

blogosphere

the influencer industry

issue 23

Nikki
Lilly

MakeupJunkieG on
authentic diversity

Using your influence for good

Anastasia Kingsnorth on
growing up online

The revival of blogging

Chessie King on body confidence

also:

• fashion • parenting • fitness • beauty • books
• food • lifestyle • travel • photography • business



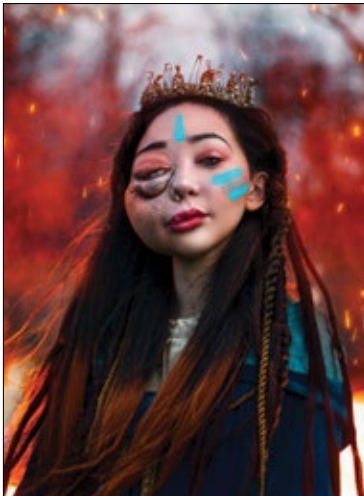
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editor's note



NIKKI LILLY
Guest Editor

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ADVERTISING

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I have been a massive fan of Blogosphere magazine since I think I was 10! I was first contacted by Alice, who is the CEO of the company, back in November and I was so, so excited. When I woke up and saw a DM from Blogosphere sitting in my inbox I was like 'wait... hang on, why are they DMing ME?' Even Alice just DMing me was such a pinch me moment! Then Alice and I met up, chatted for a bit, and then she told me that she not only wanted me to be the cover star of issue number 23, she also wanted me to be the editor in chief of this issue, which is really exciting because they've never done something like that before and the fact they wanted little ol' me to be the first to do it is just incredible.

I've always loved Blogosphere and loved how it was based on vloggers and YouTubers, but also the people working in the social media industry. And I thought it was so great that they showcase ALL of the different people in social media. When they asked if I'd want to be a part of it I was just like OBVIOUSLY, but for the longest time I was like why do you want me to do it? I'm so, so glad that I have been able to work with them because it's always been a dream.

The editor-in-chief process has been super interesting, I didn't really know what the process would entail when Alice asked me, but my jobs have been... choosing all of the people that are in the magazine aside from me - I've chosen what sort of topics we talk about, I've chosen the photos of the people in the magazine and I've also chosen the style that I wanted the cover to be - I've looked at outfits and tried to think of topics of conversations that tie in and that I just wanted to be a part of the issue.

It's been such an interesting experience and a really fun job - I'm sure sometimes it isn't as fun as it's been for me, but I've basically thought about and decided who I want in it, how I want it to all to look, what pictures are chosen, what vibe I want and the topics of conversation really. It's all been so, so great and I'm so grateful. I really do hope you love this issue as much as I do. And without further ado, enjoy!

Nikki Lilly

A note from the Blogosphere team...

We want to quickly thank you for all of your support during these very challenging times. As a small business, we appreciate it more than you know!

editorial list

Founder and CEO
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Food Editor
Andra Constantinescu (Mint & Rosemary)

Books Editor
Bronte (From Bee With Love)

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Elaine Malone (XOmissis)

Fashion Editor
Meili Fisayo (Meili Fisayo)

Business Editor
Ana Savuica (The She Approach)

Graphic Designer
Angela Lyons/Elaine Malone

Lifestyle Editor
Sophie Cliff (Sophie Cliff)

Travel Editor
Binny Shah-Patel (Binny's Food and Travel)

Videographer
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Beauty Editor
Chloe Brewer (Lady Writes)

Parenting Editor
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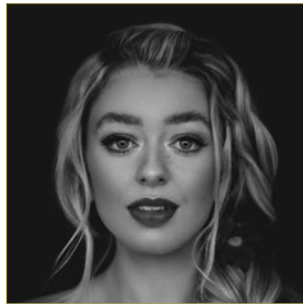
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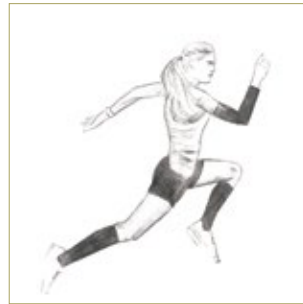
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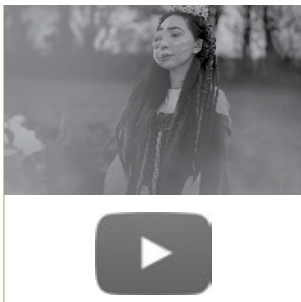
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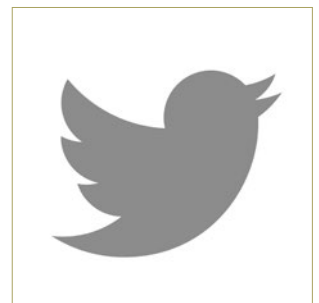
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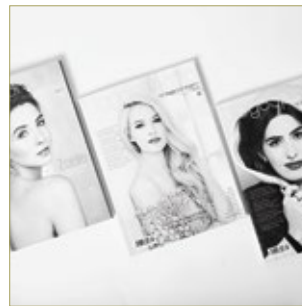
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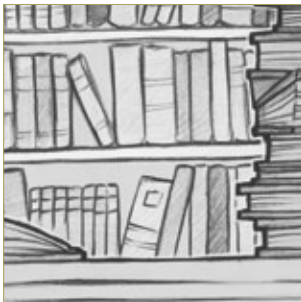
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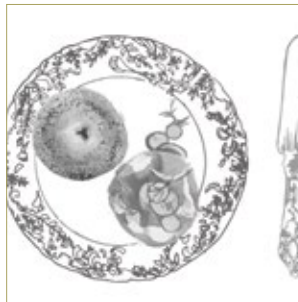
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Anastasia Kingsnorth





The YouTuber opens up about growing up online, brand deals and setting boundaries...

Photography: Alexandra Cameron
Beauty: Laura Anne

Anastasia Kingsnorth's dream job growing up was to be a secret agent. With more than one million YouTube subscribers and 160 million video views, the chances of her becoming a spy are now somewhat unlikely - she can't even go on a date without a picture of her ending up on Twitter. So, it's a good job her social media career is going so well.

Anastasia, 19, first joined YouTube in 2012 with a channel called *Anastasia Moshi*; a toy channel where she unboxed Moshi Monsters, before starting her eponymous channel *Anastasia Kingsnorth* in 2013, where she creates more lifestyle content and challenge videos. So although she's only 19, she's actually part of the old

guard of YouTube - those who started their channels before knowing that they could turn into a career.

"When I started, I had no idea that it could be a career. It wasn't really a thing back then," Anastasia says. "Obviously, there were YouTubers but nobody was 'A YouTuber'. It's not a career you train in; it's more something you fall into."

Anastasia's channel grew steadily until August 2018 when she had a surge in new subscribers after she started to appear on YouTube's trending page - something she attributed to her new broader lifestyle content. The growth of her channel brought with it both positivity and negativity.

"When you hit the trending page, you get a whole new audience that don't

necessarily understand what type of content you're doing because they haven't found you through wanting to find you, so that can breed a lot of hate on your videos. You also pick up people who love what you do, so it's kind of 50/50."

Anastasia has learnt not to let the negativity affect her, and usually has a policy of ignoring negative comments. "I feel like because I've been doing it for so long, I'm almost numb to it. The people leaving hate comments don't know me as a person, they literally see 10-15 minutes that I am choosing to show them - even though it's the real me, they're not living with me and they don't know me personally. I don't even tend to block; I'll literally just ignore it. >

“If it’s a really bad comment that’s breeding a load more bad comments, I’ll delete it. But other than that, I’ll just ignore it. I just think, well it doesn’t matter.”

In addition to learning how to handle negativity, Anastasia has had to work on dealing with comparison, too.

“When I was a little bit younger, I used to compare a lot on Instagram. But the further I’ve got into the industry I know that people only show their best side, or a lot of the time they show their best parts and they don’t show the really bad parts. Even if they look like they’re having an amazing time on holiday, I know that their life isn’t going to be 24/7 perfect.

“I don’t really compare anymore. I definitely used to, but now I just take everything that I see on the chin.”

One of the best things about being in the industry, Anastasia says, is the friends that she has made.

“The majority of my friends are from YouTube because we can relate to each other. We all understand it [creating content], and it’s a lot easier because we all share the same love for what we do.”

In the US particularly, we have seen the rise in creator houses. Team 10, Hype House... would this be something Anastasia would consider?

“If all my friends were open to the idea of us all living together then I

would definitely consider it because it would be a really fun experience. I mean, I feel like I would get annoyed with everyone really quickly because I like my own space and work area... but it would be a cool experience even if it was for six months - and it would make really good content!”

Although Anastasia has made some of her best friends online, sometimes having an online following can complicate new friendships and prospective relationships.

“A couple of years ago, I found it really hard to determine if people wanted to be your friend or were interested more social and number wise. I’ve never had a boyfriend and I think I’m going >



If it’s a really bad comment that’s breeding a load more bad comments, I’ll delete it. But other than that, I’ll just ignore it. I just think, well it doesn’t matter.







I'm 19, and I still go on
lots of nights out

to find that hard with the trust side of things, because I'll have that, 'are you interested in me as a person, or are you interested in the lifestyle that I lead?' - if that makes sense."

Should she get into a relationship, Anastasia has mixed feelings about sharing it online.

"I show a lot of my life, so keeping it a secret would be ridiculously hard. I've been on dates before where people have taken photos and then put it on Twitter!

"Obviously if I had a boyfriend, he would be a big part of my life and I'd love to make videos together - but a breakup online is a whole other thing I wouldn't want to go through."

Anastasia does feel that she has a good balance between public and private life, and downtime and work. "Even though I upload every Wednesday and Sunday [and has done for the past 6 years without missing one], I still feel like I split my time

between personal and YouTube really well. I'm 19, and I still go on lots of nights out."

As her channel has grown, so too has the workload of brand campaigns and opportunities. Anastasia is represented by talent management M&C Saatchi Social (formerly Red Hare), who help her with the contracts and commercial aspects of these brand deals, in addition to developing her personal brand and strategy for the future. Red Hare scouted her when she was just 13 years old and had 30,000 subscribers.

"I feel like they have genuinely helped my career so much, I wouldn't be where I am without them. I feel like I was really lucky to get scouted at a young age because I didn't even realise it was a thing at the time. In terms of the time to get management, I feel like it's different for everyone. Some people prefer to do it on their own and get to half a million subscribers and then think 'okay, I need help now'.

"For me, it's the best thing I've ever done. They help with all the contracts and emails, and we'll also have meetings about what brands I want to work with, what I want to do and where I want to be. You can see that they actually have your best interests at heart and that they want to build a career for you long term, not just short term."

What does Anastasia want to do long-term?

"I would love to have my own clothing collaboration line, and I'd love to move into more mainstream media like TV or maybe even radio. I feel like social media is only going to grow, too. A lot of people say, 'oh, but what if YouTube dies?' or 'It's not going to be around in five years.' I don't think it will die, but I'm just going to take every day as it comes... and if it doesn't work out then I'll just have to go back to my original plan and try and be a secret agent!" ○



fitness



Edited by **Leela Jasmine Sule**



Blog Name: Get Up & Grow Girl
Blogger: Leela Jasmine Sule
Age: 26
Started blogging: 2012
Based (area): London
Monthly views: 652+
All time views: 3,914+
Blogging platform: Squarespace
Twitter handle: @leelajasmine
Instagram handle: @leelajasminesule
Camera: Canon G7x
Contact: leela@getupandgrowgirl.com

I'm Leela, a London based PT and life coach. Through my business, 'Get Up & Grow Girl', I empower women through the power of weightlifting! I work holistically with my grow girls to build up their confidence just as much as their strength. 'Get Up & Grow Girl' has evolved into a supportive community of clients that also build each other up with meet ups from team workouts to just lazy Sunday brunches, (because fitness is nothing without post workout avo toast- am I right?). I use my social media platform to spread our message; that a woman can be anything she wants to be, when she commits herself to it! I see this in the holistic sense, and help women to make their dreams happen, regardless of whether that be to achieve their first pull up, or even start their own side hustle. That's why I blend my passion and expertise in both fitness and life coaching - sharing technical fitness tutorials, and videos on mastering the skills you need to achieve your dreams!



selected blogs

- 1 Zanna Laczó** I feel like Zanna is my insta soulmate! We are constantly checking out each other's pages to leave comments like, 'Omg, I was literally saying this yesterday!', or 'I just wrote a blog post on this!'. We are totally on the same wavelength. I love how she also blends her love of health holistically, incorporating mindset, just as much as the physical side of things. **p17**
- 2 Diah Rasid** I find Diah's journey super interesting to watch due to the unique blend that is her profession; as both a prep coach and a doctor! With my own family coming from a medical background, I always notice the contrast between my school of thought as a PT, compared to theirs. With Diah having both a very fitness focused profession and a medical profession, I've always thought she must have a very unique perspective, that would be super interesting to learn from. She also shares loads of inspiring videos of her personal progress in the gym, and I love that she is another role model showing that women can lift heavy and be crazy strong too! **p18**
- 3 Shayaan Kahn** Shayaan's page is awesome because it's such an informative place, and a zero bro science zone! I'm a big believer that fitness should be functional; in the sense that it should make your body better at what it needs to do in every day life. The aesthetic changes should be the cherry on top! From the content he creates, it seems to me that Shayaan shares that ethos! With tutorials on easing different aches and pains, there's so much there to help you ensure you're training smart. **p19**
- 4 Jaffer Cake Ahmed**'s page is just full of energy! It's amazing how you can look at a flat page and just get such an uplifting vibe! Inspiring and motivating people in fitness is all about energy, so I think he's done an amazing job in translating his personality onto his feed. I feel like you can just tell from his page that he would be a ball of energy to workout with. He always seems to be in loads of different, trendy, workout spots in London. **p20**
- 5 Chloe Hamard** I've been following Chloe for years, and it's been amazing to watch her journey and see her grow! She's another who shares fitness videos that are designed to serve. That combined with her motivational captions on mindset make her page a joy to visit. Reading her captions also make me feel like I've found another soul sister! **p21**

1 Zanna Laczo

Online persona: Zanna Laczo
Name: Zanna Laczo
Age: 29
Started sharing content: 2014
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: 6,000+

Average comments per post: 25+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @zannalaczo
Camera: Samsung S10 and Sony A5100
Contact: zannalaczo@gmail.com



Mobility Friday

I know it can be hard to get back to moving after a longer break, so ease yourself into it with this warm up flow. Save this warm up routine and hear if you liked it so I know what to create more.

The drill is great to get your whole body warmed up, primarily you'll mobilise your hips and spine which tend to get stiff, especially if your job is sedentary.

So the flow:

1 Elbow to knee into scorpion reach | Breathe slowly and extend the movement, limbs.

2 Squat reaches | Deep squat, relaxed with heels on the floor. Use elbow against knee while the other arm rotates as far as you can.

3 Spine wave opposite ankle grab | Go slow and breathe slow, try to think of pulling your spine upward, and with the downward dog grab and turn onto opposite ankle.

Let me know how it goes or what else you'd like to see from me. Move your body, respect your body and enjoy yourself in the process.

Please get in touch about online coaching if you want to be your strongest, best self.



How to train your glutes?

In short quality over quantity. Awareness, Consistency, Note your genetic limitations, Train all ranges, Don't be afraid of heavier weights.

If your goal is to have your glutes strong and improve the aesthetics as well then a few years back the common advice was: Just squat!! But it's not as simple. We all squat a bit differently putting emphasis on different muscles. I never felt my glutes working much with squats, but studies show otherwise and it might be your holy grail... Below you see an example workout for different targets. Fit them in 1 workout on limited time or spread across your weekly sessions. (better loading&recovery)

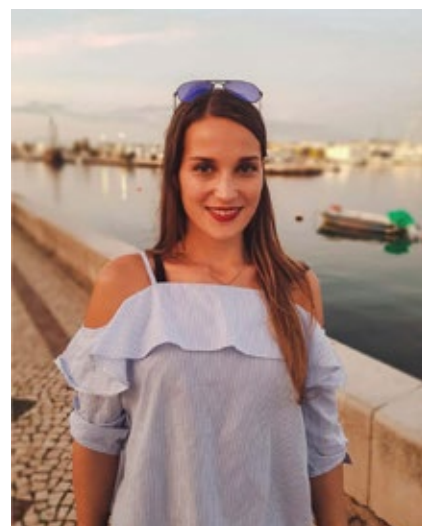
Let's say for strength you'll do: 3-4 sets 3-6 reps each, deadlift, hip thrust, foot out good mornings... etc.

For volume: 3-5 sets 15-50 reps each, Clams, banded thrusts, seated abduction, banded monster walk. etc.

For fun and end range involved: 3-4 sets 8-15 reps or go for time, toe taps and hip flexion, single leg hops, side to side swings, twisty deadlift... etc.

What's your favourite glute based exercise??

Also recommend to include unilateral exercises such as: split squat, b stance variations, cossack squats etc.. Don't be afraid to try different things, educate yourself and stay curious, and stick with what works for YOUR precious body.



Factz that takes time to realise:

1 - (Finding out) Who you are as a person is more important than how You've been conditioned to believe this is You.

2 - Knowing what you want from life is more important than wanting what everyone else wants.

3 - Following the passion & fire within and things that make you happy is more important than supplying everyone else's needs, draining yourself in the process.

4 - Taking care of your health, wellbeing and mental state is CRUCIAL if you want to be there for anyone else, even if for yourself.

5 - Weight, financials, career, things you own has no due date in life. Walk your lane and find out WHO YOU ARE first, before you try to fit into society's mould of who you should be.

6 - If you read it carefully you realise that: IF YOU DON'T PRIORITISE YOUR WELLBEING AND HEALTH, YOU SIMPLY CAN'T be the best in life, business and for your loved ones. ○

2 Diah Rasid

Online persona: Diah Rasid
Name: Dr Nadiyah Al Hasyir Abd Rasid
Age: 30
Started sharing content: 2013
Based (area): Nottingham, UK
Average impressions per post: 6,000+

Average comments per post: 20+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @diahrasid
Instagram handle: @diahrasid
Camera: Canon G7X
Contact: diahrasid@gmail.com



GLUTES & HAMSTRING:

Day 11/66 @gymshark #Gymshark66

- Smith Machine Sumo Squat
- Single Leg DB Deadlift
- Reverse Leg Curl
- Deficit Sumo Squat

Are you glad that workout video is back? If you are. Save, share and let's start shredding! Xx D.



Consistency is key

"I start early, I stay late, day after day, year after year. It took me 17 years 114 days to become an overnight success." Found this quote today and it reminded me of how hard it is to get to that one day of feeling truly accomplished or successful!

Consistency is the key, and I can't wait to get back to proper training and tracking macros. Another 8 weeks challenge starts 5th August 2019.

What's your goal(s) for the month of August lovelies? And how do you prep emotionally, mentally or physically for it?



Valuable lessons

My visit to Malaysia this time has definitely been filled with many valuable lessons. One of them being:

Be happy not because everything is good, but because you can see the good in everything. I have met amazingly wonderful people who were just so strong that I can't even begin to describe how amazed I was with the way they face their struggles. How they can just see the good in everything and take down one struggle at a time in peace. Today, let's aim to act on one of our many worries & see the good in it.

May we find peace in our hearts & have a blessed Monday ahead O

3 Shayaankahn

Online persona: Shayaankahn
Name: Shayaan
Age: 23
Started sharing content: 2015
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: 5,000+

Average comments per post: 7+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @shayaankahn
Instagram handle: @Shayaankahn
Camera: iPhone 11
Contact: info@holisticforce.co.uk



Commitments

You're probably thinking another person on Instagram topless.. yes it's getting boring right? But the caption is worth more than picture.

In this moment in time I have not been putting 100% effort into my training/diet due to other commitments taking over. I've been training max 4-5 x a week with my normal schedule being a 7 x week including gym + jiujiitsu...

Anyway the point being is you're always going to have dips in training due to life.. how am I dealing with it? Every time I get the chance to train I put as much effort because I know I'm not getting the same amount of time I used to.

Anyone got any thoughts on training and personal commitments, would be great to see how you deal with this - drop a comment?



Training

The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in combat.



Inspiration

You miss 100% of the shots you don't take ○

4 Jaffer Cake

Online persona: Jaffer Cake
Name: Ahmed Jaffer
Age: 27
Started sharing content: 2013
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: 3,000+

Average comments per post: 20+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @Jaffer_Cake
Camera: Samsung S9 and Canon g7x M2
Contact: Ajaffer.social@gmail.com



Comfort zone

Yo, don't give up what you want most for what you want now.

Very little comes from settling back in your comfort zone.

Midweek madness? You got this bro



Booked out

Happy weekend, you. 7/7 classes booked at 90% capacity or more. It's gonna be sick. All the love



Keep moving

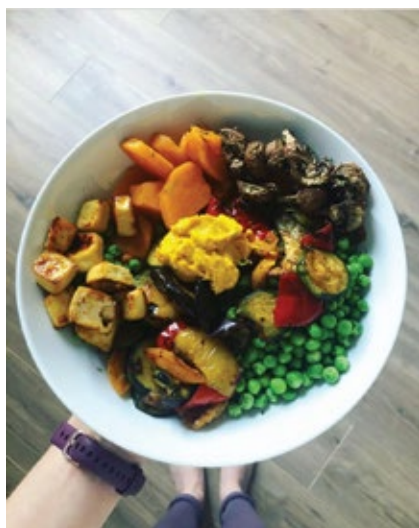
Our energy, our smile, small changes within us inevitably ripples itself to another heart. But when you step out of that flow, we step out of our own dance, and let ourselves become stagnant.

Keep moving, keep dancing. ○

5 Chloe Hamard

Online persona: Chloe Hamard
Name: Chloe
Age: 28
Started sharing content: 2014
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: 5,000+

Average comments per post: 50+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @chloehamard_pt
Camera: Canon EOS M50
Contact: hello@chloehamard.co.uk



Veganuary

Veganuary is going well so far. It does require a bit of organisation and planning (including packing enough vegan snacks for work) but I'm surprisingly enjoying spending more time in the kitchen.

My primary focus was to come up with quick and balanced plant-based meals that can become staples and are satisfying enough to not make me miss eggs and fish. So far so good. I think the best way to handle Veganuary if you're not really into cooking (like me) is to keep things simple. Why try to follow complex recipes using ingredients you've never heard of? Find your go-to foods and a few different ways to pair them together. That's enough to start with.

This week I've made batches of roasted & boiled veggies and tofu (seasoning is everything!!) to throw in a plate with either sweet potatoes or chickpeas. Knowing that I have all these options at the ready has made meal prepping pretty stress free. Oh and I love discovering delicious plant-based brands that help me make my meals tastier, such as @chicfood veggie hummus (#gifted).

I can't promise I'll make a vegan pizza from scratch or a 3 layer vegan cheesecake but I will try some proper recipes at some point.



#BeginnerSeries

"Should I do stairmaster workouts to build my glutes?"

If you want results, there's a more effective option for you: resistance training. You need to put your glutes under stress, aka lift weights to grow them.

I'm not saying you should start loading a barbell straight away though! Learn to activate your glutes first, then do dumbbell hip thrusts and bridges until you've mastered the technique and are confident enough to use a barbell. You can still do some kickbacks on the stairmaster if you enjoy that. You can also use a band to activate your glutes and make some exercises more challenging.

But please, don't be scared to lift weights, it's literally the one thing that is going to shape your body. You can find my whole Beginner Series on the blog. If you'd like to get into resistance training but don't know where to start, I'm here to help.



Keep going!

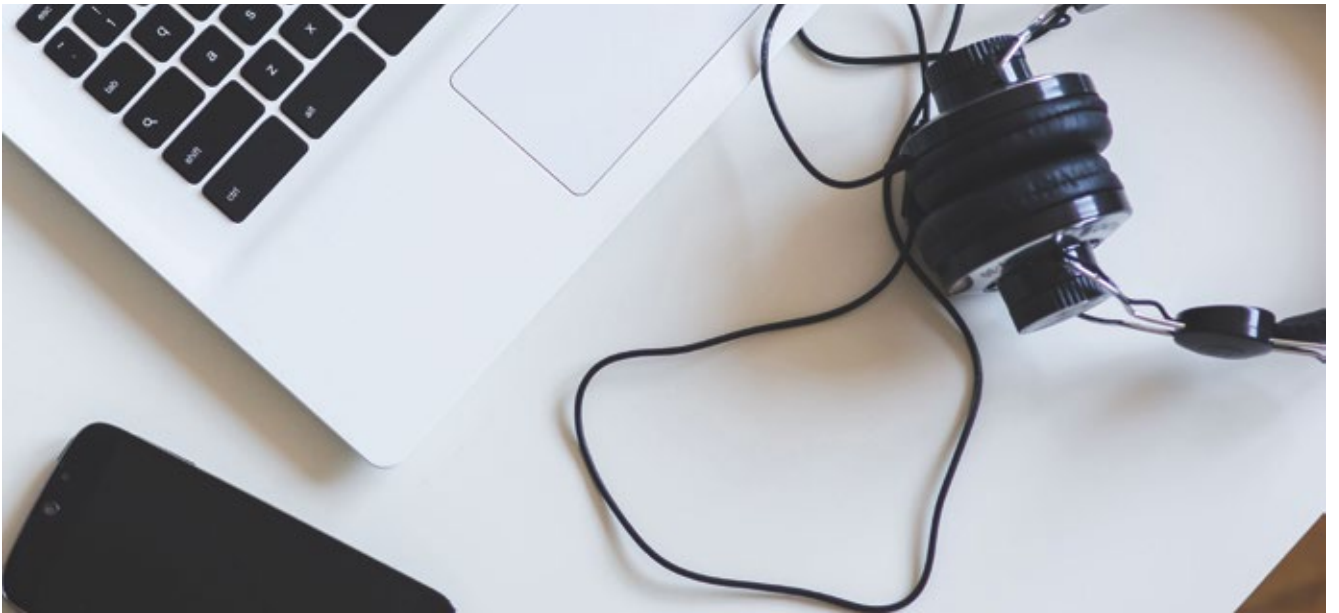
I know it can be disheartening to scroll through Instagram and see everyone sharing their progress when you feel like you haven't made any.

If things haven't quite gone to plan, it doesn't mean that you can't do it, that you're not good enough and it's surely NOT a reason to give up on your goals.

We want to "start the year as we mean to go on" but actually, the first days of January are not going to "make or break" anything.

You're doing your best, you're taking small steps and whatever you haven't achieved this week, you will do next week.

You can do this 



Blogosphere

Serious Influence

Blogosphere: Serious Influence is a podcast all about the business side of the influencer industry.

The series features interviews with influencer marketing experts, brands as well as influencers themselves.

Series three guests include Grace Beverley, Estée Lalonde, Sam Chapman and Phil Hughes (COO Gleam).

Available now on the following platforms



New Podcast Alert!

F.F.F

Fundraising as a female founder

Fundraising as a Female Founder is the brand new podcast by Alice Audley, the CEO of Blogosphere.

The series features interviews with women who have either raised money, are raising money, are an angel, work in venture capital or work within companies investment teams.

Series one guests include Stevie Spring CBE, Tobi Oredein and Isabel Garvey.

Available now on the following platforms



Revive your blog with these SEO tips


We're seeing lots of you talk about putting more time into your blogs this year, so here are our top three SEO-related tips for bloggers

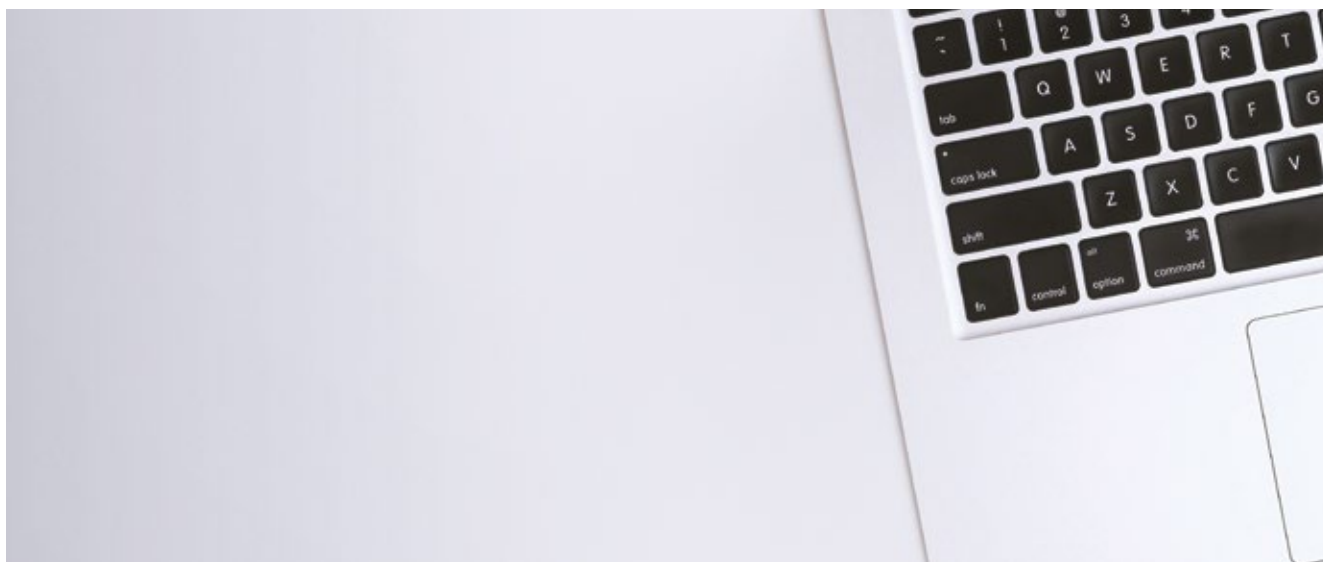
1. Do an SEO audit. Take a note of your stats on analytics, so you can monitor trends going forward and compare results. This will allow you to see what is working and what isn't. Check in with Google Search Console to see if there are any issues with crawling your site. Are there any technical SEO improvements that could be made - either by yourself or a developer? If you are looking to redesign your site, focus on site speed and usability.

2. When writing new content, aim for at least 500 words. Go back to older posts that have less than 300 words and either remove them, mark them as noindex or bulk them out to add more useful or updated information. Google sees posts with less than 300 words as offering no real value.

3. In terms of SEO, there's so much you can do to get more traffic to your posts. If you've been on a break for a while,

spend some time catching up on SEO changes. When it comes to optimising content for search engines, you'll want to focus on producing quality content, researching keywords and search intent, keeping an eye out for guest posting opportunities and encouraging readers to share your content on social.

For more advice like this, check out our #TechTuesday videos on Instagram (@blogosphere_magazine) 



business



Edited by **The She Approach**



Blog Name: The She Approach
Blogger: Ana Savuica
Age: 24
Started blogging: September 2016
Based (area): Birmingham, UK
Monthly views: 26,000+
All time views: 633,500+
Blogging platform: Self-hosted WordPress
Twitter handle: @thesheapproach
Instagram handle: @thesheapproach
Camera: Canon EOS M
Contact: ana@thesheapproach.com

Heya! My name is Ana. I am the creator of The She Approach and an online marketing strategist who's going to change the way you approach blogging. (Pun intended!) What started as a University assignment back in 2016, soon turned into a passion project and an online business that aims to help as many bloggers, influencers and content creators thrive online.

With a degree in PR, a handful of published eBooks and years of trial and error to back me up, I now share blogging and social media tips, strategies and marketing trends on my own blog, in an attempt to teach women how to grow an engaged audience and monetize their platforms. Because if there's one thing that I'm passionate about - it is getting bloggers paid for the work they put in.

As a recent graduate, I am now planning to pursue blogging full-time and document the process (while also sharing way too many photos of my dog on Instagram). If you're looking for tips on how to improve your blog, use Pinterest to drive traffic to your website, write and publish eBooks, or make affiliate sales (without alienating your readers), join my email list or come say hi on my socials!

selected blogs

1

Flourishing Business Mum Dani is a powerhouse in the business world and an inspiration for me personally. She has grown two successful online businesses from a small blog, businesses that now allow her to support her family financially, as her husband took the role of caretaker for their beautiful baby girl. If you want to learn how to become a Virtual Assistant or how to organize and grow your existing business, she's the one to learn from. **p27**

2

Sweet and Simple Life Cate is a content creating machine. Not only does she publish helpful blogging tutorials on her blog every single week, but she is the creator and moderator of a super-engaged - and just as helpful - Facebook group for bloggers. I've never seen someone care so much about their audience, and I think we can all learn from her. **p28**

3

The Quiet Type Katie and I virtually met when she became an affiliate for my eBooks and courses, and someday she does a better job at promoting them than I do. A born educator and salesperson, Katie is definitely the one to watch in the blogging sphere and you can tell she's passionate about what she does. **p29**

4

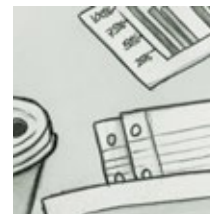
Incoming Success Lidia is someone that I've personally helped set up their first blog, but I take no credit for her success. She's hard-working, knowledgeable and super creative. She's reinvented herself multiple times in the online space to adapt to the fast-changing pace of the online world, and I guarantee this is not the last you'll hear of her. But while you're here, be sure to check out her helpful YouTube videos, Lightroom presets or services. **p30**

5

The Content Bug Cathrin is a blogger, YouTuber and educator who has tons of helpful content if you're looking to take the next step with your blog. I discovered her on YouTube when she had under 500 subscribers, and I was sure she was already famous - that's how good her videos were. And since then, she's been inspiring me to only put my best content forward as well. **p31**

1 Flourishing Business Mum

Blog Name: Flourishing Business Mum **All time views:** 102,000+
Blogger: Dani Fairhurst **Blogging platform:** Self-hosted WordPress
Age: 31 **Twitter handle:** @FlourishBizMum
Started blogging: 2007 **Instagram handle:** @flourishingbusinessmum
Based (area): Midlands **Camera:** N/A
Monthly views: 5,200+ **Contact:** hello@flourishingbusinessmum.com



How To Break Your Business Out Of A Funk

➤ It happens to us all. You're cruising along happily in your business and then you hit a wall. Your productivity and motivation disappear. Your income slows down. Or, even worse, comes to a complete standstill. Things just don't feel like they're working any more. It's a horrible feeling as a business owner – you're not sure whether it's time to throw the towel in or it's just a bit of a business funk. I'll tell you now, that more often than not, you're just in a bit of a business funk and it will pass. Your funk might just last for a couple of hours but it might last weeks or even months. This post is going to outline all of the ways you can tackle that business funk and your biz moving forwards again.

Review Your Goals and Your "Why"

A great place to start is to go back to the roots. Think about why you started your biz in the first place. Taking a step away from the day-to-day tasks and the immediate hurdles that you might be facing in your business at the moment and looking at the bigger picture can be really helpful. If you don't have a "why" or any big-picture goals, then now is the time to get them in place. Chances are that you do actually have them, but you've never sat down and thought about them as your official business goals! By going back to the "why", you're refocusing your mind on the end goal which should give you a new lease of business life and a renewed sense of determination.

Take Some Time Off

I don't know about you, but some of my best ideas come to me when I'm not working. Whether it's in the shower or when you're stuck in traffic, inspiration strikes us when we're least expecting it. Not only is taking time off from your business good for new ideas but actually taking a step away from your business and switching off from it completely is great for your mental health. We spend far too long staring at screens or pouring over our latest creations. We rarely take time off. I know for a fact that I never, ever switch off from work. Even if I've turned my laptop off for the day and we've put a film on, I'm still checking emails on my phone or scrolling through social media and "networking" with other business owners. I just don't stop! And I know it's really bad for me – it's often the cause of my business slumps. If you work too hard, you will get burnt out. So taking some time off from work completely will help you get some well-deserved rest. Try and leave the stresses of work behind; even if it's only for a couple of hours. You can always build up to eventually taking a full day or even a week off!

Have a Business Retreat

Working "in" your business is very different to working "on" your business. And, if you're trying to

break your business out of a funk, there's nothing better than taking some time to work "on" your business. Working in your business is all about doing the tasks that make the business function and bring in money. Working on your business is all about strategising and putting in systems that help you work in your business efficiently. But it's hard to work on your business when all of your time is spent working in it. And then of course, once that's all done, you want to take some "time off". Time to keep your house clean, time to eat and time to watch Netflix. That's why a retreat is great. It can be as simple as setting aside a day to work in your home office or local cafe and focusing on those systems and cleaning up your business functions (like finally getting round to organising your inboxes!). If you're looking for something a little more heavy-duty why not book yourself an AirBnB for the weekend (or week), pop your out of office on and really get into things.

Chat to Other Business Owners

I will bet all of the hazelnut lattes in the world that you are not the only business owner who's trying to break your business out of funk right now. Every single day there will be thousands of entrepreneurs and business mums just sitting there at a complete standstill in their business wondering what the hell to do! So why not reach out to them and chat about what's holding you back at the moment. It doesn't matter if they're in a slump at the moment or not, chatting with other business owners is always inspiring and might be just what you need to get back on the horse and get your business out of a funk! Facebook groups are a great place to meet other business owners. There are groups for business mums, businesses in your local area or businesses in the same niche as you – whatever your criteria, there will be a group for it.

Learn Something New

Depending on what kind of funk you're in, you might want to learn something new that's biz related – or maybe not! I often find that when I need to get my biz out of a funk, I focus on one area of it that I know I need to improve and set about teaching myself how to do that. For example, I know that my email funnels could be much, much better which, in turn, would help boost my revenue. So, if I'm feeling stuck in my biz, I look for blog posts or courses etc. to help me build better funnels. This links back to working on your biz rather than in it because you're still doing something to build and improve your business but you're not getting bogged down in the things that are frustrating you at the moment. Alternatively, why not take a complete break from your business and learn something new that you've always fancied but never tried. It might sound weird but when you need to break your business out of a funk, focusing your mind on something completely different and entirely

captivating can help massively. If you're a creative like me, it's no use trying to switch off from work by watching a film or going to dinner. Your brain will still be running a million miles an hour, thinking about your biz. BUT, if you're learning something new, that big 'ol brain is so focused on absorbing that new information that you forget about those business frustrations. When you do eventually go back to working in or on your business, your mind will have had a well-earned break and your focused and clarity should be much better!

Try Something New

If you really feel stuck and can't possibly see a way to break your business out of a funk, maybe it's time to mix things up a little. In my mind, being in a funk and quitting are a long way apart and there are a lot of steps and possibilities in between. So, before you give up, take a look at those goals and your overall "why" and rethink things. Are there things in your business that just aren't working? Are there parts of your business that just aren't bringing an ROI (return on investment)? Or are there things that you've wanted to try for a long time but never had the chance to? Sometimes, trying something new in your business gives you a new sense of purpose, determination and enthusiasm for what you do. The only thing I will add to this one is a word of warning – think carefully about any big changes you might want to make. Whilst adding a couple of new products to your line is a fairly minor adjustment, having a total rebrand and targeting an entirely new market is likely to slow business way down in the short term.

Believe in Yourself

One of the biggest walls I hit with my businesses comes down to self-doubt and the downward spiral that ensues! Sometimes I find myself doubting my products and services so much that I don't promote them. I think I'll improve them (and myself) before I start promoting and showcasing what I have to offer again. Then, because I'm not promoting, business slows down a little which only makes me doubt myself more. And so on. I know I'm not alone in this and that means neither are you! Getting out of this mindset can often help you break your business out of a funk but the big question here is how to break yourself out of that mindset and break free from the cycle. For me, the answer is to keep pushing through regardless – that's just the best method I have found to work for me personally. For other people, it's about looking back at what has worked well and really celebrating those achievements. Other people invest in a coach to help them through. It all comes down to trying different tactics and finding what works for you.

