME and a role modelling success?
- * How do you feel about maybe not being the one your child runs to when they need advice or comfort?

Whatever your responses, they will be lessons to learn from and experiences to build upon.

The first step to moving forward is: Understanding your past in order to see the present clearly and have a better future. I don't mean dwelling in the past and blaming others or getting caught up in the emotion of your past experience. The idea is not that you start confronting family members who teased you, or parents who didn't let you go to the party with your friends. That is all done now, let it go and... breathe! Although, if you do have some significant and serious issues that keep you stuck in the past, I recommend you visit a professional counsellor or therapist. What I am talking about is trying to understand how your past is impacting you now.

Those who have significantly influenced you in the past have helped to shape you. How much time have you spent thinking about who they might be? Some might call them role models. Professional women I have spoken to spend surprisingly little time thinking about it; however when they do, they are taken aback by who those people are. Sometimes it's their mothers, but

more often, fathers, aunts, neighbours, people who they respected and were often self-made.

Your list of influences are having an impact on how you see the world now.

In the introduction, I told you a bit about my influences. The biggest influences for me have been my mother and grandmother and, understanding that my need to be responsible was both a blessing and a curse; changed the way I viewed being ME in my home. I know where my sense of responsibility and need to earn comes from, but actually things are not tough for me right now so I don't need to act as if they are. This is part of my story and I'm sure you have your own. When you are wise to it, you can gently shoo it away when it comes sniffing around, or embrace it like a long-lost friend who comes back into your life.



REFLECTION

- * Reflect on your influences in your journal.
- * Think of two or three people who have positively influenced you.
- * List at least one thing that each of them taught you.
- * How is what they taught you influencing your life now?
- * How do you feel about that? Were you aware of how you felt?
- * When you have finished reflecting, move on to the following activity.



ACTION - Values

Your values inform every decision you make, they are the rules by which you live and underpin who you are. Sometimes you can lose sight of them, particularly in times of stress. Reconnecting with what's important to you will remind you of where you came from and will help you make the right decisions for you as we go through this process.

On the next page is a table of values that have come up in my conversations with women MEs. You may think of others that resonate with you, if so please add them.

Examine each one carefully. What are your top 5? No one is going to see this, so be honest. You can circle them on the page or list them in your journal.

Give your reasons why. Are there any surprises? If so why is that? What does that mean for how you live your life as ME?

How can your values help you with the challenges of being ME?

Remind yourself of your values regularly. They are at the heart of who you are and help you to make the right decisions for you.

<i>Table of Values</i>			
<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Independence</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Personal Development</i>
<i>Relationships</i>	<i>Self Awareness</i>	<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Power</i>
<i>Advancement</i>	<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Friendship</i>	<i>Family</i>
<i>Affection</i>	<i>Adventure</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Respect</i>
<i>Order</i>	<i>Cooperatio</i>	<i>Loyalty</i>	<i>Spirituality</i>
<i>Pleasure</i>	<i>Helpfulness</i>	<i>Wisdom</i>	<i>Wealth</i>
<i>Harmony</i>	<i>Economic security</i>		

Awareness of ME

So you're ME, but do you even know how you feel about that? What about your partner, how do they feel? Who, or what, is influencing how you both feel?

Many of my conversations with women confirmed that their nerves are raw when their role as ME is discussed. One of my past leadership coaching clients described 'resentment' when she became ME and another, in an online discussion, described the time that she was ME as, "dark days" that she no longer wanted to remember, while others felt pride and achievement about their place in the world.

Andrea said, "I subconsciously just don't talk about any element of my work success. I would say I work mainly because it's interesting, it's never because 'it's financially lucrative, it's paid for the extension or its paid for the car' because I suppose it would make them question their own situation."

While Bernadette feels that, "Society hasn't caught up with women's need to be recognised as intelligent

people, not just domestic people. I mean, you still have the role as a mum and still help around the house and still have a job. If you have a job, you know, it's almost a luxury at times because you still have a home to run."

A recent radio discussion described the male point of view when talking about stay-at-home dads. There was not one singular experience for men being at home; some loved it and even enjoyed being the token male in the playground with the 'yummy mummies' while others found it utterly soul-destroying.

With your life as ME often not outwardly accepted by society, no one would be surprised if you suppressed your true thoughts and feelings as a coping mechanism.

The process of raising your awareness can be unsettling. You've probably got some things buried away for a good reason; it could be painful, disruptive; mean change for you and others; but it could also make things better, more open and even easier.

Slow and steady should be your motto here. To start the process of raising your awareness gently, reflect on and write down your responses to these questions.



REFLECTION

- * Did you have a choice in the way things are?
- * Did you make the decision together?
- * Is there a nagging thought or feeling that you are finding more and more difficult to ignore?
- * Look at your responses, the language that you've used. The flow and the overall message - what does this tell you about where you are at with your thoughts and feelings on being ME?



