



ASK AMANDA JAYNE

I would love to hear from you and will reply to letters which, if we print them, will remain anonymous. Your details will be treated confidentially. Email me at harleysttherapy@gmail.com or ring me on 07760 669246. Take a look at my website at www.harleystpsychotherapy.com

January is a rubbish month. We've run out of money, patience, daylight, sunshine and energy. Christmas is over as quickly as it began (in October) and it can leave us feeling flat. Kids and grandkids are going back to school or university after eating us out of house and home and the wintery weather keeps us tucked up indoors.

One of my favourite questions to ask a client is: "If you were your own best friend, what would you do for yourself right now?"

A lot of us will have spent the holidays thinking of others and catering for family and friends, and making sure everyone has a good time. Self-care (not to be confused with being self-ish) is very often the last thing that anyone thinks about, especially over the Christmas period.

Yet taking care of oneself has a knock-on effect on everyone around us. If we are happier, healthier, less stressed, then our families and close friends reap the benefits of a jollier, happier, more contented us.

If we are feeling good, then we are more likely to be open and available to the people around us, and we can let our good feelings permeate to those around us. You know that person who is always smiling and fun and easy to be with? You can bet they practice a lot of self-care.

Clues that you are not practicing enough self care:

- You put everyone else first, doing things for others even if it makes things hard for you
- You say yes when you mean no, and vice versa
- You constantly worry about what other people think of you
- You feel anxious or stressed a lot of the time
- You cannot sleep; your brain won't let you, even though you feel tired
- You feel flat or deflated, without much enthusiasm for anything
- You feel like a failure

New Year, new start, new you

It is time that you started to look after yourself rather than just thinking about everyone else. **Amanda Jayne**, our expert psychotherapist and counsellor has advice on how to begin the process of self-care.

- Your inner narrative is negative, such as 'I should be more/less...'

Apart from the basics, like making sure you eat regularly and healthily and get enough rest, you can also start to look after your mental health by talking things over with a counsellor/psychotherapist.

Counsellors and psychotherapists are not just there to help with the big mental health problems. Anxiety or depression can sometimes creep up on us and before we know it we are feeling fed up and struggling to sleep.

Talking things over with an impartial, and fully trained counsellor can help you to process the way you deal with things in your life and help you to look after yourself better. Looking after your mental health as well as your physical health can lead to a more contented and fulfilled life.

It maybe time to process some of the things that have happened to you in your life which have been difficult, and find a clearer path through.

When looking for a counsellor it is important to make sure that they are qualified; have membership of a professional body, and most importantly, that by the end of the first session you feel completely at ease. If after the first session you don't feel at ease, then perhaps that person is not a good 'fit' for you. It's important that you feel totally comfortable with your counsellor, first session nerves aside.



Photo: Jacob Lund/Getty

Properly qualified counsellors and psychotherapists:

- Will have a university degree or diploma in counselling/psychotherapy
- Will be a member of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP) or the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).

Please be very wary of any counsellors who are not members of either of the above and make sure you check out their qualifications. Some private training providers can produce certificates which look like a proper qualification but are actually only a home-study short course or online course. A fully qualified counsellor or psychotherapist will have trained for three to four years at a university or on college courses accredited by one of the above professional bodies. **IT**

A good place to find a counsellor in your area is **The Counselling Directory**, which you can find online at: www.counselling-directory.org.uk