So there you have seven ways to break your business out of a funk. ○

2 Sweet and Simple Life

Blog Name: Sweet and Simple Life
Blogger: Cate Rosales
Age: 31
Started blogging: 2010
Based (area): San Diego, California
Monthly views: 20,000+

All time views: 440,000+
Blogging platform: Self-hosted WordPress
Twitter handle: @simplycaterose
Instagram handle: @CateRosales
Camera: Canon Rebel T6i and iPhone
Contact: cate@sweetandsimplelife.com



5 Simple Ways to Legally Protect Your Blog

➤ Let's talk about the legal side of blogging. Yes, this subject typically causes bloggers to fall asleep or run for the hills...but it's super important to talk about it. The fact is: your blogging business comes with some risk, and you must be proactive in protecting yourself, your blog, and your readers. The better fact is: this part of your job doesn't have to be complicated! Today we're going to cover 5 simple ways to legally protect your blog...and they aren't scary at all, I promise! As an online business owner (yes girl, you are a business owner now), you are taking on some risk. There is the risk of someone stealing your content... the risk of being sued for stealing someone else's content... the risk of someone being negatively affected by the advice you provided on your blog. Yeah, the risk list is real, and it goes on and on. So, how can you legally protect your blog from these headaches?

Disclaimer: I'm not a lawyer and this is not legal advice.

CREATE YOUR OWN ORIGINAL CONTENT

This one might seem like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many new bloggers think it's okay to copy/paste someone else's content on their own blog. You'd be equally surprised by how many bloggers have stolen my own content over the past few years. For those that didn't know, this is illegal, so you probably shouldn't do that. Instead, focus on creating your own original content, based on your own real experiences and expertise. How does this legally protect your blog?

1. You will know with 100% certainty that your content doesn't fall into any possible category of plagiarism or copyright infringement. If you don't know what plagiarism and copyright infringement really are, then it's important to do some research and make sure that all of your blog content falls within its legal bounds.
2. You have your own copyright protection on your original content the moment that you create it. Yes, "your work is under copyright protection the moment it is created and fixed in a tangible form," according to Copyright.gov (an excellent resource for my fellow U.S. bloggers, by the way)! This means that if you are creating your own original work, you are the legal owner of that content and no one is allowed to reproduce or distribute that content without your permission.
3. You'll draw your own genuine readers to your blog. People that relate to YOU and YOUR content. People that trust your recommendations, share your work, and want to buy what you're selling. All

of this helps you to gain traction and authority as a blogger.

GET PERMISSION

Throughout your blogging career, there will be times that sharing someone else's content with your audience can really benefit your readers and followers! Maybe it's an infographic that someone else created, or an article they wrote, or a recipe they made. Or maybe it's just someone else's beautiful picture you want to share on Instagram. Instead of copying their work or using their content without permission, it is always best to ask them if you can use/share their work. It only takes a quick minute to send an email or private message to your colleague and ask for their permission to share their work on your platform. ** The exception is if they post the content publicly and make it "shareable" in a way that still credits them as the original creator (such as Facebook sharing or using the embed option). Most of the time, this leads to additional exposure for that blogger, so they respond with a resounding "sure, no problem!" But sometimes, for their own personal or professional reasons, bloggers don't want their content shared anywhere but their own platform. This is their legal right, so it's important to respect it. As a side note, you are technically allowed to link to any online resources that you want on your blog (just as I linked to helpful resources above). As long as the link goes back to the original source, you're fine. However, for other forms of content, like other people's images, you need to get permission.

GIVE CREDIT

This one goes hand-in-hand with getting permission to share someone else's content with your audience. When you do have the privilege of sharing that content on your own blog or social media channels, it's important to give proper credit to the original creator. Keep in mind, you didn't create this content, and failing to credit the creator could easily land you in the plagiarism/breaking the law category. You are essentially passing off someone's work as your own, and that is NO BUENO. So, always give proper credit to the original source. If you're not sure how to give them proper credit, ask them. Usually, proper credit simply involves mentioning the fact that this content belongs to someone else and sharing a clickable link to their own blog or social media channel. If you fail to give credit to the original creator, they can take legal action against you for stealing. You can also get penalized by search engines.

USE COPYRIGHT-FREE STOCK PHOTOS

What happens if you need some pictures for your blog and you don't know how to take them yourself? Can you just hop on Google and snag the first great picture you see? No. Remember, that

content has copyright protection and you can get into legal trouble if you use it without permission. So...what's a blogger to do?? Thankfully, some companies provide stock photos to their customers with no strings attached and no copyright protection. Meaning, you are allowed to use their photos on your own blog, and most of the time, you aren't even required to give credit to the creator. Yay. It's still important to be careful and choose your stock photo sites carefully. Just because someone says they have rights to share stock photos with you doesn't necessarily mean they do. Paying for a stock photo subscription is going to be your best bet, because that company has their own legal obligation to YOU, their customer.

GET YOUR LEGAL PAGES

As online business owners, we all have a legal obligation to our audience and our government. At the very least, your blog should have these THREE important legal pages: a privacy policy, a disclosure, and terms/conditions. These legal pages protect you and the readers who frequent your website. They let your reader know about their rights and responsibilities when visiting your blog, and they relieve you from any legal liability relating to the content on your blog. Here's a direct quote from my friend Amira, who is a lawyer: "A Privacy Policy is to inform your website visitors WHAT personal information you are collecting from them and HOW you are going to use that information." This is a legal requirement for every website, so you don't want to skimp on this area. Make sure you have a thorough privacy policy that has been drafted by an actual lawyer. Your Disclaimer is equally important, and here's why. Also a quote from my lawyer friend Amira: "Simply put, a disclaimer protects you from lawsuits. By having a disclaimer, you 'disclaim' or 'deny' liability for the content you publish on your blog." And the last legal page you need to have on your blog is your Terms and Conditions. This page includes your website rules and it forms a "legal binding contract between you and your website user, incorporating your Privacy Policy and Disclaimer, which can later be used in court to enforce your rights and settle any legal disputes." Again, my friend Amira rocks, and this is a quote from her. I had my legal pages drafted by a lawyer, and I'm so thankful that it's one less thing for me to worry about. Her legal pages are very reasonably priced, and she provides an amazing free community and personal support if you need any help getting your pages set up and published.

At the end of the day, we all just want to have a successful blogging business, a legally protected website, and happy readers. Following these five simple tips will be the key to reaching those goals and having the legal protection that you need for your blog. ☺

3 The Quiet Type

Blog Name: The Quiet Type
Blogger: Katie Jenison
Age: 30
Started blogging: 2017
Based (area): Minnesota, USA
Monthly views: 2,241+

All time views: 26,856+
Blogging platform: Self-hosted WordPress
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @kjenisonwrites
Camera: N/A
Contact: thequiettypeblog@gmail.com



The Secret to a Successful Side Hustle

➤ Now, more than ever, side hustles are gaining momentum. It's no surprise we're hearing a lot about people who have found success with an after-hours side hustle—or that you'd want in! If you have big entrepreneurial dreams and you feel as if you should be out there doing your own thing, you have to act on it. You only get one life and one shot to live it the way you've always wanted to. When it comes to pursuing entrepreneurship, you have to be smart about it. You may be excited to get started, but don't go crazy and quit your day job before you're ready. That's where a side hustle comes in. It lets you explore your options, get to know what it's like to run a business, and eases you into entrepreneurship. Yes, it will be hard work and there will be long hours. You'll have to make sacrifices, too. There will be days when you just don't feel like working on your side hustle, but if you want to be successful, you've got to do it anyway. Commit to giving it all you've got, in every spare hour. This kind of approach to passion and work is something that often comes naturally to creative entrepreneurs. Despite that, as a newbie, you may struggle with figuring out where to start—especially when the creative entrepreneurs you follow seem so successful. You probably wonder what the secret to a successful side hustle is. A lot of people do. The thing is, there isn't really a secret at all. Here's what you need to know about running a successful side hustle.

There's No Such Thing As Failure

This is one of the most important things to remember about entrepreneurship. Failure does not exist. Okay, so maybe it does—technically. The idea is that when you make a mistake or things go wrong, you shouldn't look at it as failing. Instead, look at it as a learning opportunity. So many people are afraid to fail because they think it's a bad thing. Failing = teachable moments. Learn from mistakes and use them to your advantage. More importantly, don't let them hold you back.

You Have to Show Up

Showing up is THE. MOST. IMPORTANT. part of running a successful side hustle. You don't have to be perfect and you don't have to overthink anything. You just need to do the work. Show up every day and get it done. There's no way around it. If you don't put in the work, your business can't grow and you'll find yourself further away from your goals than you've ever been. If you're having a hard time being productive while working from home or balancing your side hustle with your day job, it may take some trial and error to develop the right routine. Be patient with yourself as you figure



out what works for you, but don't get complacent. Bottom line, you have to do the work.

Starting Up Doesn't Have To Be Expensive

When you look at people running successful side hustles, you're probably also seeing dollar signs. The truth is, starting a business doesn't need to be expensive. You may feel as if you have to invest a lot to get off the ground but the reality of it is that you don't. All you need is a solid plan, a little creativity, your laptop, and a WiFi connection. You might even want to do a WiFi speed test to make sure that you have what you need. This is especially crucial if your side hustle is run primarily online, so if that's the case, getting a better connection is worth investing in.

Serving Others Is What Counts

When it comes to running a successful side hustle, placing an emphasis on how you serve your customers should be a priority—always. The way you serve your clients and audience determines your success. Make sure that you know what they want and find a way to give it to them. If you're struggling with figuring out how to serve your clients, you need to make an effort to identify their needs. Start by creating a profile of your target

client. Who are they? How old are they? What do they do? Then, find out what they need. You can do this in a variety of ways.

Send a survey to your email list. Create a poll within a Facebook group. Visit online forums related to your industry or niche. Ask your current or past clients. Find a way to connect with your target audience and learn about their needs directly from them. Then, figure out how to solve those problems to better serve them. Not only will this help you convert a successful side hustle into a full-blown business, but it will also boost your credibility.

Creativity Can Be Learned

Creativity is a powerful thing. Most people believe creativity comes naturally and either you have it or you don't. The truth is, creativity can be learned—especially in business. Becoming a creative person isn't as hard as you may think, either. It just takes a little practice. Just to be clear, I'm not talking about becoming the world's next best artist when you can't draw to save your life. I'm talking about creative thinking. As in, learning how to solve problems, turn failure into success, and market your side hustle.

Read books related to your industry or niche. Find a mentor or business coach. Read personal development books. Listen to podcasts that interview successful or up and coming entrepreneurs. Subscribe to (and read) the blogs of people in your industry. Hang out in discussion forums and groups. Join Facebook groups for your industry. Participate in a mastermind group. Sign up for webinars. Just read in general!

Clearly, I'm a big believer that reading can improve your mindset and business. So, here are 5 of my absolute favorite books for finding inspiration and building a successful side hustle.

- You are a Badass by Jen Sincero
- The Freelancer's Bible by Sara Horowitz
- Get Scrappy by Nick Westergaard
- Big Magic by Elizabeth Gilbert
- The Slight Edge by Jeff Olson

Conclusion

Take it one day at a time. Show up and do the work and then watch your business grow. When you feel like quitting, don't. You may be suffering from imposter syndrome or just feeling a little burnt out, but you have to push through it. You never know if your next blog post, email, product launch, or podcast could be the one that gets you noticed. It could be the break you've been waiting for. If you give up, then you'll never know what could have been. So remember, you're just one step away. ○

4 Incoming Success

Blog Name: Incoming Success
Blogger: Lidia S
Age: 22
Started blogging: 2018
Based (area): Romania
Monthly views: 1,000+

All-time views: 6,000+
Blogging platform: Self-hosting WordPress
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @lidia.incomingsuccess
Camera: Canon 750D
Contact: lidias@incomingsuccess.com



10 Mistakes to Avoid for your Pinterest Growth

➤ When managing Pinterest for your blog or business, there are a lot of things you may be doing right, and maybe some you're doing wrong that are slowing down your growth. If your account is not bringing enough traffic, you need to make sure you're not doing any of the next 10 mistakes.

Mistake Nr. 10

Not having a clear vision for your profile – You do not have a set niche for your Pinterest account, you don't have a lot of boards that are about the same topic, so that people can know what your profile is about instantly. Having a set niche for your account makes it look a lot more professional and follow worthy.

There are a few ways you can make sure people know what your profile is about once they click on it:

- mention it in the title and description of the profile
- use the board cover to showcase your anchor board
- use the slider to showcase 5 boards that are most relevant to your profile
- mention it in the profile's description
- have a lot of boards that fall into that topic
- join group boards on that topic

For example, I blog about making money online, growing your business, freelancing and social media growth tips – so, a lot of my boards are related to these topics. Then, I also made sure to mention what I do and who I am in my profile's title and description.

Mistake Nr. 9

Not taking advantage of Pinterest business profile features – you do not have a slider set up with 5 of your most relevant boards and are not using the profile cover to showcase your anchor board (a board that only has your own content).

Mistake Nr. 8

Not pinning popular content into your own boards – by pinning relevant popular content into your own boards, Pinterest will know what those boards are about and will start recommending them to others. I suggest searching for keywords every day and then pinning some of the most popular pins into your own relevant boards.



Mistake Nr. 7

Not following other people in the niche daily – as any other social media platform, Pinterest requires engagement in order to grow, so I suggest searching for 4-5 people in your niche every day, following their accounts & pinning their pins.

Mistake Nr. 6

Not pinning your own content consistently – in order for your Pinterest account to grow and generate traffic to your website, you must have leads on your profile that will get people to your website. For that to happen, you must create new pin graphics with every post and pin them consistently.

Mistake Nr. 5

Not having enough boards or pins on your profile – if your profile looks like nobody made an effort to set it up, it's going to be really hard for it to grow. So, I suggest creating at least 30 boards at first & pinning at least 10 pins into each board to begin with, and then add on – every week – one new board, every day – new pins.

Mistake Nr. 4

Not joining and pinning into group boards – group boards are a great place to engage with other bloggers and entrepreneurs such as yourself by sharing and repinning similar pins. This will help your overall engagement and website traffic. I

suggest joining at least 15-20 group boards in your niche to begin with and then keep finding at least one more to join per week.

Mistake Nr. 3

Not having branded pin graphics and board covers – for people to recognize your pins immediately and be attracted to your content, you must have branded pin graphics. Make sure to have a consistent logo throughout the pins, consistent colors and fonts. Same goes for the board covers – use the same fonts and colors you always use.

Mistake Nr. 2

Not pinning every single day – by downloading the Pinterest app, you are able to at least pin for 5 minutes a day, and sometimes that is good enough to keep your account growing. Not pinning at all for days in a row, is going to slow down your growth consistently, as Pinterest needs to see that your account is active.

Mistake Nr. 1

Not optimizing your account for SEO – Pinterest is a search driven platform, and for that reason, you need to make sure to add keywords in your boards and pins titles and description consistently, as well as add boards into categories. You also need to add keywords in your profile's title and description, as mentioned before. ○

5 The Content Bug

Blog Name: The Content Bug
Blogger: Cathrin Manning
Age: 25
Started blogging: October 2016
Based (area): Rochester, NY
Monthly views: 63,000+

All-time views: 480,000+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @thecontentbug
Instagram handle: @thecontentbug
Camera: Canon M50
Contact: thecontentbug@gmail.com



What is email automation & why you need it for your email list

➤ Let's talk email automation. If you haven't been using email automation then you're missing a key aspect of growing and honestly using your email list. What is the point of having email subscribers if you aren't nurturing them, providing them with the information they need and want, and then, in the end, monetizing them?! Isn't that the point! Today I want to take a minute to talk about something so important: Email Automation! I first learned about email automation my first month working in the digital marketing industry. And at the time, I thought it was so genius! You get to be the hands-on guide and control how people interact with your brand. Plus you get to help them through the steps of your sales funnel to lead to more money in your pocket. Now doesn't that sound awesome?! Heck yes. So let's get to the good stuff.

WHAT IS EMAIL AUTOMATION

You've probably heard about social media automation before. Basically where you automate your social media posts and they are sent out without you having to do it yourself every time. Well, email automation is the same thing. It's a way to automate your email list so that it can run on its own without you having to check it every second of every day. With email automation, you can provide people with freebies they sign up for while you sleep. You can send out 5 emails spaced several days apart while you're relaxing on the beach drinking a margarita. And you can tag people based on their interests without knowing them personally or slacking their life! So yeah. Email automation is a big deal. And here's why you need to use it.

WHY YOU NEED TO USE AUTOMATION

Let's break down the facts real quick. In case you aren't drinking the email automation cool-aid yet.

1. It makes your life easier - Let's talk about the obvious... email automation makes your life a heck of a lot easier. Seriously. You don't have to check your email list every day. You don't have to worry about emails getting sent out. All you have to do is sit back and relax knowing that you've set the systems in place to run your email while you work on more important things.
2. It will lead to long-term readers - A lot of people that will visit your website will never come back again. It's just the reality of it. But what happens when they visit for the first time and sign up for one of your freebies? Well, you get a second opportunity to win them over! So don't blow it!

3. You can make more money! - Oh yeah. I'm talking about real money. Do you have a sales funnel for your blog? I didn't for the longest time. But with your email automation, you get to create the systems to help lead people through that sales funnel. Resulting in more money in your pocket. With trigger products and your sequences, there are plenty of opportunities to use email automation as your money driver.

HOW TO START AN EMAIL LIST

Starting an email list can actually be a lot easier than you think. The biggest hurdle is picking the platform you are going to use. I use ConvertKit, and I highly recommend them to any blogger who wants an easy platform that will allow for quick growth. And if you don't want to switch platforms in the future, then start with ConvertKit. You may want a free option right now, but once you start to grow, you'll want something that can grow with you. So instead of dealing with the hassle, just get started with ConvertKit from the very beginning.

WAYS YOU COULD USE EMAIL AUTOMATION

There are several different ways that you can use email automation to your advantage. So let's break it down to make sure you get the most out of this tool.

1. Give people their freebies immediately
Have you ever wondered how when you sign up for something for free how it's immediately sent to your email? Well, maybe you've never thought about it. But that's email automation at its finest. You can have 34 freebies on your website and you don't have to actually send out 1 freebie manually if you have the proper systems in place. With ConvertKit, there are 2 main options on how you can do this. You can either attach the freebie to the confirmation that is sent once someone signs up for a specific form. Or you could use their automation tools feature so when someone signs up for a form, they are then subscribed to a sequence. And the first email in that sequence includes their freebie!
2. Categorize your email subscribers
If you're a member of my email list, then you should know that with every opt-in you sign up for and with some of the links you click in my email blasts, you are tagged based on your actions and interests. Creepy, right? Ehhhh... Yeah. Yeah, it is. So if someone signs up for my 30 Day Instagram Challenge, they are tagged with an interest in Instagram and Social Media. That way when I have a specific email or promotion that I want to send out that has to deal with Instagram, I can send it to the people that are actually interested in that topic. It's a great strategy to send targeted emails, have

more success on your promotions or product launches, and keep your subscribers!

3. Schedule future emails
No one wants to take the time each week to write and send a new email to their email list. Especially if you are in the launch phase of a new product! One of my favorite things to do is to batch write my emails and then schedule them to be sent over the next few weeks. Going on vacation... doesn't matter. Your email will be sent automatically. Sick in bed wanting to watch Netflix all day... don't worry. That email will still be sent. If you batch write your emails and schedule them for a later time, you create a set-it-and-leave-it strategy which will make your life a heck of a lot easier!

4. Guide people through your sales funnel
Want to make more money with your email list? Introducing sequences. They will quickly become your besties. With every new email subscriber you get, you should have them subscribed to a sequence. And in those sequences should be specific emails that are designed to provide them with more information about you, your blog, your business, and what you can offer them. This is your opportunity to nurture your new subscribers to make sure they turn into long-term followers and readers. So how do you do that? Well, you create a sequence that includes at least 3 emails that are designed to provide people with more information. The information they didn't know they needed. And then at the end of the sequence, you can offer them more information in the form of your services, paid product, or paid course. Heck, this could even be an affiliate link that you want people to sign up for! First, educate. Second, sell.

BABY STEPS TO GET STARTED

If you're new to the whole email automation world, the best place to get started is with sequences. You'll notice that when you have the systems in place to automatically send out emails over a period of time to new subscribers, that you'll feel like you have your life together. I'm not kidding. There is no point in generating new email subscribers if you aren't doing anything with them. So start out simple. Write a few 3 email sequences and set the automation in place to have those run while you sleep. From there, move to on categorizing your audience and batch scheduling your emails. And don't be afraid to change the systems you have in place. I've reworked and rewritten my welcome sequence a couple of times to make it reflect my brand, new content, and new products. As you grow and change, so should your systems. Never get too comfortable. ☺

Nikki

Lilly

The social media star speaks to **Alice Audley** about living life with a chronic illness, the importance of using your influence for good and how your current situation is not your final destination...

Photography: Claire Luxton
Beauty: Kate Pope





I am a warrior.

I will fight and keep on fighting.

You can hurl your weapons; your arrows, your spears.

But you will not penetrate my armour.

My fire will burn, and keep on burning. My battle cry will be heard.

Across the wind you will hear my howl.

I will not cower from you. I will not die.

You will listen. You will learn. You will accept.

I am a warrior. That is who I am.







Chainmail cloaking her chest, a blue-eyed wolf dog at her feet, a Macaw circling overhead, fire burning behind, Nikki Lilly looks fierce, bold and powerful. Exactly what she is.

It's difficult to write about Nikki Lilly without sounding like a fangirl. But, after spending time with her over the past few months - both on the shoot and as she guest-edited this issue - a fangirl I am. At just 15 years old, Nikki has been through more challenges than most do in a lifetime, but she hasn't let these diminish her spirit - she is positive, motivated and passionate. She is a true fighter; a bona fide warrior.

Nikki has an AVM [Arteriovenous Malformation], which is an abnormal tangle of blood vessels connecting arteries and veins, which disrupts normal blood flow and oxygen circulation. Nikki's AVM is craniofacial and has led to facial swelling, and severe nose and gum bleeds. Since being diagnosed at 6 years old, she has had more than 70 major operations and visited Great Ormond St Hospital more than 350 times.

"I was born with my AVM, but it didn't start affecting me until I was 6 years old. I started getting pain on the right

side of my face and a few veins started appearing, but we didn't think it was anything major. But then we went to the GP and the GP quickly referred us to a specialist doctor, who referred us to Great Ormond Street," Nikki remembers.

"Because I was so young, I didn't really know what real illness was like. I thought it would be like a cold; that I'd feel unwell and then I'd have some medicine and it would go away and I'd feel better. But I became quite sick, quite quickly... and I was in hospital most of the time and couldn't go to school and that's when I realised that actually my life was changing and it was something that was going to be chronic."

After her diagnosis, Nikki had to give up most of her hobbies - ballet, dance, football, cheerleading and trampolining, and spent increasing amounts of time alone at home. It was during this time that she discovered the world of YouTube.

"When I had to give up everything, I was left feeling really isolated and lonely. I had lost all touch with the outside world and with all people my own age. I was just at home or in hospital. I started to watch YouTube videos, and

found Zoella and some American beauty YouTubers. I loved make-up tutorials and how make-up could really transform someone's confidence and how they felt about themselves.

"I used to film myself on the family iPad just mumbling about different things and one day I just thought to myself, 'why don't I make a channel and upload this?'. I don't even think I realised that you could get subscribers or anything."

After seeking the permission of her parents, Nikki was allowed to set up a channel and upload videos - but as long as they monitored them and the comments were disabled. The ability to create videos gave Nikki a sense of joy she hadn't felt in a long time.

"The happiness I felt when making videos was amazing. When I was diagnosed, I lost such a sense of self; of self-confidence and self-worth. That chatty child, that outgoing child, that Nikki that I was before had completely disappeared. YouTube really helped me regain my confidence."

YouTube has also gained Nikki a lot of fans. Her channel has more than one million subscribers, and amongst her popular uploads includes a cover of *Lovely* by Billie Eilish and Khalid that has >









I became quite sick,
quite quickly

more than 19 million views. These stats, however, are nothing compared to her TikTok account - which she only properly started in December 2019. There, Nikki has 1.4 million followers and her top video - only the fourth she uploaded - has 94.7 million views!

"I think that TikTok numbers are numbers that you won't get anywhere else. I went from having 100,000 followers to 500,000 the next day. You would never get that on YouTube - ever. I was so gobsmacked - my YouTube took me over a year to get 100 subscribers. I've never seen that [TikTok] growth before."

With large audiences across YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, increasingly brands are getting in touch and Nikki is starting to think about management. "I've never wanted to rush into things, and I think my parents have been really good at not just finding any old person to work with - they really have my best interests at heart. We've talked to managers and are talking to people now.

"What I really want is someone who's not just going to focus solely on YouTube, or solely on the TV side [Nikki has a series with CBBC called *Nikki Lilly Meets*. Guests include Theresa May, Katie Piper and Jeremy Corbyn]. I need someone who can do both worlds, as that's what I want to do in my future.

"If I could wave a magic wand and have a perfect manager it would be someone who I would have a great connection with, and would not just be completely business based, they would be a friend too."

In terms of what type of brand work Nikki would like to do, top of the list would be to create her own make-up or skincare line.

"I would love to do a collaboration with Makeup Revolution - that would be a dream for me. I remember when *SophDoesNails* did her first collaboration with them, I thought 'oh my gosh, if I could ever do that one day it would be amazing'.

"Eventually, I'd love to create my own makeup line. And my goal would be to have people from all walks of life be in the campaign. I think that there are more people challenging what is conventional beauty now - and I would want every single person there."

Promoting inclusivity and diversity is incredibly important to Nikki, as is raising awareness for charities. Nikki has worked with the likes of Alzheimer's Research UK, Stand up to Cancer and Jeans for Genes.

"I think it's really important for people on social media to use their platforms for good. There are so many causes out there that need support - and it can be hard for some charities to be seen."

Nikki actually also set up her own charity called The Butterfly AVM charity. "We set up the charity in 2012. One of the main reasons we set it up was because there wasn't much information about AVMs out there, and the stuff that was there was really scary. It was really >

to help raise awareness for AVM, help raise funds for research and treatment, and also be a point of contact for other people who were finding it hard to cope with their children having AVMs.

"It's been incredible. We've seen and spoken to so many people across the world, and we've raised three quarters of a million pounds for research - that money goes straight to a researcher who's dedicated to finding a cure.

"We've done so much already - we've found the genetic mutation that causes AVMs.

"Eight years ago, we wouldn't have even really known what an AVM was, and so the fact that we can now provide definitive symptoms for people and provide doctors to look at - it's everything we could have hoped for and wanted when I was first diagnosed."

Nikki's charitable campaigning and presence on social media has caught the attention of mainstream press and awards ceremonies. She has been a guest on *Loose Women* and *This Morning*, and has won both an Emmy and a BAFTA. At one of our editing meetings in London about this issue of *Blogosphere*, a man came up to her to tell her how much of an inspiration she is and how his daughters would be so sad they weren't there to meet her. It's a lot of fame for someone who's

still so young - how does she stay grounded?

"I just remember where I started, where I came from, my roots. I started this as an escapism from the hard days. I think online lots of people can appear that they've got their life together, but a lot of people haven't. I hope I can be that sort of light that keeps it real. If I'm having a bad day, I talk about it.

"It's totally fine to make your profile a highlight reel, but make it clear to other people that it isn't your whole life. I do wish there was more honesty and reality on social media."

Honesty and reality is something that Nikki is going to be continuing to concentrate on.

"All of the people I've interviewed for *Nikki Lilly Meets* have been so open and honest when talking about important topics, such as anxiety, depression, self-confidence and how they have affected them; which I'm so grateful for so I'd really love to continue that.

"I can't believe it's already 2020, there's so much going on. Working with you has been insane, it's been something that's been on my bucket list, so the fact that I'm doing it now and that you've made me your first ever editor-in-chief means so much -

thank you for trusting me."

With *Blogosphere* ticked off the bucket list, what else has Nikki got in the pipeline this year?

"I'm very happy that I've also recently become an Ambassador for the charity *Changing Faces*, so I'm looking forward to being able to work with them more.

"There is so much pressure on my generation to convey themselves a certain way and to fit the mould of what society thinks is perfect. We are constantly presented with airbrushed ideals of what we 'should' look like. I want to challenge that.

"It's also super important to me that I keep campaigning and raising awareness for my charity, too. I don't want another person to feel alone and I won't give up until definitive treatments are found and the clouds of uncertainty are removed from AVM sufferers and their families' lives.

"I hope that my little corner of the internet can be a symbol of hope that people need to believe in themselves; to know that it's okay not to be okay, to know that a bad day doesn't equal a bad life, and most importantly a symbol of all the reasons why you should keep fighting and never give up.

"I want to show my viewers that despite my illness I can make the most of every day and live my best life." ○





Watch our behind-the-scenes film
with Nikki Lilly on our YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/blogospheremagazine



lifestyle



Edited by **Sophie Cliff**



Blog Name: Sophie Cliff
Blogger: Sophie Cliff
Age: 29
Started blogging: December 2014
Based (area): Leeds, UK
Monthly views: 10,000+
All time views: 500,000+
Blogging platform: Squarespace
Twitter handle: @sophiecliff
Instagram handle: @sophiecliff
Camera: iPhone X
Contact: sophiecliff@live.com

Hi, I'm Sophie Cliff (aka *The Joyful Coach*), and I'm a blogger, podcaster and coach based in Leeds, UK.

I started blogging about five years ago as a creative outlet, and I wrote about everything you could imagine, from travel to mental health to my wedding. However, I quickly discovered that what made me happiest was creating content that inspired other people to live their most joyful and fulfilling lives, whatever that looks like for them.

I now see my blog as a bit of a guide to getting the most out of life, and I share lots of uplifting and positive content both there and over on Instagram. I also share practical tips and strategies for a joyful life in my podcast, *Practical Positivity*, and my newsletter, *The Weekly Pep Talk*.

When I'm not creating content or coaching awesome clients, you can find me hiking in the countryside, or drinking red wine on the sofa with my husband and our very adorable cat, Lola.

selected blogs

1 The Enthusiast How much better would the world be if we stopped being so self deprecating and cynical, and got enthusiastic about the stuff that's important to us? That's the message that Ellie at *The Enthusiast* is sharing, and she does it in such a fun, relatable and inspiring way. I love seeing her enthusiasm pop up in my Instagram feed, and her content always manages to shake me out of a pessimistic slump. **p47**

2 Teadayblogs I am OBSESSED with Tea's incredible Instagram feed. It really does have everything - from gorgeous outfits, inspirational quotes and perfectly written captions that have me thinking for hours after reading them. But I think what makes @teadayblogs really stand out is the incredible editing - it's quirky, playful, and oh so colourful, which I think is something we all need more of, right?! **p48**

3 Blue Jay of Happiness Fellow life coach, Kat, is my go to whenever I need a bit of guidance on how to take better care of myself, and her blog is jam-packed full of posts to help you do exactly that. What I love about Kat is that she isn't preachy in any way - her posts are vulnerable and relatable, and contain practical tips to help you practice self-compassion and build self-worth. She also shares some great behind the scenes content over on Instagram which I really enjoy! **p49**

4 A Rosie Outlook Rosie is a blogger that I've followed for years, and I've loved following along with all the highs, lows and everyday moments in her life during that time. She writes about a whole variety of topics, but also with her usual down to earth approach that makes the reader feel like a friend. If you're after content that feels real and relatable, Rosie is your gal. **p50**

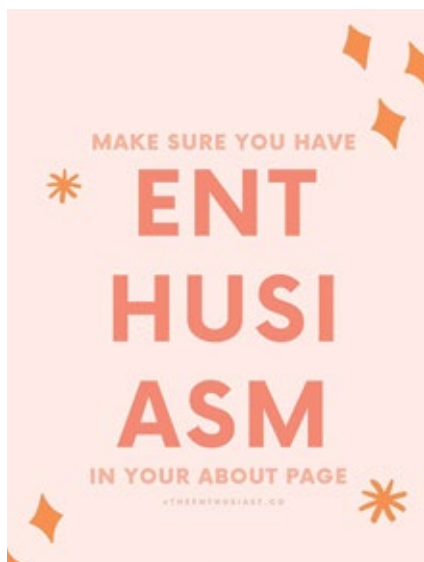
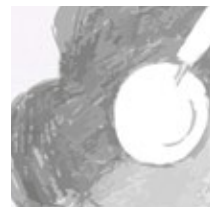
5 Rhianna Olivia Fellow Leeds babe Rhianna has long been one of my favourite bloggers, mainly because of how incredibly down to earth she is. She shares a mixture of travel and lifestyle posts, covering everything from how to create a budget to the TV shows and books she's loving. What's consistent is her northern humour, playful design, and cool AF taste. If you like your lifestyle blogs with a healthy dose of personality and inspiration, you're sure to fall in love with Rhianna. **p51**



1 The Enthusiast

Online persona: The Enthusiast
Name: Ellie Kime
Age: 23
Started sharing content: 2018
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: N/A

Average comments per post: N/A
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @eleanorkime
Instagram handle: @theenthusiast.co
Camera: iPhone 8
Contact: hey@theenthusiast.co



You may not know this, but I am actually a copywriter (specialising in creative for the wedding industry), what this means is that not only is there a fat stack of blog posts coming your way this year, but that I'm also passionate about how enthusiasm helps small business present their best selves. About pages are my JAM, so here's why you need enthusiasm popping from every para: it shows people you really care about what you do, so they trust you'll take their job & money seriously

- it signposts you as a specialist (we've no time for impostor syndrome here hennies)
- it'll make you stand out amongst a sea of competitors with boring corporate about pages
- it'll show people how great you'd be to work with
- it's nice to see what you do outside of work too, and adds authenticity



You know the old saying, grid photos of Ellie are rare and then 2 come all at once but this was a moment very much worth commemorating. Yesterday @sophiecliff held her London leg of #Kickstart2020 and I was honoured to be on the panel alongside @vixmeldrew and @madandsadclub. The morning session was spent taking a new approach to goal-setting: FYI, you should connect your goals to FEELINGS! and the afternoon was about building confidence & a success mindset. I've never seen so much notebook scribbling and never had such gorgeous panel questions before - thank you Sophie Cliff, it was a JOY to be part of.

(p.s if anyone is good with Photoshop please pop Vix in, not sure where in the descending height order lineup she slots)

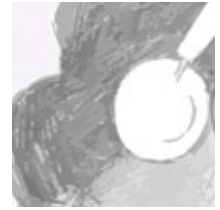


Confession time: I've never really felt a spiritual affinity to any particular spice girl - I was usually just assigned Mel C because I'm brunette and from the north (despite not really having that much of an accent.) but here I am trying to live my best VB life anyway with my @sylviesigns the first order of 2020 is hanging this up because my future is looking golden, baby #gifted O

2 Teadayblogs

Online persona: Teadayblogs
Name: Tide Adesanya
Age: 23
Started sharing content: 2017
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: 1,500+

Average comments per post: 50+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @teadayblogs
Instagram handle: @teadayblogs
Camera: iPhone 7 Plus
Contact: Teadayblogs@gmail.com



#editwithtide

Glided out of @sheltershops on cloud 9 last week. After living my best colour-blocking life for #styleforshelter.

What brought a extra spring to the condensation beneath my soles was the ethos of the shop! By buying #secondhand or donating your second hand treasures to your nearest Shelter charity shop, you play a role in fighting #homelessness and funding the vital work that goes into supporting people facing bad housing and homelessness.

It feels good when you shop good.

Go have a flick through their stuff - the ladies are proper nice, had such a laugh, killed a pumpkin... you had to be there.



#editwithtide

Week 2's category is 'GET OUTFIT'

I want you to STRIP OFF... then edit your garms back on (or not) (but definitely do, cause that's the whole point of this whole charade so...)



Curate my wardrobe

#gifted I've been selling my stuff on here after I realised that my wardrobe - underwear draw specifically - has zero conscious thought put into it. So so many ripped, hot pink Primark knickers from 2002 - branded with "I woke up like this". Beyoncé would be appalled. Hence why I'm purging my closet and looking to fill it with quality, consciously made items that bring me joy. I'd like to softly curate my wardrobe pls.

@organicbasics is nothing if not a delicately curated brand, right down to its packaging. Soft texture laced with strong ethics to make feel-good undies I'm happy to have in my wardrobe!! I'm wearing SilverTech™ Starter Pack; size XS. This danish brand sure know how to make a comfy set of underwear Beyoncé would approve of - a perfect first brand partnership.

To treat yourself to this danish goodness use my discount code: TEAOB for 10% off

(p.s a bra that you don't immediately want to take off when you get home *gasp*) photo: @sylko713 ○

3

Blue Jay of Happiness

Blog Name: Blue Jay of Happiness

Blogger: Kat Nicholls

Age: 34

Started blogging: 2008

Based (area): Guildford, Surrey

Monthly views: 800+

All time views: 57,500+

Blogging platform: WordPress

Twitter handle: @BlueJayBlog

Instagram handle: @katbluejay

Camera: iPhone 8+

Contact: kat@bluejayofhappiness.com



When self-care hurts

➤ Self-care is often seen as something soft, nurturing and even fluffy at times. It's a warm bubble bath on a Sunday evening, a cup of tea in the garden, a gentle yoga practice as the sun sets. And it certainly is all of these things, but it's also so much more.

I've always considered self-care to be anything that helps you feel calm and refreshed. An act or practice that recharges you and brings you back to yourself. But the more I work in this realm, the more I realise this isn't strictly true.

This, I believe, is because self-care often involves an element of growth and change. And this can feel sticky and uncomfortable. We have to meet some not so pleasant emotions on the way. We have to sit with discomfort, knowing that ultimately what we're doing is for the best.

I want to share some examples here and reiterate that while it can feel uncomfortable at first, these actions are still acts of self-care. They'll help you grow and develop in beautiful ways.

Setting boundaries

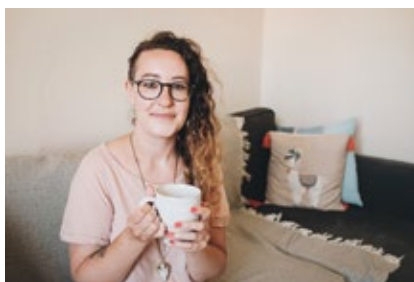
This is a pretty broad umbrella, but setting any type of boundary can feel difficult at first. Maybe you're drawing a clearer line between work and life? Perhaps you're firming up your boundaries around social media? You may even be setting boundaries with loved ones in your life.

Whatever boundaries you're setting, you have good reasons for setting them and know deep down it's an act of self-care. So when the heat of discomfort arises, breathe through it. Remind yourself what happens when your boundaries evaporate.

Saying no

In a similar vein to setting boundaries, saying no to people and prioritising your needs is no easy thing. Whether you're saying no to more work because your plate is already full or you're saying no to a social invite because your mental health is playing up – prioritising your needs can feel icky, I know. Especially if you're used to people pleasing and putting other people's needs above your own.

In this instance I would encourage you to remind yourself how your self-care supports others. Saying no may feel like you're not helping others, but it's the only way you can keep hold of the energy you need to really be there for others. If saying no out



right feels too hard, try offering an alternative (for example, "No I can't meet for dinner tonight, but let's grab a coffee at the weekend instead").