ACTION

If you found the last reflection challenging and feel that you want to further unpack your feelings around being ME, then I recommend this focusing exercise. If you feel that you have reflected enough then you can skip this and move on to Happy ME on page 33.

You are so close to your situation that you may find it difficult to see it in a way that isn't charged with emotion. It is a real challenge to stand back and look at it objectively. I would like to introduce you to an approach called *Focusing*. It is a meditative approach to personal growth, which is underpinned by the belief that unresolved issues actually exist in our physical body. It has parallels with *Mindfulness*, which you may be familiar with. This short form *Focusing* exercise, created by Eugene Gendlin, can provide a space to listen to your body in order to gain answers you may not achieve by simply reflecting. (http://www.focusing.org/short_gendlin.html)

Let's try *Focusing* to help you unlock these feelings. Try it on your own first and then you may want your partner to support you or join in with you. Find a quiet space where you will be undisturbed for 20 minutes, preferably away from a desk and sit in a comfortable chair.

1. Clear a space

How are you? What's between you and feeling fine?

Don't answer; let what comes in your body do the answering.

Don't go into anything.

Greet each concern that comes. Put each aside for a while, next to you.

Except for that, are you fine?

2. **Felt Sense**

Pick one concern to focus on.

Don't go into the concern.

What do you sense in your body when you sense the whole of that concern?

Sense all of that, the sense of the whole thing, the murky discomfort or the unclear body-sense of it.

3. **Get a handle**

What is the quality of the felt sense?

What one word, phrase, or image comes out of this felt sense?

What quality word would fit it best?

4. **Resonate**

Go back and forth between word (or image) and the felt sense.

Is that right?

If they match, have the sensation of matching several times.

If the felt sense changes, follow it with your attention.

When you get a perfect match, the words (images) being just right for this feeling, let yourself feel that for a minute.

5. **Ask**

What is it, about the whole concern that makes me so

_____?

When stuck, ask questions:

- * What is the worst of this feeling?
- * What's really so bad about this?
- * What does it need?
- * What should happen?
- * Don't answer; wait for the feeling to stir and give you an answer.

- * What would it feel like if it was all OK?
- * Let the body answer
- * What is in the way of that?

6. Receive

Welcome what came. Be glad it spoke.

This represents only one step on this concern, not the last.

Now that you know where it is, you can leave it and come back to it later.

Protect it from critical voices that interrupt.

Does your body want another round of *Focusing*, or is this a good stopping place?

As a result of *Focusing*, you are likely to have a new understanding, awareness or idea. Jot down anything that arose for you from the exercise as you will use it later.

Happy ME

I regularly buy a decaf soy latte when I am out and about. Occasionally, I will find that the seam of my paper cup isn't quite glued properly and my coffee is slowly seeping out. It's not obvious to the eye, but it is to the touch. I'll wrap it in a paper napkin, it absorbs it a little, but it doesn't go away. Just like the coffee, how you feel leaks out slowly, almost unobserved, but definitely felt.

It's an illusion to believe that you can feel miserable and it won't impact those around you. Just like your happiness, it has a ripple effect. You are part of a family unit, your happiness has far-reaching consequences. You owe it to those around you to be happy. Perhaps you won't recognise your impact until it's illustrated for you. Try creating your happiness map and see for yourself.



