

in your style

PHOTOGRAPH XXXXXXXXXXXX

### “I COULDN'T GET EXCITED ABOUT ANYTHING”

**THEN:** Barbara Hutchinson, 57, is an artist. She's married to Roy, 59, and they have two children, Jane, 34, and Phil, 23.

**BARBARA'S DILEMMA:** My happiness bubble seems to have burst and I no longer feel that great inner energy. Three years ago I left my job as a graphic designer and now work as a freelance artist from a studio at home. My children have left home, so I have a lot of freedom timewise and financially, but I have no sense of excitement – even when I'm looking after my beautiful grandchildren. I'm searching for some peaks in my life.

**EXPERT ADVICE:** Barbara was stuck in a lifestyle rut. She was suffering from passive stress because although she'd given up her job and embarked on a new career as a freelance artist, things were just ticking over and she didn't have enough stimulation. She needed a new challenge but wasn't doing anything to make it happen. You have to work at achieving happiness, so I asked her to pay more attention to the things that make her feel good and look at positive reasons why she does things. I encouraged her to seek out new activities.

**BARBARA'S VERDICT:** The life coach told me to write a list of things I was doing in a normal week and analyse them asking “Why are you filling your day with this – what are you hiding from?” I really have taken time to look deeper into myself. I've also cut down on alcohol, which has helped my arthritis, my weight and general fitness levels. I'm eating better and have started walking more. I took on board what the life coach said about new challenges. I had already developed an interest in practising energy healing on friends and family over the past few years, but I've since started a spiritual healers course. Because I'm making the most of my career aspects, I'm now enjoying my other responsibilities, such as looking after my grandchildren.

**THREE MONTHS ON:** I now positively strive to enjoy anything and everything I do, which has had the effect of making everything so much better and more fulfilling. I've lost a few kilos, which has increased my confidence, and I've made some new friends.



**EXPERT TIPS FOR RE-ENERGISING:**  
➔ Be proactive about finding happiness. Look at everything you do and focus on the things that make you feel good.  
➔ Capture moments in time. When you're next enjoying something, take a mental photograph of it and store it in your memory, so that you can recall it if you feel down.  
➔ Check your diet – sugary snacks and caffeine can cause energy slumps, alcohol is a depressant and over-dieting can play havoc with your energy levels.

# WE NEED A LIFE MAKE-OVER!

Need to make a big change in your life? We sent five women to life coaches to find a new approach to their problems

## “WILL I BE ABLE TO MAKE A NEW LIFE FOR MYSELF AFTER I STOP WORK?”

**THEN:** Jacqui Rhodes, 59, works in aviation. She lives with her son Greg, 21, and her elderly mother, for whom she is the main carer.

**JACQUI'S DILEMMA:** After a long and rewarding career, I'm looking forward to relaxing, travelling and teaching abroad when I retire. At present I need to be there for my mother and I must sort myself out mentally and physically before I can embark on this exciting new phase.

**EXPERT ADVICE:** Jacqui is secretly worried about losing the status that a profession gives you. Then there's the fact that financial concerns and family commitments prevent her going off in gay abandon. But that's life. It's important to accept the reality of a situation and work within your limitations to see what you can achieve now. If you're unable to do something straight away, you can still begin to get everything in place and that's what I've encouraged Jacqui to do.

**JACQUI'S VERDICT:** My plans are still on hold due to my mother's disability, but the life coach showed me that I can still take important steps to achieving my goals. I go swimming every morning and, although I haven't lost any weight yet, I certainly feel a lot better. Also, I've been researching courses to enable me to teach English abroad. Seeing a life coach has been hugely helpful in that it's enhanced my feelings of excitement about my future. It's also made me realise that life's a blank screen and I can make of it what I want.

**THREE MONTHS ON:** I'm still swimming and I've lost 6kg in weight, so I'm feeling upbeat. I've also provisionally booked myself

on a part-time travel writer's course and a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) course. I'm definitely seeing the light at the end of the tunnel now.

### EXPERT TIPS FOR FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE AND EQUALLY SATISFYING ROLE:

→ Ask three people closest to you to write down three things they love about you. As well as

boosting your self-confidence, this simple exercise may give you a clue about your strengths from other people's perspectives.

→ Draw up a list of things you've never done, tried or perhaps even thought were ridiculous ideas. Chances are you'll find something appealing in there – then give it a try!

→ Open up as many options in your life as possible, so you're never only aiming for one course of action. That way, if something doesn't go quite according to the way you've planned, you always have an equally attractive Plan B that you can fall back on. >>





## “I COULDN'T GET OVER LOSING MY BEAUTIFUL SON”

**THEN:** Stella Lockyer, 54, is a phone counsellor. She's married to David and they have a son Adam, 27. The couple's eldest, Luke, died in 2002 at the age of 24.

**STELLA'S DILEMMA:** After my son died in a road accident, I couldn't see a reason for living, but I struggled on for my husband and younger son's sake. When I eventually came out of my hole, I began to make big changes, like leaving my job as a careers adviser to become a telephone counsellor. I've also lost 13kg through walking, but I need some fun and pampering to bring out the best of me after such a dreadful time.