Letting go

Habits, routines, beliefs, toxic relationships... there are some things in life we all struggle to let go of, but sometimes we need to. The habit of checking emails just before going to bed. The routine of eating lunch in hurried bites at your desk. The belief that your worth is rooted in your productivity. The so-called friend who makes you feel like what you have to say doesn't matter.

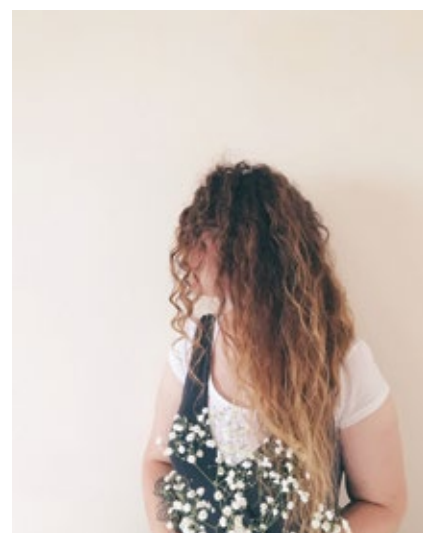
Facing the things in life that don't serve us and letting them go feels new and scary. But, when you get through the discomfort you'll find space. And this is where new and nurturing habits, routines, beliefs and relationships can grow.

Saying yes (and pushing through fear)

We've covered the fact that saying no can be hard, but so can saying yes. Saying yes to opportunities that feel too big for you. Saying yes to the next step of your growth. Saying yes to yourself. All of this takes you into new territory and you haven't got a map for that. It takes courage.

Sometimes self-care is saying no and retreating to a place of comfort, but sometimes it's saying yes and pushing through the fear of the unknown. This line is a tough one to tread and one I honestly wrestle with the most (thanks for that, anxiety).

It's hard sometimes to know what the right course of action is and just doing what feels good when it comes to self-care isn't always the answer. As with all things personal development, I believe listening to yourself here is key. Journal, meditate, do whatever you need to keep tuning in to yourself and how things feel. What parts of self-care feel hardest for you?



I want to pop a reminder here too that if self-care is an area you're looking for support with, I would love to help. Take a look at my coaching page for more information on that.

I will be back on Wednesday with the show notes for my first official podcast episode! It will be an introductory episode to tell you my background, why I decided to start a podcast and what I hope to achieve with it. ☺

“ ”

Setting any type of boundary can feel difficult at first

4 A Rosie Outlook

Blog Name: A Rosie Outlook

Blogger: Rosie Tapping

Age: 35

Started blogging: 2010

Based (area): Southampton, Hampshire

Monthly views: 7,000+

All time views: 170,000+

Blogging platform: WordPress

Twitter handle: @rosieoutlook

Instagram handle: @arosieoutlook

Camera: Canon G7X Mark ii/ Google Pixel 4

Contact: rosietapping@hotmail.com

OVERCOMING A LACK MENTALITY OR SCARCITY MINDSET

➤ I always knew I had various habits that could be interpreted as greedy or hoarding. Let's say I'm going to the supermarket for snacks for example – I'm coming out with a multipack of crisps, chocolate, sweets, ice cream and half of the biscuit aisle. I know there are people who might pick up a bag of popcorn and a packet of Maltesers, but I am absolutely not one of them. I've just started buying a small maternity wardrobe – let's face it, I'll only be wearing these items for about the next five months – but I've already got three different pairs of jeans and two almost identical striped smock dresses, and I considered buying a second pair of a particularly comfortable set of maternity joggers today. I have to buy only what food I'm planning on eating that day or the next as there is no room in my food cupboard – it's already full of 'staples' that I keep stocked in case I run out of them; like four different types of peanut butter, and three different shapes of dry pasta. This doesn't just manifest itself in the hoarding of physical belongings however, it presents itself in different ways – my assumptions that there won't be enough time to do something, that I will be too tired or that an illness will drag on longer than it does. A niggling concern that I won't be able to afford the things I need (a real, current example: that I won't be able to take the full amount of maternity leave because of our finances). A constant sense that people are doing better than me, and that I'm not trying hard enough or I will never be that successful (as if that prize has already been won, and there's no room for me). A feeling that I can't not go to that party or social occasion or I'll miss out. A lack mentality is what tells you that you have to pack half of every cupboard in your house when you go on holiday, rather than reminding you that if you forget the toothpaste, unless you're going somewhere incredibly remote, there will probably be a shop where you can buy some.

I'm not necessarily a pessimistic person but I am governed by a constant sense that there won't be 'enough' or a fear of 'running out' of something. And this affects so many of my decisions and the way I approach things.

It's only recently that I realised that all of these things are symptoms of a lack mentality – or scarcity mindset. For whatever reason, I've developed a guiding paradigm that there is not enough to go round, that there are limited resources of the things I want and need, and that it is a risk to allow a situation where I might miss out or fail. As much as I try and challenge it, I know that I always have an underlying fearfulness of losing things I'm attached to, or not getting the results I want. Attachment is



a real theme for me – I become deeply attached to plans I've made, ideas, or outcomes, and I know I can be inflexible and controlling. All of these are habits I've learned because I believe in this 'not enough-ness' and I'm trying to combat it, to mitigate the risk of things going wrong, or losing out. For example, my raiding of the supermarket during a snack attack is because of an underlying fear that I will buy the ice cream but want the Maltesers, or that someone else will have bought the cheesecake and I'll feel envious. If I had a different mindset I'd be able to just have faith that whatever I chose would be exactly what I wanted. My lack (or scarcity) mindset makes me believe that if I don't go to that party or event, that I'll miss out on meeting someone that would have been a great connection, that I'll see pictures on instagram and feel envious, or that I really, really would have liked to try a slice of that cake. An 'abundance' mindset would believe that there are hundreds of opportunities always presenting themselves for new connections, enjoyable evenings, or delicious cakes. It would have me believe that whether I stayed home and watched Netflix or went to that party, either choice was exactly where I needed to be, and everything will always unfold as intended.

If you subscribe to the Law of Attraction, a lack mentality is a surefire way to hold you back from achieving what you desire. Because the Law of Attraction dictates that what you focus on is what you attract more of, if you're constantly focussed on 'lack' or what you don't have enough of, in theory you will attract 'less of' and your concerns about running out of things may come to fruition. It is difficult to manifest success whilst being constantly fearful about things not working out.

The way that I'm overcoming my lack mentality is with two techniques at the same time – by being grateful for what is, and by changing my mindset

away from 'lack' towards 'abundance'. The first part is incredibly important and speaks to my idea of 'hoarding' things and being fearful of running out. In order to overcome this I have to believe that I already have everything that I need, and to not be constantly pursuing that exciting new thing I feel I need to buy, or own. By being grateful and assured in everything I already have, I can overcome that nagging feeling that I would only be happier if I owned... another smock dress, a yoga ball, a new Charlotte Tillbury lipstick – etc. An affirmation for this might be "I already have everything I need". Again, this is not just about belongings, it's about believing in my own 'enough-ness', and reassuring myself that I don't need to do that extra qualification to be employable, or lose that weight to be attractive, or to receive a compliment to feel more secure. There is something here about being present too – it is only when we start looking to the future that we feel those urges for the next exciting 'shiny penny'.

The second part is to believe that the 'pie is not limited' and there is always enough to go around. I tell myself that there are endless opportunities for me to attract things into my life, to grow and find happiness. That I can be generous, and give things away or share things because more will always come into my life (this counts for anything – belongings, knowledge, time, etc). So much of it is about being guided by faith, not fear. Believing that all will work out, rather than having to constantly develop tactics for stopping things from going wrong. This can be difficult, but my approach is try and be conscious of those thoughts that come from a lack mentality, and reframe that towards an 'abundance mindset'. So if I'm worrying about being out of the office when an important meeting is happening, or an opening might arise for a training course, I might tell myself "I will always attract the right opportunities my way" or perhaps "What is meant for me won't pass me by". I find great power and reassurance in affirmations – I write them in my gratitude journal every day and when I find my ego kicking in or my brain starting to go back into old patterns of thinking, I'll use an affirmation to refocus.

None of this is easy – a change in mindset never, ever is, as it's often about unpacking deeply rooted beliefs. My first instinct is always still the fear, the worry, the concern about risk and the need to control, acquire, or hoard things, but hopefully with more intention I can start moving from lack to abundance. And maybe one day soon I can clear out my food cupboard, give away more of my clothes and have the faith that I'll have the energy and time to go to that yoga class.

Do you have a lack mentality or abundance mindset? Or, if you've managed to move towards abundance, how have you managed it? ☺

Blog Name: Rhianna Olivia**Blogger:** Rhianna Bowe**Age:** 26**Started blogging:** April 2014**Based (area):** Leeds, UK**Monthly views:** 3,000+**All time views:** 800,000+**Blogging platform:** WordPress**Twitter handle:** @rhiannaoliviab**Instagram handle:** @rhiannaoliviab**Camera:** Olympus PEN EPL-7 and iPhone 8+**Contact:** hello@rhiannaolivia.com**Reflecting on 2019, and setting intentions for 2020**

➤ Last year, I decided to stop doing resolutions. I feel like a broken record saying it, because I've mentioned it a few times since, but they just don't work for me. I set things that are basically impossible to achieve, or I focus too much on things that don't actually matter (AKA the way I look), and I just set myself up to fail. Not a good way to kick off a new year. Instead of setting resolutions for 2019, I wrote a post about what my ideal 2019 would look like. I also checked in on myself, and set some updated goals for the end of the year back in September. All-in-all, I've had a fucking fantastic 2019. Shall we reflect a little?

We got engaged!

After 10 years together, Joe popped the question whilst we were away on a belated anniversary stay at a beautiful cottage in Richmond. We were up incredibly early (around 5am I seem to remember) because the countryside is full of birds, and the cottage was so warm we had to keep all the windows open. We'd been trying to get back to sleep for a good hour when, at around 6am, we decided to give in and make a brew. We sat in bed, staring at the view from our bedroom patio doors and chatting, when Joe asked me to marry him. My reaction was simple – fuck off, you haven't got a ring. No. Context: I'm not a complete dick – he asked me to marry him all the time, and I always said "no you don't have a ring". It was sort of a little in-joke at this point and he'd ask me (in jest) regularly, so it was a total knee-jerk reaction. It wasn't until he asked "don't I??", leant into the bedside drawer and showed me the ring I knew he was completely serious. I obviously said yes, cried a lot, facetimes my mum, cried some more, had to wait for everyone we knew to wake up so we could tell them (shockingly, nobody was awake at 6am on a Saturday), cried some more. It was, quite honestly, the best day of my life. The wedding isn't going to be for a little while, but we're still on cloud 9 over eight months later!

I transformed my relationship with money

I started 2019 ready to finally fix my tattered relationship with money. I set up a spreadsheet, we started saving for a house deposit, and we took a serious look at our spends. I've almost paid off my overdraft (just waiting for some invoices to be paid in January, then it will be gone!), I've managed to save more than ever, and, most importantly, my relationship with money is so much healthier. I'm not laid awake on a night worrying about paying bills, I'm not spending my wage on stuff I don't need then wondering where all my money is, and I can look at my bank account without being riddled with anxiety. Even if I'd done this and not managed to save this year, it would still be my proudest achievement.

I put myself first and became happier in my own skin

This is a big one for me, as I've always been a massive people pleaser. This year has seen me completely change in myself. I've cut ties with toxic friends, I've been confident at work, I've been kind to myself, I've paid attention to my mind and body to try and understand it more, I've believed in myself more than ever. It's honestly taken me years to get to this point, and I'm still not quite where I want to be, but that's why my word of the year for 2020 is growth.

So, what about 2020?

If I could design my perfect 2020, what would it look like? Well, in my head, it's a mixture of things – both big and small.

Buy a house

Okay, so this one is top of the list because it's both mine and Joe's biggest goal for 2020. We're about 2/3rds of the way towards our deposit and, if our maths is correct and no huge financial surprises crop up, we'll be in a position to buy this Summer. Obviously we then need to actually find a house and, you know... buy it, but we're hoping to be in our first home before Christmas 2020. Fingers crossed!

Read more books

I set myself a reading challenge last year of 25 books. Halfway through the year, I realised setting myself a challenge isn't my style at all. It added an element of pressure to something I was trying to enjoy and use to wind down, and I'm not about that life. So, after about 7/8 books, I decided to stop counting and just read as and when I wanted to. I've gone back and had a look at what I read, and I read a total of 17 books which is AMAZING for me. Before this year, I'd read maybe 5 or 6 all year so 17 is a huge jump. In 2020, I'd love devote even more time to reading, and I'd like to try reading some books that I wouldn't normally pick up. Some of these were my favourites last year!

Set a date for the wedding

As I've already discussed on the blog, we're prioritising the house over the wedding for financial reasons. It works for us, and I'm happy that we've made the decision to put all our money into a house before we start to properly think about getting married. That said, we still want to speed things up a little. We don't mind waiting a little longer than we'd planned, but we don't want to wait forever, so hopefully this is the year we set a date and start properly planning!

Be proactive

I'm incredibly guilty of saying I want to do something, then getting bored and frustrated when it doesn't immediately happen for me. It's a habit I'm trying to break, and although I'm slowly getting there I'd love

to take this even further in 2020. If I want something, I need to make the change and do it. And that's exactly what this entire decade will be for me!

Nourish myself and move more

Although 2019 has been a cracking year, it's been the year where I've felt the least healthy. A combination of working for a barbecue restaurant, a little too much alcohol, and not being able to exercise because of my knee has led to me feeling incredibly sluggish and has also led to quite a few instances of being poorly. Ideally my knee operation is going to be over and done with, and I'll be all recovered by March/April time, which also hopefully means I'll be able to start exercising again. Until then, we're giving veganuary a go and I'm going to try combat the amount of cheese and wine I've consumed over the past few weeks with some actual fruit and vegetables...

As much as I want to nourish my body more, I also want to nourish my mind more. I've been great at listening to my body this year, and I want to keep that up and take it further. More meditation, more walks, more checking in with myself, more self care.

Visit at least one new place

With the house and wedding savings, we've already said we probably won't take a big holiday this year. Although I'd love to be able to do it all, it's not realistic, and we want to prioritise the house and the wedding. That said, we still want to take a few smaller trips this year! Just maybe not a 2 week all inclusive somewhere... Definitely leave a comment and let me know of your favourite budget-friendly city breaks!

Save more money

As I said earlier in the post, 2019 was the year I really transformed my relationship with money. I've finished the year with a full Lifetime ISA, alongside way more blog earnings than I expected, a paid-off overdraft and a few hundred quid emergency savings as well. I couldn't be more proud of myself, and I want to continue this into 2020. Because most savings will go towards the house, and then towards the wedding, I don't want to be too specific about figures, but if I could keep up the good habits and come out of 2020 even more financially secure I'd be over the moon.

I'll obviously keep you all updated through my money saving series in the meanwhile!

And that's everything! I've got such a great feeling about 2020, I just know it's going to be a really exciting year for us. And that's without even thinking about the new decade! Bring it on.

How would you design your perfect 2020? Let me know in the comments! ☺

Blogosphere: Serious Influence with...

Jennifer Quigley-Jones

Hosted by: Alice Audley

Jenny: My name is Jennifer Quigley-Jones, and I am the CEO and founder of Digital Voices, which is a YouTube specialist influencer marketing agency based in Shoreditch.

Alice: Tell me about your background: what was your education, what has led you to where you are now?

Jenny: At school I was a bit of a geek. My friends were known as Jenny and the losers. I used to wear punk boots and multi-coloured tutus, pretty weird – only on weekends. It was an all-girls Catholic grammar school with purple uniforms; they really weren't fans of individuality in any way.

Alice: How did you find going to an all girls' school? Competition wise?

Jenny: Really academically intense. And girls would rip people apart sometimes; I mean, that was my experience in school. But I became really focused on academics when I was 17 so then I went to Warwick and did history and politics with a year in America. I was really interested in Middle East policies so I did my masters at Harvard in Middle Eastern studies. I did Arabic everyday and it was funded by the Kennedy

Memorial Trust, which was a scholarship that would send British students to Harvard and MIT. Then after working on the Syria crisis for a while, I worked at Oxfam for a little bit, I found that my Arabic wasn't fluent – it was good, but it wasn't great and I really wanted to learn as much as possible in my next career step, because NGOs move very slowly, and I read an article in *The Economist* that said 'if you're quirky then you should work in tech' so I applied for a job at YouTube and I ended up working with UK creators as a partner manager and at YouTube for two years.

Alice: What year was that when you started at YouTube? What was the interview process like?

Jenny: Yeah it was quite intense. So I started in 2015 and stayed till mid-2017. The interview process was while I was in Boston, so you had to do phone interviews. I applied for a role in Arabic working with Middle Eastern creators but from London, but they made me interview for an hour in Arabic on Skype but with no video, so you're just sat there talking to someone and I had post-it notes with Arabic words all over my screen – it was a nightmare. They were like 'you're good, but you're not

fluent in multiple dialects' and I was like, 'yeah, of course'. So there were two phone interviews including that one and then three separate interviews via Google hangouts with different people and they asked if I could be in the UK for those, so I went into the UK for those and did them all in one day, but it was quite an intense process.

Alice: So you got the job based in London. What were your responsibilities then? And 2015 was the first outdoor campaign with YouTubers.

Jenny: Yeah the Made For You campaign in 2016 and they did the buses in 2015! It was a really exciting time, the job has changed a bit since but at the time when I first joined they wanted us to work with over 100 creators a quarter.

Alice: So you got to build direct relationships with influencers through that?

Jenny: Yes and often their management would turn up to meetings, but sometimes – most of the time it was you and the creator and that was amazing. I think I worked out once, there were 500 creators in 2 years, which in the UK >



space means you're getting to know the people across all different verticals, who are growing but not necessarily really big – you had to have initially 10,000+ subscribers and then they raised it to 100,000+. But it meant you got to know all this wonderful talent on YouTube, especially the people who weren't ready to be full-time yet, which I really enjoyed because you're helping them shape their careers.

Alice: Do you think that you ever wanted to go into management?

Jenny: Management is very stressful. There are also a lot of really bad managers.

Alice: What makes a bad manager?

Jenny: God you're asking the hard questions aren't you?! I think people who aren't honest with creators, who aren't open about fees, so if anyone is taking more than 20%, run away. I think bad managers also would take AdSense revenue. There are also those managers who run around claiming to manage people that they don't actually have relationships with, and I think that's awful. I think if you're anywhere near exploitative with young people, again that's an awful sign. Also I think some talent management then forces creators to professionalise, and a lot of YouTube creators aren't ready sometimes to step into that consistent business professional behaviour space. I think they're pushed by managers, who know they need to accept brand deals to earn fees, so I just never wanted to be someone taking money off creators. Our entire business model at Digital Voices is that we take money from brands, but we're never taking money from creators.

Alice: So what made you want to leave Google? Was it burnout from having to meet so many creators in such a short amount of time? There has been quite a lot of backlash with YouTube deprioritising digital first creators and working more on celebrity.

Jenny: Yes, there was a debate about that while I was there and there were a lot of reality stars that were coming to us and TV stars coming to us asking for strategies and I wasn't particularly interested in them to be honest. It's fine; it just takes so much skill to be a YouTube creator. You need to be able to edit videos and have your own style and do it consistently. It's very different to Instagram. To be honest after two years I just felt like I was having the same conversation with creators and I wasn't learning, and at the same time, so many brands were coming to our team, and YouTube wasn't supposed to be matching up brands and creators. So brands were like 'can we sponsor anyone? Could you provide a list?' And I was like, well this isn't our job and we're not impartial so I felt really strange because you are half recommending people but you're not seeing the brand deals through, and there was obviously a huge gap in the market. So it's kind of a combination of getting bored and not learning. I think YouTube and Google are a great place to work for a couple of years but they take really smart, high-achieving people and put them in jobs where they often do the same thing. So unless you are really committed to staying at Google, you can break those structures and find new ways to innovate within Google and move forward.

Alice: So the impetus to start Digital Voices was because nobody was doing

the video piece? Do you do campaigns across Instagram as well or is it predominantly: look, this is video? Why, in your view, is video so much more important than the other channels?

Jenny: We do YouTube First campaigns, so we've done Instagram campaigns but it's with YouTube creators. They tend to have higher engagement rates on Instagram anyway because when you're scrolling through just a vast amount of content, you will like someone's content if you feel as though the like means something or you're actually friends with them.

If you feel close to someone then you will engage with their content more, and YouTube creators have such a deep relationship with their audience. I think to me the prime difference with YouTube creators is that you are watching someone for an average of four minutes a video with the sound on and go through a search process before you choose to watch their content. They have to really earn your trust to win your viewership, and then once you do you're like full screen, sound on, immersive viewing and you pay attention for like four minutes, and the average view time on our campaigns is five minutes and 17 seconds, for a brand to get access to someone for that long they would have to pay to commission a short documentary on TV. People don't pay attention for that long on other platforms and that's why I find it so exciting.

Alice: Facebook video, what are your views?

Jenny: I think Facebook has always prioritised publishers and that is great for them, but it has led to a lot of publishers having issues. I think also

it's a scrolling thing, when they're scrolling through Facebook they're not watching it. The average watch time on Facebook video is like 17 seconds and if you talk to most publishers they are like 'we get nowhere near that' and it's sound off viewing, so it's not the same type of experience. And think about the number of people that watch YouTube in bed, you don't get into bed to watch Facebook. You get into bed to watch Netflix; you get into bed to watch YouTube. How many platforms do you let into your bedroom?

Alice: And you use YouTube search as well which you don't really do on the other platforms.

Jenny: I think it's a very different approach to video. So we have debates, because often brands will come to us and they will say 'oh we know that we have to partner with YouTube creators to access young audiences'. There is this stereotype that Gen-Z are the consistent YouTube viewers, so if you want to partner with someone who has high subscriber numbers and consistent views, great. But I also think the search functionality on YouTube helps you access older audiences. Think about the number of people who when they're redoing their house search for like, 'how to build this brick fireplace' thing. I think search attracts different people but it's still super powerful for brands and they need to learn how to use it.

Alice: With the clients that you see approaching you, is there a particular vertical that you see more of approaching you? Beauty or fashion or?

Jenny: We've worked with people from music to fashion to tech to travel;

I think the vertical that's most exciting is weirdly any product that needs the sound on to explain.

We're doing a big campaign with Fasthosts at the moment, who are a Internet service provider, so if you have a business you can buy your domain or manage your website or manage your emails through Fasthosts and they're partnering with technical creators. We're working with a VPN company at the moment - running Surfshark's campaigns. They partner with people across every vertical. But it's because you can't explain it via an Instagram post; you need the sound on to explain it. So I think there's a lot that we're going to do much more with tech, much more in travel, much more in fashion - we've just designed a trial with a fashion brand, which I'm really excited for.

Alice: Would you ever consider doing some campaigns across podcasts? Because in the same way that you engage with the YouTube video, you do engage with podcasts more? And you have your own podcast – what was the reason for starting that?

Jenny: Yes. I think we just realised that there are a lot of stereotypes and negative stereotypes about YouTube creators. We really want to break them by showcasing the creative and entrepreneurial talent out there. I think YouTubers get a really bad rep for no reason often, or there's one person who behaves badly (cough suicide forest) and everyone gets tarred with the same brush, so we wanted to showcase the weird careers people have had and the weird channel specialisms. We interviewed Collin Abroadcast, whose entire channel is about travelling the world and

haggling at fake markets – great, really weird! He's got over a million subscribers; it's great.

Alice: Going down into a niche, engaging with content as opposed to just eyeballs on it – do you still find that we are in an industry where vanity metrics are still undermining the space?

Jenny: Yes. I thought that massively last year, and this year I think brands are getting a bit more savvy. It still is interesting when brands are like 'how many impressions will this get?' or 'how many completed views?' and it shows they completely misunderstand the space.

Alice: What would you say to a brand when they ask stuff like that to you?

Jenny: It's like comparing apples and orchards; an impression is literally someone flicking past an image. It has nothing to do with engagement, you don't even know if they've read the caption. But a YouTube video where they have to listen to your branded message for 30 seconds, as well as often a dedicated video that they watch about your brand for five minutes, massively builds trust, so normally the way we will show how different it is, is comment sentiment. We get really good comments.

Two social media teams have had to send around the definition of the word 'stan' to their team, which is from the Eminem song 'Your biggest fan, Stan'. Post Office's social media team never thought that they'd have audiences say, 'I love you so much that I'd kill my girlfriend if you reject me' which is kind of hilarious. So we show them positive comments sentiment, we've also got to the stage where we're doing 'time



spent with brands' as a metric, which is really compelling because you can show a brand how many years' worth of time the audience are viewing that campaign and spent with your brand.

We're also doing performance driven campaigns that are based on conversions. We have a client on a retainer where if we do not make back a certain percentage of their spend within 30 days in actual sales they can end the retainer, and they've just upped it to unlimited because it's done so well. I think people should be really focused on tracking ROI whether that's through UTM links or discount codes or landing pages, as you can definitely track conversions. I think in 2020 there's going to be a huge push towards – right, what did this company actually sell?

Alice: Is that technology that you've built up?

Jenny: We get the creators to share the analytics with us and then work it out from there.

Alice: How old is Digital Voices now?

Jenny: Just over two years.

Alice: You do have a niche, but there are multiple agencies - how has the reception been? Do you find that the agencies are warm and welcoming to each other or are they quite competitive? What are your views on other agencies within the space?

Jenny: I think finally we're at the stage where lots of blustery players have fallen away and random management companies trying to tout talent have just fallen away because they can't compete in that type of media-by-performance based marketing world.

I think in the last year and a half

things have professionalised quite a lot. There are businesses and influencers' dinners, there are people who are trying to bring agencies together. I'm more than happy to share knowledge, I've been on panels and I'm happy to chat. I like that we have a specialism that markets us as different, because I think especially with the branded content from Facebook and Instagram, platforms and agencies that are really just relying on measuring Instagram are really going to struggle and I think they're probably going to try and pivot quite quickly.

Alice: I think a few of them have already and have got a higher tier where they actually do the brand campaigns and work directly with influencers which is the antithesis of what the platforms were actually supposed to be doing in terms of scalability.

Jenny: Yeah exactly. I think it's a good thing that they're trying to pivot but also shows a slight desperation. I think TikTok is the other one – everyone keeps trying to pivot to like, 'oh we have this search functionality for TikTok creators'. And TikTok is, pricing standardisation-wise, ridiculous at the moment and also if a brand owns their content and they own their channel that's fine. You've got to be so careful with challenges that are created on TikTok, from a safety perspective. There were so many issues about this with YouTube but YouTube's spent ten years trying to fix it.

Alice: TikTok has 1.5 billion active users now.

Jenny: Yeah, which is huge – that scale that has massively taken over Instagram, it's very addictive to use; the user experience is great. Yeah

YouTube is on 2 billion, Facebook is on 2.2 I think?

Alice: What are the analytics like though with TikTok as a brand?

Jenny: The API isn't open and they're trying to build more analytics. I think brands should think carefully before they spend a lot of effort or try to run campaigns on TikTok. I think it's in-vogue at the moment, but brands should definitely spend more time on the platform. The more time I spend on it, the more concerned I get. There's a challenge like 'hashtag I don't look thicc until I turn around' and literally a young TikTok-er was saying to her audience, 'please, 13 year old girls, stop doing this challenge, you are putting basically borderline childhood pornography on TikTok', and the whole point of the challenge is you stand as a girl facing the camera wearing leggings and then it says, 'I don't look thicc until I turn around check' and then you turn around and put your ass in the camera to show that you're thicker than you look. There was a side profile challenge – what is that as a quality of content? Apart from trying to sexualise young girls? It's literally awful, and the comments on them are so many older men commenting on these young girls, and I'm like, we need to be super careful about that. So we're happy to work with some TikTok creators if it's part of a YouTube-first campaign but I just think brands need to be super weary.

Alice: When you were at YouTube, was brand safety one of the big concerns for you? Did you follow some of the mechanisms that they put in place? I know that there was a removal of ad revenue and the adpocalypse. People say they're seeing a return in pre-roll revenue now.

Jenny: Yeah, it's coming back. The thing when I was there, my big concern, was I flagged and a lot of people flagged, there was an article about this, about the child content that was being viewed in a sexual way that wasn't necessarily sexual content involving children. That was concerning. I would sit down with creators and be like, 'hey, you know this video where your daughter is in a swimsuit in a bath of slime, 25% of the viewers are from non-English speaking men who are aged over 40, how do you feel about that?' It was just a really interesting conversation to have because often these creators know what they're doing, and they'll be like, 'don't worry my child is safe because it's only a video and it's not actually inappropriate'. I think YouTube had this big issue where they were trying to work out if you can control viewer behaviour or viewer mentality and it's really difficult.

Alice: Do you think YouTube offers the best insights as a platform? We've talked about how the API isn't open for TikTok yet, we've had a few people who had companies on Facebook and the API gets cut off overnight.

Jenny: I'm hoping YouTube doesn't cut off access because they said they would limit it. I think the more Facebook plays this game where they limit access; YouTube will look at limiting access as well. I think that's kind of the wrong way to go about it, not just selfishly because we use the API to pull creators on their audience data but-

Alice: Why do you think Facebook is doing that with their API? Because we've had the removal of likes being rolled out and there's the Facebook creator portal and all that becoming basically the biggest influencer marketing platform – not to be too skeptical of mental health.

Jenny: I 100% agree with you. I think it's Facebook trying to own the Ad spend. This is one of the things that I find really different about YouTube again and Facebook. YouTubers made videos for ten years, I mean they've commissioned originals, they've experimented with stories, reels, but apart from that they've pretty much been a video platform. Facebook has released Facebook dating, Facebook currency – it's trying to own pretty much any spend they can and that's why I'm kind of more skeptical because I agree with you, I think they are trying to own the influencer marketing spend through owning the metrics. Is that what a platform should do?

I don't know if that's the money or the space they should be in. Because essentially limiting entrepreneurship on the entire industry surrounding influencer marketing, but also limiting the control of influencers themselves over their data. They might choose to sign up to one platform, but if Facebook is the only platform and is automatically showing their data to brands, is that concerning? I mean, yeah I am quite skeptical of that.

Alice: Bit of a minefield.

Jenny: Yeah it is. I like the fact that YouTube's been doing video for ten years, it's growing and there are new creators on who are just like completely different to the people who were on the platform five years ago. I love that they're sticking to that specialism.

Alice: Do you think that YouTube should be doing more for their creators? Because you do get quite a lot of creators that are a bit annoyed at YouTube specifically, you see YouTube Rewind and it's all based on Will Smith and then not being on the trending page and things like that.

Jenny: I think YouTube needs to expand its partner program. It's become much more limited in that they wanted to help support creators more deeply, so since I left they started restructuring it, so partner managers work with the same people over and over again, which is great for the level of support they get but it also means it's inaccessible to a lot of creators. We've sent creators to the YouTube Partnership team with over a million subscribers and they've been like, 'I don't think we've got space in our portfolio', and I mean like, this creator is growing really quickly, they're amazing. They're a young BAME woman. This is essentially someone you should be promoting, and they talk about mental health, this is someone who you want to be promoting, who you want to be supporting, who you want to represent diversity on your platform.

Alice: When brands come to you and they're asking for recommendations to work with, is diversity one of the things you think about when bringing campaigns together? Do you think enough people are doing that?

Jenny: We do it quite naturally, because our team is very racially diverse and gender-wise very evenly split. I think it automatically improves your campaigns with that. I did have to sit down with the Post Office and be like 'are you a bit worried we don't have a man on this campaign?' They were like, 'no, it's okay'. And we've actually had another brand that we ran an event for saying, 'this is the most diverse event we've ever seen'. I was like, 'great, it just happened naturally'.

Alice: Which is the best way. We ran a panel at the Blogosphere festival – you can't just as a brand be, 'I'm going to be diverse now', it has to be

internalised by hiring, that's the only authentic way to be diverse, which makes perfect sense.

Jenny: We have this YouTube session every week where on a Thursday afternoon the team will get together and we show each other the YouTube channels or formats we've discovered that week, and one of the new members of the team was like, 'oh I've just been watching this lace-frontal wig tutorial', and the guys on my team were like, 'what?' And I was like, 'you know what we're going to sit down and watch it and you're going to show them' because black hair is huge on the platform and it's something they've never been exposed to. They just couldn't believe that there were millions of views on this lace-frontal wig video. I kind of feel like by knowledge-sharing with a diverse team you're educating everyone.

Alice: What's the best campaign that you've worked on with Digital Voices that you're most proud of to date?

Jenny: That's tough. We're launching a really good one now, but we're midway through. I think probably it was not a big campaign, but it was so much work. We did a campaign for Post Office Travel and it was to promote the travel money card and travel insurance, which has to go through two legal teams of compliance, the insurance team and the travel money card team and they were really worried about accessing young audiences. Finance and insurance: very stressful topics. One creator did a £100 challenge in two countries in 24 hours. She travelled from Poland to Berlin, which was really cool. It was ClickForTaz who is hilarious, she's one of my favourite creators to work with, and then we sent Eve Cornwell who is a law student, so with the compliance stuff was amazing, to

Porto when she finished her exams and they both did this cheap break, with very smartly integrated branded messages. Throughout there was a lot of fun. ClickForTaz made this joke out of it saying, "oh if I fall over I'm fine cause your girl's got travel insurance!" And people kept commenting saying "your girl's got travel insurance!" in the comments and it just really resonated with the brand so I loved doing that one.

Alice: What are the worst campaigns that you have seen across the market? What do you think is a systemic bad influencer campaign that is tarnishing our world?

Jenny: We refuse to work with any gambling or tobacco companies and that includes vaping. I am so angry any time an influencer promotes loot boxes or promotes a gambling platform. I don't care if when they click through to the link it says 'are you over 18'; I don't care. Because essentially what you've done is taken your audience, that you know includes young people and you know you cannot age gate, and you've promoted gambling to them and you've endorsed it. Four in ten millennial subscribers say their favourite YouTuber understands them better than their friends; you can extrapolate that that is going to increase with younger viewers. You as a trusted person have decided to use that trust to recommend gambling as a way of life, and that is awful.

Alice: Are you seeing an increase in the number of people promoting gambling?

Jenny: We've literally seen a CEO of another marketing agency when it came out that we refuse to work with gambling or tobacco products who sent a crying with laughter face to my Instagram, and messaged me like 'ha, that's hilarious'. We've been told by

multiple agencies to just take the money. Agencies that are influencer specialists.

Alice: But you've got to have values though?

Jenny: Yeah, better to have values but clients don't always ask their agencies, who do you work with? Do you work with gambling companies? Just ask. As a client, it is your responsibility to make sure you're working with people you ethically agree with. It amazes me that people don't do that.

Alice: Especially when you've launched your own company, you want to be able to stick to your values, but also you've got payroll to think about.

Jenny: Turning down the big brands that we did was really painful – seeing the amount of money, and that's how a lot of influencer marketing agencies as well, they prove their models in terms of conversion. One of the reasons that I am so grateful we got to work with Surfshark and we've made over a hundred videos with Surfshark in the last six months and got millions and millions of views, it's been really exciting. I have been so happy we could prove our conversion model with a product that is not gambling because we can sleep at night. I get that when you're growing a business that's what you want to do, but I could never not think about the societal cost of what we're doing as well. And I wouldn't want to use influencers as pawns or financially incentivise them because they need to pay their bills from gambling money. It just feels evil. And for vaping, loads of people are like 'vaping is fine'. Once someone vapes, they are four times more likely to smoke. >

Alice: What are your aspirations for Digital Voices? Would you like to set up offices all over the world? What is your next three to five year plan?

Jenny: My plan is to become the global authority on YouTube creator marketing. Hopefully it will expand that quickly. I think we're probably going to open an Amsterdam office in the next six to eight months. We just won Booking.com so we're working with them and seeing how that expands and we're in talks literally this afternoon with a big brand based in Amsterdam as well, so we're very excited about that. We're running a campaign in the Middle East at the moment, and I think there is a lot of opportunity there, I kind of want to open an office there to go back and I think Singapore is on the cards as well.

Alice: Where would you open the office in the Middle East?

Jenny: Probably the UAE (United Arab Emirates). I used to live in Kuwait, but I think UAE is good because it's closer to the media. Lebanon is great but it's a bit unstable so UAE probably. There's a lot of potential there, I think there are lots of YouTube things happening in UAE.

Alice: So would you be looking to hire some more? Will you be growing your team this year as well?

Jenny: Yeah, we're already desperately trying to hire more creative strategists. We're massively hiring – we hired four people for Christmas and we're hiring

three now as well, so in the last two months things have got pretty crazy.

Alice: How do you go about your recruitment?

Jenny: We experimented with a recruiter before, but we found that they didn't get YouTube, so it's really tough. We are going to put the jobs on The Dots and on The Drum Recommends, and maybe on Campaign. Because we're trying to hire an agency specialist first, basically someone who knows YouTube and the agency UK system, because we have so many relationships with agencies where we just don't have time to follow up and close the deals.

Alice: I suppose that's another side as you have created a business as a female founder, how have you found that process?

Jenny: I started by myself and I didn't realise what running a business would be, and now it makes me just want to win more. That sounds really bad, but I realise how few female entrepreneurship role models there are. Especially in the influencer space where there are so many influencers that are female, creators that are female. I can't believe that there aren't that many female founders in the space so it makes me really want to be a really good example, and it makes me want to win in a business sense. I don't just want to be a person running an influencer marketing agency that's fluffy and 'oh Jenny did that nice business'.

I don't want that. We guarantee views for every campaign; we guarantee conversions when that's in the criteria. We win. We outperform everyone.

Alice: How do the guaranteed views work?

Jenny: Guaranteed organic views based on our predictions.

Alice: What happens if you don't hit that?

Jenny: We will either return our agency fee to the brand or we will spend it on commissioning content until we do. We are very honest about it. We never tell creators how much they're expected to hit, we're never putting it in contracts because that incentivises them buying views, which we don't want to do. So we essentially are like 70% of the fee goes to the creators and can write that in contracts as well, the 30% we earn if we get the data right, if we don't get the data right we haven't earned it – you can have the money back.

Alice: How important do you think that level of transparency is across the space? Do you think we'll see more of that this year?

Jenny: I hope so. Someone in the industry said to me, 'oh my god, your customers come back, you've got people who want to put you on retainers, shout about that' and I didn't realise how many agencies in the space struggle with consistent clients. >





I think if you're not keeping your clients, you're doing something wrong

Because we've built our whole business on consistent clients who come back that we work with for like minimum a year. I think if you're not keeping your clients then you're doing something wrong and it's often because you're not transparent enough and you're not honest enough. If we think something's going to not work, we'll tell them. The fact that we put our money where our mouth is means they trust our creative ideas more, so that's quite fun.

Alice: What are your predictions for the influencer-marketing world?

Jenny: Hopefully 'time spent with brand' will become a mainstream metric. I think we're going to see far more management. There's still a huge gap for management and I think we're going to see more management companies spring up that actually work within deep niches. So if you look at educational or Studytuber management companies, like Sixteenth Talent have done a lot with Studytubers, maybe there will be more specialist management

agencies. I think we're going to see creators diversify even more. One of my employees found a channel the other day, a YouTube channel with 50,000 subscribers where the guy reviews lift journeys. Like gets in, listens to music, gets out.

Alice: What are you most excited about?

Jenny: Can I also mention the death of the Instagram grid? Actually maybe that is what I'm most excited about – no it's not. The death of the Instagram grid is a massive prediction, if you look at the way TikTok is so engaging, it's a very immersive, full screen, swiping user experience. I think Instagram is just going to try and copy that as much as possible.

