



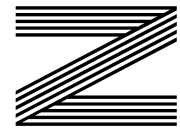
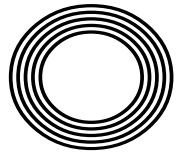
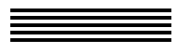
VIOLET
FEBRUARY
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MARK WRIGHT MAKING
HIS FOOTBALL COMEBACK

Valentine's Day traditions
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Alison
HAMMOND

The TV presenter emerging into the spotlight



FREE

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Editor's notes...

FEBRUARY 2021



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** BrentwoodOngar.

Do you ever get the impression that people don't want to talk to you? As an Everton supporter, I get it a lot. But I'm talking about wider society and our apparent unwillingness, at times, to simply pick up the phone.

Of course, I'm not blind to the many other ways we communicate with each other. On text, WhatsApp, email and social media, we are more conversational than ever, and to a broader sweep of people than ever in the past. And yet, my fear is we're in danger of actually becoming lonelier if we don't restore the basic form of picking up the phone.

This month, let's all make an effort to put in a call. It's powerful, it's genuine, it's personal, and it's not an experience you have to inadvertently share with 400 Facebook followers.

Our lack of one-to-one conversation - a simple voice down the phone - is something a lot of us are beginning to miss, particularly in lockdown. It's that desire to talk, to hear someone's voice, to share a laugh.

If you want or perhaps need a chat, for whatever reason, give someone a call. In fact, you can even give me a call. It's good for you, for us, for society - oh, and I promise not to try to sell you an ad.

Nik Allen

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CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Tim Green

At the time of print all content in **VISION** was relevant and up to date according to COVID-19 government guidelines

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The WRIGHT STUFF

HOW ONE OF OUR MOST ADORED REALITY TV STARS WENT BACK TO HIS ROOTS... GRASSROOTS

It's a fantasy that has crossed the mind of every grown man in his late twenties who has a normal, run-of-the-mill, everyday job. It's the thought, 'Perhaps it's not too late to realise every boy's dream and become a professional footballer; perhaps I can still make it.'

That reality TV star and Heart DJ Mark Wright still held those very unfulfilled ambitions is perhaps less of a surprise. He was, after all, on the books of West Ham, Arsenal and Tottenham as a youngster. When released at the age of 18, the left back was picked up by Southend United, but drifted into non-league football as the distractions of nightclub promotion and reality TV came about.

After spells in then Conference with Grays Athletic, Crawley Town and Rushden & Diamonds, the charismatic Essex-born star joined the cast of *TOWIE*. One of the original cast members, he was only with the ITV show a year, but the die was cast, and from *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* to *Take Me Out: The Gossip*, through presenting jobs on *Mark Wright's Hollywood Nights*, *The Bachelor* and *This Morning*, the husband to actress Michelle Keegan has been a permanent fixture on our screens for a decade. And when adding in his Heart radio show duties – a gig he's had since 2012 – it's any wonder he has any spare time...

But what about those football ambitions?

"I've never got over the fact I didn't make it in the game," he says. "And despite everything I achieved elsewhere, being a professional footballer now would top it all."

In October last year, Wright set out to make one final crack at the game he loves, and a call to John Yems, his former manager at Crawley, saw the now 33-year-old invited to West Sussex to train with the club.

The presenter describes the three months that followed as a whirlwind, combining media duties with a punishing physical routine designed to get his fitness up to League Two standards. His every move has been followed by a BBC film crew, whose iPlayer series *Mark Wright: The Last Chance* has proved a huge hit.

"I never had any expectations, but I always knew I'd give it everything I had, and the welcome I got at the club was tremendous from day one."

In December, Wright's dreams moved a step closer – he signed a contract until the end of the season. And being named on the bench for Crawley's FA Cup fourth round clash with Leeds United on January 10, just two days after his brother Josh signed for the club, set up the most impossible of scenarios. Could he make the comeback of all comebacks?

Crawley strode 3-0 up against their star-studded Premier League visitors, on their way to grabbing all the weekend's giant-killing headlines. A perfect day could only be topped by a call to the bench for a substitution. And so it happened... he may have only come on in the 91st minute, he may have only touched the ball three times, but a dream was realised on that cold Sunday lunchtime at the People's Pension Stadium.

And it doesn't stop there – the Reds are eyeing up promotion from League Two and there will be no resting on his laurels for Mark Wright... a reality star in every sense.

THE WORLD AROUND US

Part 4

In the last part of our environmental series, we look at the final key driver in the health and well-being of the planet: global warming.

The phrase 'climate change denier' has become commonplace in conversations about the gradual warming of the planet and the causes of this. Scientific opinion points to humans and our explosion of population, industry and consumption as the real effects of the Earth increasing in temperature by 1° Celsius since 1880.

It doesn't sound a lot, does it? And yet, a one-to two-degree drop was all it took to plunge the Earth into the Little Ice Age in the Medieval Period.

The platform climate change deniers have generally sees their voices amplified well beyond what they should be. The results of various studies often level out at around the same rate – namely that only two or three people out of 100 will dispute the scientists' theory that humans are the cause of global warming.

With such a large accepting consensus, the drive to combat this gradual warming of Earth has

accelerated in recent years. Equipping ourselves with data, while ensuring we have the ability to interpret it, is vital.

Temperatures across a timespan of a year, five years or even a decade might rise four degrees in one region and drop six in another (which is why anomalies occur, such as Greenland's Jakobshavn Glacier actually increasing in mass since 2016), but overall, there is trouble ahead.

