

BY THE QUEER COMMUNITY,  
FOR THE QUEER COMMUNITY



# Embrace:

LIVING YOUR BEST

# Queer

LIFE

A magazine to uplift, affirm, support and offer wellbeing advice to the queer community.

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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR....

Anyone else feel like we're stuck in a dystopian nightmare? Since the last issue the world has gone mad, sending so much love to everyone and anyone who is impacted by the Supreme Court ruling and associated fall-out, please reach out if you need a space to talk.

On a brighter note, we have some wonderful articles to share with you this quarter, from some incredible humans, from finding peace to gender euphoria we have it covered.

Please do connect with me and let me know what you think, I'd absolutely love to hear from you, or if you'd like to write an article yourself, get in touch,

Love Lianne (She/They)

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*let's get  
started*





BY MIKE NISTOR

# Wellbeing of Queer People

I specialise in working with the LGBTQIA+ community so naturally my thoughts on wellbeing are intrinsically linked to that of queer individuals. Naturally, wellbeing is influenced by many factors but there is one, which from my experience, plays the central role in the wellbeing of this particular group, and that is social acceptance.

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It is important to point out that social acceptance goes beyond mere tolerance—it encompasses respect, inclusion, and equal treatment. When queer individuals feel accepted in their families, workplaces, and communities, they experience lower levels of stress and anxiety. Studies consistently show that LGBTQ+ people who grow up in affirming environments have better mental health outcomes, reduced rates of depression, and lower risk of self-harm compared to those who face rejection or discrimination.

Acceptance isn't just personal within the remit of friends and family—it's institutional as well. This has been increasingly evident recently in the public discourse in the UK. It is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that anti-discrimination laws, marriage equality, and rights to gender-affirming healthcare are directly linked to the wellbeing of queer individuals. Despite what we may hear on a regular basis, these are not privileges, they are basic human rights which foster a sense of dignity and belonging.

Support systems are crucial in promoting affirmation and tackling homo/transphobias. Unfortunately, for many queer individuals, this support does not come from their family. In fact, I work with a lot of clients who are shunned and ostracised by their families and operate better within 'chosen families'.



A crucial element of wellbeing is finding your tribe and having access to acceptance and emotional support from peers. Queer-friendly spaces, whether real or virtual, are important environments where people can share experiences, seek guidance, and celebrate their identities without fear. That is why I am a proud member of Safe Space Alliance, a nonprofit organisation that helps people identify, navigate, and create safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities worldwide.

Wellbeing is fundamentally linked to mental health, which in turn, for queer people is profoundly impacted by the ability to live authentically. When queer individuals are able to express their identities without fear of judgment or backlash, they experience greater self-esteem and overall happiness. Sometimes, it takes no greater effort on our part than using the correct pronouns! Gender euphoria does not always need great swaying actions but a simple act of respect and support to affirm someone's gender.

The main point of this short piece is not to offer some deep, life changing insight into wellbeing. Nor is it to suggest that wellbeing is the related to one area in someone's life.

The point is that a fundamental cause of wellbeing for queer individuals is rooted in social acceptance and support. Like anyone, when treated with dignity and respect, their mental health and personal fulfilment improves dramatically. Social acceptance can lead to a world where queer individuals and in fact all of us can not only survive but thrive. Acceptance isn't just a passive act—it's a powerful force that transforms lives.



## Mike Nistor (He/Him)

Mike is an accredited counsellor (NCPS and Pink Therapy) welcoming people from a range of diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation and gender. Sex workers are also welcome and valued. He is on the NUM register).

Outside his main practice, Mike is currently working with ACCEPT, one of the first organisation of its kind in Romania supporting LGBTQIA+ individuals by providing pro-bono or significantly discounted therapy sessions. He was honoured to receive a Mind Kent Mental Health Wellbeing Award in 2024 for supporting the LGBTQIA+ community.



BY MANDI HAWKE

# Hard Mode, No Cheat Codes: Thriving as a Queer, Neurodivergent CEO

Ever cried over chicken nuggets?

I have.

And it had nothing to do with the nuggets.

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Being a queer, neurodivergent entrepreneur means navigating a world that wasn't built for me. Sometimes that looks like spiraling over nuggets not being ready when I thought they would be. Or the Chipotle dressing being sold out. Or a client not replying to an email—and my brain deciding it's definitely because I said the wrong thing, priced myself out, or ruined everything.

It's not about the nuggets. Or the dressing. Or the inbox silence. It's the **sensory overload**, the **emotional dysregulation**, the **effort it takes to show up**, and the **exhaustion of doing business in a neurotypical world**.

There's a name for part of this: Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD).

RSD is an intense emotional response to perceived rejection or criticism, common in folks with ADHD and trauma histories. Dr. William Dodson estimates that 99% of people with ADHD experience RSD—and for many, it's the most painful part of their day-to-day life.

As a business owner, RSD can turn sending a pitch or posting online into what feels like walking into traffic without armor..


I can go from "I'm an expert, total badass CEO who knows their magic" to "everything I do is awful and nobody wants what I offer" in under five minutes.

But that doesn't mean I'm not a badass. It just means I have brain gremlins who feed me nonsense.


**It's like playing the game of business on Hard Mode, no cheat codes, no manual.**


So instead of fighting my brain, I've learned to support it.  
To build glittery scaffolding.  
To create shimmer-strong routines that hold me when things get wobbly.


### **Some of the ways I accommodate my beautiful brain:**

 **Trauma-informed therapy** – IFS and EMDR (with a great therapist) help me address the root of my reactions—not just the symptoms.

 **A queer business coach** – Someone who reflects my brilliance back when I forget.

 **Systems over shame** – I plan around my energy, not expectations. Think color-coded workflows, visual tools, flexible routines.

 **Visual affirmations** – Pep talks and post-its on my mirror, my fridge, my desktop.

 **Gratitude as grounding** – I don't bypass hard feelings, but I do anchor into what's working.

-  **Community that doesn't require masking:** I choose spaces like Queer Business Club and Famm Connect, where showing up as your whole self isn't just allowed—it's celebrated.

I'm also building Proud Academy—a bold, affirming marketing education community for queer, neurodivergent, and allied entrepreneurs. A place to grow, collaborate, and thrive—without pretending to be fine.

Talking about mental health in business spaces is still taboo.

Some folks won't work with me because of this.

But others—maybe you—are craving a space where it's safe to be fully yourself.

I choose transparency over performance.

Because pretending I was fine nearly broke me.

I don't do that anymore.

And I invite you not to, either.

This life asks a lot.

Sometimes we have to be our own pep squad, our own parent, our own lighthouse.

When the gremlins show up, I say: "That's not true."

Then I look for the proof that I'm already enough.

We don't talk about this enough.

Let's start.



## **Mandi Hawke (She/They)**

Mandi Hawke is a digital marketing strategist and Chief Magic Maker at Proud Empowerment Business Solutions, where soul meets strategy and visibility becomes a form of magic. She helps purpose-led brands glow up online—ethically, imaginatively, and without the hustle or hype. From campaigns to content, Mandi turns values into visibility and clicks into real connection.

Off the clock? She's chasing wonder, sipping something sparkly, and cheering on her clients—the dreamers, doers, and world-shakers—who are here to make business brighter.



BY GEM KENNEDY

# Queering Spirituality and Creating a Personal Practice

For many queer people, spirituality can feel tricky. Too often, our earliest experiences with it are shaped by religious institutions steeped in homophobia and transphobia.