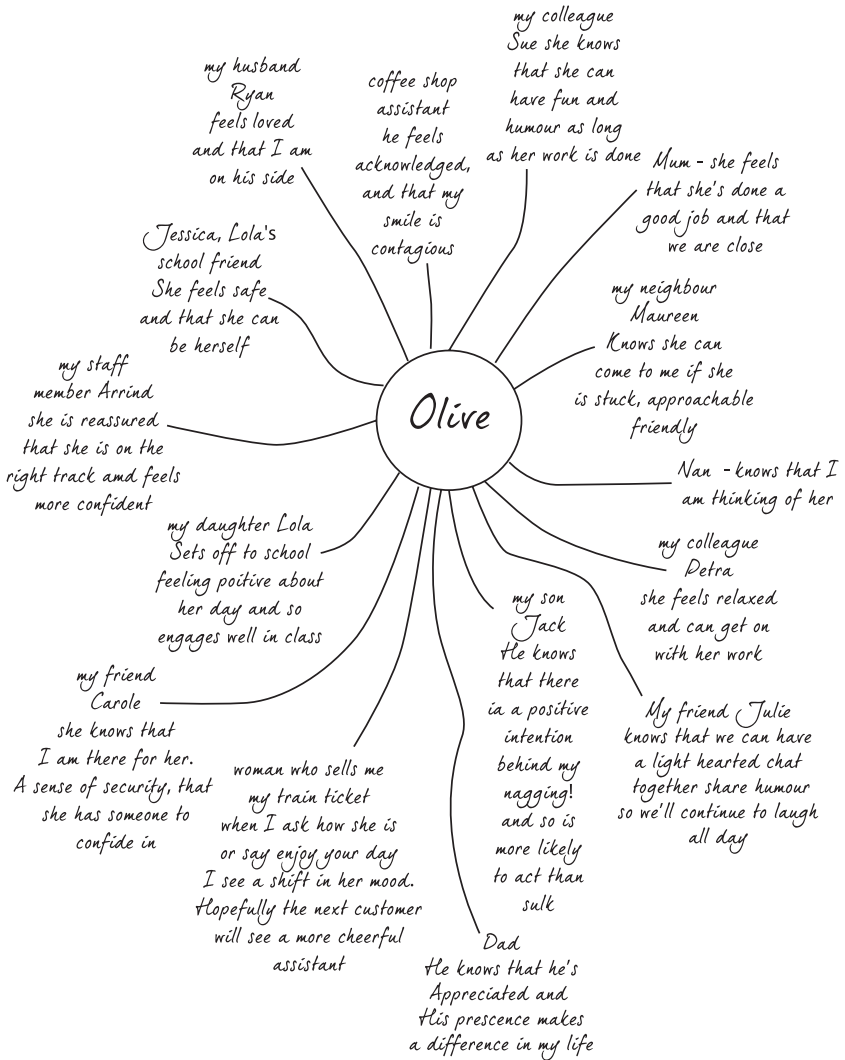
ACTION - Create Your Happiness Map

Drawing your happiness map will illustrate the extent to which you are making a difference to the lives of others. It will provide you with a clear picture of those who your happiness impacts most.

On the next page is an example of a completed happiness map; you can draw yours in your journal. Depending on the size, you may want to draw it over 2 pages.

1. Draw a circle with your name at the centre.
2. Draw lines extending outward from the circle and at the end of each line, write the name of someone you believe your happiness impacts. They could be: parents, partner, children, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts/uncles, neighbours, friends, colleagues, people you interact with on your daily commute to work.
3. Note how your happiness impacts them, e.g. when I wake up in a good mood, everyone has a good feeling in my home and they have a better day. When I smile at the postman on the way to work, he feels acknowledged and valued and hopefully, this has a knock-on effect on his day.
4. Spend a moment, look at this happiness map; a little bit of happiness can go a long, long way. Think about the converse; when you are unhappy it spreads the same distance, maybe further. Which map would you rather have?
5. What are the things that you need to address to ensure your happiness? You don't need to have the answers on *how* to address them just yet.

Olive's Happiness Map



Wellbeing

Making ME happy

Nick Bayliss, in his book *A Rough Guide to Happiness*, says that one of the keys to happiness is balance. He suggests that to obtain happiness you need to do the opposite of what you usually do. So if you sit at a computer all day glued to your chair, you should do some physical activity in your downtime, such as dancing or karate. If you have a physically demanding role, you should do something more relaxing, like reading a book or listening to music in your downtime. It doesn't take much to regain this balance; twenty minutes of exercise could potentially balance out an eight hour day sitting at a desk. Do you usually measure the right balance in your life in terms of time? Twenty minutes of work doesn't mean that you need to find twenty minutes of family time to make up for it. You don't need to think of it in that way anymore, just work out what's right for you.

I would add that you also need to understand your feelings around happiness; do you think you deserve it, or is it for others who have more time, less responsibility, a charmed life? Have you been unconsciously sabotaging your own happiness? What's your story on happiness, is it short-lived, only for other people? Who do you know who seems happy? Identify what internal qualities help them to be this way.

Bernadette is now divorced, she has three children, one who still lives with her. She was born in France and moved to the UK when she was eighteen to work as an au pair, fell in love and stayed. While still married, her husband chose to stop supporting her and the children, even though he was still in full employment, so she was

thrust into the role of financially - as well as emotionally - supporting the family.

“I mean definitely, I would never have been happy just being a housewife and mother because there was too much out there I wanted to find out, I wanted to learn, I wanted to do.”

Few women admit to this. Being a wife and mother may just not be enough on your route to happiness. The world of work and career can offer an independent and different environment in which you can thrive.

I hope you are starting to feel curious about what really makes you happy. Here is an opportunity to begin to reflect on it, although you may have to keep asking yourself this question over a few weeks to get to the real answer and be honest with yourself.



REFLECTION

- * What you *think* will make you happy versus what *really* makes you happy.
- * Be honest, when are you happiest?
- * What's special about those times?
- * How do others benefit when you are at your happiest?