Alice: What about IGTV?

Jenny: We've just talked about it for so long and it's just not been engaging yet. Everyone's talking about making IGTV content.

Alice: Originally when IGTV was able to be shared to the feed, the reach on that seemed very good but that seems to have now been restricted.

Jenny: Yeah so if you only watch it when you're scrolling does that mean IGTV should exist or is successful? Not necessarily. They don't release watch time. I think for a reason. I mean we'll keep talking about IGTV for as long as they push it - probably for the whole of the 2020's!

I'm most excited about building the team and working with more creators and running more campaigns and being more creative. We are about to launch some campaigns that I am really excited about. We've got so many brands getting in touch who are super interesting to work with and who are desperate to do something different or long form influencer marketing. I am just like: perfect. We had a brand the other day say 'yeah we want to do YouTube. But we don't just want to run YouTube ads. Can we do something meaningful with creators?' I'm like, yes! Let us do it. ○





ClickForTaz

Taz Alam talks to **Charlotte West** about poetry, authenticity and the pressure to share on social media

Photography: Linda Blacker
Beauty: Julie Wong

Bounding off set filled with an infectious energy that she didn't have when she walked into the studio an hour earlier, Taz Alam (of *ClickForTaz* fame) is grinning from ear to ear. When looking through the images from the photo shoot, she coos over each one, pointing out the huge difference between the first photo and the last. In typical Taz style, she refuses to take any of the credit, praising photographer Linda Blacker at how well she managed to make her relax whilst in the spotlight for her first ever photo shoot.

The 26-year-old creator from Cardiff has more than a million subscribers on YouTube, and yet is still so humble and down-to-Earth. Perhaps it is a result of her avoiding overcomplicating things when it comes to her job: no manager, only a few brand deals to her name, barely even posting on social media outside of her video-focused world.

Nowadays it feels rare to find creators so committed and in-love with their content; it harks back to the early days of YouTube, when the platform was for those of us needing an outlet and a community.

Once we settle down side-by-side on the sofa, that beaming smile reappears on her face... it strikes me that Taz doesn't really do formal, so it comes as a surprise when she tells me she studied law at Cardiff University.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was kind of a nerd – a geek – and I did base my worth on getting good grades, but I couldn't see myself in the legal world," she admits.

"I wanted to do something creative, so decided to go for it: post consistently, and thankfully it worked out. But I was always, and still am to this day, a massive YouTube fan. I don't see myself as 'a YouTuber', I'm just someone who watches YouTube and every now and

again posts videos."

She makes it sound so simple, this technical industry, dominated by algorithms, that attracts millions of eager eyes ready to criticise any mistakes. None of this pressure seems to noticeably rub off on Taz though - she knows what she likes to make, and she sticks to that.

Her bubbly personality is arguably her most defining feature, and yet following graduation she fell into a dark depression that many ex-students experience after entering the 'real world' for the first time. The way out, for Taz, was using that sadness to spark her creativity, and so she wrote poetry. After being introduced to the medium by her friend, she posted them online and found that her words were resonating with a lot of people.

"I got to 200,000 subscribers from it, which was crazy, but it was never what I wanted to do. That was just a fluke. The >



videos I make now are the videos I've always wanted to make, but the poetry thing was just – I don't even know, they were just really sad, depressing poems. "I was so sad and lost and I didn't have many subscribers so had nothing to lose. All I could be was honest at that point. I couldn't fake being all happy and smiley."

Her content now is dominated by up-beat challenge videos, a stark difference in tone from her poetry, and I wonder whether it was a conscious decision to move away from the spoken word. She emphasises that she fell into poetry, and suffers with imposter syndrome as a result, but the challenges and social experiments are the content she has always been most passionate about.

"I stopped being sad and I was still making really sad poems because I thought that's what people wanted from me. I can only create what I am, and I wasn't feeling sad anymore. I also felt like I said everything I wanted to say with the poetry.

"Funnily enough, I'm getting back into it as I realised, as a human being, you have all kinds of emotions. You're not always happy, you're not always sad:

you are all these beautiful things. I just like expressing myself, whether that's through making someone laugh, or making someone cry. It's all in the fun of creativity!"

Taz goes with her gut, and that has clearly served her well so far. I comment on her authenticity as a creator; after being so vulnerable it would be understandable if she built up some walls for protection, however Taz has managed to keep a healthy balance of having boundaries, and still managing to portray her honest self on camera. It's a challenge that many YouTubers face, but it seems to come quite naturally to Taz.

"That's really kind of you to say, thank you. I don't know how to respond – you're just saying, well done on existing! I come from a background where you have to get good grades and do the absolute most to just get by, and you get no thank you for it because that's just the expectation. Now, all I do is exist and they're like: 'you're so good at existing! You are so amazing! You deserve all of this!' I'm just doing the basic minimum and getting so much praise."

Taz underestimates her talent, but while she sees her own work as filming herself 'existing', she acknowledges that other creators, naming David Dobrik, are going above and beyond: "he posts two crazy, amazing videos every week. He also has a second channel. He's also really good at social media. He's good at everything. Then I compare myself, thinking I need to be on that level, but I'm just not David Dobrik."

When it comes to other social media platforms, Taz struggles. It seems to have come as a byproduct of the job that she didn't sign up for. I ask if she feels the pressure to be present across every platform to help build her audience or keep engagement high. "I do feel pressure. I feel like I should do it," she admits.

"But with, for example, Insta Stories – no one cares what I'm doing today. They don't care. If I post something, it just doesn't feel natural. I like it more when it's videos where you've edited it and it has a storyline." She then bounces the question back to me: "How do you feel about social media? Because social media is for anyone and everyone." I tell her that I don't have much of a following outside of my friends and family, and >





I just like expressing myself



still I question whether I'm sharing too much. Taz agrees, "I quite value my privacy, my personal life, so I just never know with social media where the balance is. Beause then you also feel like, am I not sharing enough? It's such a mind game. I still haven't quite figured it out. You go onto YouTube because you like making videos, right? Not because of social media."

Other byproducts of the job that Taz has kept her distance from are the ideas of management and brand deals. When I bring the two up, her enthusiasm diminishes slightly.

"The truth is, I don't know what I'm doing in that area. All I care about is creating videos and I'm really happy with what I'm doing with my content." This is clear when she describes her process with brands.

"My experience is: I'll get emails, and if it's a brand I like I'll speak to

them, and then you do the video – it's very formulaic. I tend to focus on integrations, rather than dedicated videos, because that way I can still make the content I want to do."

It appears that management will remain on the sidelines for a while longer, but brand deals are something that she wants to utilise more in 2020 for the good of her videos.

"I really want to step up in terms of the type of content that I make. Last year I made a video about creating a fake art gallery, and it's the video I'm most proud of, but very different from my other content.

'I want to make more videos on that scale. That's why I would like to work with more brands, because they give you the budget to create those kinds of videos.

"I hope in 2020 I can make bigger projects and original content. Obviously

not all the time because I'm human, but I always want to strive – my whole thing has been that I just want to get better and I want to grow. As long as I can look back in a year's time and see that I have grown then I'm happy."

As we stand up to leave, Taz leans over to give me a hug and I'm reminded of just how friendly and welcoming this community can be.

Taz is the epitome of laid back, approachable authenticity: qualities that are the reason vlogging has been loved by viewers and creators alike for so long. It's reassuring to know that creators like Taz are still out there, and that they will continue to keep the platform grounded amongst the whirlwind of drama and commercial interest.

As Taz puts it: "I'm just going to carry on existing and see where that takes me." ○



I hope in 2020 I can make bigger projects and original content



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An incredible night, with incredible people! Congratulations to all the winners and the nominees, you are what make the internet such a positive and powerful place!

- Zoe Sugg, #BlogosphereAwards2019

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Fashion



Edited by **Meilifisayo**



Blog Name: Meilifisayo
Bloggers: Fisayo Adedeji
Age: 29
Started blogging: 2016
Based (area): Oxford
Monthly views: 500+
All time views: 3,000+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @Meilifisayo
Instagram handle: @Meilifisayo
Camera: iPhone
Contact: meilifisayo@mail.com

My name is Fisayo, and my blog name is Měilī Fisayo. Měilī means beautiful in Chinese. I was born in Lagos, Nigeria and left for the UK at the age of 16. I started blogging in 2016, it's a space that I cherish the most because I get to express my views on life, fashion ideas, travel tips, and beauty ideas. My favourite part of my blog is the Fisayo speaks category, where I discuss somewhat controversial topics by shining light on them and getting other people thoughts. I just started my YouTube channel which I am very excited about. It covers fashion hauls, makeup tutorials, hair, and beauty. I am all about girls supporting each other and my goal is to inspire, educate and motivate someone every day through my social media platform.

selected blogs

1

Styling the way forward She is a lady with many talents as well as a final year student, studying PR and communications. How she juggles it all is just commendable. Along with her giving us amazing style, she has just reignited her passion for fitness which she documents on Instagram @stwffitness. She shares her daily workouts and healthy living lifestyle. Your go-to girl if you are starting your fitness journey, she has definitely inspired me and I know she will inspire you. [p75](#)

2

Abbienaija She is one of the most creative people I know - covering fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. She is also a fashion designer (ogelondon), and an AR creator for Instagram and Snapchat. Her aesthetic is beautiful and if you haven't used any of her Instagram filters you are missing out. You go see for yourself. [p76](#)

3

Artbecomesyou How she juggles a full-time job, being a mom and a fashionista, I can't comprehend. She is always on trend, serving some great looks! She is definitely a super mum. When it comes to styling tips and makeup routines (and if you have a 4c hair type) you need to check her out. [p77](#)

4

Doris Megenta She is stylish, sassy and elegant. She is an all-round blogger covering fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. If you are into a girly yet elegant style, then look no further than Doris. She will give you great outfit inspiration. [p78](#)

5

ellafashionfix She is the queen of mixing prints and layering, which makes her stand out and she does it effortlessly. She makes me want to dare myself and dive into prints which I will normally not go for and the way she styles them makes me want to recreate. So if you are into prints or layering and need a plug this is your girl to follow on Instagram. [p79](#)



1 Styling the way forward

Online persona: Styling the way forward

Name: Tunrayo Oyewole

Age: 28

Started sharing content: 2011

Based (area): London, UK

Average impressions per post: 4,500+

Average comments per post: 60+

Preferred platform: Instagram

Twitter handle: @stwfblog

Instagram handle: @stwfblog

Camera: Canon 7D Mark II

Contact: stylingthewayforward@hotmail.com



Nice

I'm so glad I did this shoot when we landed in Nice on Friday. We were walking to our hotel when I saw this nice looking spot and did an impromptu shoot. Not knowing that it would be the only proper shoot that I would do in Nice because the weather had other plans for us. My hair was drenched, even having an umbrella wasn't enough to protect you from the rain. So here it is again!



Bologna

So here comes the #Bolognaltaly photo feed spam



Basilica di San Petronio

Sitting pretty at the stairs of Basilica di San Petronio

2 Abbienaija

Online persona: Abbienaija
Name: Abimbola Ogunsanya
Age: 24
Started sharing content: 2014
Based (area): South East London
Average impressions per post: 4,000+

Average comments per post: 50+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @abbienaija
Instagram handle: @abbienaija
Camera: Canon m100 and iPhone X
Contact: abbienaija@hotmail.com



Ugh it's Monday again

This pic is a visual representation of how I'm not mentally ready for this week's stress but we moweee. Have a lovely week ahead people



Pop of colour

Found this in my camera roll & thought my feed needs a pop of colour so here goes..



Gallery

Who's your favourite shortie in the room? ○

3 artbecomesyou

Online persona: artbecomesyou
Name: Lydia Epangue
Age: 32
Started sharing content: 2010
Based (area): Birmingham, United Kingdom
Average impressions per post: N/A

Average comments per post: N/A
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @artbecomesyou
Instagram handle: @artbecomesyou
Camera: Canon 500D
Contact: artbecomesyoublog@gmail.com



SMARTCAZJ

I finally managed to get my shit together and captured some gorgeous shots thanks to @itsmaryamsalam. Absolutely living for these You're a gem. And thanks for reminding me that passion finds time. Pic by @arewapphotograph



JUSTFORPUN

Orange you glad it's nearly Wednesday? Cheesy, I know. But I just love a good pun. Never miss an op-PUN-tunity. Drop your favourite puns below.

Photo by @scarlettstvns



LAYER, LAYER

Rolling up my sleeves to catch up on #SexEducation Season 2 ALL WEEKEND Happy Friday y'all Shirt @arketofficial

Sheer dress @simplybeuk
 Pic by @scarlettstvns

4 Doris Magenta

Online persona: Doris Magenta

Name: Doris Magenta

Age: N/A

Started sharing content: 2017

Based (area): Scotland, United Kingdom

Average impressions per post: N/A

Average comments per post: 100+

Preferred platform: YouTube

Twitter handle: @Doris_Magenta

Instagram handle: @doris_magenta

Camera: Canon 80D

Contact: contactdorismagenta@gmail.com



Hey Queens

Just passing by to say hi. I have been MIA lately because life has been very busy for me offline. Thank you so much to all the beautiful souls that sent me DMs and called, to check up on me. I really appreciate your kind acts. My busy offline schedule at the moment, are all part of my goals. However, I honestly do miss posting content and interacting with y'all like I used to; but will try to keep in touch online whenever possible. So how are y'all doing?



Becoming vegan

Me at the Mono vegan cafe, trying to figure out how to start life as a wannabe vegan. Lol please where are my vegan Kings and Queens masters or vegan wannabes at? Any tips? Please kindly drop below. Good morning. Happy Wednesday. Muah



Masterpiece

Don't let what some people can't see in you, talk you out from who you know you are and how God sees you... a Masterpiece!!! and One of a kind!!! Happy Tuesday Kings and Queens. Muah ☺

5 ellasfashionfix

Online persona: ellasfashionfix**Name:** Ella Adenaike**Age:** N/A**Started sharing content:** 2019**Based (area):** NYC Area**Average impressions per post:** N/A**Average comments per post:** 100+**Preferred platform:** Instagram**Twitter handle:** N/A**Instagram handle:** @ellasfashionfix**Camera:** iPhone**Contact:** ella@ellasfashionfix.com**Desired results**

Honestly the biggest thing for me this 2020 has to do with identifying the day to day activities I need to focus on what will over time, yield the desired results. Sometimes we focus too much on the end goal & that desired end number. But the truth is without today's little step and tomorrow's stride, that end goal will be nothing but a wish.

**Focus**

There's always going to be good and bad in this life. What you choose to focus on will make the difference.

**Calmness**

Sometimes the things we allow to taunt us, just need us to taunt them with our calmness. Have I said I love you guys this week? ... I love ya O



Makeup JunkieG

The YouTuber opens up about management, comparison and the importance of authentic diversity...

Photography: Linda Blacker
Beauty: Julie Wong

Georgia Rankin, known online as MakeupJunkieG, has had some terrible experiences when attending events. The one that tops it all, she remembers, was arriving at an old venue, discovering that there was no lift [Georgia uses a wheelchair] and being offered the solution that the venue staff could 'just carry her up the stairs'. "It's embarrassing and it's not great for me pain-wise, either. I'm 21 years old, I don't want to be carried up the stairs by strangers. I just want to go to a place that's accessible, I shouldn't have to worry about it," Georgia says.

Georgia has skeletal dysplasia, which hinders the growth and development of bones and joints, and is 2ft 7 inches tall. Since being diagnosed as a child, and despite some of her bad experiences, she does think that on the whole accessibility is getting better. "There are lifts in clubs nowadays, and buildings are becoming more accessible. There is still a way to go, though."

Georgia is positive and incredibly warm. She's got a great sense of humour and her laugh is joyous. On today's shoot, which she has attended with her mother Andrea (who has her

own great TikTok account @officialmumager), Georgia is full of energy, open to testing out a new style of wardrobe and makeup, and really fun to be around. She is definitely a glass half full type of person. Her warmth permeates her YouTube channel - and is, no doubt, why she is so popular on the platform. Georgia has more than 700,000 subscribers, and more than 44 million views on her videos. She joined YouTube in 2014 after appearing on *This Morning*. After the show, she was gifted some MAC makeup and decided to create a tutorial on YouTube... the rest, they say, is history. >



A person is lying on a bed, partially visible on the left side. The bed is covered with a greyish-brown fabric. Several pink roses are scattered on the bed. The background is filled with sheer, light-colored fabric, possibly a curtain or a bedsheet, which is draped and folded, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The lighting is warm and soft, highlighting the textures of the fabric and the petals of the roses.

“”

I don't want to be
carried up the stairs
by strangers



In 2018, Channel 5 created a documentary about Georgia's life called '30 inches tall and turning 18' - it was this, she says, that led to her YouTube really blowing up.

"After the first night of the show, I hit 10,000 subscribers. I went from 1,000 to 10,000. It was mad," she remembers.

Since creating the channel, Georgia's content has evolved to more than sole beauty tutorials.

"When I started, I thought 'I want to teach people how to use makeup', but now it's very different. I want people to come away from my channel thinking 'I am good enough, I shouldn't feel like I'm not worthy in the world'.

"Social media can sometimes feel like a very dark place and I want my channel to be a break from that. I want to help people mentally. I always get messages from people saying 'I've had a really

bad day and then I watched your video and it's made me happy' - that's why I do what I do. That's my purpose."

Although Georgia's upbeat outlook makes up the majority of her YouTube, she has also shared videos where she talks about having suffered with comparison and some of the lower moments of her social media journey. 2019 wasn't the most positive year for Georgia.

"Last year was really rough, and I had a lot of bumps in the road. My old management didn't work out at all, and I felt very left out and forgotten about. I felt like I was really at the bottom of the food chain.

"I found Instagram a difficult place. I kept seeing campaigns with the same girls and I really felt like I wasn't accepted. I don't feel like there's enough diversity in campaigns. It does

affect you because it puts you in the sort of state of mind like 'am I in the right job?'.

"It's sad because I love seeing diverse people in campaigns and I know it does have a good response because when brands have reposted me on their page, the comments are really good."

Georgia has changed management since last year, and is now represented by Free Focus - who among others represent Hannah Witton, Zoe London and Lucy Moon.

"It's amazing already. Finding a team who want the best for you is so important. They need to connect with you as a person, you've got to get each other because this industry is so intense."

Since changing management, Georgia has already seen an increase in brand opportunities. She recently did >



Social media can
sometimes feel like a
very dark place





There is a real hierarchy when it comes to numbers

a photoshoot campaign with Lounge Underwear to celebrate International Women's Day. The experience really boosted Georgia's confidence and she'd like to do more fashion campaigns in the future.

"Years ago I used to really struggle with clothes and it used to be such a big worry. I've got used to it now, though.

"I wear jeans all the time, but the jeans that I've got are actually cycling shorts, but they look like mom jeans - which are the style I would want to wear anyway.

"Underwear in particular was a real worry. I used to think 'oh no, I'm going to have to wear Peppa Pig underwear for years!' I used to wear Next really young girls, but they'd dig into me because I'm not tiny - I've got curves. But then I discovered brands like

Lounge, where the sizing is amazing - a size 4 is perfect for me and I felt like a new woman."

Creating her own fashion range would be a "massive dream" in the future, but for the time being Georgia would love to work with the likes of Misguided and Pretty Little Thing. She also wants to continue creating relatable content for her ever growing audience.

"My main audience is 18 and above, which I love. My followers have grown up with me and my content is older - lifestyle vlogs and things. I'm not really a fan of the challenge videos for example. "I want to be relatable. You know, I'm not that glam - apart from things like this. Most of the time I'm sitting at home with my dog, I don't really go out that

much. I want to be honest about that." If she could change one thing about the influencer industry, Georgia says she'd like people to care less about numbers. "There is a real hierarchy when it comes to numbers, and I think it's such a sad situation. If you've got low numbers, you're seen as low down. "It's like popularity - I think no matter what numbers you have, you should be treated the same."

She would also like to see "authentic diversity". "There's a difference between throwing someone in there for a tick of the box, like 'we've ticked the diversity box but we're not really bothered about the person, it's just so we look good as a brand'.

"I want to see more brands who genuinely have a passion to be diverse." ○

#BlogosphereChat

Marketing Yourself Online

We host an hour long Twitter chat every Sunday at 8pm UK time to discuss a topic related to blogging and social media. You can use the hashtag #BlogosphereChat to take part. We hope you join us next Sunday!

Q1. Do you have a social media strategy or plan for promoting your content/blog posts?

Many contributors aspire to have a strategy for their content and blog posts, but mostly post as and when they can. Pinterest was mentioned a few times as a platform for promoting content.

 **Nathan Lewis**
@NathanLewis,
Replying to @BlogosphereM
And advice, more people should use Pinterest, it can bring a lot of traffic to your site unlike other social channels. People are on Pinterest because they're looking for inspiration and not likes. #BlogosphereChat

 **Luna P. Fox (Autumn Witch)**
@BurstOfAutumn
Replying to @BlogosphereM
I am working on scheduling and making a plan but for now I am sticking to an amount of posts per week/day on various socials and my blog. I use pinterest & other media to promote my blog in various ways for different people. I am working on accessibility lately!

Q2. Do you use any apps to schedule or help plan and organise your content?

There was a mixed response to this question with some preferring to post in the moment and others using scheduling apps like Buffer and Hootsuite. Planoly was also mentioned by a few creators to help organise their content.

 **Kat Sonson**
@SonsonMedia
Replying to @BlogosphereM
A2: all starts in a spreadsheet once I've got the content for the week sorted. Then transfer twitter + LinkedIn to ContentCal. I'll have the insta captions in a spreadsheet + post free without scheduler

 **Linda Hill**
@LindaHillSOHill
Replying to @BlogosphereM
I always schedule tweets using @hootsuite the day before just in case something happens and I can't do it in real time.

Q3. Have you considered setting up a newsletter? Are there any you would recommend?


Many could see the value of having a newsletter but have yet to take the plunge. For those who do, Mailchimp and MailerLite were mentioned as useful tools for creating newsletters.

 **gingin300**
@Gingin300
Replying to @s_silly_place and @BlogosphereM
Bloggers I know say that a newsletter is the most effective way to convert followers into buyers. I have zero experience of it myself. I guess it depends on what you want from your blog as to whether it would be useful to you

 **Sophie**
@sophie_etc.,
Replying to @ExploreWithEd @BlogosphereM and @XOMisse
Newsletters are 🙌 for opening up personal conversations with your audience! And as long as the content is exclusive to the newsletter, people definitely respond well to it

Q4. Do you prefer scheduling content or posting in the moment?

This question also had a varied response as some enjoyed the ease of posting in the moment and the freedom of not being to a time. For others, scheduling content helps free up time for creating and helps manage workload.

 **Elaine Malone**
@XOMisse
Replying to @BlogosphereM
Scheduling 100%, I find it easier to do it in batches otherwise I think I'd get overwhelmed

 **LOIS : No Cruise Control**
@n0cruisecontrol
Replying to @BlogosphereM
I like to post in the moment at the moment 😊

Q5. What social media platform do you think your content performs best on? Why do you think that is?

Twitter was a popular answer to this question, mostly down to the amount of time users invested into the platform.

 **Teresa Maria | Outlandish Blog**
@TeresamariaThe
Replying to @BlogosphereM
A5. For me it's definitely Twitter. Google is my no.1 traffic source, but Twitter is right up there. It's largely due to my own activity on this platform, though. I do spend quite a lot of time and effort promoting here.

 **Explore With Ed**
@ExploreWithEd
Replying to @BlogosphereM
For general content, Twitter. For my blog, Pinterest - probably as it acts like a search engine for travel ideas and tips #BlogosphereChat

beauty



Edited by **Lady Writes**



Blog Name: Lady Writes
Blogger: Chloe Brewer
Age: 31
Started Blogging: 2016
Based (area): Cambridgeshire, UK
Monthly Views: 10,200+
All Time Views: 320,000+
Blogging Platform: WordPress
Twitter Handle: @LadyWrites_Blog
Instagram Handle: @ladywritesblog
Camera: Olympus Pen E-PL7
Contact: info@ladywritesblog.com

Hi, I'm Chloe, otherwise known as *Lady Writes!* I started blogging properly in 2016 as a 'bit of everything' blogger and settled into hardcore beauty blogging by 2017. I adore writing about all-things-beauty, it's my passion, my hobby and my full-time job. I'll never get bored of it - I eat, sleep and breathe it, just ask my husband! I'm never happier than when I'm trying a new eyeshadow palette or writing about new releases in skincare. This year I won Best Beauty Blog in the UK Blog Awards, which was a huge accomplishment for me. I still have to pinch myself on a daily basis that I'm lucky enough to be living my dream career, and creating content about all the things I love. I've been fortunate enough to work on some amazing campaigns both on my own channels and for brands' external platforms, including things like filming adverts, a New York press-trip and exclusive launch campaigns. Beauty blogging is my life. I'm so grateful for all the opportunities it's given me and the wonderful bloggers I've been able to meet on the journey!

selected blogs

1 Hayley Hall Hayley is one of the most valuable and trustworthy bloggers within the beauty industry, with bags of experience spanning years and a reputation that means she's both respected and trusted, she's one of the few people whose content standard I look up to. You can trust her to tell it how it is and let you know if a product truly is hit or miss. **p91**

2 Boy Does Beauty I found Andrew through a follower and I've seen his name come up in various places so thought I'd check him out. When I did, I could see why people rave about him! I love his style, it's so visually appealing but he's also really honest and down to earth in how he talks about all things beauty: his product thoughts make me laugh and also make me want to try things for myself! **p92**

3 My Skinology I love that when you visit Elizabeth's Instagram her posts are like reading mini blog reviews of products that she's tried - it means I can consume all my content in one place! She nails the Instagram pic aesthetic as well as including a huge amount of detail including ingredients, real opinions and more in her captions. She's one to go to when you need opinions on something for sure. **p93**

4 Style By MK Design If you're looking to follow accounts who nail makeup flatlays and just want to inject some more beauty-product related content onto your Instagram feed then Gosia has it covered. She's great at showcasing some lovely products in the most Instagram-worthy way! **p94**

5 A Brunette Edit While Jess covers a lot of topics, I find her beauty content is really predominant and she's just so down to earth and relatable - which is exactly what I want on my feed! I love that she's showing that 30 somethings can enjoy beauty as much as the 20 somethings and gives the mum/every day aspect on everyday beauty favourites. **p95**



1 Hayley Hall

Blog Name: Hayley Hall

Blogger: Hayley Hall

Age: 37

Started blogging: 2010

Based (area): Buckinghamshire and London

Monthly views: 50,000+

All time views: N/A

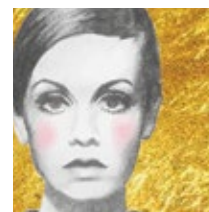
Blogging platform: WordPress

Twitter handle: @HayleyHall_UK

Instagram handle: @HayleyHall_UK

Camera: Olympus Pen

Contact: HelloLBQ@gmail.com



How To Look Less Tired In 7 Easy Steps

➤ Mornings are not my speciality to be honest; I'd much rather spend a leisurely morning eating breakfast, watching daytime telly and catching up with emails than getting up at the crack of dawn and being on a commuter train by 7.30am. I've always needed at least eight hours of sleep to feel my best, and I'm badly effected if there's any level of disruption during the night – it impacts not only my energy levels, but my skin always shows the signs of lack of sleep like a badge of dishonour. Dull skin, dark circles, more visible fine lines... It's not a good look. But over the years I have perfected the best way to fake it, helping to boost my skin and create the illusion of the most rested overnight session imaginable, to ensure nobody knows I was up pondering the ending of *The Good Place* at 4am. If you've ever thought of a morning "how do I look less tired?" out of pure desperation, here are my tips and tricks for ensuring you look well rested every single day.

Under-eye patches - The invention of these has been a godsend for anyone overworked and under-slept, as they deliver a potent mix of skin loving ingredients exactly where they're needed for visible results in only a few minutes. Our under-eye area is the first to show signs of tiredness and dehydration because the skin is so thin, but a tired eye can also have a negative body-wide impact if it's not fixed fast. In my opinion the absolute king of these is the Elemis Pro-Collagen Hydra-Gel Eye Masks, which contain a mix of Plankton Extract, Padina Pavonica and Chlorella to provide an instant skin-tightening effect, whilst Hyaluronic Acid hydrates the fragile eye area and helps to smooth out those telling fine lines. They're super pricey though (around £50.00 for a pack of six) so as a cheaper alternative the Sesderma C-Vit Eye Contour Patches (£20.00 for a pack of five) are basically just as good; they contain Stabilized Vitamin C, an antioxidant booster system, Sweet Orange extract and a low molecular weight Hyaluronic Acid to help hydrate deep from within. You simply pop these patches under your eyes while you're drying your hair / brushing your teeth and remove them before applying your usual skincare and makeup; they really do help to plump the skin, reduce signs of fatigue and generally leave you feeling more awake. Although too expensive for most of us to use every day (although Pixi do a cracking pot of 30 caffeine-enriched Depuffing Eye Patches for £22.00) they're great for emergencies.

Facial massage - I'm such a fan of facial massage, for its blood flow stimulating properties in particular, but when I'm tired I always make time for five minutes massaging my skin in front of the bathroom mirror because you can instantly see the difference.

Manually lifting and massaging away any tiredness is incredibly uplifting – both physically and mentally – and a great way to start your day. Although you don't need anything but your usual skincare and your hands, I'm a fan of using a cooling Jade massage aid. ARK Skincare do a fab Jade Tool (£20.00) which has been specially designed to work with the contours of the face, lifting and aiding drainage to leave your complexion looking far more radiant; Hayo'u also offer a bigger alternative I've used for a few years (£38.00) if you fancy something heavier. Although I don't personally think traditional Jade Rollers are as effective, they are a great way to intro into facial massage and help you to start navigating around your face for manual lifting and skin boosting benefits.

Brightening concealer - The temptation is real to coat your under eye area in as much concealer as possible, but that can actually have the opposite effect by creating a heavy and cakey base that shows up every dehydrated line. Opting instead for a lightweight brightening concealer will help to reflect the light and give the illusion of wide awake eyes, and applying your concealer in a 'V' shape underneath the eye will enable you to blend the product more naturally – drawing the attention down towards the centre of the face and reflecting the light effectively. Often we apply too close the the lid, when actually the benefit is in creating the illusion of light from much lower down the face. A sponge is also your friend here, helping to effectively blend the texture effortlessly into skin to create an airbrushed finish that looks and feels incredibly natural.

Lightweight radiant base - Reaching for your heaviest foundation on a knackered Monday is never a great idea, as the thick texture will remove all of your skin's remaining natural glow and replace it with a uniform colour that's often even more dull. My go-to base is the IT Cosmetics Your Skin But Better CC Cream (£32.00) as it features colour correcting pigments, light reflecting properties and hydrating ingredients to leave skin looking and feeling fab all day long; it also helps to minimise imperfections and reduce the appearance of pores, so you'll look like you've had a great nights sleep even when you haven't.

Lashings of mascara - Subconsciously we tend to find defined eyes (created via liner and mascara) attractive because they're a sign of vitality; if you focus on creating a wide and bright eye it will help you instantly look more rested and radiant, as it draws more attention to your limbal ring and conveys the idea of youth. Similarly, our lashes tend to be thickest and healthiest during our younger years, so enhancing them with a slick or two of mascara helps to brighten the face and keep us looking



fresh. Spending a few minutes applying lashings of mascara, but skipping the liner and eyeshadow, will help your complexion look all the more radiant – while saving essential minutes. So simple, but so effective! My personal fave mascara is definitely Maybelline The Colossal Big Shot Mascara (£7.99).

White pencil - It's simple science that light colours reflect and bring out the brightness in surrounding similar hues, but have you ever used the age-old trick of using white eye liner when you're not feeling your best? Applying a touch to the inner corner of eyes can help brighten dull tones, conceal dark circles and emphasise the whites of your eyes – the result of which is a much more 'awake' look that you'll love. I still love Essence's Big Bright Eyes pencil (£2.49) but it's tricky to track down; NYX do a great alternative though in their Jumbo Eye Pencil (£5.50) which is just as creamy and easy to use, while Makeup Revolution (£3.00) also have their own affordable offering. If you're not a fan of pencils, then a white or silver highlighter would do the job just as well: apply the smallest amount with a brush to the inner corner of eyes, blending outwards to add much needed light to an otherwise dull area.

Add a bright lip - If in doubt, just add lipstick. It's amazing the power a pop of colour has on the overall appearance of your face, helping to distract from any skin dullness or dark circles in an instant while giving you the confidence to walk with your head held high. One of my all time faves is Elizabeth Arden's Beautiful Color Lipstick (£19.00) which offers great pigment, long lasting results and a comfortable finish – all wrapped up in a luxe case that will definitely help you to feel your best. The Bobbi Brown new Crushed Oil Infused Gloss (£19.00) is also a great way to add a comfortable flush of colour to your lips, but without the same level of commitment or heaviness; the 'Rock & Red' colour is a personal fave, just for the classic 'I'm bossing it' impact of such an iconic shade.

So if you're wondering how to look less tired every morning, these seven simple steps should help you look wide awake and feel ready to face the day. And a cold shower never hurt anyone either... ☺

2 Boydoesbeauty

Online persona: Boydoesbeauty

Name: Andrew Wheatcroft

Age: 32

Started sharing content: 2019

Based (area): Manchester

Average impressions per post: 1,500+

Average comments per post: 120+

Preferred platform: Instagram

Twitter handle: N/A

Instagram handle: @boydoesbeauty

Camera: iPhone11

Contact: andrewwheatcroft2018@gmail.com



Sunday Reflection

This wasn't going to be today's post but here it is! Isn't it sad that in the UK we only discuss the person's mental health struggles openly when it's too late?! If you're in the UK you will have heard the news about Caroline Flack. I obviously didn't know her but it's so heartbreaking to know that she thought suicide was the only way out?! If you've struggled with mental health and got so low and thought about suicide you'll know what it feels like. The press and social media hounded her till she couldn't take no more. Why is it ok to dehumanise a person because they are in the public eye?! I'm not just talking celebrities I'm talking anyone who puts themselves out there. Things need to change. She may have not been "perfect" in the things she did, but I'll bet everything I have on the fact that the people who were dragging her name through shit had made mistakes too! People do certain things or act in a certain way because they are struggling to deal with their own demons inside. Ask yourself why are they acting like that? It's not always as straight forward as it may seem. I feel so, so strongly about this. A 40 year old woman has taken her life. Admittedly I've said things about people who are exposed to the public as it was just the hot topic at the time. It's not ok. We've all passed comments on people through what we've heard or seen. Whether it be a celebrity or not. Do you really know that person? If not keep your nose out. We all need to make more of an effort to be kinder, to watch what we say or type. There's a petition in my bio. Go sign. Let's take Sunday to reflect and change this shit.

One Year

Happy one year Instaversary to me! I know it's been so lovely having me on your feed for a year hasn't it?! Thank you to me. All jokes aside. It's my pleasure. Anyway, SPEECH SPEECH SPEECH I hear no one

cry, but I will anyway. I started this account a year ago when I was feeling a bit shit about myself, about my situation and not mentally in a good place. I did it thinking I would just be sharing bits and bobs when I felt like it but nothing exciting. I did not know it would turn into this! It's more than Instagram. I've made friends that are actually touchable like in person and not just on here! Shock! It's taught me that when you surround yourself with good people, good things happen. I'm so, so grateful to each and everyone of you for supporting, sharing and even the ones that don't support me but still follow me, I thank you for letting people know about me. This account has took me places I never imagined, given me opportunities that I only thought the "perfect" Insta people had but it's also taught me a lot of life lessons. It's taught me that I'm in control of my life and I choose who joins my circle, it's taught me that I'm actually bloody funny, but it also taught me to be kind. Sounds ridiculous but sometimes we all join in with idle gossip but sometimes forget the impact it has mentally on us. Positivity breeds positivity. Thanks again. I'm an acquired taste, but I'm fucking tasty as fuck once you take a bite. See ya.



Skincare routine

Awkward pose? Check. Talking about my skincare routine? Check! I'm proud of my skin, it's not been an overnight miracle it's taken years and years of perseverance and persistence to find out what worked for me and keeping a solid routine - morning and night! Here's what I do to keep my skin in tip



top condition. *Disclaimer - this is what works for me, if it doesn't work for you, sorry honey boo boo. See ya.

- 1 Double cleanse. Bitches be like wtf?! It's basically cleansing your skin twice to ensure you have removed everything. I use a balm to begin then use a gel/cream cleanser secondly. This step is vital in preparing your skin for what's next
- 2 Tone. I never use acid toners. Shock horror. I find they irritate my skin and cause inflammation so i always use hydrating toners such as the @freshbeauty rose one.
- 3 Essence. @Caudalie essence is my go to. I pat this onto my skin once the toner has absorbed then whilst the essence is damp on my skin i go in with the next step.
- 4 Hyaluronic acid. I pat hyaluronic acid onto damp and allow to absorb. This gives me skin ultimate hydration. I'm loving @officialmedik8 & @goodmolecules ones.
- 5 Treat. Use a treatment serum. Depending on your concerns. I go in with a vitamin c/firming serum or a collagen serum to give me what my skin needs. @Drroebucks ningaloo is beautiful for this.
- 6 Moisturise. I use a rich cream as my skin drinks it up. The rose deep hydration one from @freshbeauty is divine. If your feeling spends then the @augustinusbader is the one.
- 7 Spf. Always spf. Whatever the weather. Your skin needs protection. Don't do all that and not wear spf. The biggest investment you can make is spf. I love @purito_official & @paulaschoice for these at the minute.

At night I add retinol (obvs @officialmedik8 crystal retinal) after my serums and let the retinol sink into my skin for 20 mins then layer moisturiser and add oils if you think necessary. Who else follows this regime?! What do you do differently?! I'm intrigued. Happy sunday! O

3 My Skinology

Online persona: My Skinology
Name: Elizabeth
Age: 32
Started sharing content: 2017
Based: London, UK
Average impression per post: 6,000+

Average comments: 160+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter: N/A
Instagram handle: @my.skinology
Camera: iPhone 8 Plus and Nikon
Contact: my.skinology@yahoo.com



Serum and red lipstick

Happy Sunday! How was your day so far lovelies? Mine was pretty great. Today I want to talk about two things: 1) this serum 2) red lipstick.

This is @diorskincare Oil-Serum, as you know I don't do oils, but this has the formula and consistency of a serum, absorbs completely into the skin, no oiliness at all, more like a serum, quite wet and I really like it. I will show you the formula in my stories. Is great for dehydrated skin and I love to use it on makeup days or as the last step in my skincare routine. Leaves my skin baby-soft and also great when paired with actives. Also how gorgeous is the packaging?

Onto the lipstick now, red lips are totally out of my comfort zone, can you believe I've never worn any? I was pushed by the hubs as he loves it on me. Really gorgeous formula, very pigmented, cream & non-drying. Saving it for special days. On my eyes and cheeks, I am wearing the Backstage palette in 002 for the eyes and 001 Glitz for the cheeks. Simple, yet chic. Will keep you posted on my progress with the serum. *gifted @diorbeautylovers

Glycolic Acid

What is your fave acid? Mine is Glycolic & my skin seems to react very well to products with a higher GA concentration. I was very intrigued by the @skinceuticals_uki Glyco 10 and I used it in several ways:

- few times a week paired with other products;
- on its own few times a week;

- every night for a month paired with a hydrating treatment (applied 1h after).

WHAT IS IT?

