IT'S ALL ABOUT ME

Life and Living
A candid and quirky approach

with Ev Francis

Hey you! Fancy seeing you here! First things first, I had a fabulous birthday filled with way too many celebrations, gin and medium rare beef. Am I the only person who spends a week celebrating their birthday? I had some good old fashioned pampering, including a spray tan, manicure, lash lift, a birthday meal, drinks and a Sunday lunch. All that in a 23rd birthday. Wowzers, what can I say, may as well milk the cow for all it's worth!

Aside from birthday celebrations, I wanted to touch base on a few things that have got nothing to do with chronic illness, fatigue or doctors. Why? Well, our lives are filled with this illness, so let's discuss something else for a change.

The Bullet Journal

I'd first heard of this when my one of my favourite bloggers mentioned it on her platforms. She described it as the organisation tool that every person, regardless of their job, should have in their lives. Three years later, I jump on the hype because my new year's resolution was to try my best in editing and organising my life. I'm the sort of person who claims to have lost her keys when she's holding them.

Now, I've always enjoyed writing in a diary, I find it very therapeutic and something that I'd recommend everyone try once in their lifetime. I believe it's good for the ol' mental health. So, I wanted to give you a few ways bullet journalling or writing in a diary.

Though it does require a notebook, Bullet Journal® is actually a methodology. It's best described as a mindfulness practice disguised as a productivity system. It's designed to help you organize your 'what' while you remain aware of your 'why'. The goal of the Bullet Journal is to help its practitioners (bullet journalists) live intentional lives that are productive and meaningful.

Pacing

I don't mean to sound like your therapist, consultant or GP but

pacing seems to be the only form of treatment any person seems to recognise as a 'treatment' for this M.E. malarkey - which is unfair, because it's not a treatment. But if, like me, you enjoy working, then you may also find using a bullet journal a really enjoyable and efficient way of planning my month out. For me, it ensures that I can see which weeks or days are my busiest and which are quieter. I can then ensure it levels out so that I can have the days between busy days to rest, take time out and chill the hell out.

Therapeutic

I have also begun to use my bullet journal as a drawing platform, I'm no *Van Gough* but doodling a few images has become quite a nice way of zoning out of an evening - and creating cover pages for each month has also become one of my favourite activities. I have my finest fine liners and just doodle away whilst watching the latest series on TV.

Organised

I found writing in a normal diary a tad boring so I never found the system effective. Yet, bullet journalling has changed my outlook for diarising since I can make real notes of my upcoming activites without panicking. I have a two-page spread that looks like my calander and then one page for more details. Important dates and activies go on one side, outgoing debits, etc, on the two page spread. It works rather well indeed. Smashing!

Mindfulness

My therapist really encourages mindfulness, as does the creator of the bullet journal. It's a way of making the most boring activity feel therapeutic, productive and efficient without feeling like a chore that perhaps writing/noting dates down in a normal diary would do. I like to be able to write it in one box and feel like my tasks, activities and life doesn't seem to feel like a blur. It's a way of managing my tasks without pushing myself and ending up in bed for a week.

Aside from bulleting my life into a journal, I've also really enjoyed swapping my overplayed playlist of **Kylie, Trance** and **Madonna** for podcasts. Yes, I know, madness! I find them to be really useful for commutes that are boring or for when you're feeling lonely (you feel as though you are part of a bit of chit chat).

Fearne Cotton / The Happy Place

When **Fearne Cotton** stepped down from hosting her Radio 1 show, I was sad. It was the show that, when I was an avid radio listener, I would actually listen to. I like her as a celebrity, I like her fashion and most of the time her music choices. Then my music taste went from Indie rock to camp euro pop and I found that there were few radio stations playing my favourites anymore. Damn ageist radios!

So, when I saw that she was hosting a podcast, I was thinking that it had to be worth the listen - and it definitely is. Cotton speaks mainly of mental health and how celebrities such as **Zoella** and **Davina Macall** all keep 'happy' in the age of social media. It's just one interview each week but one that I enjoy and it actually makes me feel rather calm listening to it.

At Home With

I feel this was the podcast that got me really listening to podcasts as an alternative to pop bangers. The show is presented by two of my favourite bloggers, **Anna Newton** and **Lilly Pebbles**. These two travel and spend time in other influential female homes such as; **Liz Earles', Tanya Burr, Zoe Sugg** and **Joe Elvin** (Ex-**Glamour** Editor). Their conversations are a mix of interior chat and career chat which make for a real engaging conversation and one that I find myself immersed with and find that I learn so much about the women they interview as well as the bloggers themselves. I do believe that podcasts allow these hosts to present in a style that perhaps **YouTube** doesn't necessarily allow since it's all about appearances and looking the part. These interviews and chats are far more candid and engaging than the ones you watch on their other platforms.

Wittertainment: Simon Mayo and Mark Kermode Film Review

I'm not a film buff, neither am I a cultural person and the closest I get to a watching what I call a cracking film is a musical. However, all the critics agreed that **A Star is Born** (above) was cracking - **Lady Gaga** is sublime, **Bradley Cooper** is marvellous and the music in it, is worth downloading. YASS. But, back to the podcast, I never realised **Simon Mayo** could be quite a good listen. For years, I thought of him to be rather plain. The sort of personality that reminds you of a garden chair - not a lot to it. Actually, he's quite interesting especially when partnered with film nerd **Mark Kermode**. I'd never followed Kermode until listening to a segment of this podcast, then within a week I'd gone through their archive to listen back.

Each week, they report and listen to all of the films that are gracing the box office. I really like the fact that you get Mayo as the everyman listening to it but Kermode giving you the critical eye. If you get time, listen to Kermode ranting about his dislike for **Sex and the City 2**. A film that even I, as a fan of the show, found terrible to watch. We agree that neither is it funny, modern or cultural. It's available on **BBC Sounds**, **iTunes** or the standard podcast listening forms but this is worth your listening time especially if you find yourself reading lots of film reviews like I do; despite never listening or paying any attention to them. They absolutely despised **The Greatest Showman** (above), however, I loved it.

Anyway, will you be coming over to the dark side and listening to a podcast or even bullet journalling? Or dabbling in both. Let me know on my social media accounts!

Ta da, Ev x

Instagram: @cornerstoneforthoughts
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ME AWARENESS WEEK 6th-12th May 2019

This photo sums my life up with living with M.E. 'Me and my Shadow' my cockapoo Tallulah is literally my shadow, following me through good days; when I have energy to take her for much needed walks and fresh air for both of us, and bad days; when she doesn't leave my side, as the photo shows! A dog is not 'just a dog' they can be your best friend.