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Some of us carry deep wounds from those spaces, on top of feeling disconnected from the spiritual traditions of our ancestors due to colonialism, cis-heteronormativity and patriarchy. Perhaps we've tried to engage in traditions but have been turned off by the cultural appropriation that seems to have become normalised in many spiritual spaces. And yet, when reclaimed on our own terms, spirituality can become a powerful tool for healing, grounding, and self-connection.

From a young age, I felt drawn to the mystical; the unseen world of spells, energy, and intuition. But when I turned to organised religion in search of meaning, nothing ever quite fit. Through a lot of exploration and experimentation, I eventually found my way to more alternative paths including intuitive practices and creative expression.

It wasn't until 2018, when my marriage was breaking down, that I truly started to find the spiritual connection I had sought for so long. Then, in 2020, two friends and I began a weekly magical practice, which two of us continue weekly to this day. We open and close our time together with a visualisation, share what's going on for us and pull tarot or oracle cards for each other.

I've also found amazing queer folk doing radical spiritual work and have loved attending and facilitating workshops at gatherings like Queer Spirit. Now, my practice is the quiet current beneath all that I do, both personally and professionally. It's liberatory work!



Creating a personal spiritual practice can help us reconnect with the earth, with ourselves, and with a wider lineage of queer mystics who've always existed, even if their stories are hard to find. For some, this might look like breathwork and somatic practices. For others, it might be spending time outdoors, honouring nature's cycles or circling with community.

Tools like oracle cards and other divination practices can offer moments of clarity. Learning about ancestral traditions, especially those outside of colonial or dogmatic frameworks, can restore a sense of belonging. And connecting with queer-centered spiritual spaces, like the Queer Spirit community, the Reclaiming movement or the Radical Faeries, reminds us that we're not alone in our seeking.

Queerness itself invites fluidity, creativity, and a rejection of rigid norms. Why shouldn't our spirituality reflect that too? Organised religion teaches there's a specific way to do things and there are those who possess the knowledge and experience that we should look to. But there is no single "right" way to be spiritual and you absolutely cannot "get it wrong". When we shape our practices around what resonates deeply and authentically, we create something not only meaningful, but sustainable.

In times of uncertainty, grief, or injustice, a personal spiritual practice can become a sanctuary and a way to remember our inherent sacredness. It affirms that even in a world that often misunderstands us, we are still whole, still connected, and still resilient.

How do you connect with and express your sense of spirituality? Do you feel your spiritual needs are being met? Is there anything you might like to try?



## Gem Kennedy (They/Them)

Gem Kennedy (they/them) is a coach, speaker, and podcaster. They believe that living authentically isn't just life-changing for us as individuals; it is a vital component in liberation work, creating a ripple effect that transforms communities and the wider world.

Gem is deeply passionate about supporting and empowering queer and neurodivergent change-makers and cycle-breakers to understand themselves, how they best function, and navigate the systemic restraints that attempt to hold us back.



BY PATRICK WALDEN

## Finding Peace Within

**Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is a well-established, evidence-based treatment for trauma and distressing life experiences.**

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One of its foundational techniques, the Calm Safe Place exercise, is used to build emotional regulation and a sense of internal safety before diving into more intense trauma processing. For queer individuals—who often carry complex trauma related to identity, discrimination, and social rejection—this tool can be especially powerful.

Queer people frequently grow up in environments that are emotionally unsafe or even overtly hostile. These experiences can range from microaggressions and family rejection to physical violence and systemic discrimination.

Over time, these threats to safety become internalized, leaving the nervous system in a constant state of alert. The Calm Safe Place exercise provides a structured way to counteract this by teaching the body and mind what true safety and peace feel like—sometimes for the first time.

### **What Is the Calm Safe Place?**

The Calm Safe Place is a guided visualization that helps individuals mentally “go” to a place that feels calming, soothing, and safe. This place can be real or imagined, indoors or outdoors, familiar or completely fantastical. The goal is to create a vivid multisensory image that you can return to any time you’re feeling overwhelmed or triggered.

For queer individuals, this practice offers the opportunity to create a world that affirms who they are—a world free from judgment, gender expectations, or fear. It becomes a symbolic refuge and a tangible coping skill.

## How to Do the Calm Safe Place Exercise

You can practice this exercise with a therapist or on your own. Here is a step-by-step guide:

### Find a quiet space

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position where you won't be disturbed. Close your eyes if that feels safe for you.

### Take a few deep breaths

Inhale slowly through your nose, hold for a moment, then exhale through your mouth. Let your body begin to relax.

### Begin the visualization

Imagine a place where you feel completely safe and calm. It might be a beach, a forest, a cozy room, a mountain top, or an entirely made-up world.

Think about the visual details: What do you see around you? Colors, light, objects?

Add sound: Are there waves crashing, birds singing, wind rustling through trees?

Imagine the smells: Fresh pine, ocean air, your favorite candle, or maybe nothing at all.

Notice the textures: Are you sitting on soft moss? Wrapped in a warm blanket? Floating in water?

Reflect on the feeling: What emotions do you notice in your body when you're here?

## Add affirming elements (optional but powerful)

- Include people, animals, or symbols that affirm your queer identity.
- Perhaps you imagine being surrounded by friends who support you, or maybe it's a world where gender and orientation are understood and celebrated.
- This is your space—free from judgment, expectation, or danger.

### Anchor the feeling

As the calm and safety settle in, gently squeeze your hands or press your feet into the floor. This helps anchor the emotion to a physical sensation, making it easier to recall later.

### Create a mental cue

Choose a word or image—like “calm,” “haven,” or a visual symbol—that you can recall to bring yourself back to this place when you need it.

### Return slowly

When you're ready, slowly count to three, bring your awareness back to the room, and gently open your eyes.



## Why It Matters for Queer Healing

For many queer people, the external world has not always been a safe place. This exercise allows individuals to reclaim emotional sovereignty—to create safety within, even when it isn't available without.

It's a chance to rewire the nervous system by experiencing and practicing safety and acceptance.

Additionally, the Calm Safe Place can be uniquely customized to reflect your queer identity. This might mean visualizing a world free from gender roles, including affirming representations of chosen family, or crafting a space where your pronouns are always respected and your identity is celebrated. The act of creating this space is a form of resistance and reclamation.

When used consistently, the Calm Safe Place becomes more than just a coping strategy. It becomes a powerful symbol of healing, autonomy, and queer joy. It reminds you that even in the midst of external chaos or inner pain, you have the capacity to return to a state of calm and connection.

Whether you're in therapy or doing healing work on your own, this exercise can be a cornerstone of your emotional toolkit. Practiced regularly, it builds resilience, helps reduce anxiety, and lays the groundwork for deeper trauma work.

**Contact Patrick at  
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or at @PhiladelphiaEMDR**



## Patrick Walden (He/Him )

Patrick Walden is the owner and founder of Philadelphia EMDR, where he provides EMDR therapy, EMDR healing intensives, and professional EMDR trainings for therapists. A licensed clinical social worker in practice since 2008, Patrick specializes in helping adult survivors of complex childhood trauma heal and reclaim their lives.

Patrick's clinical work is rooted in compassion, deep presence, and the belief that healing is possible for everyone. Through weekly EMDR therapy and customized intensives, he supports clients in processing stuck trauma, reducing distress, and moving toward greater freedom and wholeness.