In simple English, it's an overnight night treatment at 10% pure Glycolic Acid conc designed to tackle texture, remove dead skin cells, renew and restore the skin condition. It's a thin cream, quite hydrating for a treatment and very potent. Tingles quite a bit, but I like that. Other stellar ingredients are Phytic Acid (great for acne & melasma), Salicylic Acid (brilliant for acne, pores) + a bunch of humectants. Very well formulated in my humble opinion.

MY EXPERIENCE:

I used a similar product at 12% Glycolic (6 yrs +), therefore I knew my skin would love it. However, what surprised me the most was when I used the product on its own. I would wake up with soft, nourished and radiant skin. Never dry, compromised or sensitive which is common with strong products used on their own. I would say I have seen rapid and superb results when I used this every single night, paired with a great #amroutine my skin looked bomb. For some interesting reason, my spots fade much quicker when I used this treatment in comparison with other actives/treatments. If your skin tolerates Glycolic Acid, I highly recommend this overnight treatment. I know it's pricey, but it's worth it. My bottle (if used every night) would probably last 4 months as you only need a bit. It was kindly gifted, however I would purchase this with my own money when on offer. I recently opened the SkinCeuticals Blemish Treatment and I am so curious to see how they compare will keep you posted. So far, I love the texture and seems potent too. Have you tried anything by @skinceuticals_uki ? What's on your list?



Beauty addiction

Do you have a beauty or skincare addiction? Please share as I have a confession to make. I am a lipstick & shoeaholic. In particular a nude lipsticks fan as for shoes is ankle boots. However, I am a smart-addict now. I go through my lists, cut a lot of items and only buy something I don't have already (not sure of that's a good thing) or something that would complement some outfits better than what I already have. Also, throwback to when this stunning @ctilburymakeup In Love with Olivia was brand new. A fabulous shade, if you like Pillow Talk and the colour suits you, you'd love this. From the kissing formula range, this is has a satin finish, not as matte as PT. It was my summer obsession. Now, it's your turn to confess O

“ ”

I am a lipstick & shoeaholic

4 Style By MK Design

Online persona: Style By MK Design
Name: Gosia
Age: 34
Started sharing content (year): 2018
Based (area): South East England
Average impressions per post: 1,700+

Average comments per post: 100+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @stylebymkdesign
Camera: Olympus Pen E-PL8
Contact: stylebymkdesign@gmail.com



#friyayfaves

It's #friyayfaves time inspired by @the__glow__girl

A few makeup faves

- Laura Mercier Translucent Loose Setting Powder
- Zoeva Cosmetics makeup brushes : 123/cream cheek & 105/luxe highlight

What are your favourite makeup brushes brands?



Glamglow

@glamglow Super Cleanse Triple Charcoal Cream-to-Foam Cleanser, a clarifying face wash that utilises a Triple Charcoal Complex to refine and refresh the complexion.

It contains a powerful blend of three charcoals to detoxify and absorb impurities from skin, plus TEAOX1® Eucalyptus Leaf and Mediterranean clay. Delivering a mattifying effect, the purifying, oil-fighting cleanser will decongest pores of clogging debris to leave skin feeling soothed and revitalised.



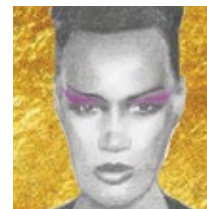
My Sunday essentials

I have been loving @viicodebeauty eye masks. This gel-like texture is so cool and refreshing to feel under my eyes. VIIcode eye masks - PR

5 A Brunette Edit

Blog Name: A Brunette Edit
Blogger: Jess Marriner
Age: 37
Started blogging: 2018
Based (area): Bristol
Monthly views: 750+

All time views: 18,000+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @abrunetteedit
Instagram handle: @abrunetteedit
Camera: Olympus pen e-pl9
Contact: a.brunette.edit@hotmail.com



WHAT BEAUTY MEANS TO ME...

➤ Coffee with a lovely friend who is going through a bit of a tough time recently reminded me of an occasion at work, a few years ago where, as a team building exercise, we were asked to bring in something that 'represented us'. It's probably of little surprise that I totally forgot to find anything and at the last minute found myself scraggling around in my bag... what was recovered (amongst Freya's emergency snacks and socks) was more lipsticks than was strictly acceptable for one bag, including my most coveted Chanel Rouge Coco Lipstick in Jersey Rose.

That lipstick had been purchased at a point in my life where things weren't exactly going to plan (the saying – if things aren't working out shout 'plot change' and carry on – was particularly relevant) and some may have said financially spending £30 on a Chanel lipstick wasn't the most savvy of decisions. I, on the other hand, saw it as a £30 investment in myself and walked out of Boots feeling like I had just purchased the world. Because that lipstick was more than an item of make up to me, it marked the start of reinvesting in myself.

My love affair with all things beauty related had always been simmering in the background, stemming originally from the Tinkerbell peel off nail varnish and Body Shop bath pearls I found buried in my stocking one Christmas, but the usual distractions of life, work, being a mum, prevented me from ever dedicating much time or thought to it. The silver lining to finding myself in the world of co-parenting and negotiated weekends, was the gift of time. I rediscovered the joy of painting my nails – a pop of cheering colour when things were a little grey, and activities that had fallen by the wayside, such as having long drawn out baths, suddenly got bumped a few rungs up the priorities list. I discovered the inexpensive but insanely good body and bath range Soaper Duper whose body washes produced THE best bubble baths. Born from the same founder as Bliss, their range of body butters, scrubs and hand care are divine, inexpensive and rival any bath & body products from higher end ranges that I've tried – many hours were spent submerged and no one judged my over enthusiastic measures poured in!

Other beauty items which resurfaced included face masks; Oskia's renaissance mask being the splurge option, worth every penny for its 'peel in a balm' brightening and smoothing abilities and signature rose scent. The less spendy but still effective version, Superdrug's Vitamin C mask, delivers similar results with a touch less 'luxe'. I broke out candles which I had been saving for 'another day',

the type of candle that feels like you are burning money but smells heavenly and lifts even the foulest of moods. I can still remember the scent emerging from the Diptique Bais candle as I lay in the bath, having rescued it from its box where it had sat for several months unburnt – word of advice, that 'another day' is now! If you don't fancy sending quite so much money up in smoke then Beauty Pie's Pomegranate and Baies Rose offering is a sultry fruity concoction that throws up a decent amount of scent and burns cleanly. Call it clichéd but a piping hot bath, face mask, candle and an ice cold Baileys (my bath drink of choice – don't judge!) rivals any fancy spa experience in my opinion!

And that lipstick. It became part of my routine, a nod to the start of the day. Not the brightest of shades, more a 'my lips but better' colour, those moments where facing the world felt that little bit harder, the Coco Rouge was a welcome boost of get up and show up. I defy anyone to invest the equivalent of a Friday night takeaway in a luxe treat for yourself, and not feel the benefits of a little self-therapy. Spending time on yourself, feeling a little more confident, reinventing your look, faking it on days where you'd much rather crawl back into bed – these are the times when beauty can play such a crucial role.

There are certain times in our lives where there is nothing we can do about the walls tumbling down around us, but we sure as hell can look good whilst they do! Jess X O

Photo by Kayeighgrestyphotography

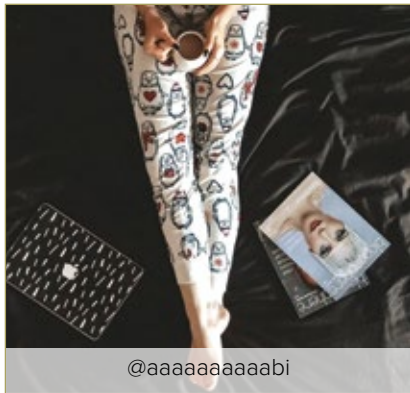


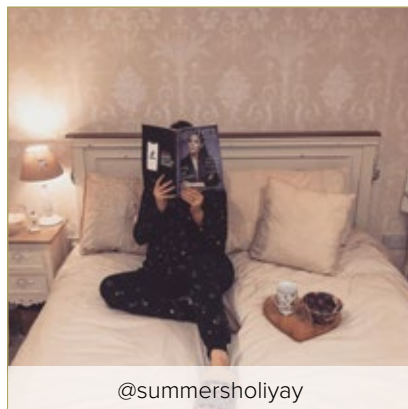
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There are certain times in our lives where there is nothing we can do about the walls tumbling down around us, but we sure as hell can look good whilst they do

#blogospheremagazine on instagram

We love being tagged in Instagram posts. Here, we share some of our favourites...





Chessie King

Photography: Jade Keshia Gordon
Beauty: Kate Pope





Chessie King is luminous - she glows, and you glow after speaking to her. Today, on our set, her energy is contagious. The day is a blur of backdrop and outfit changes - all bright and colourful. Although we're still in the confines of winter, Chessie has somehow managed to create a cocoon of summer in our studio.

After snapping our final shot, we sat down with the 26-year-old body confident influencer to ask her some of our burning questions.

How did you use Instagram before you started posting body confident content?

I used Instagram almost just to show what I was doing with presenting, so I showed little clips of me interviewing people. I also created a thing called Secrets, which was a little roundup of my favourite places around the world. So I would have London Secrets, California Secrets, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Copenhagen – and they would be 15-second videos, because that's the maximum that Instagram would do, and it would basically show the atmosphere, the food, and the restaurant.

Then I would do a little breakdown of the price, I would show the price with the moneybag emojis – one being

quite cheap, five being expensive. Then the healthy options, so I was showing healthy places to eat with your family and friends, so I would rate that out of bananas, so one to five bananas. Then I'd say what it was best for, if it was best for a date scenario or to take your family or to go with your sister or work colleague.

Then I was also posting a lot of fitness content, a lot of workouts and yeah – hopefully they were easy to follow videos, but it kind of went through different stages and evolved into body confident posts.

When did you start posting more body confident content online and what encouraged you to do it? Did it feel like a big step? What was the initial reaction like when you began posting?

It was around three and a half years ago that I posted my first transparent photo. It was my jeans just undone and my belly hanging out after a big Sunday roast. I think I'd had a really intense week of just negative body image thoughts, and I feel I'd got to the point where I couldn't relate to anyone online, just because it was a sea of perfection, and I was adding to that perfection because that's all I really knew. That's what Instagram was – it just became the

norm to edit your body, and everyone was doing it, so I thought that was what Instagram was.

It was a giant step because it felt like I just wanted to change my reason for using the platform, and I wanted to use my voice to speak out and be like 'look this is what I look like, I know that you'll probably be feeling like this at some point during your lives too'. If we can start sharing real life, and start sharing normality, and being like 'look, I look like this, you probably look like this, your sister, your colleague, your boss – everyone looks like this when they sit down, or everyone's got little lines on their bottom or on their, I call it my second bum'.

The initial reaction was really positive, it was almost like a sigh of relief and everyone going 'finally someone is actually just being real and being what everyone else needs to see' – it's that relatability. It was a big change, a big shift, and that was when everything started changing.

What do you think have been the biggest impacts from the body confident movement so far?

There are some incredible people on Instagram who are spreading body confidence and just really supporting those that need it. I just say, I wish we >



If we were all the same, it would just be extremely boring

could bottle up a little bit of them and prescribe it as medicine to those that need a little bit more self-belief, self-appreciation, self-celebration.

I think the biggest impact of the body confident movement is the appreciation of what our bodies do for us, and the realisation that we are all struggling with body confidence, we are all struggling with body issues and we really should just step outside of what our bodies look like and appreciate them for what they are doing, like the functions.

I try and think of it like a biology lesson – we're stripping back the first layer of ourselves, so what's beneath our skin and be like, wow my brain is thinking, filtering through all the knowledge that I give it, it's also thinking for me, it's creating ideas constantly, and then going down to my heart, and my heart is beating for me and as someone with heart problems and having a heart operation in a few weeks

I think it's so important for me. It's made me realise how incredible the centre of our bodies is, and that it's just keeping us alive without us having to tell it what to do.

I think beneath our stomach, everyone's so obsessed with stomachs, this ideal, this perfection that none of us can live up to, and then just going beneath the stomach like wow the food I'm eating it's digesting. There's so much activity going on that we don't appreciate. Our legs, if we're able-bodied, are giving us the ability to walk around. I work with a lot of Paralympians, and I think it's just incredible when working with them, their priority list – like with us we're lucky to think about how our hair looks in the first few hours of the day, but for them the top of their priority list is getting out of bed into the chair to go to the toilet, just the logistics of doing that. It put things into perspective, and

going – why are we worrying about our hair and our makeup and how we look, when there are so many things that come before that for those that don't have the freedom that we do to be able to walk. I think it's created such an incredible community that was needed.

I think the diversity and the multi-dimensional complexities of this movement just open our eyes to other people's lives and let us appreciate the variety in how exciting it is. If we were all the same, it would just be extremely boring. I love the quote: 'difference is the only thing we have in common'. I think our differences and our individualities are so unique to us and they identify us, but as a community when we all come together, I think we have so much power as an army of support, and an army of uncensored posts, and this messaging that everyone needs in their lives, men, women, non-binary, whatever backgrounds you've >





come from, whatever story you've got behind you, whatever age, size, shape, everything.

Do you still have days where you struggle with self-confidence? Do you feel a responsibility or a pressure to constantly feel confident?

I used to feel the pressure to constantly feel confident, I used to feel that pressure because it was quite overwhelming having an audience to speak to. But actually I see it as the polar opposite, I see sharing the days where I don't feel so confident, which is very rare now because I've just realised that there are so many things in life that are more important than my body. The days where I'm like, ugh I couldn't fit into my jeans, didn't have any outfits to wear – the days where I share that, I feel like it just helps me so much because I realise I am not alone and there are so many people going through it.

How do you use sponsorships with big brands to further communicate your message of self-love? How do you balance promoting self-love and also promoting products through sponsorships?

I feel a responsibility to look after my followers and to put the right things out there, which is why I'm so selective with who I work with on sponsorships or AD-basis, but I don't feel like I'm weighed down by this constant feeling where I have to post everyday, and keep up this false sense of – because I am just me, offline, online, personally, privately, and publicly. I feel like I've taken away that pressure because I don't care how I'm perceived because I'm just like, well it's me. For some people, my posts might not resonate with them and that's absolutely fine. That's why there are so many people to follow on Instagram, because you find people that you really really want to listen to and there are some that maybe you

don't connect with, but that's the joy of life and of humankind. That's why there are so many different messages out there, whether it's body confidence or veganism or sustainability or a political point of view, I just think you learn so much from other people's views and even if you don't agree with them it's where you become a more complex character.

How important do you think education around invisible illnesses is? What can be done to help?

Invisible illnesses are something that I talk about. Matthew my fiancé is type 1 diabetic, and has been since he was 14. I'm deaf and I have tinnitus with a heart condition. I think there's so much stigma behind hearing aids, and I try and shatter those stereotypes and be like, 'hey, I was 23 when I lost my hearing and I got a hearing aid'. It's made me a more compassionate and empathetic person because I realise that so many >

people are going through all these things behind the layer of what we can see.

If you delve deep inside them then there is so much to be told that you can't see on the surface, and that's made me a kinder person, because I won't react to someone pushing me in the street, or maybe barging past me to get on the tube. I just think, maybe they're visually impaired, or anxious and they need to get somewhere – all of this just gives me that real understanding of other people, and in turn has made me a nicer person.

How does your work with body confidence translate into the offline world?

For me the offline world is incredibly powerful, and I feel like it's something that we're all deficient in, that face-to-face communication and that real human connection. I feel like it's becoming less and less as these social media platforms become bigger and bigger.

Going into schools and universities and speaking to, not just students, but their parents and their teachers,

and just helping to support all three communities, so the parents, teachers and students who really need the same messaging, but maybe a different way of relaying it. I think for me it's using what I put online, but then just getting people all in a room, at events or when I go into these schools, to just show them that there is so much more to life than social media.

There are so many more interesting things about you as a human than just how you look and the people that love you, the people that are around you every single day, your solar support system, they're never going to remember you for how you looked. They're not going to be at your funeral and think 'ugh, I loved her abs and I loved the way her legs were so toned and she had that thigh gap'. They're going to remember you for all the memories that you had with them, all the time that you gave them, the way you made them feel. I just think we forget about that. We all hope not to look back when we're 80 and think 'oh god I spent so much of my time

perfecting my face or my body, what for?'

Yes, for yourself, and if that helps you feel confident then incredible, but looking back at albums on your phone, or whatever we'll have in however many years. Just living for more than how you look, just finding that inner cheerleader and being like 'no, you know what, you've got this, you've got so much more value and so much more worth than just your aesthetics'.

Something that I talk about a lot, I've written a book called 'Be Your Own Best Friend', and that is my main messaging because if you can speak to yourself as if you were speaking to your best friend, if you can speak to your body like you would your best friend, then that is so powerful. Also I think the advice that you give your best friend, whether that's work, boys, life advice, then you take that advice and think – how would I say that to my best friend Tess, or my best friend Sammy? What advice would I give her if she said 'oh my god I just hate my tummy' or 'I just hate my legs'? What would you say to them? Take that advice and yeah, be your own best friend. ○

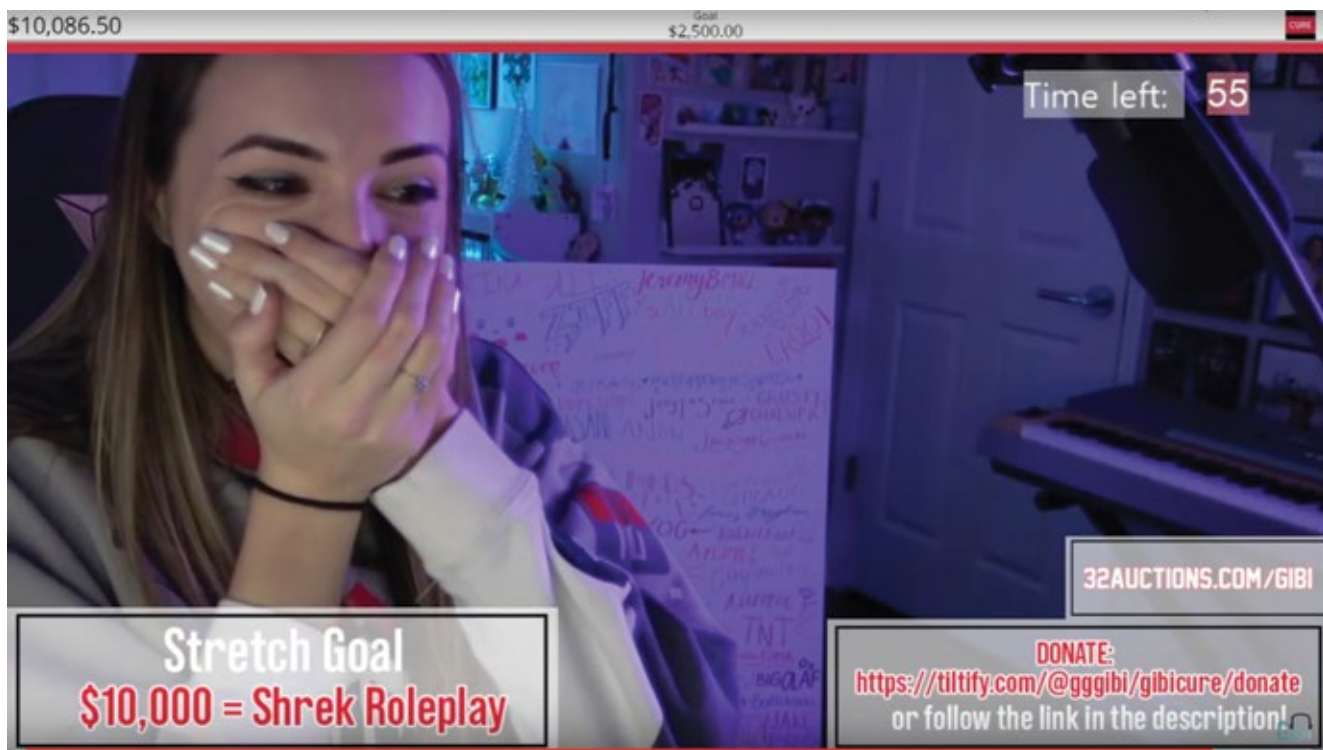


There is so much more to life than social media



Charities: using influencers as a force for good

Charlotte West discusses the success of recent charity campaigns, and how they can improve the reputation of influencers in the mainstream world



The image is a screenshot from a live-streamed charity auction. At the top left, the current amount raised is \$10,086.50, and the goal is \$2,500.00. A 'Time left: 55' timer is in the top right. The main video shows a woman with long brown hair covering her face with her hands, appearing emotional. Behind her is a whiteboard filled with handwritten names and donation amounts. In the bottom left, a banner reads 'Stretch Goal \$10,000 = Shrek Roleplay'. In the bottom right, a banner says 'DONATE: https://tiltify.com/@gggibi/gibicure/donate or follow the link in the description!'. A URL '32AUCTIONS.COM/GIBI' is also visible in the bottom right area.



By working with charities influencers have the opportunity to prove that they are more than an Instagram #AD

We are all aware that big brands have been turning to influencers to promote their products throughout the latter half of the decade. The deep connection that creators have with their audiences is a marketing dream, as their ‘influence’ really does mean they are capable of encouraging their followers to jump onto the latest trend.

It is not only brands that have recognised this new marketing strategy, but charities too have begun noticing the success of influencer-driven campaigns and have started to utilise it for fundraising. It is heartwarming to see, as the mainstream media often portrays the influencer industry as a microcosm that perpetuates a narcissistic and greedy lifestyle; however, working with charities gives these big influencers an opportunity to be humanised and remind us that they have connections to these important causes too.

Most recently a big charity that has taken to the online space to raise money is Great Ormond Street Hospital. The children’s charity plans to host a gaming live stream during the first week of April to raise money, and they’re encouraging gamers of all varieties to

get involved with the campaign. Even their head office is participating by hosting their very own 48-hour long live streams, which will feature celebrity guests and giveaways. But what is it about live stream that seem to attract fundraisers?

From as early as 2007, live streams were being used as a tool to raise money. John and Hank Green from the Vlog Brothers set up their first annual Project for Awesome fundraiser. The campaign encourages all creators in the community, not just those with a large following, to get involved, adding to its widespread appeal. Anyone can make a YouTube video explaining why their chosen charity should receive a percentage of the total money raised, and even viewers can feel a part of the action by voting for their favourite videos and donating money to the cause. The fact that this project spans across the entire YouTube community makes it an incredibly inclusive space, allowing everyone to feel like they’re making a difference, which is likely why it has sustained its popularity over the past 12 years. In particular, it seems to be the 48-hour live stream that the Green brothers host that really emphasises that community feeling.

Throughout the stream they invite guest creators to join them, hold giveaways and celebrate milestones, allowing everyone watching to feel apart of the success of the fundraiser.

Perhaps this is why live streams have soared in popularity since the set up of Twitch in 2011; there is no better way of feeling closer to your favourite creator than by watching them in real time. Twitch in particular has become a popular site for fundraising, and this is evident following the introduction of Tiltify in April 2019, which places a donate button directly onto the Twitch site, allowing users with ApplePay or PayPal to donate without having to be redirected to a new page.

As gamers are the largest users of Twitch, it is unsurprising that their fundraisers can raise staggering amounts of money. For example, in January 2019, streamer H.Bomberguy decided to play the entirety of DonkeyKong64 from start to finish, in order to raise money for the UK trans organisation Mermaids. The stream ended up lasting 57 hours, but was clearly worth the effort as he raised an astounding \$340,000.

Beyond gaming, the concept of watching live money being raised is >



@saffronbarker

always an exciting process and often encourages mass donations. Gibi ASMR completed a 12-hour marathon live stream on YouTube to raise money for Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy in early December last year. By the end of the stream she had raised over \$15,000, causing the YouTuber to break down in tears. Her reaction proved to all those watching that she was genuinely overwhelmed by her viewers' generosity, which only caused more people to donate, as she raised around \$2,500, her target for the entire stream, within the final ten minutes.

Outside the realms of marathon streaming, charities have collaborated with influencers in other ways to fundraise. Last year Saffron Barker completed the London Marathon on behalf of Dementia Revolution. Although she initially turned down the offer due to her belief that she was incapable of running that far, her personal trainer convinced her otherwise. As a result of this challenge, Barker opened up about her close connection to the charity, as her great granddad suffered from the disease. This shows how charity campaigns can encourage influencers to be vulnerable and share even more of their personal lives with their audience. With followers already being invested in the lives of their favourite creators, the use

of this emotional vulnerability makes the cause feel much closer to viewers, and thus they are more inclined to feel the desire to help. As a result, Barker raised over £11,000 through her fundraising page.

Another charity that frequently collaborates with influencers is Stand Up for Cancer. From getting influencers involved in special Great British Bake Off episodes to helping out on big projects, this charity understands the significance of content creators in our modern world. These larger scale projects encourage influencers to get creative with their fundraising ideas; for example, ClickForTaz raised money for the charity through creating a fake art gallery in London, displaying artwork created by her and her fellow creators. The video she made documenting the process currently has over 4.5 million views, and the online auction that she held following the release of the video selling the remaining paintings raised over £5,000.

These examples prove just how much money influencers can raise as a result of their close relationship with their audience; they can have a profound effect on charities by raising thousands of pounds in comparison to the average fundraiser. These staggeringly large sums of money can make such a

difference to their chosen cause and allow life-changing work to take place as a result.

So effective is the influence of these creators that the 15-year-old vlogger Nikki Lilly was able to set up her own charity with her family: Butterfly AVM. Due to the rarity of Nikki's Arteriovenous Malformation condition, the charity does vital work in raising awareness, as well as money that can be put towards the research needed to find a cure.

Nikki's incredible work has caused the mainstream media to pick up on her achievements, and helped to spread the message beyond the online space and to a wider audience, further showcasing the positive impact influencers can have.

Overall, there is a clear dichotomy between the perception of influencers as narcissistic and greedy, and this proof that their charity work can be a huge success.

Despite the current popularity of influencers, this constant need to legitimise their place within the entertainment space is still an on-going struggle. However, by working with charities influencers have the opportunity to prove that they are more than an Instagram #AD and can be part of a united force for doing good. ○

parenting



Edited by **Life According to MrsShilts**



Blog Name: Life According to MrsShilts

Blogger: Emma Shilton

Age: 37

Started blogging: 2008

Based (area): West Midlands

Monthly views: 13,000+

All time views: 1,780,000+

Blogging platform: WordPress

Twitter handle: @mrsshilts

Instagram handle: @mrsshilts

Camera: Sony G7X and iPhone 11Pro

Contact: Emma.Shilton@outlook.com

I'm a family lifestyle blogger from the West Midlands and I live at home with my two young boys Olly and Freddie, and my husband Greg. I'm a work-from-home-mum blogging 'full-time' around being a stay-at-home-mum with school runs and 3am wake ups!

I have been writing my blog, Life According to MrsShilts, for over eleven years and it is just that. There's a huge mix of content on my blog as it's documented my troubles with my health and infertility, through to pregnancy and into my boys' early years and beyond. Being a parent is the most wonderful thing but it's hard work too and I don't mind sharing my mix of emotions!

The blog shares snippets of everyday family life and also my personal weightloss journey back to a healthier me. I've lost a lot of confidence in the fog of everyday mumlife and I'd love to claim it back, because who knows where it could take me. So that's my mission this year, whilst enjoying the moments, milestones and smiles with my boys.

selected blogs

1

Dear Bear and Beany Laura's blog captures family life with her husband Andy and their two wonderful girls. With family adventures, milestones and memories, Laura's blog and Instagram never fail to make me smile and give us a glimpse into what life is like raising two young girls. Laura also has a particular eye for stylish home interiors and shares beautiful snaps of their family home. [p113](#)

2

Sorry about the mess is a family lifestyle blog documenting the lives of Chloe, her husband and their family of 3 boys. Chloe's blog and Instagram are a wonderful mixture of family travel, fashion and real family life. I have loved watching their family evolve into what it is today and seeing their family adventures on their holidays and at home in South London. A really interesting read and one that I have loved to spend time on. [p114](#)

3

Soph-obsessed is written by Sophie who lives in the North West with her husband and two young boys. Sophie writes that she is 'admittedly and unashamedly winging it at all times' and I absolutely adore her honest insight into parenting. Sophie is the kind of girl you'd love to live next door to and put the world to rights with. She's a delight to watch and follow. [p115](#)

4

The Fat Funny One is a glimpse into the life of Jess; a body confident mum of two (soon to be three) and wife to Trev, whose outlook on life is fun and inspiring. Jess isn't afraid to show the reality of mum life but does it with humour and everyday relatability. She's a delight to watch on Instastories and I'm looking forward to seeing Jess's family grow this year. [p116](#)

5

Unlikely Dad Tom is the mastermind behind *Unlikely Dad*; a glimpse into life as a dad via adoption with his husband Daniel. I've loved watching their family life evolve over the last few years whilst tackling all the usual parenting issues from potty training to starting school; their son Kai is a delight to see. I love to see Tom's perspective as a dad on social media and cannot wait to see what the future has in store for him and his family. [p117](#)

1 Dear Bear and Beany

Blog Name: Dear Bear and Beany
Blogger: Laura Smallwood
Age: 40
Started blogging: 2015
Based (area): Hampshire
Monthly views: 25,000+

All time views: 453,381+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @dearbearandbean
Instagram handle: @dearbearandbean
Camera: Olympus Pen E-PL8
Contact: Laura@dearbearandbeany.com



Why I Write...

➤ Blogging is my job, but do I talk about it in my real life? Do I tell people what I do? Or do I let them think that I spend my days at home, doing the housework etc. I'm definitely in the last camp! But why? Blogging isn't a widely known and respected career. It is seen as a hobby and I can kind of understand why people think this, because I started as a hobby for me and I had no idea when I started that you could make money from blogging. But you can and I do! I remember when I started to get contacted by brands, asking if they could send me their product in return for a blog review. One of my first reviews was for SockOns, which I already loved and used for the girls and so I said yes. I literally jumped up and down with excitement. Which makes me laugh now, especially when I think about the amount of time I spent on doing a review for a pair of SockOns, but it was all a learning curve.

As the years went by, I had to learn very quickly about running a business for myself. There is A LOT that goes into running your own blog and business. There is only me and no IT, finance or legal departments that I can contact and rely on when I need help. I've had to learn it all myself. It has been a big learning curve, but on the whole I have enjoyed learning. Apart from the legal side of things that blows my mind.

Blogging has become a huge part of not only my life, but my family's life too. We're all invested in it, and Andy and the girls are all really supportive of it. We're extremely lucky to have had some wonderful opportunities thanks for my blog and we're always very grateful for these. I talk to the girls about my blog all the time, especially Alice who understands it a lot more now. She knows what Mummy does and that her photos are used on it and that everyone can see them. At the moment she loves it, and feels proud that we get to show other children things. I'm sure there will come a time when she won't want to be involved and that's ok. I would immediately stop featuring her and Holly, as soon as they make that decision. So, if it's such a big part of our life, why don't I talk about it? I'm not a particularly confident person, I don't like the limelight on me. Which I'm sure surprises people, as I imagine people expect bloggers who share their life on the internet and on social media to be the opposite. And I'm sure some bloggers are all about look at me. But that's not my personality at all. In fact if I think too much about the amount of people that read my blog, or see me on social media, it makes me want to close it all down and hide in a hole!

When I started writing my blog, I didn't think anyone would read it. I wrote it for me. I was on maternity leave with Holly and I missed having something for



“ ”

When I started my blog, I didn't think anyone would read it

me, and I had a lot going on in my mind and it was a way for me to channel all my thoughts. I was later diagnosed with post natal depression, and blogging helped me through it. If I know that people in my real life read my blog, it makes me cringe, and I know that people do. But I push that to the back of mind. It's always odd when someone makes a comment about something and I think I don't remember talking about that to them, and then I think to myself 'oh I mentioned it on Instagram'. But I just let it go over my head. People seem to discover my blog by themselves and I am SO grateful that people do support me. Every single time someone likes one of posts, it always means so much to me. But yes, I still cringe if they talk to me about it in person.

Andy doesn't understand why I don't talk about it more. He is really proud of what I have achieved

and I know that he talks a lot about it to his work colleagues and friends. Which is lovely, but I can't bring myself to do it. When people ask me about it, I want to run away and I try and move the conversation on. Which is ridiculous really, because I'm sure they are only asking me about it because they are genuinely interested in it. I need to get braver.

One thing that I can tell you is that I still absolutely love writing my blog. I love that it is all mine, and I can write what I choose to write. I love the feeling it gives me when I finish a post. I love when a post resonates with someone and they reach out to tell me. I'm sure that it won't stay my job forever, but what I am sure of, is that I will always write my blog. I can't see a time when I won't blog... ○

2 Sorry About The Mess

Blog Name: Sorry About The Mess
Blogger: Chloe Bridge
Age: 35
Started blogging: 2011
Based (area): London
Monthly views: 11,000+

All time views: 700,000+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @mostlychloe
Instagram handle: @mostlychloe
Camera: iPhone and Panasonic GX7
Contact: chloebridge@gmail.com



Why you should never ask me if I'm going to "try for a girl!"

➤ "Are you going to try for a girl?!. Jeez. That's an interesting question to come out with oh so casually. Do you assume I've never thought about it? That's sweet. Hmmm. What can I tell you? Let's see...

Shall I start with the notion that you can't try for a girl, you can only try for a child? Shall I tell you that I have, in fact, tried for a girl before. Several times, in fact. I got boys. It's cool. I love them fiercely.

Do you want to know about my hormonal condition that makes it more likely that I will conceive boys? You thought it was all down to the man, didn't you? Because you've never had to delve into the science and the research like I have.

Please, do go ahead and tell me the theories about timing, about diet, about intricacies to do with the act of conception. You clearly think I must not know these theories, because I have all boys don't I, so I can't possibly have known. Perhaps you want me to reciprocate and ask you in return which position you used to conceive your children, what you eat, and how frequently your other half ejaculates.

Do you want to know just how realistic the idea of a daughter has been to me at times? That we've had names picked? That I imagined all my boys were girls at one point or another during my pregnancies with them? Do you want me to tell you that gender is a construct? That I don't even like pink or frills and don't care one bit about doing girly activities with my perceived construct of a daughter. Do you want me to tell you that despite this, I still do have silly preconceived notions of how awesome I'd be as a mum to a teenage girl. That I just wanted to know her, whoever she is and turned out to be.

Do you really want to know why we "keep making boys"? Or are you just trying to remind me of my miscarriages. Of the fact that we have as many living children as we do pregnancies that didn't make it. Do you want to hear about the restrictive and sometimes crazy diets I've put myself on. For months at a time, in the hopes of giving myself the best chances of conceiving a girl?

Or how about the hormonal pills I take to keep me fertile? Because I'm not, without them. I can't conceive with a click of a finger. It takes time, and preparation, and the right hormonal balance.

Do you want to know more about my medication? About how it sometimes has me up sick in the night? Do you want to know that I've done these things long term, even though my husband has categorically said no more children, just in case he



changes his mind one day? Do you want to know about the world of extreme gender 'swaying' tactics?

I bet you thought it was simple, didn't you? You didn't have to try this hard. You know what's especially fun? When people tell me that little quote about how a son is yours until he finds a wife but a daughter is yours for life. Cute. It's also brilliant when strangers stop me in a supermarket to tell me I MUST have a daughter because they are the ones who will look after me in my old age. Not my good for nothing sons. Not them.

Do you want to know how volatile a subject this has proved between me and my partner? Bonus points if you ask me this question in his presence, by the way. It's always fun to have to casually play down the very in depth, extremely personal, soul searching conversations (arguments) we've had on this very subject. The at times near-desperate pleading to see the other person's side. The literal years that we've been having this to and fro.

If you have the time, maybe I'll tell you about the guilt I've felt for pushing him, and the guilt he's felt for not giving in to what I want, for sticking to his guns for what he feels is the best thing for our family as a whole. What's one more child, eh? It's no big deal. You thought we were mad when we announced we were having a third, but of course you are totally on board with us trying and trying and trying until we get a girl. That makes total sense.

Do you want a breakdown of our financial situation? Could you afford four kids? Would you like to donate to our crowdfunding page? We'd have enough money if I got a donation for every comment I've ever received.

Do you have any advice for me if number four turns out to be a boy? What's the bet that you'll be the person making the disappointed comments that I've found so damaging and hard to deal with in the

past? You want me to go through that again like it's water off a duck's back? Perhaps you want the gory details of the gender disappointment if the gamble doesn't go the way you'd hope? Would you understand then, that it's not a frivolous game to play?

Do you want some admission that I'm not happy with my lot? Don't for one second think that us parents of all boys can't immediately read between the lines of this question to the truth of the matter: You think our family set up isn't perfect. Go on, ask me this question in the presence of my sons for good measure. Put the thought into their beautiful little heads that perhaps I didn't want them, or that I'm unhappy that they are boys and not girls (they've actually asked me this, you know). That's always really helpful, no really, thank you so much for that.

Do you want to know that it's been a long, LONG old process to get to a place where I'm genuinely happy with the idea of not having any more children.

It's taken literal years for me to stop planning and pondering, and adopt a "What will be will be" thinking. And sometimes even now, my emotions on the subject change direction as abruptly as a strong wind. It knocks me down out of the blue, and can take weeks to get back up again.

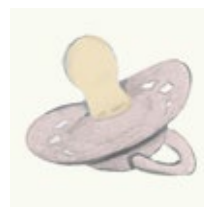
So go on, ask me that question some more, so I have to confront those conflicting feelings yet again. When you see my troop of boys, tell me jokingly not to look so sad, tell me teasingly that I could have tried harder for a girl. Ask me that leading question: "No more, really? It would be nice to have a girl though wouldn't it?"

Ask me in front of my wonderful children. Always in front of my children. Ask me for the rest of my life. Because I know you will. And here is my question for you: Why is what I DON'T have, more interesting than what I DO have? ○

3 Soph-obsessed

Blog Name: Soph-obsessed
Blogger: Sophie Gillum-Webb
Age: 31
Started blogging: January 2016
Based (area): Cheshire
Monthly views: 40,000+

All time views: 900,000+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @sophobsessed
Instagram handle: @sophobsessed
Camera: Canon 700D
Contact: sophie@sophobsessed.com



HAVING A LARGE AGE GAP BETWEEN CHILDREN

➤ When it came to deciding if we were going to expand our family, it took a lot of deliberating. It's not that we ever planned on stopping at just one but life kind of took over and before we knew it whole years had passed and it just never felt like it was the right time. Is there ever a right time?

When Is The Right Time?

The trouble is by the time we felt ready, our family of three had the perfect dynamic, and it was questionable if disrupting that would be a positive thing. Having another baby is one of those decisions you make in life that you have to commit to. It isn't something you can waver on. You don't get the opportunity to dip your toe and retreat if it doesn't work out as you planned. It's also one of those changes that come with no guarantees, and there really is no knowing how things will turn out. It was this element of complete surprise that made me anxious.

On the one hand, I wanted to grow our family more than anything, and on the flip, I was scared of the change. I'm the kind of person that doesn't welcome change. I appreciate that in life, things must change to blossom and grow. It doesn't mean I have to like it though. I am far more comfortable in a situation I know isn't the best than to risk the change to make things better. Having a baby would be a change, and I was worried about the age gap.

Almost everyone I knew that had more than one child had done so in short succession. Some had waited mere months while others only short years. Henry was almost six when we decided to try for another baby, and I wondered if the age gap was going to be too big. People often warned me that I was leaving things too late, and I let these worries cloud my mind somewhat. When we got the joyful news that we were pregnant, I was both ecstatic with joy and riddled with anxiety. I worried tirelessly that I had made the wrong decision.

