

# Press Reset FOR 2017

We're so over 2016. It's time to look forward to a year of possibility and positivity. Here's how to own the next 12 months of your life...

**F**eel like changing things up? Whether last year was pretty damn brilliant or pretty damn awful, everyone could do with some lessons in how to be more positive,

feel stronger, both emotionally and physically, and be better able to cope with problems. Here are some simple tools you can put in place that will make this year altogether better.

## Want to feel more fulfilled?

The chart below is a Life Pie. No one will have a perfectly balanced chart, but there should be *some* proportion. People who live well-rounded lives are happier, more fulfilled and confident. For example, if 75% of your pie is 'work' and you lose your job, you may regret not investing more time in other areas. If the slices are more balanced, when things shift and shudder – as they will, that's life – you'll have other things to fall back on.

### Top tools

Draw a circle and divvy it up into these eight areas, using rough percentage 'slices' to represent how much of your life you give to each. Consider the literal amount of time you spend as well as the headspace you give each. Be honest.

Are any slices massively out of proportion? Are there some that don't exist at all? Commit to having a more evenly sliced pie. Write down every heading on a sheet of paper then, underneath it, jot down realistic

goals to make that section more fulfilling. For example, 'Turn my phone off when I'm with my kids', 'Sign up to a dating app', 'Book that zumba class', or 'Offer to get my neighbour's groceries when I'm going shopping'.





## Want to be bolder?

All change starts with courage. Whenever you start doing things differently, you face the possibility of failure. Failure can be *good*. No one nails everything first time. Think of JK Rowling. Her first *Harry Potter* manuscript was rejected by a number of publishers before being taken on...

### Top tools

- **Ask for feedback** So you failed – use what you now know to develop and grow. Don't wallow in self-pity. Those emotions stall your life.
- **Don't use 'must' or 'should'** They suggest an external demand that you have to obey. For example, 'I *should* have gone to the gym last night' or 'I *must* do my tax return'. Swap these words for 'can/could' or 'will/would' and you'll feel more in control.
- **Practise positive visualisation** People often picture themselves failing. By imagining yourself succeeding, you experience the *buzz* of winning that award or the *pride* of receiving that promotion. Recalling these emotions makes you strive for goals.
- **Keep an achievement pinboard** When people feel insecure, they can often dismiss achievements as 'not counting'. Celebrate success – anything from getting your project in on time to having an injection when you're terrified of needles!

## Want to feel calmer?

Being more mindful means being more present in the moment – taking notice of what's happening, both in the world around you and in your own head. It stops you getting swamped by worries or strong emotions. Participants in a study\* who practised mindfulness exercises for five minutes a day for three weeks reported feeling significantly less stressed, had more positive interactions with others and felt more in control of their lives.

### Top tools

- **Stop and ask yourself, 'How is my mind at this moment?'** Is it busy? Calm? Are your thoughts racing? Is it clear? Confusing? Do it now.
- **Acknowledge the fact that you've stopped and observed your mind** You're not trying to change what's happening in there – you're just aware of it. This simple exercise is the very essence of being more mindful: stepping back and observing without punishment or judgement. You can then choose to relate to your thoughts in a more compassionate and less reactionary way. Practise this exercise for five minutes every day.

Check out free apps and websites like [freemindfulness.org](http://freemindfulness.org) or [headspace.com](http://headspace.com) for more ideas and support

## Want to be more active?

Exercise can be petrifying. All those muscly people sweating over gym equipment you have no idea how to use is enough to put anyone off.

But there are ways to improve your fitness without feeling out of your depth. Exercise releases endorphins\*\*, natural feel-good chemicals. Getting your heart pumping also releases adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine\*\* – hormones that get you 'buzzing'.

### Top tools

- **Set realistic goals** Start small – take the stairs rather than the lift, get off the bus a stop earlier and walk, cycle rather than drive small distances. So many resolutions turn to dust because they're totally unrealistic. Things like, 'I'm going to run a marathon in May' when you can't walk up the stairs without wheezing. Setting yourself up for a

fall can lead to low self-esteem.

- **Get someone else involved** If you want to try a class or sign up to a team, ask a friend to join you – you'll be less likely to let someone other than yourself down.
- **Book yourself a class with a no-cancellation policy** No one likes wasting money, so if you're going to get charged, even if you don't turn up, you'll be more likely to go.

Words: Jo Usmar. This Book Will Make You Think By Jo Usmar is out now. £8.99 (Quercus). Photograph: Getty Images