BY CHRIS BOWNESS

# Coming Home to Yourself: The Quiet Revolution of Authenticity

Over many years of supporting people in their wellbeing journeys, I've noticed a powerful pattern: reconnecting with authenticity, the deep truth of who we are, has the ability to transform everything. It's not something external we have to earn or create. It's something innate we remember, reclaim, and allow to guide us.

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Authenticity often gets mistaken for a surface-level idea, "just be yourself", or something vague or airy. Instead, its roots go much deeper. Research has shown that living authentically supports greater emotional resilience, higher self-esteem, and stronger mental health overall. It's not that authenticity erases life's challenges; rather, it changes the way we meet them.

When we are grounded in our self-essence, we feel more empowered to face difficulties, more resilient in uncertainty, and better able to find our own answers in the twists and turns of life.

I've seen it time and time again: as people reconnect with their authenticity, their confidence grows. Their wellbeing strengthens. Even when the storms of life come, they are less likely to be swept away because their roots run deeper. Problems don't necessarily disappear, but the relationship to them transforms, from feeling overwhelmed or powerless, to feeling empowered, grounded, and centred.

One reflection from a participant beautifully captures this:

"From birth I've been taught to be quiet in order to be loved.

I've been praised for being quiet and punished for being loud, not realizing that loudness was simply my way of exploring who I was.

All my life, I played small to receive love, but struggled deeply with authenticity. Through my journey in exploring my authenticity, I'm finally discovering my real self. I've realized that being authentic in the world attracts the people who love me for who I truly am.

It's a story I've heard echoed in many forms. When people reconnect with their authenticity, they often describe a growing sense of empowerment, confidence, and wellbeing. Life starts to feel more aligned — as though, instead of fighting upstream, they're moving with the current of who they were always meant to be.

This journey back to our authentic selves isn't always easy, especially when, consciously or unconsciously, we've been handing parts of ourselves away to roles, expectations, or external pressures. But every small act of remembrance, every quiet moment of choosing truth over performance, becomes an inward revolutionary act.

Part of this process is also noticing where we may have unconsciously handed away our self-essence, to roles, relationships, expectations, or societal pressures. Awareness is the first step.

With compassion, we can gently reclaim our power and begin moving through life with more authenticity and joy.

### **Reflective Invitation:**

What does authenticity feel like for you? Where in your life do you feel most connected to your true self, and where might you be handing parts of it away? There are no wrong answers here, only what feels right, a journey of remembering what was never truly lost.



## **Chris Bowness**

Chris Bowness is the creator of the Nurture Map, a transformational approach to wellbeing that guides people back to their truth. Rooted in the belief that authenticity is a radical act of self-love, their work empowers others to reclaim their inner power, live courageously, and create a life that feels like home. Through mentoring, writing, and workshops, Chris supports people in charting their own path, led by self-trust, wholeness, and the wisdom within. Find out more at [nurturemap.com](https://nurturemap.com).



BY LOGAN BLACKBURN-ISSITT

# The Quiet Power of Being Seen

First, I carried a secret. It didn't make me miserable because I had buried it too deep. I learned to live and love and laugh while keeping it tucked away. Life carried on. It was a good life.

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Then came the day the secret couldn't be kept any longer. When answering the question meant lying or exposing myself. So I told the truth. There was relief. There was worry. There was a kind of euphoria too.

Tiny things lit up my days in ways I didn't expect. Shaving my face for the first time. A birthday card proudly addressed to "boyfriend, brother, son, uncle, grandson, son-in-law." The sound of my voice deepening into something that felt like home.

For a while, the world caught up with me. People stopped doing double takes. New faces and new spaces didn't ask questions. I passed. No sideways stares. No hesitation. I could have stayed there. It was safer not to tell anyone. It felt easier to blend in. To just be.

I got my new birth certificate. My new passport. I was undoing the quiet betrayal of biology with paperwork and persistence.

There were awkward moments. Comments like, "Your son is your double," or "Bet you were just like that as a little boy." I smiled. I nodded. I carried on. Safer not to correct them.

Meanwhile, the world outside changed. Slowly, stubbornly, it got a bit better. New protections in law. More open conversations. A handful of allies who didn't flinch when I trusted them with the truth.

And then, in March 2022, on International Transgender Day of Visibility, I did it again. I came out. Properly. Publicly. No hedging. No hiding. Just a simple post telling the world: I am a trans man.

I didn't want my children growing up thinking that being yourself was something to be ashamed of. I wanted them to see that you can live in the light. That you can stand tall and take up space, even if it feels scary sometimes.

I had a rainbow star tattooed behind my ear. Right there where everyone could see it. A small, stubborn mark to say: I am here. I am proud. I am not going anywhere.

Being visible fills me with a happiness I find hard to describe. It is an inextinguishable fire within me. It feels wonderful. I still carry fear. I still know the risk of being attacked is real. But I am no longer spending my days worrying about being found out. I am already found. I am already whole.

I want my children to know they can be honest. That they can be proud of the Dad they have. Hopefully, they can watch me be brave, and know that no matter what this world throws at us, we are not built to be extinguished.

You cannot stomp on me.



## Logan Blackburn-Issitt (He/Him)

UK-based trans dad of six, sharing insights on fatherhood, the highs, lows, and all the wonderfully weird moments in between. Blogger and community advocate, navigating life with my wife and incredible kids.





BY EL DEANE

# The Importance of Expert Mortgage Advice for Wellbeing

Navigating the world of mortgages can and often is complex for most people, whether they're first time buyers, home movers, those coming to the end of their mortgage product; investors or those looking to get their ducks in a row to understand their position and prospects of buying down the line.

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Whilst securing a mortgage is often a significant milestone, it's essential to recognise that financial decisions, including buying a home, are tied to much more than just money. They are linked to our personal wellbeing, our sense of safety and long-term security. For LGBTQ+ individuals, expert mortgage advice is crucial in ensuring that informed decisions are made and they are supported by a truly inclusive, non-judgemental Adviser and that's where I come in.

The LGBTQ+ community often faces unique challenges when navigating the housing market. Discrimination, whether overt or subtle, still exists in many sectors of society, including within the estate agency and financial services industries.

The LGBTQ+ community may potentially face higher hurdles in securing mortgages compared to the wider non-LGBTQ+ community. For example, information systems rarely account for capturing titles and genders beyond the binary Mr and Mrs; lenders and financial services experts may not fully understand or in my experience, care to understand, what and how households and incomes with non-traditional family structures function and exist.

The complexity is further compounded by legal uncertainties or lack of recognition for LGBTQ+ couples when it comes to inheritance and property ownership. The financial implications of these legal gaps can be significant, especially for LGBTQ+ couples.

Ultimately, this can lead to frustration, delays, and the expensive and far reaching consequences of incorrect advice. Bigger than that, and as we consider our wellbeing, these experiences often include a painful, upsetting and uncomfortable conversation around inherently vulnerable subjects: our finances and families.

With an anticipated 91% of mortgages in the UK being written by a qualified broker in 2026 (according to Intermediary Mortgage Lenders Association\*), it's clear that access to a comprehensive panel of lenders to review products and have recommended the cheapest one for you and your circumstances is a no brainer.

However, when we consider wellbeing, care, respect and understanding, mortgage advice is never just about the numbers. A knowledgeable LGBTQ+ Mortgage Adviser who understands the specific concerns and challenges of the LGBTQ+ community can ensure support through systems, the conveyancing and legal processes and more, to mitigate the stress that moving home or changing mortgage may bring about.