Telling Henry

We hadn't told Henry that we were going to try for another baby. Pregnancy isn't a guarantee, and I had no idea if we would even be able to conceive, so it felt unnecessary to burden him with that. Once pregnant, we kept the news a secret until we were at 12 weeks and had our scan. In some ways, I am superstitious, but mostly, I was just terrified, and I wanted complete certainty before we broke the news to anyone – especially Henry. We told him when he came home from school on the day of our scan, and as he gripped that scan photograph, I could see the



excitement beaming on his face. He was thrilled that he was going to become a big brother. Initially, it felt like a honeymoon period. Of course, the idea of a brother or sister sounds fun at first, but when the reality kicked in that was sure to change. Henry spent the remainder of the pregnancy planning out his future as a brother, and although the two of them had never met the love he had for his unborn brother was evident.

Hugo's Arrival

Hugo's birth wasn't quite the hypnobirthing experience I had envisioned, and I spent the majority of labour in the waiting room of triage. The midwives were convinced he wasn't coming and disputed whether I was actually even in labour!!! Eventually, I convinced them to take me to a room, and it's a good job because six minutes later, I was holding a newly birthed Hugo!

In the morning, Ollie left the hospital and went to collect Henry. For an hour, it was just Hugo and me, and as I looked down at this new life, I knew that our lives were about to change forever. When Henry walked in, it was probably the happiest moment of my life. It was the first time all of the people that meant

“ ”

The honeymoon period never ended

the most to me were in the same room. Henry looked past me almost immediately his eyes searching the room for his new brother, and as I stepped aside revealing the basinet where Hugo was wrapped up in a tight cocoon, I could see the love between both boys and my heart was fit to burst.

From that moment, Henry has become Hugo's protector he dotes on and adores him every second of every day. He is a considerable help watching over him, entertaining him and generally just loving every bone in his body. The honeymoon period never ended, and the age gap I was so worried about was never a problem. I think that there are positives to every sized gap for every different family and what works for one might not work for another. There is one thing for sure I couldn't imagine a different age gap between the two of them now! ○

4 The Fat Funny One

Online persona: The Fat Funny One

Name: Jessica Jones

Age: 30

Started sharing content: 2014

Based (area): Bedfordshire/London

Average impressions per post: 25,000+

Average comments per post: 75+

Preferred platform: Instagram

Twitter handle: @thefatfunnyone

Instagram handle: @thefatfunnyone

Camera: Canon G7 Mark 2

Contact: thefatfunnyone.jj@gmail.com



Last night I spent the evening binge watching travelling families on YouTube then woke up this morning wanting to sell the house and book flights please tell me I'm not the only one?

You all know I'm obsessed with travelling and I adore being able to share those experiences with the kids. They learn and grow so much every time we take a trip we try and visit museums, learn about the history or local culture (before and whilst there), we try local cuisines and really try and make some part of every trip educational and a learning experience for the girls - Obvs we hang out at the beach or the pool A LOT too!



Yesterday we had some serious fun at @madeformums and we got an opportunity to record some podcasts (we all know I love a podcast) and on one of them I spilt some tea and made a statement that actually made me feel a bit shocked at myself as soon as I said it.

'I could never be a stay at home parent' .

Now before anyone kicks off (Obvs someone will it's the nature of the gram) but I said it because it's true. For me, the job (and it is a hard core job) of a stay at home parents requires levels of patience, resilience and strength I'm not sure I have.



Isabella decided the other day she wanted to kinda of sing/shout/talk to the baby, it was one of those moments you wish you could bottle up and have over and over again, listening to her little voice not really saying proper words but just stroking my belly and mumbling in her toddler speak...

I grabbed my phone and took a quick pic (didn't want to risk videoing and her stopping, hence her closed eyes lol as I snapped it and put my phone back down) and about 0.5 seconds after I took it... well, you see where her finger is? She rammed it full throttle into my belly button and when I told her it hurt and she couldn't do it again she went absolutely bat shit and screamed for the next 20 minutes and threw herself in the floor along with the snacks and her sippy cup.

There is always a story behind every pic O

5 UNLIKELY DAD

Online persona: UNLIKELY DAD

Name: Tom Cox

Age: 35

Started sharing content: 2017

Based (area): Berkshire

Average impressions per post: 30,000+

Average comments per post: 200+

Preferred platform: Instagram

Twitter handle: @unlikelydad

Instagram handle: @unlikelydad

Camera: iPhoneX

Contact: thommc Cox@gmail.com



Is 'Felt cute, might delete later' still a thing? Because I felt cute but might delete later



We had parents evening tonight. I just love him so much and am so proud of him. The silly little thing



So it seems some of you think we look alike? Literally the best thing anyone could ever say to me. Kai has the first of his new swimming classes this morning! Praying they serve good coffee and snacks ☺



blogosphere

subscription

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photography



Edited by **JKG Photography**



Blog Name: JKG Photography
Blogger: Jade Keshia Gordon
Age: 26
Started blogging: 2011
Based (area): London and Kent
Monthly views: N/A
All time views: N/A
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @jkgphotography
Instagram handle: @jkgphotography
Camera: 5D Mark iii
Contact: info@jkgphotography.co.uk

I'm Jade and I'm a 26-year-old fashion, beauty and influencer photographer from London. I first picked up my camera in 2010 when I was 17 years old, by mid 2011, I had already purchased my domain name and made my first website. Fast forward to 2015, I made the conscious decision to leave university and take on photography full time. This was a challenge that I rose to, in November 2015 I started working with Grace Victory - plus-size blogger and content creator. This definitely allowed me to work with many others within the plus size industry, also branching out and working with other bloggers/influencers. I have since worked with a vast variety of models, influencers and brands like Nike, Lauren Pope, Ebay, M&S to name a few. Consistency has always been something that I've preached in a world where one day you will no longer be the newbie in your field. I knew that I had to keep shooting no matter what. Being a fashion and beauty photographer, I have had the privilege of being published in numerous print and online magazines, this helped me to grow as a photographer. Now, I also teach masterclasses under the sub brand 'JKG Masterclass' going into schools, teaching 1-2-1's and group quarterly masterclasses.

selected blogs

1

JKG Photography (editor's photograph) This image was taken in a The Lounge Studio back in November; I do love studio images - you get to really play around with the lighting. This particular shoot was for a nail artist Phoenix Nails, I contacted her to create some unique imagery of the nails that she creates on a day to day basis. For the model we decided to go for a long statement nail, and series of different make up changes created by Monique Monroe. I think I chose this image in particular for the simple fact it was shot with one light, that had a beauty dish connected to it. I'm always in awe with the kind of images that can be created with just one light. [p121](#)

2

Blue Spit Shingi and I met through a mutual friend. Over the years she has thrived off making sure that the work that she puts out is inclusive to all. Especially working with people of colour, trying to enrich the industry with her captivating imagery. She's also shot THREE puma campaigns all while being in her final year of university. When I look at her work I always feel so relaxed and at ease, for multiple images to be able to make you feel like you are at one with the image is amazing. I know 2020 is going to be a great year for Shingi so do check her out. [p122](#)

3

Moeez I first met Moeez at an event for an app called Comb, which he co-founded. We exchanged social handles that day. Since then I have seen him grow into one of the best street style photographers I have seen. From London to Paris, his ability to capture each event so differently with class is uncanny. From his depth of field to the relationship he has with his images you can tell that he takes pride in the work that he creates, every image feels like a new story is to be told. [p123](#)

4

Cass Michael Photography The beauty and swimwear photographer that you should know about. Every campaign that Cass has worked on has always been to the highest of standard, from Smashbox to her most recent work with Nubian. The way she captures different skin tones is such a blessing because it can be very challenging and Cass gets it every time. She is definitely one of my go to photographers when I need beauty inspiration. Oh did I mention she's INTERNATIONAL, regularly travelling to Australia and USA. [p124](#)

5

Sean Whitty I came across Sean's work a few years ago he had taken some beauty images for a client I had also worked with. When I went onto his page I literally liked everything there, I was in awe of his attention to detail while shooting beauty. Especially during post, you can tell the he takes time to refine the images that he has created. Being a great photographer is one thing but being able to enhance your work in post is magical. [p125](#)

1 JKG Photography

(editor's photograph)



Title: 50 Shades Of Blue
Where the photo was taken: The Lounge Studio
Time the photo was taken: 6pm
Camera used: Canon 5D Mark iv

2 Blue Spit



Title: Ari in LA.
Where was the photo taken: Koreatown, Los Angeles.
Time the photo was taken: October 2016
Camera used: Pentax K1000, Kodak Potra 400 film.

3

Moeez



Title: Caroline Vreeland being Caroline Vreeland, dramatic and fabulous no matter what
Where the photo was taken: Paris Fashion Week, September 2019
Time the photo was taken: 4 or 5pm, after the Ralph & Russo show
Camera used: Canon 1DX Mark I, 70-200mm 2.8 lens

4 Cass Michael Photography



Title: Elinor

Where the photo was taken: Smashbox Studios, London

Time the photo was taken: N/A

Camera used: Canon 5D MKIV

5 Sean Whitty

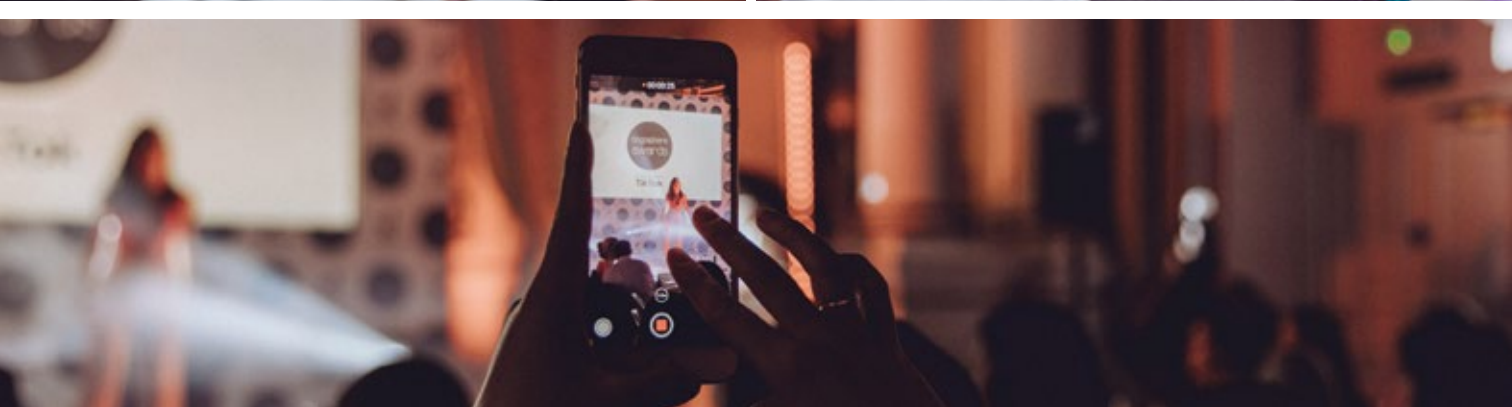


Title: Ayoola Bakare

Where the photo was taken: Studio (makeup by @charma.mua)

Time the photo was taken: August

Camera used: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV



#BlogosphereAwards2020

The Blogosphere Awards 2020 nominations have now closed...

And collectively more than 25,000 influencers and brand campaigns have been nominated!

Stay tuned on our social channels for updates about the ceremony and the shortlist

books



Edited by **frombeewithlove**



Blog Name: frombeewithlove
Blogger: Bronte
Age: 22
Started blogging: 2017
Based (area): Northampton, U.K.
Monthly views: 7,000+
All time views: 55,000+
Blogging platform: Squarespace
Twitter handle: @frombeewithlove
Instagram handle: @frombeewithlove
Camera: Canon EOS 200D
Contact: hello@ frombeewithlove.com

Hil! I'm Bronte but you can call me Bee. I'm a writer and blogger and love to talk about all things film, entertainment, lifestyle, travel and Instagram. But my favourite thing to talk about is books. I travel to some of my favourite locations and create short stories about them both in visual and written form.

My goals in life are to be as kind as I can to as many people as I can, to write amazing words that people love, to continue to take photographs that inspire and motivate for Instagram, to read and cuddle my cats as often as I can.

selected blogs

- 1 Daisy Chains & Headspace** Beth's account is the epitome of a cosy bookish account. Her warm tones and inviting bed set ups make me want to curl up in bed with a book every single day. Beth also has a really great blog, writing posts on wrap ups and even articles on the best books to read for writing inspiration. I was really inspired by her '2020 Reading Resolutions', which I felt really resonated with me. Beth's blog post told me that it's okay to read at your own pace and slow down if that is what works best for you. **p129**
- 2 Olivia's Catastrophe** I've been following Olivia for a very long time, probably since I started my Instagram journey four years ago. Not only is Olivia a blogger and Instagrammer, she is also one of the most entertaining booktubers I follow who frequently shares book hauls and reviews. If you're looking for a Book Blogger who gives her honest opinion on books and recommends some really great reads, Olivia is the perfect person to follow. **p130**
- 3 Booksandquills** I've been a fan of Sanne's YouTube account for a while and have only recently got into her blog. Yes, she talks about books but she also talks about so much more. There's regular travel content (including the best indie book shops to visit in London), food and lifestyle where she talks about her journey with sustainability. Sanne also has a podcast set to launch in August called the 'Pro/Con' podcast for students, young professionals, freelancers and creators. **p131**
- 4 Clumsy Words** Kathleen's account is definitely one of my favourite book accounts out there. Her photography style is super quirky and unique, using unusual angles and props to create stunning photos. Some of my favourites that she does are when she matches her book and outfit to a wall behind her which makes a really cool effect. I also really love her book stack photos which, in my opinion, are some of the most unusual out there – better than any of the ones I've ever done! **p132**
- 5 Word Child** describes herself as an "avid reader and passionate photographer" and that really shows in her photos. She frequently shows little corners of her home which look like every book lover's dream little reading nook! Word Child also shares her candid travel moments, showcasing some of the most amazing locations and bookshops I've ever seen. I've definitely added a few of the bookshops she's featured on her account to my bucket list! **p133**

1 Daisy Chains & Headspace

Blog Name: Daisy Chains & Headspace

Blogger: Beth McCallum

Age: 24

Started blogging: July 2015

Based (area): Glasgow, Scotland

Monthly views: 1,600+

All time views: 25,900+

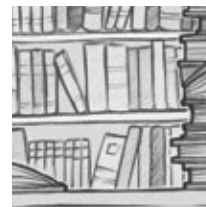
Blogging platform: WordPress

Twitter handle: @bethsbookshelf_

Instagram handle: @bethsbookshelf

Camera: Sony a6400 and iPhone 7 Plus

Contact: beth.c.robertson95@gmail.com



5 Books To Read For Writing Inspiration

There are an abundance of books on writing. In your local bookshop, there is probably a whole section dedicated to books on how to write – usually titled “How To Write A Bestseller” or something along those lines.

I do like these books. They’re useful, helpful and have a lot of practical advice. But they aren’t particularly inspirational. There aren’t often examples of good writing. They don’t make me want to sit down and write. More often than not, they leave me feeling overwhelmed, incapable and on occasion, patronised.

I’m most inspired from other books. Published, well written, beautiful books. They don’t always have to have an amazing plot or great characters – just lovely or surprising or tasteful prose. So here are some books I recommend reading to inspire your writing and get writing tips, even if not in your familiar how-to format.

1. The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake by Aimee Bender

If you ask me what my all time favourite book is, this one pops into my head (along with *The Hunger Games* and a few others). This book has almost no plot. And the plot that is there is odd. Very odd. But I loved it. However, even if you don’t like the “plot”, the writing is to die for. Jodi Picoult says, “A book with such beautiful writing that sometimes I have to stop and taste a sentence a second time”.

It’s different, lyrical, light, and the words are well chosen. Here’s an example: “I took a bath by myself and went to bed. I felt her come by later, as I was dozing off. Her standing, by my bed. The depth of shadow of a person felt behind closed eyelids. Sweet dreams, sweet Rose, she whispered, and I held on to those words like they were a thread of gold I could follow into blackness. Clinging to them tightly, I fell asleep.”

This book revolves around food. The description and focus on food is beautiful but not overwhelming. Aimee Bender does a fantastic job of focusing on minor details without letting them cloud up her writing.

2. We Were Liars by E. Lockhart

This is one of my favourite books to read. The writing grabbed me immediately. It’s a subtle mix of prose and poetry. It only uses this technique when necessary, but when Lockhart breaks into poetry, it changes everything and makes this story truly unforgettable.

The other notable thing about this book is the length. At only 220 pages, Lockhart tells a unique and



memorable story, heartbreaking and surprising. She is talented in keeping in only the necessary details, yet building up a believable cast of characters and a vivid setting.

“We looked at the sky. So many stars, it seemed like a celebration, a grand, illicit party the galaxy was holding after the humans had been put to bed.”

It is young adult, so some of the descriptions can be cheesy, but I think they’re beautiful.

“It doesn’t matter if one of us is desperately, desperately in love. So much in love that equally desperate measures must be taken. We are Sinclairs. No one is needed. No one is wrong.”

It’s a quick, easy read. If you’re going to pick it up just for the writing, I’m confident you’ll fall in love with the story, too.

3. The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath

When I was gifted this book, I didn’t realise how much I would love it. Honestly, I can’t remember much that actually happened in this story. I remember loving the main character, but I remember being enraptured in the writing. The gorgeous, punch-you-in-the-face prose, the sheer honesty of it.

Since then, I have bought Sylvia Plath’s complete collection of poetry because I just love her voice so much. Plath has a special skill in describing the familiar quotidian in a completely new unfamiliar way. That’s one of my favourite things to read about. I notice when I read Plath, I almost start writing like her. Therefore, I feel I become a better writer.

An excerpt from *The Bell Jar*: “That’s one of the reasons I never wanted to get married. The last thing I wanted was infinite security and to be the place an arrow shoots off from. I wanted change and

excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself, like the coloured arrows from a fourth of July rocket.”

UGH! How good is that? It’s divine writing. Such a familiar and popular concept but so new in Plath’s voice.

4. The Girl on the Fringe by Etgar Keret

This beautiful book is a collection of short stories. And by short, I mean short; they average at 3 pages. It’s the perfect book to keep in your bag when you only have 5 minutes here and there to read. What I like most about this book is the ambiguity of the stories. They are quite vague so they mean something different to everyone who reads them. There’s a huge range of types of stories in this book and while each sentence isn’t particularly lyrical or mesmerising, overall, it’s a gorgeous collection.

He’s so good at setting a scene, drawing up an image in your mind, with just his words.

“She was so pretty, and so incongruous, hanging upside down from the ceiling that way. With her long hair dangling downward, and her breasts molded like two perfect teardrops under her white t-shirt. So pretty. I climbed back up onto the pile of books and kissed her.”

5. Conversations With Friends by Sally Rooney

For character reasons alone, I couldn’t gift this book with a full 5 stars. It’s a 4 star read for me, but man, did I enjoy reading it and taking in the delicate writing style. It’s a beautifully written book. Sally Rooney has a light yet bold, easy to read, sophisticated tone. Each sentence feels effortless but new.

“The grass had been cut and gave off a warm, allergenic smell. The sky was soft like cloth and birds ran over it in long threads.”

That’s one of my favourite lines from this book. It’s an irrelevant detail to the plot but the way it’s described makes it so important.

“I cried until my lungs hurt and my face was rubbed raw. I couldn’t explain what made me feel that furious, consuming misery, but sometimes even still when I thought about that election, my eyes filled up stupidly with tears.”

Something I struggle with as a writer is describing emotions. I find it hard to “show” an emotion differently every time. In my first novel, there is a lot of crying and emotional breakdowns. I noticed after my first and second draft that I wasn’t doing anything creative with the way I described the tears. So reading books like Sally Rooney’s, where she describes a familiar response/emotion like this, helps me get creative with my descriptions.

Good luck with your writing! ○

Olivia's Catastrophe

Blog Name: Olivia's Catastrophe
Blogger: Olivia-Savannah
Age: 21
Started blogging: August 2013
Based (area): Australia
Monthly views: 1,250+

All time views: 28,900+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @oliviascatastro
Instagram handle: @oliviascatastrophe
Camera: Sony DSC-H400
Contact: olivia-savannah@oliviascatastrophe.com

MY FAVOURITE BOOK CHARACTER IS...

➤ Hey Catastrophes!

So, I'm currently reading a book and one of the characters is perfect for me! It got me thinking about what personalities or characteristics are common in all of my ideal book best friends and bookish boyfriends. I was quick to see a pattern and find out what I like. This post also doubles up as I share photos with my current laptop sticker I love! It's Raven Cycle merch (no surprise there) for my bae Adam Parrish. So without further ado, my favourite book character probably is...

A Side Character

I'm not sure what it is about secondary characters, but I tend to like them more than main characters! A lot of the time the main character is made to be 'relatable,' but that often leaves them without much personality of their own... other than their plot purpose. Or they are destined and burdened with great purpose. I often find it easier to fall for and love the secondary characters as the author usually gives them a heavy dose of personality that makes them unique and very particular to themselves! I also think that if I were in a novel, I'd probably wind up being the secondary character too. An example for a secondary character I loved more than the main character would be Simon from *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare.

Introverted (Or Quiet Until You Get to Know Them)

I might as well be talking about myself here. I'm generally a quiet person... until I am comfortable and get to know you. I'm also very introverted. Maybe that is why I relate to characters who are introverted too, or take their time to come out of their shell. I love that characters like this have hidden depths to them you would miss out on if you judged them at first glance. A character I love like this is Jasper Cullen from *The Twilight Saga* by Stephanie Meyer. He's my favourite Cullen!

Incredibly, Unshakeably Loyal

I know this trait is the one that gets me every single time... I'm a sucker for loyal characters and it goes hand in hand with loving secondary characters as they are often loyal to the main character! It's also a bit dangerous because I know that being too loyal can mean that you miss red flags or overlook faults in someone. But I can't help it. I think it's also because loyalty is something I value an awful lot in real life too. I think all of Gangsey's gang from *The Raven Cycle* by Maggie Stiefvater are incredibly loyal to him. Adam Parrish included.

Practical

Practical characters get me all the time. Logical, organised thinking... Although I myself, am partially practical minded, I am also very emotional as well. I see myself as a 50/50 split and sometimes I find my emotional half to be incredibly frustrating. Which may be why I love and admire characters who seem to be unfailing practical. Adam Parrish has a lot of this, but Edilio from the *Gone* series by Michael Grant was the first practical character I feel hard for. When we meet him for the first time he has his wits about him when the world is being turned upside down, and he is trying to practically solve the problem.

Thoughtful or Reflective

What can be more important in life than taking the time to think and reflect in order to better yourself? However, this can sometimes be a double edged sword. Sometimes if you're too thoughtful, you can end up caught spiralling in your own mind. Admittedly, this happens to me every now and again, and it makes me feel very seen when I read a book where a character struggles with thinking too much from time to time. But I also love when thoughtfulness is used to an advantage as well, seeing as it can be a great character strength! Matt from *Rend* by Roan Parrish was a character I connected with a lot, and he is incredibly thoughtful and reflective.

I know I mostly stuck to male characters for this post, but I wanted to mention some female characters I love who show some of these personality traits too!

Isabelle from *The Mortal Instruments* is actually my favourite character from the series, and is also a side character.

Scarlet from *The Lunar Chronicles* is very practical.

Annabeth from *Percy Jackson* is very loyal to her friends.

Marin from *We Are Okay* is very thoughtful.

Fanny from *Mansfield Park* is an introverted character I once related a lot to. ○



“ ”

I'm a sucker for loyal characters

3 Booksandquills

Online persona: Booksandquills
Name: Sanne Vliegthart
Age: 31
Started sharing content: 2008
Based (area): London, England
Average impressions per post: 13,400+

Average comments per post: 11+
Preferred platform: YouTube
Twitter handle: @Booksandquills
Instagram handle: @Booksandquills
Camera: Canon 60D and iPhone 8
Contact: booksandquills@gmail.com



St Michael's Mount

I'm slowly starting to plan 2020, which is partly daunting and partly filling me with joy. It's all undecided for now, but hoping to find some more structure by the end of December. Do you know what's your schedule for 2020 yet?



Little Women:

Couldn't resist dressing up for a trip to the cinema to see Little Women with @leenanorms and @jenvcampbell. I will literally take ANY opportunity to put on a historical-inspired outfit. I considered reading the book before, but wasn't really in the mood for it this month. Will definitely read it now though! Have you seen the film yet?

Very thankful for Ger taking these lovely shots 10 minutes before I had to rush to catch my bus.

P.s. that second hand top I bought for my Jane Eyre ghost costume for Halloween is proving very useful...



Favourite Books of 2019:

I helped a friend move home today and am now on my bed, refusing to move another inch for the rest of the day. If you're feeling the same, you can watch my latest video, all about my favourite reads of 2019! A few spoilers in the picture already... Link in my bio! What was your #1 read of 2019?

*Picture contains gifted books. 

4 Clumsy Words

Online persona: Clumsy Words
Name: Kathleen Crowley
Age: N/A
Started sharing content (year): 2015
Based (area): Denver, Colorado
Average impressions per post: N/A

Average comments per post: N/A
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @clumsywordsc
Instagram handle: @clumsy.words
Camera: Nikon D7200
Contact: ofclumsywords@gmail.com



Here's a little fact about me

I actually graduated with a degree in English Lit (no surprise there) and Art History! So, when I get an opportunity to combine the two fields I get this warm tingly feeling of things falling into place. This image is based on *The Corn Poppy* by Kees van Dongen (c. 1919) who was a Dutch artist and a contemporary of Matisse, he was part of the Fauvism movement, which is literally translated to "wild beats". This was not an endearing term in the early 1900s, but van Dongen ultimately became an important figure in the radical use of color and form. Any favorite artists? Let me know! You can also check out the original image in my stories.



My Struggle

"For the heart, life is simple: it beats for as long as it can." *My Struggle* (book one) / Karl Ove Knausgaard



A perfect pocket pairing

"Sure baby, mañana. It was always mañana. For the next few weeks that was all I heard—mañana a lovely word and one that probably means heaven." Jack Kerouac / *On the Road*

A perfect pocket pairing if I do say so myself. I have managed to stockpile a pretty comprehensive collection of *On the Road* paperbacks. Mostly because it's the book that really made me fall in love with reading, but also because the covers have this neat well-worn vintage feel that I can't seem to resist. What book do you have the most copies of? ☹

5 Wordchild

Online persona: Wordchild**Name:** Triin**Age:** 43**Started sharing content (year):** 2013**Based (area):** East Sussex**Average impressions per post:** 50,000+**Average comments per post:** 70+**Preferred platform:** Instagram**Twitter handle:** @triinq**Instagram handle:** @Wordchild**Camera:** iPhone XS plus, sometimes DSLR**Contact:** triin@me.com**Happy Birthday Jane Austen**

"When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library."

Happy Birthday Jane Austen.

I love my pastel coloured Austen collections (@acturusbooks @barnesandnoble) and today is the best day to show them some daylight.

Have you ever heard of a fire starting from fairy lights? I'm so paranoid because the bookstacks under the window are excellent fire material. Just look at them!

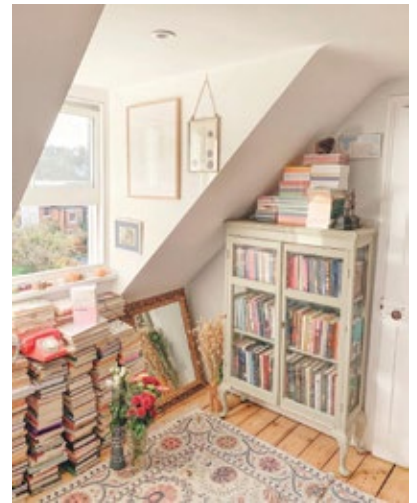
Which books are you giving your friends and family this Christmas? I have been thinking of writing a blog post about the book collections that I would recommend for Christmas. I wish I had more free time.

**Reading weekend**

How is your weekend going? Are you reading or watching anything outstanding?

On my table I have 5 beautiful books by #IrisMurdoch, a latest @vintagebooks collection published this year. #TheBlackPrince was my favourite at school. My Instagram username idea originated from #AWordChild before I'd even read the book. I was drawn to the book because of the title. On the left are my older books by Iris. All from charity shops apart from the first edition of A Word Child. #TheBell is a big favourite of mine too.

I haven't been outside today because it's been raining heavily since lunch time. My reading life hasn't been good this week because I started 5 books with promising beginnings and lost interest in them. So now I'm watching the first series of @TrueDetective and loving it. Even if it has an unforgivably sexist beginning. But I guess life in Louisiana is sexist.

**Non-fiction November**

"It wasn't until I got into the workplace that I realised gender equality was not a given; it was something to claim." - @ScarCurtis, #FeministsDontWearPink.

I'm planning to read Feminists Don't Wear Pink for #nonfictionnovember.

What is the first book that comes to your mind that you associate with November? Have a nice week ahead!

"I'm so excited to watch the next generation of teenage feminists make their mark on the world because I truly believe they're going to achieve extraordinary things." ☺

“”

Have you ever heard of a fire starting from fairy lights?

When did ‘Vegan’ become a dirty word?

In a society where cancel culture is rampant and everyday there is a new person being torn down for not being perfect enough, no one is safe, especially influencers. **Yvette Barnett** explores the evolution of Veganism from a lifestyle choice to a target on your back; and why more and more people are shying away from the label because of the backlash and mental health effect it is having.



Vegans have always been the butt of jokes, most of which they take on the chin, but when did that cheeky attitude move towards such an emotionally charged, angry attack to the point that many influencers are too afraid to label themselves as 'vegan'? Influencers become vegan for many different reasons; no lifestyle choice causes more attention and negativity than the 'vegan' label. Vegans get attacked from people who find their choices insulting to their own values, but more problematically, they receive an onslaught of hate from their own peers, who hold them to an unattainable standard. Vegans put others down for not being 'perfect' or 'good enough'. Not only is this expectation detrimental to the vegan cause of compassion and sustainability, the backlash is also having considerable effects on the mental health of notable vegans to the point that more and more influencers are moving away from the vegan label and choosing to be 'plant based'. Is this the way forward, the evolution of the movement or is it giving into bullying and letting the negativity win?

What is Veganism? Isn't it just a fad diet?

In 2020, veganism is so much more than a diet. It has evolved so far from its early beginnings. Veganism is the practice of abstaining from the use of animal products. The practice can be traced to northern and western ancient India in 1300 BCE. However, the vegan

diet became increasingly mainstream in the 2000s. *The Economist* declared 2019 "The year of the vegan". While maintaining its early values, it has evolved into an all encompassing label that covers everything from what you eat, what you wear, to even what you clean your house with.

The plant-based movement has taken the world by storm, with more people becoming vegan every day. This change in lifestyle can sometimes lack variety or inspiration; this is where bloggers and influencers have exploded. This has led to everything from vegan make up bloggers, vegan mummy bloggers, vegan fashion bloggers, the list goes on. In 2020, to be vegan is not simply eating 'plant based', it means that you do not use any animal products in any area of life. The label vegan has also become a status symbol for many bloggers and Instagrammers, by creating an idealist and perfect lifestyle. But what happens when you fall short for the new idealized status?

The vegan trend has launched many vegan influencers, and allowed them to build empires on the lifestyle choice. Ella Woodward created her food blog Deliciously Ella in 2012 and in 2019 it has grown into a million pound brand. She has launched four best-selling books, a number one app, three delis and a further three food product lines across the UK. She is now a major brand in most health food stores. Grace Beverley, formerly GracefitUK,

began as a fitness Instagrammer in 2014. Since then she has adopted the vegan label, focusing on the sustainability message and, over the past two years, she has founded B_ND and TALA during her time at Oxford University. Both multimillion dollar businesses look to bring an ethical and accessible side to the fitness industry. It is clear that incorporating the vegan label into your brand can be very lucrative, but what is the impact if you have to abandon that label?

Veganism weaponised.

Veganism, unlike many lifestyles, gets critiqued by both vegans and non-vegans alike. Meat eaters sling the usual insults "soy boy" or threaten to sneak meat into the vegan food. But the real hate comes from within the community. No one is faster to cancel a vegan influencer than the vegan community. Society has evolved to a level where we will always have a negative impact on nature, and no one will be faster to point it out than a self-righteous vegan. Is faux leather a cruelty free alternative when it is made from plastic?

There is an unrealistic standard that is becoming expected of influencers and bloggers, this is fueling the new 'cancel culture'. Bloggers are experiencing mass anxiety, just waiting to be cancelled for not reading a food label correctly or using the wrong dishwashing detergent. What is veganism under these new standards? >



We, as a society, now hold Influencers to an impossible standard that it is causing more harm to the mental health and businesses

It is never enough, there is always something to trigger backlash. Influencers are risking their careers for a lifestyle that could either boost their brand or destroy it.

As a result of this constant anxiety and backlash, the mental health impact on public figures and influences is severely detrimental. This anxiety and backlash can affect brands and businesses. Zanna Van Dijk, a fitness Instagrammer and blogger and founder of 'Stay Wild Swim', a sustainable swimwear brand, has decided to 'un-label' herself as vegan and label herself as plant-based as she felt she couldn't withstand the constant criticism. She said that although, while at home, she is 100% vegan, while travelling mistakes can be made and that was enough for her to dissociate from the label. She has also posted about the fear of not being 100% sustainable.

"Discussing this topic opens me up to criticism which is understandable – it comes with the territory. I am often told that I am not doing enough, that I am not setting a good example or that I am a hypocrite for talking about sustainability, but not being perfectly sustainable."

The backlash that is caused when you fall short

What happens when you quit veganism but your brand is so ingrained into health and wellness? Vegan YouTuber Yovana Mendoza had

garnered nearly two million subscribers for her raw vegan diet content, but had recently been spotted with a plate of fish and called out for her ostensible hypocrisy. Her followers were unsympathetic. "You must change your name, LIEvana." one commented. "You are asking others to follow a diet that almost killed you... Wow just wow!!" said another. Since then she has lost over 26,000 subscribers and her views are currently down 400%.

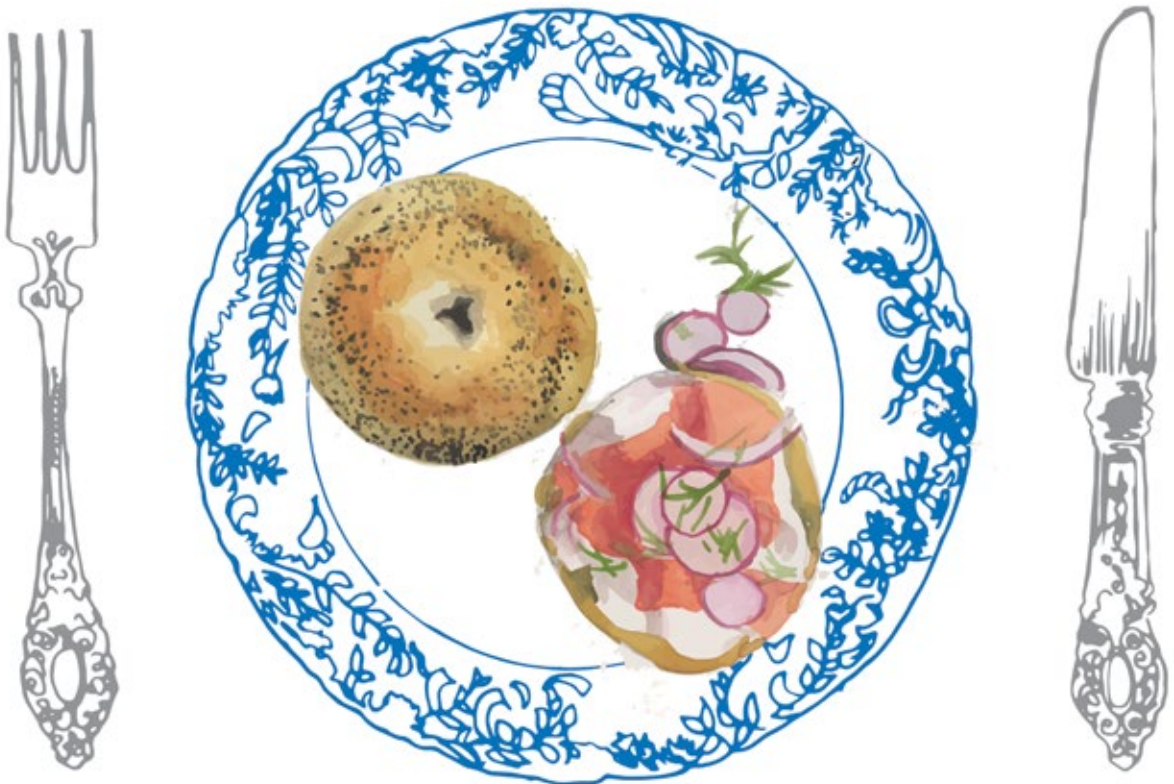
YouTuber Kalel has admitted that she is no longer vegan, and has recently been eating meat and eggs. This came as a huge shock to her audience as she used to be an outspoken vegan advocate, even working with animal rights charity PETA on a number of occasions. Since leaving veganism, her channel has suffered, she has lost 120,000 subscribers and is down 5 million views since the announcement. These bloggers' downfall was that their brand was so tied to their diet they alienated their audiences when they quit veganism.

Not all is lost, it is possible to quit veganism and not alienate your audience. Sarah's Day, an Australian health and fitness blogger has transitioned away from veganism and continued to see huge success on their channel. Sarah has always focused on health and fitness. She tends to change her diet regularly and despite being everything from vegan, paleo, macro counting etc., she has never

made it the core of her brand. She has never been preachy about her lifestyle. She constantly repeats "everyone is different, this is what works for me". Despite what works for her constantly changing, her audience does not. Sarah moved away from veganism claiming health reasons which is no different to the above examples. What is different is how humble she seemed compared to those who weren't so lucky. Since transitioning away from veganism, she is now one of Australia's top YouTubers and has 1+million followers. Proving that it can be done right if needed.

Looking at where veganism began and what it has become, is a stark and depressing commentary on our current society. A society that has taken a movement that was aimed at minimising the human impact and in protecting the environment. To what has now been grotesquely twisted into a weapon we use to put influencers and others down, while simultaneously pumping up our own monstrous ego to the point where influencers are afraid to use the label 'vegan' because of the target it puts on their back and the backlash they will receive. We, as a society, now hold Influencers to an impossible standard that it is causing more harm to the mental health and businesses. The question now for influencers to decide is whether the risk to their mental health, business and audience worth it? Or do they take back the label and make it their own once again. ○

Food



Edited by **Mint & Rosemary**



Blog name: Mint & Rosemary
Blogger: Andra Constantinescu
Age: 40
Started blogging: 2012
Based (area): London
Monthly views: 2,300+
All time views: 55,500+
Blogging platform: Self-hosted WordPress
Twitter handle: @mintandrosemary
Instagram handle: @mintandrosemary
Camera: Olympus Pen E-PL8
Contact: andra@mintandrosemary.com

Originally from Romania, I moved to London 10 years ago after an extended holiday that I didn't want to end. It took me a while to get used to the hustle and bustle of London, but the more I got to explore the city, the more I began to fall in love with it.