**EXPERT ADVICE:** Stella has made huge headway since her loss, but there are still issues she needs to address, like getting rid of the sense of tragic unfairness, so that she doesn't take it out on her husband and son, who's always lived in his brother's shadow. Everything they do together is practical and they should do more enjoyable things.

**STELLA'S VERDICT:** The life coach's best advice was to spend more quality time with David and Adam, who I'm seeing as his own fantastic person. I've also changed my diet and have been religiously body brushing with good beauty products.

**THREE MONTHS ON:** I'm making time for my family and I'm able to share my grief with them a lot better.

### EXPERT'S TIP FOR COPING WITH GRIEF:

+ Channel the love you feel for the departed person towards those important people still in your life.

## “I WANT A NEW DIRECTION, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO”

**THEN:** Beverley Seymour, 49, is looking for a new direction after resigning from her job as a teacher. She lives with her husband Richard, 52. The couple have two sons, Richie, 26, and Alex, 23.

**BEVERLEY'S DILEMMA:** Leaving my job as a teacher after 28 years has thrown me into a panic. Although I loved teaching, it was all-consuming and left no me-time. The sudden deaths of two of my friends made me realise that life is fleeting, so I'm sure about my choice – but I'm confused by the options available and want some direction.

**EXPERT ADVICE:** Fear is the greatest obstacle to success and Beverley's anxiety about the future was crippling. I told her she needed to take about three months off to get her energy and fitness levels back up before she could even think about where to go next.

**BEVERLEY'S VERDICT:** Although in reality I knew that a life coach can't say, “This will be your new career”, I still hoped they would. But I followed the advice I was given by taking time off. I'm also doing a personal training course and have lost weight. Talking to an expert has released me from my anxiety cycle; I'm no closer to knowing what I want to do, but I feel more relaxed about making the decision.

**THREE MONTHS ON:** I'm thoroughly enjoying my three months off and I'm beginning to realise I have skills that are transferable. I'm really looking forward to exploring ways to use them.

### EXPERT TIPS FOR FACING CHANGE:

+ If you can, take time off and try not to think about what's to come.  
+ Write a list of things you'd like to try. Shortlist five, then see what's feasible and achievable. >>



**in your style**



### EXPERT TIPS FOR TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE:

- + Create me-time by making a "to-do list" of chores, goals and ambitions, pleasures and satisfaction.
- + Schedule me-time in your diary and stick to it as rigorously as you would a doctor or dentist's appointment.
- + Do the "DRAG it" exercise to help you prioritise. Assign each task to one of the following categories: Do it now, Review it, Assign it, Get rid of it.
- + At the end of the day write down all the things you did well. You'll be surprised how good this will make you feel.

## "MY LIFE IS SO ACTIVE, THERE'S NO TIME FOR ME"

**THEN:** Lesley Price, 41, works at a university. She lives with her husband Adrian and children, Luke, seven, and Rose, three.

**LESLEY'S DILEMMA:** I'm a typical frazzled mom: I have everything I want in life but no energy to enjoy it. I'm juggling so many balls – work, a young family, renovation projects – I feel I could drop them at any time. I also feel guilty admitting that

I'm often on the edge. My husband and I never encourage each other to relax – for our wedding anniversary, for example, we always climb mountains! This year I'm so tired I don't think I'm up to it. No one's stopping me from having some time to myself, but if I do sneak an hour off, I feel as though I'm letting my family down by not devoting 100% of my time to them.

**EXPERT ADVICE:** Lesley is her own worst enemy and is holding herself back. She is typical of women in general in that she's constantly trying to please everyone and doesn't want to be seen as a wimp by admitting she needs time out for herself. I got Lesley to see she could fit everyone in, including herself, by prioritising. I also asked her to focus on enjoying what she was actually doing, rather than thinking of everything else she could be doing.

**LESLEY'S VERDICT:** I no longer feel I should be super woman, so I've made several key changes in my life. My husband and I now alternate at having lie-ins at the weekends. I used to feel I should spend down time gainfully doing things like shaving my legs or going for a swim, now if I feel exhausted I just sleep. I've also made changes to my diet – I've been making hummus and muesli and eating oat cakes instead of sugary snacks to prevent that mid-afternoon slump.

**THREE MONTHS ON:** Life's hectic, but I'm on much more of an even keel. For instance, I'd never asked my mother-in-law to have the children overnight before and it's really helped our stress levels. Best of all, I've learnt how to say no. We went out to the country for our anniversary, but instead of climbing a high mountain I persuaded my husband to tackle a smaller one, so we could be back down for a candlelit dinner. *For a life coach, contact:*

- + Kate Emmerson, 082 341 3143.
- + Esme Redfern, 083 381 5325.
- + Alison Reid, 072 992 9457.
- + Michele Hinds, 082 651 4014 (CT).
- + Brenda van Staaten, 082 443 4721 (CT).
- + Steve Krummeck, *The Right Coaching Company*, 082 900 0679. **w&h**

**in your style**