Using an LGBTQ+ Mortgage Adviser can help navigate potential biases, legal hurdles and can also ensure that you have access to the most appropriate possible rates and terms for your situation.

Whilst outside of the mortgage advice remit, the right Mortgage Adviser can sign-post you to financial protection services for instances where life throws us curveballs, as well as to legal professionals who may assist in structuring agreements to protect parties.

These are areas often overlooked as many LGBTQ+ clients report to me that they have not felt their relationship has been validated by Advisers they've historically had poor experiences with.

Ultimately, the right Mortgage Adviser provides you a safe, non-judgemental space and a willingness to listen, understand and be on your side throughout the process to provide as much or as little support as required, for this transaction and long-term.

The home-buying process often carries it's own stresses, but for LGBTQ+ individuals, it can be emotionally charged. The idea of creating a space that truly feels like home - somewhere you can be yourself, free from judgement or discrimination, can make the stakes much higher.

For LGBTQ+ individuals, having the support of an expert LGBTQ+ Mortgage Adviser is not just about securing a loan, it's a crucial component in ensuring long-term wellbeing. That Adviser empowers LGBTQ+ with the support, knowledge and understanding needed to navigate a sometimes challenging and discriminatory process. These informed decisions will positively impact their financial future, safety and emotional health, providing a solid foundation for years to come.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/yes-mortgage-services-limited/>

We do not charge a fee for mortgage advice.

Your home/property may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other debt secured on it.

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<https://www.mortgagesolutions.co.uk/news/2024/12/23/share-of-intermediary-led-mortgage-business-to-rise-to-91-by-2026-impla-predicts/> Accessed 22/04/2025 HLP

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## El Deane (She/Her)

I'm El, an impartial Mortgage Adviser with access to a comprehensive panel of lenders, looking to become the trusted Mortgage Adviser for the LGBTQ+ community in the UK. I do not charge a broker fee. Inclusivity, friendliness and cultivating a safe and welcoming space for everyone is of paramount importance and I am available for any questions, queries, or concerns you have wherever you are on your journey.

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BY JENN WILSON

## Gender Outlaw

I picked up a badge in the vintage pins section in a queer bookshop a few weeks ago – it had a pink triangle and the words “GENDER OUTLAW” on it. Very me – my teenager agreed – but it wasn’t always this way.

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I grew up in the 1980s and hit adulthood just as Thatcher brought in Section 28. There was so little visibility for bisexual people back then that I didn’t recognise I wasn’t straight – since most of my relationships had been with men. I had no frame of reference whatsoever for being anything other than a ‘woman’, even though I always felt like an outlier in ‘womanhood’.

So I spent decades thinking I was an ally, not recognising myself or feeling I was ‘queer enough’ to be part of the community I had always felt akin with. I was a rowdy ally, though – using my event management skills to help produce Pride events, my rent-a-gob and writing skills to speak up for LGBTQIA+ rights... I even took to the stage as gender-bending drag goddess ‘Mysti Valentine’, performing in queer and straight venues alike through the 2000s and 2010s.

All this time I was a proud feminist. “Smash The Patriarchy” was my mantra from my teens to my forties. Until 2017, when the move toward self ID and other improvements to the 2004 Gender Recognition Act kicked off its vicious backlash. Suddenly feminism began to redefine itself, as women were pitted against an imaginary trans bogeyperson, set to destroy everything we’d gained.



I know I'm not the only one who felt alienated by British feminism's gender critical wave – limiting "woman" to her biological identity seems so completely counter to everything I thought feminism was about.

Their insistence that I must be defined by my body parts and I was either a predatory 'man' or a potential victim, 'woman' just didn't make sense for me. I tried to stay aligned as a gender non-conforming woman, pushing at the socially-constructed limits of what was possible for me, and for anyone observed female at birth. Aren't humans much more complex beings than our sex-based characteristics, our biology, our animal instincts?

Connection is a huge part of our humanity – a core need, like food or shelter. Safety isn't about excluding and battling each other – our deepest sense of security comes from connection, belonging and community. 'Gender critical' beliefs stem from fear, not connection – from pushing people into one camp or another, 'us' and 'them'.

So in 2023, I finally escaped the gender binary and fully recognised myself as genderqueer. I started quietly coming out about it, politely asking those people I felt safe with if they would please use my they/them pronouns. I didn't want fanfare or trans /non-binary flags for my identity. So many years of allyship have taught me the value of bridge-building curiosity – calling in the ones who haven't made their minds up, instead of calling out the ones who have.

Then on April 16<sup>th</sup>, the UK Supreme Court Ruling enshrined my identity as, quite literally, outside the law. Their attempt to 'clarify' gave a definition that polarises all of us as one thing or another. I am legally bound back inside the confines of my femaleness, and hastily thrown together EHRC guidance dictates where I can or cannot be deemed 'safe'.

This was a visceral reminder of why I've been shouting so loudly all these years – for justice – even when our laws and law-makers are unjust. I wear my gender outlaw badge with pride, now, every day – and I'm standing with my community, on the streets, the stages, the pages and wherever we can make our voices heard.



## Jenn Wilson (They/Them)

Jenn Wilson ( they/them) helps people harness their personal capacity to make courageous choices and open up possibilities that can change worlds. In life, relationships or business, Jenn invites you to reject "normal" and be more irregular. Jenn is a values-led strategist, facilitator, activist and artist – and the founder of the International Day of Consent. Their work is rooted in queer and neurodivergent lived experience, knowledge and action, and a fierce belief in the power of personal rebellion for collective change.

<https://bemore.irregular.org.uk/everything>  
@irregularjenn on insta and tiktok



BY ZOE DUCKWORTH

# You Don't Have to Do it all (or alone): Building a Business That Actually Supports You

If you're running your own business, chances are you've played just about every role going - CEO, marketing manager, admin assistant, tech fixer, tea-maker... It's a LOT.

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And if you're queer, neurodivergent, or both, the whole "do it all yourself" mindset can hit even harder. You've probably been taught to be self-sufficient. To not ask for help. To push through.

Here's an important public service announcement for you: just because you can do it all, doesn't mean you should.

## Why going it alone isn't always the win

Many of us were never shown what real, nourishing support could look like. Especially in the business world, where independence is often praised and burnout is seen as a badge of honour.

But support doesn't have to mean handing over control. It can mean creating systems that fit the way your brain works. It can mean surrounding yourself with people who get it - who won't question why you've forgotten something three times in a row or need a nap after sending a single email.

## Building support into the way you work

This part's less about outsourcing and more about reworking your day-to-day so it feels a bit more doable. A few small shifts can make a big difference:

- **Match your tasks to your energy.** If your brain's firing, do the creative stuff. If you're running on fumes, give yourself permission to do something low-effort - or nothing at all. Bags of self compassion are non-negotiable.

• **Work alongside someone else.** Whether **What support can look like**

it's virtual co-working or a friend in the same room, accountability can be gentle and motivating.

• **Get things out of your head.** Use whiteboards, sticky notes, voice memos - whatever helps you see the mess clearly.

• **Rest isn't optional.** Taking proper breaks isn't slacking. It's maintenance.

You're not "bad at business" for needing this. You're just human, and running a business as a human, not a machine.

**When to ask for help**

If you're forgetting things you care about, spending more time stuck than moving forward, or avoiding parts of your business because they feel heavy... you don't need to power through. You might just need a bit of support.