I started blogging soon after. It was more like a pastime back then. I used the blog in order to document my new gastronomic discoveries and to keep in touch with friends and family back home. Along the time, blogging has enabled me to connect with locals and make new friends here. It gave me a new sense of belonging. I owe some of my best friendships and foodie adventures to blogging. Spellbound by the overwhelming richness and diversity of the London food scene, I soon realised that I wanted to learn more. Much more. As a result, I now have a culinary arts degree and I have also completed a Masters programme in food business. I currently work as a lecturer in Hospitality and Event Management, teaching a variety of subjects including a fascinating module on Food, Society and Culture.

selected blogs

1 Rubyandb Journal Talitha swapped Sydney for London and made it her mission to capture the new adoptive town in its best light.

Think spring trees in full bloom (yes, 'tis the season), restaurants with a view and the occasional Sunday brunch served in the family kitchen or in some of the 'hottest' places in town. Talitha's Instagram feed may not be all about cooking or eating out, but it is the perfect example of how important food actually is in shaping our relationship with the places where we live. **p139**

2 Borrowed Light Catherine depicts bright, colourful visual stories of the everyday food, following its journey from farm to fork. Her recipes are simple and seasonal – and it's the sheer simplicity that makes them so appealing in the first place. Good food doesn't always need to take hours to prepare and Catherine's approach demonstrates that. Tomatoes and mushrooms on toast, anyone? **p140**

3 Simply Food By Mandy I finally met Mandy just a few months ago, but I've been following her Instagram account since forever (well, almost!). Mandy is a self-thought home cook who cooks creative family meals with a focus on flavour and simplicity. Each week she shares a vegetarian meal, a midweek budget meal, a 'minimum-washing-up' meal, a recipe for spicy Fridays and the odd treats here and there. Look out for some pretty neat step-by-step Insta Stories and more detailed recipe info on her blog. **p141**

4 In Good Taste Harriet is an urban foodie with an eye for stylish, vibrant photography that makes you say 'yum!'. Her Instagram account documents mostly local restaurants: from the newly opened to the neighbourhood favourite and the crowd pleaser. There's something for all tastes (and pockets) on Harriet's Instagram – even the occasional trip to the local farmers' market or to the newest sandwich shop in town. **p142**

5 East Coast Avocet If you love eating, watching photos of and reading everything about fish and particularly seafood, you're in for a treat. Mike's blog is an absolute gem, filled with tales of the sea, short essays and recipes that you will definitely want to bookmark. The home made potted shrimps recipe is an absolute classic – and one of my all time favourites. Mike's passion for the sea and for the traditional fishing practices is inherited from his father and it is beautifully reflected in his writing and photography. **p143**



1 Rubyandb Journal

Blog Name: Rubyandb Journal
Blogger: Talitha McQueen
Age: 39
Started blogging: 2016
Based (area): London
Monthly views: 1,561+

All time views: 20,676+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @Rubyandb
Instagram handle: @Rubyandb
Camera: Olympus Pen E-PL7 and Nikon D600
Contact: hello@rubyandbjournal.com



Covent Garden – Self Guided London Walk

➤ Covent Garden is a gorgeous part of London and a place you should definitely visit. If you follow the Ruby and B Instagram account it will be no surprise that Covent Garden is one of my favourite places to spend time.

I think part of the appeal is that such a large section of it is free of cars. It can be incredibly busy but if you know the little local places to visit then you're in for a treat.

Covent Garden is on the eastern fringes of the West End, sitting between Drury Lane and Charing Cross. By 1654 it was the home of a small open-air fruit-and-vegetable market. Gradually, both the market and the surrounding area fell into disrepute. By the 18th century, it had become a well-known red light district. Today it is a vibrant area full of boutique stores and some fantastic cafés and restaurants.

To see the full beauty of Covent Garden I recommend checking out these places.

Abuelo – I usually walk to Covent Garden from Charing Cross or the bus stop outside the Savoy so Abuelo is usually my first stop. This Australian Argentinian cafe is the perfect place to grab a coffee and breakfast.

Rose Street – I only discovered this gorgeous spot during my third year in London. Since then I have visited at least every two weeks. It's a hidden treasure. This tiny little lane is the home to Bageriet, a Swedish bakery. Such a cosy spot and ideal on a cold day. It's only tiny so be warned you may have to wait for a vacant table!

The Market Building – The neoclassical building is beautiful and perfect for photos. The entrance is usually the home to a flower-filled cart.

St Pauls' Churchyard – A little oasis away just behind the main square of Covent Garden. I sometimes wander in there to sit down and take a break.

Petersham Nurseries – This store is full of lovely homewares, furniture and gifts. I love grabbing lunch at their deli. The food is healthy and delicious.

The Shop at Bluebird – This lifestyle and fashion store is absolutely gorgeous. The building itself is amazing to see with the original pulleys, beams and glass atrium. Be sure to head up to the second floor for a beautiful view of the stores interior.

Compagnie des Vins Surnaturels Seven Dials – This French Bar is located in Neal's Yard and is a great spot for a glass of wine. Head to the second floor for a beautiful view of the yard below. ☺



2 Borrowed Light

Blog Name: Borrowed Light
Blogger: Catherine Frawley
Age: 40
Started blogging: 2008
Based (area): West Sussex
Monthly views: 1,483+

All time views: 192,632+
Blogging platform: Squarespace
Twitter handle: @cfrawley_
Instagram handle: @catherine_frawley
Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Contact: catherine.frawley@googlemail.com



Pink Risotto | A Recipe

I made this recipe in collaboration with Panasonic Kitchen and their new Microwave oven, the concept being to use up left overs, save time and washing up by creating a new meal within the microwave. The great thing about this recipe is creating a risotto that doesn't require 20 mins of stirring and stove watching. I'm sharing for anyone who sometimes wants a delicious meal made from scratch but doesn't have the time to pot watch on a weekday evening.

Ingredients

- 100g fresh beetroot, trimmed, scrubbed halved and cut into slices
- 30ml water
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 40g butter
- 125g Arborio Rice
- 300ml chicken stock (hot)
- 100g tenderstem broccoli, cut into pieces
- 100g cooked leftover chicken
- 1 tbsp soured cream/crème fraiche/yoghurt
- Salt & Pepper
- Garnish with basil (optional)
- Serve with baby spinach (optional)

Method

Add the prepared beetroot along with 30 ml of water to a glass bowl cover and microwave on HIGH for 3 mins, set aside. In the medium dish, add the onion, garlic and butter, microwave on HIGH for 1.5 mins.

Stir in the rice and add the stock, cover and microwave on HIGH for 5 mins. Season, add the broccoli and microwave on HIGH for 3 mins.

Stir in the chicken & beetroot and microwave on HIGH for 4 mins. Stir through the Sour Cream/Cream Fraiche/Yoghurt microwave for 1 min, let stand for 5 mins before serving.

Garnish with basil, serve with baby spinach



3 Simply Food By Mandy

Online persona: Simply Food By Mandy
Name: Mandy Simmonds
Age: 44
Started sharing content: 2017
Based (area): London/Kent
Average impressions per post: 20,000+

Average comments per post: 80+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: N/A
Instagram handle: @simplyfoodbymandy
Camera: iPhone 8 Plus
Contact email: mandymiller1975@aol.com



Black Cod

After watching Jamie & Jimmy last night, I thought I'd re-post my version of this fantastic dish. Now I totally agree that the longer you marinate the cod the better it will be. The marinade will draw out extra moisture giving you intense flavour and wonderful texture. However, if you don't have the time to marinate it for 2 days, then this dish will still be absolutely amazing. Honestly so simple to make you really should give it a go.

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cod fillets
- Sesame seeds
- 1 spring onion - finely chopped
- 1 chilli - finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- Juice of half a lime

Marinade

- 4 teaspoons white miso paste
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 teaspoons rice wine vinegar

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 230 degrees. Pat the cod dry with kitchen towel. Mix the marinade ingredients together in a bowl (reserving a little to finish) and coat the fish thoroughly. Leave for 30 minutes if you can. Place on a roasting tray and into the oven for 10 minutes. If you have a blow torch (not absolutely necessary!) then finish the cod with a quick blast. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve with noodles and green veg drizzled in sesame oil and lime juice.



Lemongrass, Chicken & Papaya Salad

A few of you have asked me for some healthy packed lunch ideas, well this salad is perfect. What I would do is deliberately make extra so that you can enjoy a good portion the following day. If you want to bulk out this recipe, then add cooked rice noodles and it will be delicious.

INGREDIENTS

- Salad
- 4 cooked chicken breasts - torn or sliced
- 200g mangetout
- 2 red pepper - finely chopped
- 2 handfuls bean sprouts
- 1 papaya - seeds removed and roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons cashews
- Optional - sesame seeds and coriander to serve

Dressing

- 1 lemongrass - outer tough leaves removed and chopped as finely as possible
- 1 clove garlic - crushed
- 2 teaspoons grated ginger
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 1 chilli - finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons honey

METHOD

Shake the dressing ingredients in a jar and set aside. Mix the salad ingredients in a large bowl or platter. Drizzle with the dressing and serve.



Miso Glazed Salmon with Green Beans & Mushrooms

A few weeks ago some of you requested more fish tray bakes. Here is a lovely one that would work well with, cod, haddock, pollock, or hake. Again you could add mangetout, or sugar snaps instead of green beans, but I would keep the mushrooms as they add moisture and flavour to the finished dish. I should say that serving salmon with a sticky sauce is a fantastic way of introducing kids to fish. Both my boys loved this one. Well Charlie did once he'd flicked off the chilli.

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 onion - finely sliced
- 2 cloves garlic - crushed
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 200g chestnut mushrooms - sliced
- 200g green beans - washed and trimmed
- 4 salmon fillets
- Sesame seeds
- 1 red chilli - sliced

Marinade

- 2 teaspoons miso paste
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons honey

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 210 degrees. Mix the marinade ingredients together in a bowl and coat the salmon in the mixture. Sauté the onion until soft, then add the garlic and ginger. Add the mushrooms until cooked through, then stir in the beans for roughly 3 minutes. Place the salmon on top of the mushrooms and beans and pour the rest of the marinade over the whole dish. Sprinkle with chilli, sesame seeds, season and into the oven for 8-10 minutes. Remove from the oven and serve with rice or noodles. ○

4 In Good Taste

Online persona: In Good Taste
Name: Harriet McMahon
Age: 27
Started sharing content: 2017
Based (area): London
Average impressions per post: 6,000+

Average comments per post: 30+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @harrietmcmahon
Instagram handle: @ingoodtaste_
Camera: iPhone X and Olympus Pen
Contact email: mcmahon.harriet@gmail.com



Marmite, butter & parmesan spaghetti

Marmite, butter & parmesan spaghetti by my favourite human @umbertospatuzzi. I had so many messages about this when I posted it on my stories, so I've gotten about as much of a recipe out of him as I could. He stole it off @nigellalawson anyway

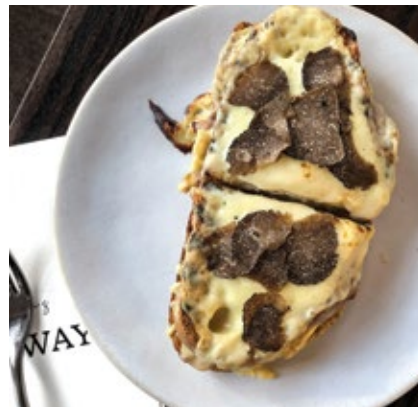
***This dish doesn't just taste like Marmite, it's meaty and really savoury and very nice ***

- Heat a 'good chunk of butter' and a teaspoon of Marmite per person in a pan
- Add the cooked spaghetti and maybe a bit more Marmite if you want.
- Coat the spaghetti in the sauce, - Once it's all coated, add a 'good fist full' of parmesan and toss through for no more than a minute so it goes a little gloopy
- Add more parmesan to serve and eat.



Tacos

Tacos & tostadas from @tacos_el_pastor in @arcadelondon. These tuna tostadas are one of my favourite foods in London and the al pastor tacos aren't far off.



Truffle Croque Monsieur

Have you ever seen anything more perfect? Truffle Croque Monsieur with black truffle from @hideaway_london. It is so lovely in there, and it looks beautiful at the moment with all the christmas decorations. If you're looking for a fancy date spot and you don't mind splashing a little cash, this is the place. ○

5 East Coast Avocet

Online persona: East Coast Avocet
Name: Mike Warner
Age: 55
Started sharing content: 2014
Based: Suffolk
Average impressions/post: 830+

Average comments: 120+
Preferred platform: Instagram
Twitter handle: @eastcoastavocet
Instagram handle: @eastcoastavocet
Camera: iPhone 11Pro
Contact email: mike@avocetmedia.co.uk



Sunday Brunch

A variation on the old smoked haddock theme, using some frozen belly offcuts, scrambled, new laid eggs from the girls and grated mature cheddar, in a rarebit to die for atop today's @agasagalife sourdough....



Fish on Friday?

Well, not a lot to see here..... only a prime fillet of North Sea plaice in a light beer batter with local 'Stemster' chips. The perfect answer for the post-Christmas doldrums. Plaice has such a distinctive flavour and a kiss of lemon does wonders for it too. Dark skin or light?



Aldeburgh beach in December

The beach-launched fishing fleet here is a fraction of its size compared to yesteryear, but still plays a vital role in the local economy. Like its cousins in Hastings, just the sight of vessels lying on the shingle evokes passion and creativity for many visitors and locals alike. These Suffolk artisan fishermen are under pressure. Their catches are dwindling and erratic, their traditional grounds disappearing and overwhelmed by various other marine industries and pursuits. With little confidence in their future and a lack of succession, they strive as best they can against the odds and that's before they have to deal with the vagaries of tide, weather and season. Eat local, eat seasonal and support them where you can. O



LTR: Kemi Alemoru, Lottie L'Amour, Grace Victory and Jamie Windust

Diversity without tokenism in influencer marketing campaigns

A panel discussion with Kemi Alemoru (of Gal-dem), Lottie L'Amour, Grace Victory and Jamie Windust

Hosted by: Elaine Malone
Photography by: MissNicklinBlog

Kemi: Hi I'm Kemi Alemoru, I'm the features editor at Gal-dem, which is a magazine for women and non-binary people of colour. We try to get those perspectives out there in the media, probably making me a perfect fit for this panel.

Lottie: Hi everyone, my name is Lottie L'Amour. I'm a plus-size LGBTQ activist and real life lesbian human being! Hello – it's nice to meet you all! I also work as head of emerging talent at TikTok.

Grace: Hi, I'm Grace Victory, a blogger-influencer person. I talk about mental health, plus size fashion. I've been full-time about five years and I've been going for about nine; I'm an OG.

Jamie: I am Jamie Windust: I am a writer, model and public speaker. I identify

as non-binary and I mainly use my channels and work to speak about trans and LGBTQ+ issues across the media, and Blogosphere kindly named me as fashion influencer of the year, which I'm sure you can tell!

Elaine: Do you think that brands thought about being diverse with their campaigns this year? And if they did think about it, do you think they thought about, or executed it correctly?

Lottie: I definitely think there was some thought. It's one of those things that's really difficult to get if it's not ingrained into your brand. If you feel that you're doing a diverse campaign and you look at your list in front of you, and you maybe have one black person, have three other people that are blonde and thin, then maybe you have somebody

who identifies as non-binary, you might think 'we've ticked all the boxes!' But there's so much more to delve into with diversity – there's diversity within diversity. There are lots of things that need to be looked at, and I feel like maybe we're not quite there yet.

Kemi: I think they're thinking about diversity. It's definitely on people's minds, whether it's on their minds for the right reason is an entirely different question. Are you trying to weigh in on the diversity conversation because you want to look like you're paying attention? Or is it that you truly want to be transformative? As Lottie was just saying, sometimes it can feel very tokenistic to have a few people be visible for that brand but when you look at the brands themselves: who's in senior management? Who's on the

creative team even? I think that's where the diversity thing starts to feel like a buzzword and not like any real work.

Grace: It can be quite tokenistic, and it's really awkward when you are a part of a campaign that's meant to be diverse. It happened to me this year. When you're part of a diverse campaign, and it's not diverse... obviously being mixed-race and plus size, when you're approached for a campaign, and you're like 'I don't know' - whether ethnic or whatever makes you so different or diverse, you don't automatically think about 'is it going to be a diverse campaign?' You think if they've chosen you, it's going to be diverse. Then the campaign comes out and you're like - oh no. There are parts of me that I know can be watered down: I still have an hourglass figure, I'm light skinned, I'm not dark skinned - it's very awkward. I think brands think by getting a couple of people that look a bit different is going to be an A* campaign, and a lot of the time it's not. As Kemi was saying, it needs to start at the top. Is your company diverse? Because then it filters down, and when it filters down it's very authentic. You can tell what is authentic and what isn't. I've been involved in both. It's very awkward for the brand, they get dragged and rightly so, but when you're involved in it, it's like - oh my god.

Jamie: I spoke this week about how working with brands, I feel, is something like mutual exploitation. What we're finding now is that so many of them come to you and they wave money at you and they're like, 'we want you to do this'. Then, like Grace said, we realise they're not as diverse as we once thought. That for me primarily comes through the ways in which the team, and the actual shoot and the logistics of the shoot, or the ways in which the hair and makeup team, or even like the car - all the aspects of it should be looked into when you're doing a diverse campaign because you're essentially nurturing a diverse talent that you need

to be looking after. I also have done campaigns that were not as diverse as I once thought or would've wanted, and I think that's really frustrating. What we need to do is almost protest that sometimes, and just not do them and then see what they do, because then what they'll do is they'll make even bigger mistakes and it's an even more righteous course to drag them wherever they need to be dragged.

Elaine: Do you think that the diversity of a campaign or a press trip influences an influencer's decision on whether to take part?

Kemi: I'm not an influencer, but what I can say anecdotally is that it is very visible when a trip has gone out and there are not many black women on the trip or aren't that many East Asian women on the trip, and you can just see from the images. This conversation has been swirling around this year as to who gets the best opportunities and sometimes brands might have a certain deal with a woman of colour where she gets to help with the campaign on her feed, so you're buying into her audience and you get to tap into that demographic, but did she get to go on the trip? And was she one of the highest paid people in that whole brand strategy? That's where it starts to look a bit unsavory. The second question is, do brands care enough? Because at the end of the day they have the massive streams of revenue - this is how influencers make their money, do they really care if a black influencer can see there are no black influencers on the trip? Is she going to bite the hand that feeds her?

Lottie: Everything you said just then really resonated. There have been so many times where you've seen a campaign and you think, 'okay, there could have been extra things that could have been done there', but actually have they really tapped into the talent that they've used? Have they spoken to

that talent and gone, 'okay, we'd love to use you, can you tell us about other people that we could perhaps use in this campaign? Can you tell us the best way we can use your talent, use your platform to get this message across in a genuine way-'

Grace: And pay for it.

Lottie: Thank you yes, and pay for it. Payment is so important. Brands should be paying not only for the platform that they have, but for their expertise and knowledge in an area the brand perhaps doesn't know about yet. Something that I think is missed every single time that there's a diverse campaign that's put out that doesn't really hit the mark is that they're just ticking a box, they're just doing anything that is going to make them look good, when really that change needs to be ingrained from the inside and then, kind of making a stand without making a statement. It needs to be natural and it needs to be something that they've really thought about.

Grace: If I'm honest, I just think brands don't care. That's the only explanation for it in this day and age, because if I think about doing a campaign, or if I think about, 'I want to launch a clothing line, who am I going to get to model clothes?' Straightaway I'm thinking non-binary, I'm thinking dark skin, I'm thinking fat, I'm thinking less abled, I'm thinking forty plus - we just know, so I don't quite get it. But then if you look at the majority of brands that have money, they're white and privileged - they don't understand what it's like to live life and for it to not be like that. I think I get quite frustrated talking constantly about diversity and inclusion because brands are just ignoring us now; it's not even a joke. Using social media to drag a brand can sometimes look quite tacky, but that's the only way they listen a lot of the time. There's a particular campaign that came out recently that wasn't as diverse as it should've been and I was

contractually bound by them so had to email them privately and then it looks like you don't care, when we do care. A lot of the time the only way to do it, and they pay attention and respond, is if it's publicly.

Lottie: The emotional turmoil of being somebody who is diverse or put into a diverse campaign and then to find out that it's not actually a diverse campaign, is ridiculous. I know which campaign you are talking about and it's horrible because the number of people that were emailing around, and talking to the whole community of influencers, going 'this is so bad I'm never going to work with them again, it's never going to be a thing.' I think that's something brands don't think about as well; we all talk.

Grace: And we know what everyone is getting paid.

Jamie: I think the influencers and the talent do need to take some responsibility. One of the biggest things that I find within the queer scene when it comes to influencers is you'll get your white sisterhood, or gay hot dads or uncles doing campaigns that are really great, and then it'll come out that it's not diverse. Why are you surprised? You were booked. What I've started to do over the past year is always ask, even if it's just a panel or any form of work that's going to become focused into a content. Who's there? Who's shooting it? Investigate a bit more, because I think often we can get swayed by the opportunity and the exposure from the brand, when actually you need to make sure the job you're doing is socially sustainable.

Kemi: I completely agree. I obviously come at this from the editorial side, so once all of this has happened and you've been in the shoot, and the press release comes out and the press release comes to me and I can see straight away what a brand is really about. First of all if they're contacting Gal-dem, they're contacting us because they want our audience, but if our audience aren't in the campaign it's like

— why do you think this is really for us? Even when we're working with brands you can feel that they think just the fact that they've got in touch with us is a tick box. If you have to push back on certain things, like we want this sort of talent to be involved, then they're like 'why don't we just go for a slim light skinned girl' — because have you actually read our site? Obviously that person can also be in the campaign but if there's multiple people in the campaign, it needs to be representative of our whole readership. You put people in the position where we need that stream of revenue to create advertorials and create revenue from an editorial perspective. But how many times should we have to say 'no' because they, at the top, can't come with the right brief?

Elaine: Do you guys think that brands pay people differently depending on their gender, their race, their disability, rather than what they're actually worth? And do you have any examples of this without naming names?

Grace: I have an example: I accidentally once got an email asking to be in a campaign, just a YouTube video, and it had the fee and I was like — 'that's too low but okay'. We started negotiating and then I got loads of other emails from the brand that were asking lots of other bloggers to be in this campaign. Same following, I think I had even more on Instagram, same campaign deliverables, I think they were offering them 50% more money and I was like — wow. I turned down that campaign simply because the fee was too low anyway. I love the brand, but I have to say no for my own morals because it's bang out of order and I have a little group of friends that have the same following as me and I always ask them, 'I've got this campaign I think you're doing it too, what are you getting paid?' And a lot of the time there is a big difference. I've also been on the flip side of that, where I'm getting paid way more than other people in the campaign, and I get that it changes depending on following sometimes — I completely understand that, but a lot

of the time when you're booked on a job with your peers that have got the same sort of following and the money can dramatically differ, and it's very awkward. I replied back to that email to my manager, 'you need to let them know that I know and I've seen this'. You can be blacklisted from the brand, even though you love them, and it can just get very murky but you do have to stand strong with who you are and know that that wasn't meant for you and is an X and keep it moving. It's happened to all of us, and it's shit.

Lottie: I actually stopped doing fashion content because of this very reason. Up until earlier on this year I was a predominantly a plus-size fashion blogger, and there was one particular experience with one particular brand who had promised me verbatim that they were going to do a certain thing with me, they were going to pay me money, they were going to bring me to a thing and it was going to be great. Then it got closer to the time and I was getting ignored, and I later found out through the grapevine — again, we all talk — that other people had been chosen for this particular thing. I called the PR out and said, 'hey you told me, I've got this in writing here, this was what was going to happen', and they were very apologetic, but that wasn't a situation that was unique. That was something that had happened before, that was something that unfortunately keeps happening in such a small community of plus-size fashion bloggers, it's a tiny community, with tiny opportunities, it's mad. I decided I didn't want to play that game anymore, I didn't want to do that because I knew that there were people that were being paid more than me that were doing less work than I was offering to do, less things than for what I was being paid and that was quite painful to me. I decided to take that power back and started doing things that I wanted to do that gave my soul happiness, which is talking about LGBT stuff and body confidence and things like that. Actually now I'm much happier and I'm paid a lot more than I was previously because I am open

about these kind of things so it was a really bloody scary thing to do at the time because all I'd known for five years at the time was fashion, but it was worth the risk, and it was worth listening to my heart and going 'no I'm not subscribing to this narrative anymore, I'm going to take that power back', and that's what I did.

Grace: I think in terms of opportunity, not in terms of a black girl getting paid less than a white girl, I just think the opportunities for a black girl or a fat girl or a less able girl, I think that they're just less anyway. You see the same type of influencer on billboards everywhere, you never see a fat girl on a billboard. You see the same influencer doing a collection with a brand, you never see a fat girl doing it. It's over and over again. It's trying to remain who you are firm footed, grounded, have your morals intact, but also we all need to work. It's like with Lottie, she had to quit what she was doing because it wasn't paying her bills and it was making her unhappy. It feels like we're having these conversations over and over again, and we're taking the smallest steps forward. That's why I say it's not always down to the marginalised to teach you about the marginalised. I am actually bored of it sometimes. Especially, with size and weight and health and all the stuff that gets thrown at us, when we're just literally here posting an ASOS outfit on the 'gram.

Jamie: I think in a similar ilk to Lottie, it's made me realise that this has never been my full-time job, it's something that I do to fund my activism, my magazine and other things. It's something that I had a massive deliberation with because I know that a lot of the queer people that follow me are anti-capitalist, they don't believe in assimilation politics, which is basically becoming the herd and becoming a sheep to follow everybody else, and it was a real tough one. But now I've decided after failure through it, and after realising the payment schedules and only the indifference of payment and the lateness and the absolute atrocity that

comes with that. An amazing writer called Paula Akpan put a massive thread on Twitter about what to do if you're not being paid on time, what clauses to put in your invoice that I would thoroughly recommend. I was like, I'm not going to centre this in what I'm doing as an activist and as a change-maker. It's made me realise that brand activism is in no way the peak of what marginalised people should be doing, it should almost be the cherry on top. If that's your job, rock and roll, but it doesn't have to be if you don't want it to be. The payment frustrations have meant that unfortunately it is difficult for it to be your full-time job.

Kemi: This is a tiny industry so people do talk, and talking is actually paramount, especially if you are in a marginalised community. There have been several times where me and several members of Gel-dem have been asked to talk at a thing, or contribute work to a thing, for a brand, and then we've found out that other people might not be paid at all. There was quite a public situation where Liv Little wasn't being paid by a brand, and then it transpired that other people were being paid by the brand, so that was publicly called out, but then you get to the point where – is the case to unionise as influencers so that everyone knows what everybody is being paid because you can't have the discrepancy where someone's getting zero and someone else is getting 150. Yomi Adegoke actually covered this in the Independent. I can see Stephanie nodding in the audience. Stephanie told the BBC that she did some work during fashion week and she wasn't being paid and she found out that other people were being paid, but if people don't talk about money how do you even know if you're being f-ed over? You have to have some real transparency and you have to have some accountability. You have to be able to go to the brand and for the brand to care that other people in the same campaign don't like it.

Elaine: Do you think that if there is an LGBTQ+ campaign going on for

example that there should be diversity within that diversity?

Lottie: I'm so passionate about this particular subject because when pride season comes around you always see the same few faces in a campaign and unfortunately most of the time they're usually male, thin, cis-gendered, white, beautiful looking human beings – which we absolutely need in campaigns, I'm not saying they shouldn't be there, they should – but there's hardly ever a lesbian or a bisexual woman in a campaign. There's also diversity within that. Let's find fat lesbians. Let's find black lesbians. Let's find Southeast Asian lesbians. Let's find Muslim lesbians. There are so many different nuances within this community, within all communities really, that aren't tapped into, and there are so many talented human beings that just want to be a part of something and want to feel like they're seen, I think is probably the most important part of it.

I used to read Diva magazine, a magazine for lesbian and bisexual women, and I can remember reading it as a kid and not seeing anyone that looked like me and it made me feel really ostracised from my own community and it was really difficult for me when I was growing up because everyone that I knew that was gay and was a woman all looked the same and didn't look like me. This is why I'm making it a point I want to focus on now because there will be other people that look like me that feel the same way as me that aren't seen. There's so much more that brands can tap into to not only appear genuine themselves, and appear that they care – whether they do internally or not is another thing – but like Jamie, I know, has been doing talks with several brands about the importance of diversity within LGBT campaigns. When it comes to pride season, I can be hired to go into a company and talk about why it's important that we still have pride, the reasons why we have pride and why there are so many different acronyms within our acronym and what they all mean, because I feel like it's important

to educate a company on why they are doing something before they actually go out and go and do it.

Jamie: I almost – this might come as a surprise – would rather be doing that consultancy than being on the billboard because this pride was the first pride that I worked, or was in that capacity doing campaigns, and it was the worst time of the year for me because it was so mind-bogglingly confusing and barbaric and exploitative and I just found the whole process frustrating because, as we've all said, we're a small community and the people that these brands think they can choose from is again a small pool, so we all talk and if we shrink that pool again down to the trans and non-binary community when we all get the call it's always the most marginalised of us that don't get the job. It's always the non-binary people of colour that are like 'oh did you get that?' And I'm like 'yeah'. Or the plus size people, or the disabled people that just aren't put in. So I would rather go behind the scenes.

Elaine: As a small community what can we all do to encourage these diverse communities to step up and be influencers themselves?

Grace: I started YouTube in 2011, and I was watching a lot of the vloggers on there and I was like, 'no one talks like me' everyone was really posh, which is kind of the same now. So everyone was really posh, and most people were white, and if they were mixed race or black, they were thin, and I was like, 'yeah I love everyone, but no one is like me', so I just started making videos and it grew and grew and grew. I encourage people to do what they want, to speak their truth. If your passion is fashion then go out there and do it – makeup, activism, whatever it is, do it. But we can't just skip over the fact that it's going to be harder for you if you look different, or if you talk about stuff that brands think is too controversial. When I started I used to swear and I remember being told, 'we can't work with you because you swear', and I was like – I'm a grown-ass woman! It's harder, and being plus size when the first brand campaigns were coming on the scene in 2015, no one was really making a lot of money, I was never picked. It took me so long to get a regular income,

so I encourage everyone to do what they want to do, but it does take a lot longer. There are some people that literally blow up over night, and some people where it's a gradual thing, and it's been quite gradual for me. What I will say is your white privileged friends in the industry – are you emailing brands asking if their campaigns are diverse? Press trips are a massive thing. If I see one more press trip of the same people I'm going to die. I'm thinking, you follow me and you follow all my friends, you follow other fat girls and other black girls, so you are fully aware that we exist – why are you still on these press trips? Even I do it. I am aware, being plus size, I am still aware that there are other types of plus size. Not everyone has an hourglass figure, there are different shapes. Some plus size women have small bums and small boobs that's another thing. So when I do campaigns now, I have to ask, 'by the way is anyone involved in this that is also plus size but doesn't look like me?' And they're like – 'hm'. It's just a lot of work and I do think that we need to encourage people that their story matters as well, no matter what you look like, what class you are, what race you are, your story is individual to you and people need to hear it and want to see you. Whether it's just because you love clothes, I still want to see that. So yeah I encourage everyone to do what they want to do, and work hard. If it's meant to be full-time for you then make it full-time, if not then make it your hobby. I still have days when I am like, 'I am done with this industry', and some days I really like it. I think everyone can relate to waking up sometimes, no matter what career you're in, and thinking 'this ain't for me anymore', but then you remember why you do it. I remember why I started because when I was 12 years old, I was looking at Kate Moss – first of all, she's white that's never going to be me, and she's a supermodel and very thin. That's why I started YouTube, because I wanted to see someone with cellulite and stretch marks and a wobble. Do what you want to do. Do it, but just know that we are fighting a cause that's a lot bigger than us.

Elaine: If a non-diverse brand wants to become diverse and be inclusive, what can they do while doing it in a genuine and authentic way?

Jamie: Hand over the reins, I think is one of the biggest things. Recently I worked, and have now a great relationship with, very surprisingly for me because I hated them throughout my childhood – Ugg. I would never wear them, until now, where obviously I wear them all the time. But they basically for pride were one of the only brands that were like, 'we want you to do a dinner to launch this product, what do you want to do?' And were literally just like, go for it. Here's the product, the product isn't going to be featured it'll just be dotted around the room, but they wanted to genuinely have a conversation where everyone was paid the exact same, we had a bougie dinner to not only chat about pride but to also educate, because they had all their PR staff there, all of their internal and external staff who work on campaigns so they know what to do next year. And for me, that was brilliant.

Kemi: I suppose if a brand is talking about diversity when they're having that conversation and they're looking around the room, if they can only see people that come from the exact same background as them and look just like them, then what is the point of launching a diversity campaign? Diversity cannot be an external activity. There is no point in talking about diversity until we're blue in the face, unless you're going to top-down and reorganise your institution so that those people are already there. Then all your campaigns won't be one off diversity campaigns, all of your campaigns will reflect your workforce and the audience that you're trying to capture. I think that the biggest thing that I can hear from everyone on this panel is that we all love being paid to be a part of a campaign or a panel to talk about diversity because people need to be able to survive, but these companies need to stop coming to us during pride month, during black history month, during a time when people are talking about people being plus size. It has to be all the time. I want you to come and talk to me at any given time. I don't want you to only talk to me when you want to access women of colour, and you want to tap into that audience on that day. I think that's where we need to get to – is trying to figure out who is BS-ing and I think it's all of them. ○

travel



Edited by **Binny's Food and Travel**



Blog name: Binny's Food and Travel
Blogger: Binny Shah-Patel
Age: 37
Started blogging: 2015
Based (area): London
Monthly views: 18,000+
All time views: 525,113+
Blogging platform: WordPress
Twitter handle: @binnyjs
Instagram handle: @binnysfoodandtravel
Camera: Canon 760D
Contact: binnyjs@yahoo.co.uk

Hi I'm Binny - a writer, dreamer, serial wanderluster and travel addict originally from Kenya but now London is my home.

I set up my blog four and a half years ago as a creative outlet while I worked for 10 years in a bank managing both Investment Funds and the Stocks and Shares Platform. In September 2017 I took the leap to leave my corporate desk job and become a full time blogger and set up as self-employed.

My passion and hobby is writing and photography and I love to write about food, whether it is sharing my recipes for dishes I love influenced from my upbringing in Kenya and my Indian heritage or restaurant reviews. I also share hotel reviews, destination guides and posts about critical Animal Welfare issues.

As I grew up in Kenya, surrounded by incredible wildlife, I have always had a keen interest in Wildlife Conservation and I am an ambassador for World Animal Protection as well as work closely with organizations such as Born Free Foundation and Four Paws.

I love packing my bags and going off on adventures, setting aside the maps and itineraries and just seeing where the road takes me, learning and evolving and living in the moment along the way.

It's my goal to get swept off my feet as often as possible.

selected blogs

1

The life of a social butterfly Jaz's blog and Instagram are a real joy and she regularly features travel destination guides, lots of travel inspiration, whether you are looking for city breaks or are interested in eco-tourism, an area which I think is really important. What I particularly adore is her focus on boutique venues, which is something I look for myself. Her photography is stunning, always perfectly capturing the essence of a destination and beautifully composed, and her writing really draws you in. [p151](#)

2

Yoko Meshi Two things had me intrigued about Sam's blog when I first discovered it - the name, which refers to the stress induced by speaking a foreign language, and also her passion for wildlife, which is something very close to my (animal activist) heart. She always amazes me with her caring nature as she has her day time job being a Veterinary Nurse and as well as doing this she writes about how to travel responsibly and how to help preserve the planet which is so important because let's be honest there is no planet B! [p152](#)

3

Where Charlie Wanders Charlie is one of my favourite bloggers and instagrammers, having discovered her when she shared content on Kenya, where I am from, and what I love about Charlie is that she keeps it real on her blog and all her posts are injected with her wonderful personality. I love how she documents things as they are with no sugar coating on top. Her blog started as a way to document her quest to visit 30 countries before she turned 30 and she accomplished it in 2016 and decided to carry on writing about her travels, which I am glad about as I love reading her experiences of staycations, short haul and long haul trips. [p153](#)

4

The Rare Welsh Bit Kacie's award winning blog, *The Rare Welsh Bit*, is one of the first blogs I ever read as I went to university in Cardiff myself, where Kacie is based, which was essentially my first home city in the UK. I've watched Kacie's blog grow from strength to strength and watched in admiration and with pride as she's been featured in various press too. Kacie covers lots of restaurant reviews and recipes and also wonderful destination guides. Her writing is fabulous, her photos superb and hers is a blog you need to bookmark asap! [p154](#)

5

What Kirsty Did Next I've been following Kirsty for years and admire how she juggles working in the charity sector full time as well as regularly updating her blog which is her creative outlet where she shares her experiences in travel, food and lifestyle. Kirsty is a regular traveller, often found at a beach destination, and on her blog you will find fantastic informative travel guides complete with stunning photography, travel advice, hotel reviews and honest restaurant reviews as what I love most about Kirsty's blog is that she tells it how it is! [p155](#)

1 The life of a social butterfly

Blog Name: The Life of a Social Butterfly

Blogger: Jasmine Buckley

Age: 34

Started blogging: April 2016

Based (area): Milton Keynes

Monthly views: 5,000+

All time views: 70,000+

Blogging platform: WordPress

Twitter handle: @jaz_butterfly

Instagram handle: @jaz_butterfly

Camera: Olympus Pen EPL-7 & iPhone 10

Contact: blog@thelifeofasocialbutterfly.co.uk

The Best Boutique Hotels in Europe's Major Cities & Beyond

➤ I'm a huge advocate for sharing the best boutique hotels in Europe and beyond on my travel blog. But, if you're a new reader, you may be wondering what is the meaning of a boutique hotel and how do you tell the difference between a boutique hotel and a hotel in general? In this post, I will not only be sharing the definition of a boutique hotel and the unique characteristics to look for, but I'll also be sharing a roundup of my favourite boutique hotels in Europe from my travels. Searching for the boutique hotels in Europe's major cities can be time-consuming, particularly if you like to check hotel reviews before you stay (like I do!) This post contains all the best boutique hotels I've discovered from my travels, if not to give you inspiration for places to stay in Europe, but for me to relive some of my own trips (something I always like to do when I'm not exploring somewhere new!)

What is a Boutique Hotel?

The definition of a boutique hotel from The Oxford Dictionary is as follows: "a small stylish hotel, typically one situated in a fashionable urban location." A boutique hotel's definition is summed up as being a small, yet trendy hotel. But, the concept of a boutique hotel and what it is like to stay in a boutique hotel goes beyond that.

What is the difference between a boutique hotel and a hotel chain?

Unlike big chain corporate hotels, which generally have the same design appearance in every room; boutique hotels characteristics are often more varied to give guests a unique stay. Boutique hotels normally provide guests with a more local experience, either by basing the look and feel of the hotel on the local neighbourhood or basing the name or design on a local artist or well-known resident. It could be that the hotel uses only the freshest ingredients from local suppliers or that the hotel has been designed by a local artist. Overall, boutique hotels (even small brand boutique hotels) are influenced by locality and this, in turn, helps guests immerse themselves into local life and culture to improve their travel experience. The look and feel of boutique hotels generally have a more welcoming and cosy vibe, as the rooms will often have more than the standard picture on the walls. Expect to see vases, a selection of books, fancy toiletries, cushions and all the other items you may expect to see in your own home.

If you're anything like me, you'll be so inspired by a boutique hotel's design ideas that you'll try and recreate the interiors and styles in your own home.