Energise ME

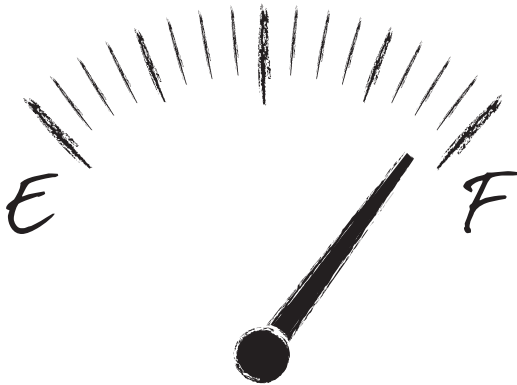
I know that people have looked at me like I'm a lightweight when I've said that I have been travelling or training for a few days and need a day to recharge my batteries, but I am the one who is rarely ill; this is because I listen when my body is telling me to stop or slow down.

Andrea is a self-employed consultant and can usually manage her diary to be where she needs to be. She says,

“I work from home quite a lot, I’m kind of the common point, I can be around to do lots of things, so I end up doing most of them. But also I’m probably better at it than my husband because I do project management and he’s not that way inclined.”

You may recognise this, not just being ME, but also the home maker and ‘go to’ person for everything as well. This role at the centre of everything, pulled in many directions, can really take it out of you.

So how’s your fuel? You need to be at least half full to embark on this journey, you don’t want to break down on the way. Know what energises you and what depletes your energy and where your gauge is right now.





ACTION

The first thing you can do to start to explore your energy level is log it. For one day, just log everything you do in your journal. Put the times down the left hand side and log hourly what takes place, also put an indication next to it, whether it energised or depleted your energy. You can create your own key. Try to make it a typical day, not when you're off on holiday or under extreme pressure. Here's an example of one ME's typical morning.

6am - make packed lunches 😐
 7am - Shower 😐
 8am - school run 😊
 9am - commute - read book 😊
 10am - answered emails 😐
 11am - one-to-one meeting with staff member 😊
 12pm - writing report 😊
 1pm - quick lunch 😐

When you have your log, reflect on the following questions in your journal.



REFLECTION

Looking at your typical day, what drains and what energises you?

Is there enough of what energises you? If yes, be happy. If no, what small action can you take to reduce what drains you and increase what energises?

Ask yourself, what will be better if you act now?

If you like, create a metaphor for that feeling, such as ‘I feel light as a balloon when I plan to visit the gym one lunchtime a week.’ You can then keep that metaphor as a reminder and ask yourself - ‘Do I feel light as a balloon today?’ If not you know you need to do something about your energy levels.

Temporary ME

Almost every woman I spoke to saw being ME as a temporary arrangement. I am not sure if this was a coping mechanism, ‘It won’t last forever so I’ll just manage’, or a true belief. Yes, it might be temporary, but it also might be permanent and treating situations as temporary puts you in limbo; is that where you want to be? Nothing is permanent or secure, but not taking action because things might change soon is not a helpful choice.

Perhaps you think that it’s temporary because the pendulum swings for and against being ME many times on a daily basis. Rhonda is a successful businesswoman working in a male-dominated environment, she went back to work when her son was seven months old and, after discussions, her husband resigned from his job in order to be a stay-at-home dad. Strictly speaking, he is more than that, as he is going to be a property developer in order to further secure their future, but things are slow at the moment. When I asked her if it was a temporary arrangement, she said, “I would say it’s for the foreseeable future, but sometimes I get quite irritated by the situation and I basically say to my husband, ‘You’re going to have to go back to work.’ But it literally depends when you ask me that question as to what I think. Today, I think it’s a foreseeable future thing.”

Even if it is only temporary and things change shortly, don’t you want your life to be the best it can be now? If you are

viewing being ME as a temporary arrangement, you may want to reflect on why that is, using the questions below.



REFLECTION

How is thinking of being ME as temporary helping?

If you saw it as a permanent thing, what would you need to do that you're not doing now?

Sit with this knowledge and see where it takes you, without rushing into action.

Through this process of looking back, through understanding your past to see the present more clearly, you may be exhausted, a bit battle-worn, numb or have the effervescent feeling of excitement and energy. We've come a long way together. Through a series of actions and reflection you have explored:

- * The fact that you are ME
- * Who influenced you on your path here
- * What the values are that govern your decisions
- * Your feelings around being ME
- * The positive impact your happiness has on others
- * Your wellbeing and energy levels

Look at your notes in your journal, what do they tell you? Treat your notes with curiosity and let them propel you forward, they are the seeds of knowledge that you will grow and develop over the coming weeks.

Getting this far means that you have created the mental and physical space in your life to work through this guide. Are you ready to be the best ME you can be? If so, let's continue.