Not the "hustle harder" kind. The kind that meets you where you are

At Positive Orange, we work with queer, neurodivergent business owners who want things to feel lighter. Whether that's help with admin, marketing systems that work with your brain, or a bit of structure, encouragement, accountability and endless positivity. We're here to help you build a business that actually fits YOU.

You don't have to do it all. You don't have to do it alone. And no, you're not behind.

If you're ready for things to feel a little easier, come say hello!

[www.positiveorange.co.uk](http://www.positiveorange.co.uk)

[www.instagram.com/positiveorangeva](https://www.instagram.com/positiveorangeva)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/positive-orange/>

## Zoe Duckworth (She/Her)

Zoë (she/her) is the founder of Positive Orange - a vibrant virtual assistant and accountability service for queer and neurodivergent entrepreneurs who want to build their businesses with more ease, colour, and clarity. As a neurodivergent business owner herself, she knows how it feels to juggle brilliant ideas with burnout, and she's passionate about creating gentle, joyful support that actually fits the way your brain works. Think: structure without the shame, and to-do lists with a bit of sunshine!





BY ALEXXA GOODENOUGH

## Practicing Curated Balance

Balance is often presented as a pros and cons list or a color-coded schedule—a one-size-fits-all solution to getting everything done. However, the reality is that one size doesn't even fit most. Our needs, capacities, and responsibilities change constantly, and so must our understanding of balance.

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Curated Balance™ is a trauma-informed, capacity-based approach to sustainable wellness. It acknowledges that we're not just managing a to-do list; we're navigating complex ecosystems that include parenting, work, caregiving, healing, running businesses, being present with our families, and managing our bodies and minds.

Balance does not imply that every aspect of your life receives equal time or energy. Instead, it means that you must intentionally adapt.

It respects that plans can change, that grief can overlap with your work week, and that a project deadline might coincide with a time when your body demands rest. It embraces that sometimes we do what we want, and other times only what we can. There are times when we work in focused bursts to allow for a weekend away, and times when we take a moment to share joy with a loved one before diving back into chaos—literal or otherwise.

This approach is about rhythm. And rhythm is a practice curated by you. In community we are an orchestra.

Curated Balance™ encourages you to be intentional with your resources while acknowledging that tomorrow may require something different. It means establishing rhythms that adapt to your needs rather than break under pressure.

It involves creating systems that foster regulation, clarity, connection, and capacity. This isn't about equality; it's about equity, and you have the power to define what that looks like in your life.

Practicing Curated Balance™ does not mean ignoring structure; rather, it means choosing a structure that serves your unique needs. This may involve starting your day with a check-in: What kind of energy do I have—physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually? Where is it needed most? What can wait?

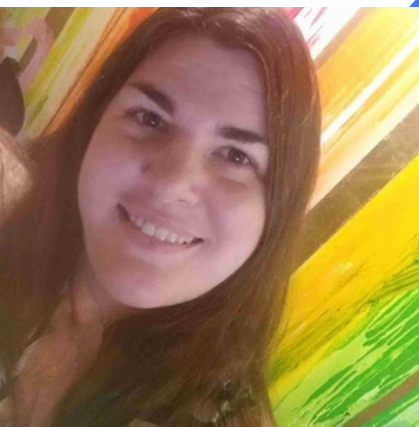
It might also look like focusing entirely on one task, whether that's enjoying a quiet dinner with family, immersing yourself in a project without distractions, or spending ten minutes being present with yourself.

Sometimes, it's as simple as slowing down to engage with something tangible. One mindfulness practice I recommend involves using your five senses to fully experience a single item—like a warm mug, a slice of fruit, or a piece of music. What do you see, feel, smell, taste, and hear? What changes when you truly take notice?

Practicing balance isn't about achieving control; it's about maintaining a relationship—with your time, your energy, your loved ones, and yourself.

Some days will be busy and full, while others may feel wide and quiet. Both experiences are valid; both belong. Balance is not a performance; it's a practice, a rhythm, a relationship.

The more you nurture that rhythm with care, the more your life will align to support you.



## Alexxa Goodenough (She/Her)

Alexxa Goodenough, MSW, MBA is a serial entrepreneur, executive consultant, strategist, and nonprofit founder. She designs trauma-conscious tools, adaptive systems, and The Village, an innovative membership space for multidimensional practitioners. Her work bridges business, healing, and real-world support for people navigating complexities of life. Learn more at [tinyurl.com/AlexxasLinks](https://tinyurl.com/AlexxasLinks).







BY PAM SEINO

# The Surprising Statistics of Adult ADD

## You're Not Forgetful, You're Just Wired Differently

Ever walk into a room and immediately forget why you're there? Open 12 tabs on the computer and finish none? Lose your keys... while holding them? Welcome to the exasperating, chaotic, often confusing world of Adult ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder)—where you might be a creative genius, a master multi-tasker, or just someone who doesn't remember what you just said 12 seconds ago.

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ADD in adults is wildly underdiagnosed, frequently misunderstood, and regularly mislabeled as “being disorganized,” “forgetful,” or (my personal favorite) “a lil flaky.” But behind the missed deadlines and half-done to-do lists is a very real neurological condition that deserves attention, compassion, and probably a color-coded calendar.

## Adult ADD by the Numbers

Let's talk stats. The National Institute of Health estimates that about 4.4% of U.S. adults have been diagnosed with ADHD (which includes ADD), but studies suggest the real number is closer to 8.1%. That's nearly 17 million adults who may be trying to “get it together” without knowing their brain literally functions differently.

In short: you're not alone, and you're not broken. You're in a club. And our meetings are... well, whenever we remember to show up.

## The Real-Life Impact: More Than Just “Losing Focus” At Work

- Zone out in meetings and then frantically try to catch up
- Procrastinate until the deadline is five minutes away, then enter superhero mode
- Forget what they're saying mid-sentence (yes, it happens mid-sentence)

- Start big ideas... and forget to finish them
- Space out while your boss is explaining the details of that big project.

This can lead to job-hopping, burnout, or being constantly underwhelmed by cubicle life. One study showed adults with ADHD earn 20–30% less than their neurotypical coworkers and are more likely to be unemployed. Not because they aren't brilliant—because they're not wired for the 9-to-5 grind without some extra tools.

## **"Behind the missed deadlines and forgotten keys is a very real neurological condition."**

In Relationships Romantic partners might say things like:

- "You never listen to me."
- "How did you forget our anniversary again?"
- "Why are there seven half-drunk cups of coffee around the house?"

And friends? You love them... even if you haven't replied to their text from two weeks ago.

## **In Your Head**

ADD doesn't just mess with your schedule—it messes with your self-esteem. Many adults spend years thinking they're lazy, scattered, or "just not trying hard enough." Cue the shame spiral. This emotional toll can contribute to:

- Low self-confidence
- Depression and anxiety
- Imposter syndrome (even when you're crushing it)

## **Let's Talk Meds (and Side Effects)**

Medication can be a game-changer—like switching from dial-up to fiber optic—but it's not one-size-fits-all. And it's not the only treatment for ADD.

1. Stimulants (Most Common)  
These increase dopamine and norepinephrine in your brain, a.k.a. the "get stuff done" chemicals.