Why I love Small Boutique Hotels

Boutique hotels make you want to explore every detail. When you fondly recall memories from a trip,

you picture vivid details about where you stayed and what you did. These images in your mind transport you back there once more, if only for an instance. When I think about my time in Lisbon, I remember opening the door to the boutique hotel room, the light streaming in through the terrace windows leading out to a balcony and how the light fell on a small circular table where some traditional pastéis de natas and a bottle of wine sat waiting as a welcome gift. This marks my experience eating Portuguese pastéis de natas for the first time. When I stayed in The Cotswolds I remember perching by the rounded windows looking out to rolling green hills, clutching the Ziggy Stardust book in my hand that I'd handpicked from the bookshelf. I fondly recall coming back to the boutique apartment in Reykjavik after long days exploring South Iceland, to drink a nice warm cup of tea, then cooking the ingredients purchased from a local supermarket. These memories intricately entwine with the trip as a whole, therefore why would I choose to stay anywhere that lessens this experience? These boutique hotels became my holiday home and have inspired me in many ways, from hotel interior inspiration, local life and even how to lead a more eco-friendly life.

Boutique Hotels vs Chain Hotels

Boutique hotels encapsulate your overall experiences of a destination, rather than being just another big brand hotel in another big city. A big brand chain hotel is likely to use the same international suppliers for the majority of their hotels to keep the overall costs down. That's why you are likely to see the same furniture in every room and, why the catering at big brand hotels often fails to include any local cuisines and flavours. Boutique hotels aim to inspire travellers and support locals. The two come hand-in-hand, creating a more authentic and sustainable travel experience. Whilst some people may say it's not about where you stay as the purpose is about exploring a new destination. I would have to disagree. Where you stay can have a big impact on your overall experience of a destination and inspire actions to take forward in your own life.

For instance, I stayed in a boutique hotel in South Beach Miami (review coming soon) and enjoyed a day trip to Bimini, Bahamas where I spent some time at Hilton Resorts World Bimini. As a global hotel brand, you would think Hilton would be doing everything they can to minimise plastic waste to aid the environment and would have the capital means to do so better than a small boutique hotel brand. Unfortunately, that's not the case, or at least it wasn't when I spent the day in Bimini. I was shocked by the number of plastic straws and packaging at Hilton Resorts World, particularly given the hotel's beautifully scenic location on the blissful Bimini Islands. I was disappointed that the hotel was actively encouraging guests to hire petrol golf buggies to explore the island. This contrasted my stay in my



Miami boutique hotel, which has bike hire, water fountains to encourage guests to use recycled water bottles and paper cups and straws to reduce plastic waste. Where we stay and spend our money can have a real impact and these hotels are not going to change unless we do. Being more mindful about where you spend your money can make a real difference to locals that live in these destinations and the environment as a whole.

Boutique Hotels in Popular Cities

- The Hoxton Hotel Paris
- The Luma Concept Hotel Hammersmith London
- Hotel Ottilia, Copenhagen Denmark
- Hotel Bishops House Prague
- Hotel Market Barcelona
- Boutique Aparthotels in Europe
- The A5 Smart Luxury Studios, Porto
- The Swan House Boutique Aparthotel Reykjavik
- The Embankment Hotel Bedford
- The Painswick Hotel, Cotswolds
- The Cornwall Hotel St Austell

The Life of a Social Butterfly is all about living the luxe life for less and staying in boutique accommodation lets you do just that! I love exploring Europe's major cities and it's worth noting that this post containing the best boutique hotels in Europe is working progress as I will be updating this post once I've stayed at more boutique hotels. I can't wait to experience more wonderful boutique hotels this year and share them with you for future inspiration. Happy travels! ☺

2 Yoko Meshi

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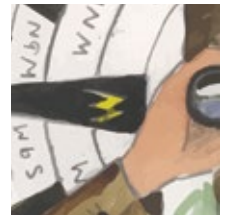
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PLAYING WITH LION CUBS IN SOUTH AFRICA: IS A LIKE WORTH MORE THAN THEIR LIFE?

➤ There is no doubt we are now a fast-paced generation. Several studies now show we opt to take in more via video and image rather than text. Social media has given us the ability to constantly be updated and instantly showcase our own lives. We are being encouraged to live every moment, tick off a never-ending bucket list and then place it online to give others the desire to do the same. I cannot say I am completely against this train of thought, part of my job is to show incredible places around the globe and encourage people to want to go there as well. But with the ease of being able to do this, with no real monitoring**, is there a potential to give a platform an access to a darker side of the tourism industry? The answer is yes and it is happening every single day, every single minute in fact. Wildlife tourism is a growing industry, we are a nation of animal lovers and the desire to see magnificent animals in the flesh is something many pen on their bucket lists from a small child. But as this desire grows, sadly so does the need for a more exciting experience, the urge to get closer.

Enter the Lion Parks in South Africa. Lion Parks offer tourists (and locals) the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the continents most beautiful animals. Lion Parks, often also dressed 'safari parks', offer guests the opportunity to have guided tours around their grounds, during these tours you will see Lions, Leopards, Caracals, and in some cases even Tigers in their enclosures, and the grand finale of the tour – the opportunity to bottle feed and cuddle a lion cub, or whatever cubs are currently available on the facility. Sounds incredible right? Definitely one for your bucket list? Wrong, your lion selfie has inadvertently just sentenced that cub to death. Lion Parks, or 'breeding farms' are businesses, businesses which are making \$100k each and every year through a long chain of events.

The Truth Behind The Lion Parks

For the unknowing tourist, you may question what is wrong with what is happening here. The animals in the parks look reasonably healthy, your guides have stories about how the cubs have been rejected by their mums, therefore hand reared and eventually they will be released onto reserves to live a life in the wild. The guides will tell you everything you want to hear and will encourage you to take the photos so your friends and 'followers' will want to come along too. Essentially, the guides are not lying. The cubs will eventually be sold to reserves, canned hunting reserves with yet another price tag over their heads. The price tag of a bullet. The lion cub you just cuddled, has now been passed onto the next link in the horrendous chain of events. The hunting industry is particularly popular with a certain type of western



tourist, an industry where they are presented with a price list containing every type of animal they are able to hunt, simply choose from a list, pay the money (up to \$45 000 for a male lion with a thick mane, females go for significantly less at around \$5000 -8000) , the animal and the hunt is then provided. A hunt where the animal is designed to not be able to win. But wait, there is yet another link in this chain. The Lion's bones. The carcass of the hunted Lions is often sold to various parts of Asia, disguised as Tiger bone for medicinal purposes. It is thought each skeleton is worth \$60 000 by the time it has been processed and sold the end consumer as 'tiger' cake. From 2014 to 2016, South Africa legally exported an estimated 1300 lion skeletons each year.

You can quickly see how much of a lucrative business this has become. And what about the adult cats you see in the parks? Essentially they are breeding machines, constantly pregnant, producing cubs for the next group of unwitting tourists to take their selfies. Cubs which are snatched away from them at just four weeks of age, in some cases even younger. And when they have no longer have a use, when they are no longer able to breed, they are replaced and face a similar fate to the cubs which have been stolen from them over the years. Currently, there are an estimated 300 breeding farms across South Africa alone, across these farms there are an estimated 12 000 big cats. Currently, this 'industry' is showing no signs of slowing down, and with this process currently being legal in South Africa, these animals do not currently have a glimmer of hope. Suddenly your lion cub selfie doesn't seem so appealing, right? Yet every hour, a new cub selfie or photo is uploaded to Instagram. Not through ignorance, but a lack of

knowledge, a person on their travels getting wrapped on the excitement. A person thinking about the likes and comments said photo may receive. Deep down they may know it's wrong, but they decide to push the voice to the back of their mind because the nice lady who shows them around the Lion Park has a scripted answer to every question you may have.

I am a firm believer in education. As responsible travellers, we need to be educating people on the truth behind the Lion cub selfie, not through embarrassment and shaming on photos. But through evidence explaining the process, in an ever-connected world, slide in their DMs with a link to an article explaining the truth. By reporting the images when we see them on social media. These constant ripples may eventually create a large tide in which these platforms take this more seriously. Most people would not even dream now of posting a photo of them riding an elephant in Thailand, through pure embarrassment, let's make the lion selfie the same. If you know someone who is going travelling or visiting South Africa on a holiday, bring it up in conversation before they leave, give them an ethical solution to where they can responsibly see animals. They may not have even considered visiting the cubs, but if they have you will have potentially stopped them making a terrible mistake. We do not want to be known as the generation who were known for choosing a like over a life. We do not want to be known as the people who funded mass production, factory farming of animal cruelty. So next time, you see a smiling tourist posing with a Lion cub on Instagram. Do not hit the like button and coo over how adorable the cub is. Think of the difference you can make to ensure another generation of cubs are not born for the bullet. ○

Where Charlie Wanders

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Best things to do in Ljubljana, Slovenia

➤ When thinking of city break in Europe, Ljubljana might not be the first place that comes to mind. Well, it should be. Forget Rome, Barcelona, Paris. Ljubljana is where it's at. And to prove this point to you, I have put together a list of the best things to do in Ljubljana.

Ljubljana castle

First up, Ljubljana castle. When wandering around the city you would be hard pushed not to notice the castle perched on top of the hill, looking down over the rest of the city. There are two options to get up there. First up – the hike. I can't attest how tough it is, as I went for option two. The funicular. This starts from the bottom of the hill, near the old town and ascends to the top of the hill in mere minutes. The cost of a return is €4. But, it is also included in the ticket for the castle. The castle itself is free to wander around. However, in my opinion there isn't that much to see without a ticket to get into the other parts. It's not well signposted and loses a bit of its context. I booked myself onto a tour – the behind bars tour. I found this gave a lot historical info and interest to the castle, but the price of the ticket also included the return funicular, and entry to ALL of the castle's content. You can also buy a ticket, that doesn't include a tour, for €10 which is 10% cheaper online. You also get all the content which includes my next two points (lots of options here!). This castle has an amazing history throughout the ages – head to the virtual film to start to learn the fascinating origins of life on the castle hill.

Panoramic tower

For the best views, head up to the tower in Ljubljana castle. Access is via a beautiful red spiral staircase, cleverly designed to have an up and a down so you don't have that awkward trying to pass someone moment. Unfortunately the day I headed up there, the weather wasn't the best. However, the views were still fantastic. You can see the curve of the Ljubljanica river around the city and all of the famous landmarks. On a clear day, you can see a third of the entire country. A third!

Puppet museum

Perhaps not for everyone, I definitely found it a little odd. But it was included in the price of the castle ticket, so hey why not? Puppetry seems to be a big part of Slovenian culture and history, so this small exhibition is here all year round. It's small but also interactive if you fancy giving it a go.

Free Walking tour

Featured on my best things to do in Ljubljana list as this is such a good way to get to know a city. The Ljubljana free tour meets every day, come rain or shine, in Prešeren Square at 11am. The tours are completely free, the guides work for tips only. Because their income relies on the tips they are

given, they are super enthusiastic, knowledgeable and deliver a great tour. It covers a lot of the main sights, Prešeren Square, Congress Square, the Cathedral, the bridges, Market & Plečnik Colonade, Town Hall, Town Square & Robba Fountain, National Library and the University. Brilliant for the first day you arrive, and gives so much history and facts about all the sights to see.

Eat Jota

Of course some food needs to feature on a best things to do in Ljubljana list. When I go somewhere new one of the most important things is to eat some of the local food. This box was first ticked in the form of Jota. A Slovenian dish consisting of sauerkraut, potato, tiny bits of fried lard and local sausage. Absolutely delicious. It does also come in a veggie version if the sausage isn't for you! Be warned though, it is incredibly filling! A perfect, scrumptious autumnal dish.

Metelkova

A very different part of the city. This area was once a former army barracks, but was then taken over by squatters. It has now been turned into a hub for nightlife, artists and independent spirit. At night it's a really buzzing night scene – although not necessarily my vibe. However during the day, it is really interesting to walk around and see some of the amazing street art which can be found on the buildings. It's only about a 15 minute walk from the river, so very easy to get to.

Check out all the bridges

Ljubljana is famous for its bridges, with good reason. Each has its own history, name and story behind it. I had two favourites. Firstly the Dragon's Bridge. The dragon is the symbol of Ljubljana. There are two legends behind the history of the bridge. One involving Jason and the Argonauts and the other George and the dragon. Both equally interesting and the architecture is definitely worth checking out. My other favourite was Triple Bridge. When it was originally built, the first in the city, it was only one bridge. It is also the only bridge to have survived a great earthquake that re-shaped the architecture of Ljubljana in 1895. But when cars were introduced into the city, they realised it wasn't wide enough. Instead of tearing down the well built bridge the architect, Plečnik (whose work is featured all over the city) added the two additional bridges for pedestrians. The shoemakers bridge and butchers bridge are also both beautiful and need to be seen.

Grab some ice cream

Ljubljana is famed for having delicious ice cream parlours. I think people fall into two categories over which they prefer – the Vigo vs Cacao debate! I tried both during my time in the city, and have to say Vigo was my favourite. At only €1,60 for a deliciously large

scoop it was a highlight. I think it is important to try both, just to be sure which one you prefer.

Try a burger at Pop's Place

As I said in a point above, I know when you are visiting somewhere new the instinct is to want to eat all the local food. I do agree with this, but I am happy to make an exception for Pop's Place. It definitely needs to feature on any best things to do in Ljubljana list. This may be the best burger I have had. I went for 'The Boss' which is their classic. Grilled onion marmalade, stilton and truffle aioli. Yum. Plus, they serve lots of local craft beers and local wines. Washing down my burger with a glass of Blažič Rebula felt pretty Slovenian to me.

Explore the open market

Every Friday evening there is an open market in the market area of the town. This is where a lot of the local restaurants set up stalls and serve some of their food. A great place to grab some absolutely delicious food, lots of options and cheaper than the restaurants. Note, it is only open during the summer months so do check when the last one is, if you are visiting out of season.

Take a day trip

However beautiful the city of Ljubljana is, I am including a day trip on my list of best things to do in Ljubljana. It is definitely worth taking the time to get out of the city for a day. And as the country is so small, much of it is accessible from Ljubljana itself. There are so many day trips available. Options include tours into the surrounding countryside of Slovenia, but also a day tour to Venice or Zagreb if you have more time. I opted for a one day tour to go and see Lake Bled, and some of the other beautiful spots near Ljubljana. If time is not on your side, a trip out to Lake Bled is definitely where I recommend to start.

Check out the amazing architecture

One of the best things to do in Ljubljana is to see all the amazing buildings. There are lots of different influences to be found across the city with inspiration from Venice and the Austro-Hungarian empire. Check out the amazing Vurnik building, which has such beautiful colours!

Stay in hostel Celica

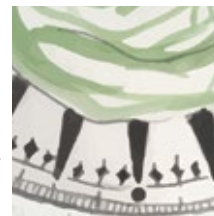
I love staying somewhere quirky, and Hostel Celica certainly delivered on that! Once a former prison, and now a great place to stay. Located in the Metelkova area of the city, so super cool and easy to walk to all the main sights and city centre. More on my stay to come!

So there you have it, my best things to do in Ljubljana. A pretty cool city, I think you'll agree and somewhere that I urge you to consider for your next city break! Have you ever been to Ljubljana? What would be on your 'best things to do in Ljubljana' list? ○

4 The Rare Welsh Bit

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MY FAVOURITE CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT: BB'S CRABBACK – ST. GEORGE'S, GRENADA
February 3, 2020

I visited BB's Crabback for the first time while on a press trip with Discover Grenada in 2018, returning for a second visit while holidaying in Grenada in 2019.

Tucked into a little nook just around the corner from the Carenage on Grand Etang Road in Grenada's capital, St. George's, BB's Crabback is perhaps the most famous restaurant on the so-called Island of Spice.

A vibrant building flanked by leafy green plants, BB's is difficult to miss, although if you can't find it, the smiling locals will happily point you in the right direction.

Stepping inside this colourful Caribbean restaurant, you're met with a wall lined with newspaper and magazine clippings showcasing its success, including articles from the likes of The Telegraph, Time Out and OK Magazine. Even before you reach the dining area, you can sense you're in for a real treat!

Overlooking the Carenage as far down as Port Louis Marina, the restaurant is refreshingly breezy even on a hot day, with paper lanterns swaying to and fro in the wind. Sip on a refreshing grapefruit Ting (or, if you're fancying something stronger, BB's rum punch really lives up to its name!) and admire the scenery as you listen to the waves splashing against the deck.

Everywhere you look, there are hundreds of names scrawled over the walls in marker pens. While this might look a little shabby at first glance, it's an important aspect of the dining experience at BB's; everyone who eats here is handed a pen and invited to make their mark before they leave.

In 2019, BB's Crabback featured in UK celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott's highly-acclaimed TV series, Ainsley's Caribbean Kitchen, with owner, Brian Benjamin giving the man himself a lesson in how to cook the Grenadian national dish, oil down. However, the story of BB's Crabback actually began many years ago in London.

THE STORY OF BB'S CRABBACK CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT

In 1971, at the age of 13, Brian Benjamin (now 61-years-old) moved to London from Grenada with his family. After school, he completed a cookery apprenticeship with London Transport, enabled him to get to grips with classical French cuisine. He went on to work in the kitchens at the Renaissance Hotel at Heathrow Airport, before winning several Salon Culinaire awards. The turning point came in 1993, when Brian (at the age of 35) opened his first restaurant in Ealing,

west London. BB's Crabback was born!

Having mastered the art of cooking Caribbean food with a little help from his grandmother, Brian ensured all the dishes she'd taught him to cook appeared on the menu at his new restaurant. Sadly though, despite being popular among the local Caribbean community, the restaurant was struggling to generate a profit. Eventually, Brian forced to admit defeat and shut up shop.

While it may not have seemed it at the time, the failure of Brian's first restaurant actually paved the way for the astounding success of BB's Crabback as we know it today. In 2007, Brian went back to his roots and opened his second restaurant on its current site in St. George's.

THE MENU

A quick glance at BB's Crabback's menu reveals an abundance of authentic Grenadian dishes with occasional Creole influences. Many of the dishes are named after Brian's immediate family, including Ava's Pancakes (named after one of his twin daughters) and Meaty Mia (named after his other twin daughter).

All of the food served at BB's is prepared using ingredients grown in the family garden. From lemons and limes to pineapples and passion fruits, whatever fruit you could possibly desire, you're almost certain to find it in Brian's garden. The family also grow fresh veg and herbs, including lettuce, peppers, rosemary and thyme. Anything they're unable to grow themselves is sourced from a nearby organic farm or butcher, with chemically enhanced, hormone-pumped supermarket produce a major no-go.

BB'S CRABBACK: THE DISH THEY NAMED THE RESTAURANT AFTER

It should go without saying that you can't visit BB's Crabback without trying Brian's signature crabback (\$36 EC) it's so good, he decided to name his restaurant after it!

After sampling the crabback for myself on not one, but two occasions, it's clear to see what all the fuss is about. Fresh, flaky cooked crabmeat is mixed with tangy cheese, white wine, rich cream and aromatic herbs before being cooked over a gentle heat and stuffed back into its shell. While it's not the most aesthetically pleasing dish, what it lacks in looks, it more than makes up for in flavour. An absolute must if you're ever lucky enough to get to BB's



Crabback yourself, I don't think I could possibly come here without ordering it again – it's an unwritten law!

BB'S SIGNATURE GOAT CURRY (THE BEST I'VE TASTED IN ANY CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT)

Almost as famous as the crabback (almost!), BB's goat curry (\$71 EC) is another signature dish that I can never say no to, having ordered it on both of my past visits. I'm not sure if you've ever tasted goat before, but whenever anyone asks me to describe the taste, I tell them it's almost like eating beef or mild-tasting game with a texture not dissimilar to that of lamb (although older goat might

be a little tougher, like mutton).

The goat in BB's Crabback's curry is slow-cooked until the meat flakes away from the bone when you tease it with your fork, served in a rich, gently-spiced curry sauce topped with coconut shavings and teamed with fragrant, fluffy rice n'peas served in hollowed-out bamboo cane.

While I can't vouch for the taste of any of the other mains at BB's myself, if we're going on looks alone, the sight of the king prawns Seretse (\$79 EC) – named after Brian's second son – is enough to make me drool. Consisting of gigantic, juicy prawns cooked in butter with lobster and mango sauce, this is unlike any dish I've seen on a Caribbean restaurant menu before.

CARIBBEAN-INSPIRED DESSERTS

The portions at BB's are so generous, there's no way in hell you'll still be feeling hungry by the time dessert comes around. Once you catch a glimpse of the dessert menu, though, the prospect of leaving without something seriously sweet passing through your lips is also virtually impossible. For a show-stopping dish, go for the bananas flamed in rum and lemon (\$29 EC).

Now, all that's left to do is pay the bill and scrawl on the wall!

BB's Crabback is from Monday to Sunday for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Please call (473) 435-7058 to place a booking in advance. Visit <http://www.bbscrabbackrestaurant.com> for more information.

I visited BB's Crabback for the first time while on a press trip with Discover Grenada in 2018, returning for a second visit while holidaying in Grenada in 2019. ○

What Kirsty did next

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A slice of Paradise in the Maldives

➤ The Maldives really is a special place and unlike any other. Situated south-west of Sri Lanka and India, the Maldives is comprised of a number of atolls and 1,190 islands. There are 132 resorts to choose from and this time, for our second visit to the Maldives, we chose to stay at Reethi Rah by One&Only. Two years ago we stayed at Huvaafen Fushi, which is also in the North Male Atoll but is very different – smaller and more intimate.

How to get there

We started our two week holiday in Hong Kong so we flew in to Male from there. As our flight was only landing at 8:30 pm, we opted to stay one night in Male as the speed boat to the resort takes an hour and we didn't see the point in arriving so late. In Male we stayed at the Samann Grand, which was actually really nice – very modern in design and the staff were absolutely lovely.

In the morning we got a taxi to the airport where we waited around 45 minutes for other guests to arrive before getting the boat to Reethi Rah. Within an hour we had arrived – in style!

The room

Waiting for us on the jetty was the lovely Oni, who was to be our personal butler during our six night stay. The resort is really quite large so Oni took us on a tour so we could orientate ourselves, en-route to our water villa which was situated on Frangipani beach. The room was absolutely stunning! It's 149 square meters (1603 square feet) so really spacious.

There are two kinds of water villa – one with a pool and one without. Ours didn't have a pool but who needs one when you've got the sea at your feet? I loved these hammock-style places to lie but honestly, they were quite difficult to get on and off! The king sized bed was super comfy and luxurious with beautiful bedding and cushions.

We slept very well! There was motion sensor lighting under the bed so if you got up in the night to go to the bathroom, it would come on for a few seconds so you could see better. The bathroom was huge! It was also where the wardrobes were and for once in my life I actually completely unpacked all our clothes so we wouldn't be living half out a suitcase. It was a game changer!

It had his and hers basins with lovely customised toiletry bags full of essentials such as vanity kits, toothpaste, toothbrush, mouth wash and shaving gel and razor. The bath was just glorious. I am definitely a bath person and having a bath whilst watching the sun set, with the blinds up, was so relaxing. I was just hoping no one swam past!



The TV had loads of films to watch, which is handy if the weather isn't great. Luckily for us, we had great weather – apart from one morning when it bucketed down for about 20 minutes.

You can order breakfast in your room for just a tray charge. We did this one morning before we were meant to go on an excursion, however this is the morning it bucketed down with rain and the excursion was cancelled. The only negative aspect was that, whilst the villas were fairly far apart, you could see some of them from your terrace so it wasn't completely private.

The resort

The resort was much bigger than we were expecting. In fact, we had bicycles to get around, which we loved! The island is 6km and is shaped a bit like an octopus. It's got 12 beaches (most of which are by villas) and two pools – one of which is an infinity pool. There are also six restaurants and a spa, gym and tennis courts. Our favourite beach was Reethi beach, which was by the main restaurant, which had three different areas – French, Italian and Asian. This is also where breakfast was served and I have to say, the options at breakfast were fantastic. There was so much to choose from – from eggs Benedict to dim sum and waffles. They also had a wonderful selection of fresh juices and smoothies, which you could order at your table or at the juice bar. And the view wasn't bad either...

Reethi beach is also where the pool is as well as the infinity pool. Oddly it was pretty quiet, which is why we liked it. There were a lot of families when we were there and I think they preferred the Beach Club or swimming by their villas. The infinity pool is for adults only and it also has a built-in jacuzzi! The pool was so tranquil and I loved how it was surrounded by palm trees. Like the infinity pool it also had a built-in jacuzzi.

The Beach Club wasn't our cup of tea because the sun beds were too close together and it was definitely for families, with inflatables in the sea, games, table

tennis and art classes. We did eat lunch there a few times though. The food was good!

In terms of restaurants there are six to choose from. We had half board which included dinner at Reethi and Fanditha. If we wanted to dine at the other restaurants we got credit. We ate at every restaurant bar one, at least once.

Surprising Reethi was one of my favourites, even though it's also where you have breakfast. I liked it because there are three areas, with three different menus – French, Asian and Italian – so it didn't feel like you were eating in the same place.

I thought Tapasake, the Japanese restaurant would be my favourite but it wasn't. The food was good but it lacked something... what was awesome was this was where the sharks came at night, which was very cool to watch. Another restaurant I really liked was Botanica, which is a garden to fork restaurant. All the herbs and vegetables are grown in their garden and the rest of the food is locally sourced. I liked it also because it was different – it wasn't situated by any water but rather under the Banyan trees and the stars. The bar also has an extensive gin and tonic menu.

What to do

When you're in paradise, the only thing to do is enjoy it! Seriously though, if you're wondering whether a beach island holiday is for you, there are lots of things to do.

We loved spending some time before or after lunch cycling around the island. We don't get to cycle at all at home in London so it's always a treat when we can do so on holiday.

Spend the afternoon or morning relaxing at the spa. I only went to the spa once but it was really nice. Anyone can go and enjoy the facilities without having to have a treatment. There are different relaxation areas for men and women with a sauna, steam room and outdoor pool. If you're quite active, there are loads of activities you can do – from water sports to playing tennis, beach volleyball or football. There's also a gym and two running routes, yoga classes in the morning and more. We did a private snorkelling trip to a reef to go and see the turtles and it was amazing!

One of the highlights of our trip was a sunset champagne cruise which I bought for my husband as a birthday present. It was absolutely magical.

We were lucky in that there was only one other couple on the trip so we basically had the boat to ourselves! I would 100% book this again if we return!

We had an absolutely wonderful time at Reethi Rah. We loved the resort, our room was amazing and the food was great and we'd definitely return to this island paradise! ☺

Will cookie laws impact our stats and revenue?



Elaine Malone, of tech blog **XOmissé**, takes a look into how browser updates and regulations surrounding cookies may impact our website metrics and ad revenue

Data is the core of digital businesses and we have cookies to thank for the majority of data we are able to collect. As content creators, we rely on cookies more than we realise. We use them to track users' activity, gather stats and metrics, serve ads, learn customers' behavior, and display media.

But as we all move for more control over our privacy online, new laws are going to have an impact on how we market our services, products and content. The result of this is likely to have an effect on our site metrics and revenue. And it's already started!

An analysis, conducted by Flashtalking, of twenty companies worldwide found that 64% of their tracking cookies were either blocked or deleted by web browsers. They also found that 75% of mobile cookies and 41% of desktop cookies were rejected.

What are cookies?

A cookie is a small text file that is downloaded onto a device when the

user accesses a website/app. It allows the site to recognise the user's device and store information about the user's preferences or past actions.

Cookies can be used in numerous ways, such as remembering what's in a shopping basket, supporting users to log in to a website, analysing traffic to a website and tracking users' browsing behaviour.

In general, there are three different ways to classify cookies: their provenance, duration and purpose.

Provenance

First-party cookies are set directly by the website the user is visiting. Third-party cookies are set by a domain other than the one the user is visiting. This typically occurs when the website incorporates elements from other sites such as images, functionality such as social media plugins or embeds, statistics and metrics tracking and advertising.

Duration

Persistent cookies remain on a user's device for a period of time specified in the cookie, while session cookies allow website operators to temporarily link the actions of a user during a browser session (from when the user opens a web browser until they close it).

Purpose

The UK International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) developed the following system for classifying cookies as documented in their UK Cookie guide.

1. Strictly necessary cookies - these are essential in order to enable users to move around your website and use its features (such as accessing secure areas of a site, page navigation and holding items in shopping baskets).
2. Performance or statistics cookies - these collect anonymous information about the pages users go to most and if there are errors on



This change may block some cookies from loading on your site and therefore break some functionality

these pages. These can also include web analytics if the data collected is limited to the website operator's use only for managing the performance and design of a site.

- 3. Functional or preference cookies - these allow the website to remember choices made by the user (such as username, language and location).
- 4. Targeting, marketing or advertising cookies - these are used to deliver adverts that are relevant to users and their specific interests.

How Brexit, GDPR and other cookie laws affect our websites

Cookies for analytics, advertising and functional services that could identify users are subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in May 2018. If you're based in the UK, you are also subject to the requirements of The Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR), which sit alongside the Data Protection Act and the GDPR, and give specific privacy rights in relation to electronic communications.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), who are the UK's data protection authority, issued new guidance that consent is necessary for all statistical/analytic cookies. They feel that analytics are not necessary to provide your services (as an example users should be able to access your website whether analytic cookies are enabled or not). However, in the EU, first-party analytics are exempt from having to obtain consent as they believe that analytics are functional since they provide us with information about how visitors engage with our services.

In terms of Brexit, as you may suspect there doesn't seem to be any concrete news for what's coming. However the ICO have said that there will be a transition period of roughly eleven months starting from the official Brexit date, where GDPR rules will still apply in the UK. It is uncertain what will be the case after that period, but as the UK was heavily involved in drafting GDPR it's likely some form of the regulations

will continue to apply.

How browsers deal with cookies

Google's Chrome browser is the biggest in the market with 64% share according to StatCounter Global Stats.

In August 2019, Google announced on their Chromium Blog that they are planning to phase out support for third-party cookies in Chrome within the next two years. Their goal of this new initiative (known as Privacy Sandbox) is to "make the web more private and secure for users, while also supporting publishers". Before completely phasing out support for third-party cookies, they hope to address the needs of users, publishers and advertisers as well as develop workaround tools. They are confident that they can sustain a healthy, ad-supported web in a way that will render third-party cookies obsolete.

In February 2020, Chrome started to roll out version 80 of their browser. Chrome 80 will change how it handles cookies as part of their long-term plan to increase security. It will now restrict cookies to first-party access by default, requiring web developers to explicitly

mark cookies for access through secure connections in third-party contexts.

- Cookies without a SameSite attribute will be treated as if they had SameSite=Lax set, which will restrict them to first-party only
- Cookies for third-party contexts must be marked with SameSite=None; Secure.

This change may block some cookies from loading on your site and therefore break some functionality. You can check this in the Chrome development tools under Console. If this happens and it is a first-party cookie, you (or your developer) will need to update them. You should also make sure that your self-hosted site is running on the latest PHP version. PHP 7.3 supports the SameSite attribute. If it's a third-party cookie, you may need to get in touch with the company for support.

But following the changes, cookies will only be available in third party contexts if they are being accessed from secure connections. And because developers will now have to declare their cookies' SameSite attribute to stop

Google changing their settings to a more secure option, it could break sites that haven't been able to address the issue.

Both Apple's Safari and Mozilla's Firefox have strong measures in place to prevent third-party tracking already. Firefox 72 blocks fingerprinting scripts by default for all users. Fingerprinting can be used to track users for months, even if browser storage is cleared and even if private browsing mode is used; with Firefox 72, users will be protected from this increasingly used tracking method. Safari made tracking users more difficult by deleting third-party cookies after 24 hours.

How to check and update your PHP version

WordPress is written in a programming language called PHP. This allows content to be saved and read from the database, pulls in different files and just makes your site run as it should. WordPress recommend PHP version 7.3 or greater. Ensuring that you are using an up-to-date version will mean your site can run faster, be more stable,

use resources more efficiently and be more protected.

A simple way to check what version you are currently on is by installing the Display PHP Version plugin or Wordfence security plugin.

You can then update the version within your web host panel, which is usually under PHP settings, PHP Version Manager or something similar. If you're not sure you can contact your web host or developer, who should be able to do this for you. It's important to note that updating your PHP version may cause some compatibility issues with outdated themes and plugins. But as mentioned, staying on an old version of PHP can have a negative affect on your site's performance, leave it open to security issues and now also, block cookies.

Moving forward

It's clear to see that cookies are evolving and that tracking as we know it is changing too. It will be interesting to see how browsers, mobile devices and regulators have an impact on our websites, our stats and our revenue. ○

listings

We've only shown you a little taster, but we really do implore,
That you drop by the blogs, and go read some more...

Anastasia Kingsnorth

Anastasia Kingsnorth:

www.instagram.com/anastasiakingsnorth

Fitness

Leela Jasmine Sule: www.getupandgrowgirl.com

Zanna Laczó: www.instagram.com/zannalaczo

Diah Rasid: www.instagram.com/diahrasid

Shayaan Kahn: www.instagram.com/shayaankahn

Jaffer Cake: www.instagram.com/jaffer_cake

Chloe Hamard: www.instagram.com/chloehamard_pt

Business

The She Approach: thesheapproach.com

Flourishing Business Mum: flourishingbusinessmum.com

Sweet and Simple Life: sweetandsimplelife.com

The Quiet Type: thequiettypeblog.com

Incoming Success: incomingsuccess.com

The Content Bug: thecontentbug.com

Cover Interview

Nikki Lilly: www.instagram.com/nikkililly_

Lifestyle

SophieCliff: www.sophiecliff.com

The Enthusiastic: theenthusiast.co

Teadayblogs: www.instagram.com/teadayblogs

Blue Jay of Happiness: bluejayofhappiness.com

A Rosie Outlook: www.arosieoutlook.com

Rhianna Olivia: www.rhiannaolivia.com

Jennifer Quigley-Jones

Jennifer Quigley-Jones: twitter.com/jenj

Click For Taz

Click For Taz: www.youtube.com/user/ClickForTaz

Fashion

Meilifisayo: meilifisayo.com

Styling the way forward: www.instagram.com/stwfblog

Abbienaija: www.instagram.com/abbienaija

Art becomes you: www.instagram.com/artbecomesyou

Doris Magenta: www.instagram.com/doris_magenta

Ellasfashionfix: www.instagram.com/ellasfashionfix

Makeup Junkie G

Makeup Junkie G: www.youtube.com/c/makeupjunkieg

Beauty

Lady Writes: www.ladywritesblog.com

Hayley Hall: www.hayleyhall.uk

Boy Does Beauty: www.instagram.com/boydoesbeauty

My Skinology: www.instagram.com/my.skinology

Style By MK Design: www.instagram.com/stylebymkdesign

A Brunette Edit: www.instagram.com/abrunetteedit

Chessie King

Chessie King: www.instagram.com/chessiekingg

Charities: using influencers as a force for good

Charlotte West: inkdries.wordpress.com



Parenting

Life According to MrsShilts: www.mrsshilts.co.uk
Dear Bear and Beany: www.dearbearandbeany.com
Sorry about the mess: sorry-about-the-mess.co.uk
Soph-obsessed: www.sophobsessed.com
The Fat Funny One: www.instagram.com/thefatfunnyone
Unlikely Dad: www.instagram.com/unlikelydad

Photography

JKG Photography: jkgphotography.co.uk
Blue Spit: www.bluespit.co.uk
Moeez: www.instagram.com/moeez
Cass Michael Photography:
www.instagram.com/cassmichaelphotography
Sean Whitty: www.instagram.com/seanwhitty

Books

frombeewithlove: www.frombeewithlove.com
Daisy Chains & Headspace: daisychains.co
Olivia's Catastrophe: oliviascatastrophe.com
Booksandquills: www.booksandquills.co.uk
Clumsy Words: www.instagram.com/clumsy.words
Word Child: www.instagram.com/wordchild

When did 'Vegan' become a dirty word?

Yvette Barnett: yvettesvibes.net

Food

Mint & Rosemary: www.mintandrosemary.com
Ruby and B: www.rubyandbjournal.com
Borrowed Light: www.borrowed-light.com
Simply Food By Mandy:
www.instagram.com/simplyfoodbymandy
In Good Taste: www.instagram.com/ingoodtaste_
East Coast Avocet: www.instagram.com/eastcoastavocet

Diversity

Kemi Alemoru: twitter.com/kemioliviax
Lottie L'Amour: www.instagram.com/lottielamour
Grace Victory: www.instagram.com/gracefvictory
Jamie Windust: www.instagram.com/jamie_windust

Travel

Binny's Food and Travel: www.binnysfoodandtravel.com
The life of a social butterfly:
www.thelifeofasocialbutterfly.co.uk
Yoko Meshi: www.yokomeshi.co.uk
Where Charlie Wanders: wherecharliewanders.com
The Rare Welsh Bit: www.therarewelshbit.com
What Kirsty Did Next: whatkirstydidnext.com

Will cookie laws affect our stats and revenue

Elaine Malone: xomisse.com

Five Minutes With...

Alice Audley: www.aliceaudley.com



Five minutes with...

Alice Audley

Founder and CEO, Blogosphere

When did you start Blogosphere?

I was looking at this recently. The first issue came out on October 17th 2013, but I'd made a Blogosphere magazine Facebook page on 31st January 2013. A long time ago, basically!

Why did you start Blogosphere?

I started a blog in 2012 during a postgraduate journalism diploma. They said on the course that I needed a blog if I wanted to break into the world of media - so I started it as a means to an end. But quickly I became obsessed and my favourite thing to do was blog, and read other people's blogs. After I completed my diploma, I tried to get a job in journalism... and it was much harder than I expected, and resulted in an early quarter-life crisis! I was going to interview after interview and nothing seemed to stick.

When I got home after one particularly dreadful interview (where in the final stage interview they changed the position from an editorial assistant to a pr assistant), rather than watch tv to unwind, I found myself reading one of my favourite travel bloggers. I read through her archive, and then went out looking for more content. It

was completely overwhelming; for every good blog, there were tens that were out of date, and the lists that were out there recommending bloggers were all written by pr companies or marketing agencies - all with an element of bias. And in that moment, I thought who better to recommend blogs to read than bloggers, and could that be done not just in travel but over lots of different genres... and that's when the idea for Blogosphere magazine was born!

My blog actually led to me getting a job at *The Daily Telegraph* - I worked at the paper for three years, before going full-time with Blogosphere in 2016.

How has Blogosphere evolved?

I'd say the main thing is that we've grown a lot. Blogosphere magazine covers the whole sphere of social media - instagrammers, vloggers, TikTokers, Tweeters etc. We have also got an events part of the business, including the behemoth that is the Blogosphere Awards!

We now cover the business side of the influencer industry through our podcast *Serious Influence*, so

we have a good understanding of what's going on on both sides of the space. And from that understanding we have launched our tech platform - the Blogosphere Network, which aims to bring real feedback between brands and influencers.

So we've grown a lot, but our core values have stayed the same - we take influencers and creators seriously, we want to make the space feel less overwhelming, and everything we do is quality over quantity (just feel the paper this is printed on!).

Favourite social media platform?

This is tricky. I do like longer form content - something that engages me for more than a few seconds. So blogs, YouTube, podcasts... this isn't really answering the question is it?

Happiest when...

Writing.

Describe yourself in 3 words...

Confident. Impulsive. Driven.

Quote you like to live by...

We're all going to die. So go for it, you don't know if you'll be here tomorrow. ☺

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