Popular options:  
Adderall (amphetamine)  
Vyvanse (lisdexamfetamine)  
Ritalin / Concerta (methylphenidate)

Pros:

- Improved focus
- Better time management
- Fewer impulsive Amazon purchases (maybe)

Cons:

- Insomnia
- Loss of appetite
- Increased heart rate
- Can trigger anxiety
- May feel like drinking espresso with a spoonful of existential crisis if dosage isn't right.

2. Non-Stimulants For people who can't tolerate stimulants or prefer a slower roll.

Options:  
Strattera (Atomoxetine)  
Intuniv (Guanfacine)  
Kapvay (Clonidine)

Pros:

- Non-addictive
- Calmer side effect profile
- No "crash" like with some stimulants

Cons:

- Takes a few weeks to kick in
- Drowsiness
- Occasional "blah" mood

## **Therapy + Tools = Real-Life Magic**

Medications are only part of the picture. For full-throttle transformation, you need the ADD Power Combo:

- CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) – Rewires how you think about your tendencies (spoiler: you're not a failure)
- Coaching – Someone to help you build structure without judgment
- Mindfulness/Meditation – Yes, yes, you fidget—but practicing stillness helps train focus muscles
- Support groups – Like CHADD, where everyone gets you
- Tools to help with concentration/productivity

## Do You Have Adult ADD?

Here's What to Look For: Symptoms in adults aren't always the bouncing-off-the-walls stuff we see in kids. Instead, it may look like:

- Constantly losing things
- Forgetting appointments or names
- Trouble completing tasks (but oh-so-good at starting them - several at the same time?)
- Zoning out during conversations (can I EVER relate to this one!!!)
- Emotional rollercoasters over small stuff.

If that sounds like your Tuesday, it's worth talking to a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist. Diagnosis usually involves questionnaires, history-taking, and possibly a few deep sighs of relief as things start making sense.

## Final Thought (Before I Forget It)

Having ADD as an adult can feel like driving a racecar with bike brakes—but when you understand how your brain works, everything changes.

With the right support, tools, and maybe a little medication, that scattered, brilliant, hilarious mind of yours can thrive.

You're not "too much" or "not enough". You're just wired for a different kind of greatness.

### Resources & References:

- CDC – ADHD Data
- Kessler et al., Am J Psychiatry, 2006
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Mayo Clinic: Adult ADHD
- CHADD – Children and Adults with ADHD



## Pam Seino (She/Her)

Pam Seino is the founder of Fit at 55, a health and wellness brand devoted to helping women over 50 thrive through fitness, nutrition, and intentional self-care. As a certified nutrition coach, Pam creates engaging courses, challenges, and digital products that empower women to take charge of their health and live vibrant, fulfilling lives. Outside of her work, Pam enjoys photography, learning foreign languages, and playing Euchre. She lives by the philosophy that life should be a judgment-free zone — a belief that shines through everything she creates.



BY RENÉE YOXON

# Gender Euphoria is a Practice, Not a Destination

## What transition taught me about finding joy in the in-between.

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People often talk about gender euphoria like a finish line. As if once you've had the surgery, found the right outfit, or changed your voice, you'll finally get to stay there—forever affirmed, forever complete. But that's not how it's shown up in my life or the lives of my students.

I am nonbinary transgender. After my top surgery, I looked in the mirror and felt something click. Later, after my hysterectomy, I felt that same feeling of "rightness". Both moments were real, grounding, and joyful. But they weren't the end. They were beginnings. Pauses. Checkpoints. And then life continued and my relationship to my gender kept evolving.

That's how I've come to understand gender euphoria. Not as a singular destination, but as something that shows up in flashes. Something you can practice. Something you return to again and again.

This perspective shows up in my work as a gender-affirming voice teacher, too. Many of my students start voice training hoping it will fix something. They're often dysphoric, misgendered, and tired of waiting to feel at home in their voice. They think, understandably, that once they sound "right," everything else will fall into place.

But voice work doesn't offer a single moment of transformation. What it offers is something slower and more surprising: tiny wins that add up to a different relationship with your voice—and with yourself.

One student told me they felt euphoric not when their voice sounded perfect, but when it stopped feeling like a performance and started feeling like a choice. Another described the first time they ordered coffee and didn't get sir'd as "a blip of joy so bright it carried me for days."

These aren't finish lines. They're glimpses. A vowel shaped just right. A phrase spoken without fear. A laugh that feels real. Moments that come and go, but always leave a mark.

I think many trans people are taught to believe that gender euphoria is something you earn through suffering. That it belongs only to people who've "done enough" to deserve it. But I don't believe that.

Voice training—like transition itself—isn't about becoming someone else. It's about getting closer to who you already are and discovering who that is along the way. For many of my students, the goal shifts over time. It becomes less about "passing" and more about reclaiming their voice as a source of pleasure, power, or peace.

Gender euphoria isn't reserved for a future version of you. You can be both perfect as you are and also want to make a change. You don't have to wait to love yourself.

You can feel good now—in your voice, in your body, in the way you move through the world. Not because you're finished, but because you're present. Because you're learning how to hear yourself clearly and meet yourself with care. And when things shift—as they always do—you get to begin again. Again and again.



## Renée Yoxon (They/Them)

Renée Yoxon (they/them) is a gender-affirming voice teacher, course creator, and public speaker based in Montreal. They've helped thousands of trans people around the world find joy, safety, and self-expression in their voices. Learn more at [reneeyoxon.com](https://reneeyoxon.com) or on YouTube at @reneeyoxon.





BY ANNA KNIGHT

# The Power of Embracing your Ands

**I believe we're all terrible mathematicians. From the dyscalculic to those with PhDs in number-based subjects, most of us are doing bad maths on a daily basis. Not the things like trigonometry that we all forgot the moment it stopped being exam-relevant—I mean the inner calculations we constantly run to estimate our own worth.**

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The good stuff—moral actions, proud moments, acts of service, general niceness—gets added to the plus column. One point per “performative” act (the ones we remember, anyway). And let's be honest, those ones tend to be slippery. Even when we do recall them, they have a sneaky way of shrinking in significance over time if we're left to our own devices..

But the demerits? They're worse. They're often not even about what we do, but who we are. And the more self-critical the belief, the more wrong we make ourselves out to be.

I'm a changemaker with a racing brain and chronic fatigue-based conditions. Which means I have approximately twice as many ideas about how I could make an impact as I have energy to act on them. I've often wondered what I could achieve if I wasn't devoting a portion of my brain to managing pain and pacing my energy—especially when the joint aches kick in around 3pm each day.

But back when I was still stuck in value calculations? Guess which side always got the weight. Creativity wasn't worth much unless I followed an idea all the way from spark to completed product—so even months of effort might net me a measly “+1”. But rest? Pacing? Caring for my body? That got filed under “laziness.” And laziness? That was scored as an exponentially growing, personality-defining character flaw.

My value today = that report I wrote – every nap taken, idea un-started, task half-finished, day off required...

Fatigue was just one thing I used to subtract from my worth. I'm nonbinary in a world designed around binaries. Bisexual in a heteronormative culture. Nerdy and more likely to be found in jeans and a Star Wars tee than in business-casual chic. A clumsy, bruise-covered southerner living in the far North. Loud. Blunt. Irreverent. I grew up with undiagnosed neurodivergence. A survivor of domestic violence.

The big stuff and the little quirks—I gave them all weight. And I used them to slash away at my worth in a never-ending mathematical quest to become “lovable.”

But here's the messy truth: unconditional self-love isn't about getting your totals to balance. It's about showing compassion to the parts of yourself you find hardest to love. Not just the cute quirks and explainable foibles—but the stuff you avoid, numb, deny. The bits you'd rather never look at. When you can gently explore those shadows, name them, and bring love to them, that's when everything shifts.

To move beyond value calculations is to hold all your contradictions with an audacious and, where before you'd subtract. It's choosing to expand rather than shrink. To see yourself not as a series of pluses and minuses, but as an ever-expanding pie chart of truth and possibility.

And with a pie chart? 100% is always 100%—you just get more detail on what's inside. The “flaws” and old rules shrink as the rest of you grows. They're joined by your brilliance, your care, your weirdness, your passions, your wins. They become just one part of a rich, full picture.

I am queer and disabled and nerdy and neurodiverse and clumsy and a displaced southerner and a survivor of domestic violence—and I am loveable. Exactly as I am.

And so are you.



## Anna Knight (She/They)

Anna Knight is a coach, trainer, and audacity advocate for the stubbornly hopeful humans making the world a better place. She supports helpers, healers, and change-bringers to build resilience, unlock their brilliance, and love the hell out of themselves – exactly as they are. Through practical tools and radical self-acceptance, Anna helps people deliver their missions and stay whole. Find them using @theaudaciousand on any social media platform or at [www.theaudaciousand.com](http://www.theaudaciousand.com)



BY PRISCILLA DEVANEY

## Feeling Stuck? Follow What Truly Matters to You

**Are you finding yourself at a point in life where everything (or at least most things) feels heavy and hard. You're not quite where you want to or thought you would be, but you're also not sure how to move forward either. Are you stuck? Stuck, is a very frustrating, sometimes paralyzing place to be and one many people know well. Whether it's navigating identity, relationships, family dynamics, career paths, or simply figuring out who you are in a world that doesn't always make space for that, feeling stuck can feel like standing at a crossroads with no map and no clue on which move to make next.**

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But here's something worth considering: the way forward often isn't about waiting for the perfect plan to appear. It's about figuring out what really matters to you and then making small, conscious choices in that direction, even when it's uncomfortable.

This is where values come in. Your values are the things that feel deeply important to you, things that make you feel like you're living truthfully. They're not goals or achievements, but instead are guiding principles like authenticity, connection, creativity, kindness, courage, freedom or growth. They help you decide who you want to be in the world and how you want to show up, even when life gets messy.

To figure out what yours might be, ask yourself: What kind of person do I want to be? What qualities do I admire in others? What lights me up, even when things are hard? What would I want someone to say about me at my 80th birthday?

Here's an example: I love being a sociable person and I am happy for an invitation for a night out to come my way. However, if I also really value my health and part of that is to give up alcohol for 3 months and engage in a healthier lifestyle, then it would not be wise of me to accept every offer to go to the pub or party.

I may choose to drive somewhere so I don't drink even though it pains me to be the sober one with all my friends. This is an example of me living in line with my values.

When you choose to take time to get clear on your values, you create an internal compass. That compass won't necessarily make your life easy, however it will make it meaningful. And when you let those values guide your decisions on a daily basis, it becomes surprisingly hard to make a "wrong" one.

Does this mean you'll never make mistakes? Of course not. However, the mistakes you make will teach you something important. They'll still have a direction. You'll be moving. Growing. Learning. Not just existing in limbo, unsure of who or what you're living for.

Here's the thing: staying aligned with your values isn't always comfortable. In fact, it's often the opposite. Choosing to be true to yourself might mean difficult conversations, setting boundaries, letting go of things (or people) that no longer serve you, or facing fears that have kept you playing small.

But there's a quiet power in knowing that you're making decisions that honour who you are and what you stand for.

And let's be honest for a moment here, so many of us have been taught to twist ourselves into knots to fit into spaces that don't see or celebrate us. So, of course it feels weird to choose your own path. Of course there's fear in standing firm in what matters to you. But discomfort isn't always a sign that you're doing something wrong. Sometimes, it's the growing pains of becoming more of who you are.

So, if you're feeling stuck right now, try asking yourself: What's really and truly important to me? What do I want my life to stand for? And then ask: What's one small decision I can make today that moves me closer to that?

Even the tiniest steps matter. The quiet decisions. The boundary you finally set. The "no" you say to something that doesn't serve you. The "yes" to something that feels bold, brave and new.

You don't have to get it perfect. You just have to keep moving in the direction of what matters. And when you do that (without harm or offence to others) you're doing life pretty damn well.



## Priscilla Devanny(She/Her)

I'm Priscilla, a CBT, REBT and Couples Therapist with almost 10 years experience working in private practice in SE London ([www.bekindtoyourselftherapy.com](http://www.bekindtoyourselftherapy.com)). Specialising in helping overloaded professionals who are successful on the outside but may be struggling with stress, anxiety and burnout, I help them go from feeling anxious and overwhelmed, constantly on edge and mentally exhausted to feeling calm, confident and in charge of their mental and emotional well-being.



BY SARA THORNHILL

# When Panic Hits: Reclaiming Power in Queer Bodies

**I've felt it too—that rush of heat, the racing heart, the breath that seems to disappear just when you need it most.**

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Panic doesn't always announce itself with sirens. Sometimes it tiptoes in like a thief, quietly robbing us of our peace.

For many in the queer community, anxiety isn't just a chemical imbalance or a result of too many responsibilities. It's woven into the fabric of our experience: the microaggressions, the fear of rejection, the years of code-switching and shape-shifting to survive. We carry it in our muscles, our breath, our bones.

We were never meant to live this way.

As a queer coach and trauma-informed somatic practitioner, I work with high-achieving professionals—many of whom seem outwardly successful but inwardly feel like they're constantly bracing for impact.

And for those of us with marginalized identities, the pressure to "keep it all together" often comes at the expense of our nervous systems.

So, what do we do when the anxiety surges? When our bodies go into fight-or-flight mode while we're just trying to get through a Zoom call or sit through dinner with family?

We begin by listening to what the body is trying to say, rather than silencing it.

Anxiety is not a flaw. It's a flag. It's the body's brilliant way of saying, "Something here doesn't feel safe."

And instead of shaming ourselves for the reaction, we can learn to respond with presence and compassion.

Here's one practice I use with clients—quick, simple, and scientifically grounded:



## The 5-Second Body Reset:

1. Press your feet firmly into the floor.
2. Let your exhale be longer than your inhale. (Try 4 seconds in, 6 seconds out.)
3. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Feel the rise and fall.
4. Whisper to yourself: "I am here. I am safe enough right now."
5. Repeat for 3 rounds.

This practice activates the vagus nerve, your body's built-in calm-down button. It's not about pretending everything is fine. It's about signaling to your system: you are not in danger anymore.

Queer panic often stems from places we couldn't control—childhood silence, religious trauma, systemic erasure. But healing is not just possible—it's powerful. And it's often found in the smallest of moments: a conscious breath, a hand on the heart, the presence of someone who sees us without condition.

You don't have to earn peace. You just have to reclaim it.

To everyone in our community navigating anxiety, know this: your reactions make sense. Your breath is a birthright. And there are tools, support, and people (like me) who see you—not as broken, but as brave.



## Sara Thornhill (She/They)

Sara Thornhill is a Personal Power Coach who helps professionals reclaim clarity, confidence, and purpose—especially in times of transition. With decades of experience guiding thousands through pivotal life moments, she offers a dynamic blend of strategy, insight, and embodied wisdom that moves clients from confusion to aligned action.



BY RHYANNON BRIGHTWATER

# Metamorphosis

Within the caterpillar beats  
the heart of the flutterbee  
and the pollywog swims  
with the soul of the frog.  
They are not alone---  
all nature is in constant flux,  
transition and metamorphosis.

I often pondered what it feels like  
to exchange one body for another so different.  
In the case of humans change is mostly  
inward, slow and pain-filled,  
a shedding of layer after layer  
like a dragon skinned,  
its scaly hide ripped and peeled away  
by the tender and terrible claws  
of the Lion bent on seeing who we truly are  
beneath our fearful guises.

How difficult it is to change even one thing  
about ourselves,  
to become so real in a world  
that prefers the disguises we have been  
compelled  
to wear by Chance or majority vote.

How hard it is to change!  
But I am part of nature, a wonder, a prodigy,  
a mere slip of a thing--though eternal--  
and how I long for the freedom  
that only comes through the rending  
of Truth from Lies oh so reluctantly lived—or  
died.



## Rhyannon Brightwater (She/Her)

Rhyannon is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She lives and works in Santa Fe New Mexico but is in the process of moving to the UK. She was a Lutheran minister and a high school English teacher prior to earning a master degree in social work. She has worked in mental health, end of life, bereavement and care coordination. As a transwomen she has served on several LGBTQI+ boards and seeks to support others in the transgender community through her lived experience and training.



BY NEILL HAVERS

# The Benefits of Hypnotherapy for Health and Wellbeing

Many people associate hypnotherapy with images of someone dazzling a swinging pendulum or going to a stage hypnotist show where members of the audience are given suggestions to perform various amusing tasks. Hypnotherapy is a form of therapy that uses hypnosis where a hypnotherapist uses specific techniques to induce a state of relaxation and focused attention in the client. While clients are in a state of relaxation, the hypnotherapist gives them positive suggestions to change thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

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Hypnosis has been around for many centuries with trance like practices rooted in various spiritual and religious traditions. Trance is effectively another word for "hypnosis", meaning being put into an altered state of awareness where people can see, hear things and respond to commands given by others.

Freud famously used hypnosis to recall repressed memories from the client's mind to heal them from trauma and other ailments. Today, hypnosis is regularly used to help people overcome common problems such as anxiety, depression, phobias, pain management, stress, irritable bowel syndrome, stop smoking, addictions and performance enhancement in sports and business among many other things!

Hypnosis is a very natural state of being. We all go in and out of hypnosis daily without even being aware. Just think back to the last time you were on a long car journey or engrossed in a good movie and became stuck in deep thought, losing track of time. Most people can be hypnotised providing they are open to it although hypnosis is not suitable for anyone with a history of psychosis such as schizophrenia as it can make the condition worse.

There are many different styles and techniques used in hypnosis including metaphors, a form of indirect suggestion where the client is given a story relating to the client's issue or problem. There is usually a very powerful subtle message in the story. Metaphors are often symbolic and a powerful tool for therapeutic change, allowing clients to adapt and explore to new behaviours and thought patterns.

Another technique used in hypnotherapy is regression, which entails revisiting memories from the past to identify root causes of a problem to aid understanding and allows the client to let go of previous difficult emotional experiences.

Visualisation techniques are used to create visual mental images of achieving a specific goal to enhance associated mental processes.

In addition, Neuro-linguistic programming techniques are integrated during hypnosis to enhance self-confidence, improve communication and promote positive behaviour change like overcoming a habit.

Hypnosis has many therapeutic benefits and it has been associated with being a similar state to REM sleep.

It helps to relieve stress, boosts immunity, reduces physical pain in the body, promotes relaxation and healing. In addition, while clients are in a trance like state, the conscious part of our mind which tends to be quite analytical is quietened, enabling us to become more attuned to our inner inspirations thus promoting creativity.

Hypnotherapy can bring about rapid change within a relatively short space of time and this may be associated with the fact that hypnosis involves working with the client's subconscious mind, the part that operates in the background and holds all your memories, experiences and beliefs from the day you were born.

The subconscious is very powerful and 85-90% of your mind is controlled by the subconscious. The subconscious has a major impact on how we perceive and interact with the world.

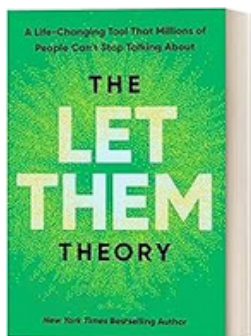
For further information about hypnotherapy, please check out my facebook page and upcoming website.



## Neill Havers (he/she/they)

I am a fully qualified clinical hypnotherapist and BWRT practitioner who has recently set up a new hypnotherapy service based in Liverpool specialising in supporting the LGBTQIA+ community. I have been a hypnotherapist for over 5 years and specialise in helping people with anxiety, depression, sleep and weight management issues. I offer in person and online therapy sessions via zoom or whatsapp. Online sessions are just as effective as in person sessions.

## BOOK OF THE QUARTER



### **The Let Them Theory - Mel Robbins**

I've read quite a bit of controversy surrounding this one, plagiarism etc, but I'm still going with it because I LOVE IT. If we could all live by the Let Them Theory, the world would be a better place.

Mel Robbins teaches us how to stop wasting our energy on things that we can't control and instead focus on our own happiness.

## MOVIE OF THE QUARTER

### **The Wild Robot**

Well this is an absolute random one, and only really came about because I watched it on a plane (and did a lot of crying) and also because I haven't been to the cinema really this quarter other than to see Snow White and needless to say, that isn't my movie of the quarter.

The Wild Robot is a beautifully written, thought provoking story about understanding what it means to belong. I think it's a wonderful reminder that connection and kindness can transcend even the biggest differences.



## SERIES OF THE QUARTER



### **Race Across The world**

Again, I think this gives us a really great look at human behaviour and interactions between people, but from a very different perspective. If you haven't watched Race Across the World, it is reality TV, but it's also a travel show.

Pairs race across from one point in the world to another with the budget of the cost of a flight, there are arguments and drama, highs and lows and I personally, can't get enough of the new series.



## UK - HELPLINES AND SUPPORT

- [lgbt.foundation](http://lgbt.foundation)
- [switchboard.lgbt](http://switchboard.lgbt)
- [mindout.org.uk](http://mindout.org.uk)
- [lgbtconsortium.org.uk](http://lgbtconsortium.org.uk)
- [stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk)
- [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)
- [gmhp.org.uk](http://gmhp.org.uk)
- [genderedintelligence.co.uk](http://genderedintelligence.co.uk)

## USA- HELPLINES AND SUPPORT

- [thetaskforce.org](http://thetaskforce.org)
- [mhanational.org](http://mhanational.org)
- [lgbtcenters.org](http://lgbtcenters.org)
- [pridecounseling.com](http://pridecounseling.com)
- [genderspectrum.org](http://genderspectrum.org)
- [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)
- [lgbthotline.org](http://lgbthotline.org)
- [glaad.org](http://glaad.org)
- [translifeline.org](http://translifeline.org)

Thank you so much for reading this first issue, please do invite your friends to subscribe and the next issue will be out in August.

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<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lianneterry/>

Or email me at [lianne.terry@outlook.com](mailto:lianne.terry@outlook.com)

I would love to hear from you all about what you'd like to see in the magazine, any feedback on this issue or if you'd like to contribute an article, please do give me a shout!