The next, vital step the Earth faces is a willingness of its people to do something about it. For all the UK's action over the past couple of decades, for all the destruction global warming has already contributed, such as coastal erosion, moorlands fires, floods and more, we contribute just 1.2 per cent of the world's total emissions.

It means that, as if it were ever in doubt, a global solution requires a true global investment of action from the planet's inhabitants.



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TIDY HOUSE, TIDY MIND: House viewers need to imagine their own possessions in your house, so the brighter and emptier your rooms are, the easier it will be for them to make that

connection.
It may mean you need to give up a weekend or two to repaint a couple of rooms, and that mass of clutter can find a new home in the loft – or the bin – but the rewards could be huge.

TIGHT IS RIGHT: Your house needs to give off a feeling of quality – it will all add to a sense of your potential purchaser stepping up a level when they move in. With that in mind, tighten and make sparkle door handles, taps and bannister rails. No wobbles, no worries.

A MEAN CLEAN: While it sounds obvious, any appearance of dust is hugely off-putting for those looking around a home. Paying professional cleaners to really give your rooms a spruce may be one of the best investments you make.

(VERY) FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Most people think first impressions are made when someone walks through the front door, but the process begins way before that. Is the lawn mown? Is the front door wiped down? Can you convince your neighbour to move his rusty Ford Mondeo around the corner?

WEATHER WITH YOU: Try to book viewings when the sun is there to light up your home. Open windows to let heat and the breeze in, and consider delaying if torrential rain may see your potential buyers soaked through before they even enter the property.



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LOOKING FORWARD TO A BETTER YEAR

Last year, as a new decade dawned, little did we know how the next 12 months would unfold. Now, as another year begins, there are growing shoots of optimism but, whatever the year does bring, a crucial lesson from 2020 is the need to prioritise financial wellbeing to ensure we can cope with life's trials and tribulations.

KEY LESSONS

The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare our fragility and vulnerabilities and presented challenges on many different levels. It has also reinforced several key financial lessons, from the importance of budgeting and building up an emergency savings fund, to investment diversification and holding appropriate life and protection policies.

In short, the pandemic has demonstrated the value of maintaining sound financial planning principles and the peace of mind this delivers. In effect, by getting into good financial habits, it is possible to ensure you are cushioned against the shock when crisis does strike.

FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Another key takeaway from last years' experience has been the entwined relationship between financial

wellbeing and emotional wellbeing: while a lack of financial stability typically leads to stress and anxiety, sound finances can provide mental peace. Research conducted by insurer Royal London also highlights the critical role expert advice plays in improving emotional wellbeing by increasing clients' financial confidence and resilience. According to the study, advised customers who have an ongoing relationship with their adviser were nearly twice as likely to feel in control of their finances as those who didn't.

HELP AT HAND

The new year period provides the perfect opportunity to take stock of your finances and build foundations for a better financial future, and seeking professional advice is a vital step in achieving those objectives. So, get in touch and we'll help you develop sound plans designed to ensure you hit your short and long-term financial goals and ultimately provide a boost to both your financial and emotional wellbeing.

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DULUX LOOKS TOWARDS SAFE GROUND IN NAMING ITS COLOUR FOR 2021

There's only one contradiction at play as far as Dulux's Colour of the Year goes – namely that in establishing a tone that speaks quietness, calmness, unassuming peace and tranquillity, the paint manufacturer is treading safe ground and not, as the shade's name implies, Brave Ground.

And yet, despite Dulux failing to state what is courageous about this tone, we can at least revel in its ability to encapsulate the mood of the world. It pleads for calm, reflection and philosophical thoughts, and offers a serenity to interiors that is very different from the intention borne out in Pantone's Colour(s) of the Year.

This warm beige shade is one that will work beautifully when matching with light woods, particularly in the bedroom or living room.

Combined with white it reclines elegantly into the

background, and as a flat shade, it can find itself offset by fabrics and furniture that offer depth and detail.

The tones of grey present in Brave Ground are also earthy enough to take interiors away from the overtly beige patterns of the 1970s that often strayed too far in the way of oranges and browns.

Consider also mixing with pastels, or sharpening the edges with blacks and greys, particularly in cushions, throws, curtains or lampshades. Ultimately, Brave Ground is a colour that will bring lightness while offering a knowing nod to dark luxury.

Indeed, perhaps in adopting a shade that is the very epitome of neutrality, perhaps in offering a platform on which we can place our existing belongings as well as bring in new renovations, Dulux is showing itself to be brave after all.



HOME & DIY

Photo credit: Ideal Home.co.uk, Dulux.co.uk



Magic MATERIALS



Tencel bedding

In a world where sustainability is not just desirable, but necessary, these alternative fabrics and leathers are presenting as viable options for global brands who want to do their bit for our planet.

TENCEL

Already a ubiquitous eco-fabric, Tencel is used by several major design brands linked to both interiors and fashion.

Produced by environmentally responsible processes from the sustainably sourced natural raw material wood, Tencel is not only a wonderfully soft and breathable material, it also combines beautifully with other fabrics such as cotton, silk and polyester for maximum versatility.

ECONYL

Fabric recycling has come a long way since the days of simple reupholstering that saw tired sofas and chairs less reinvented and more clumsily repurposed into something you could palm off to the kids or into the guest bedroom.

Econyl regenerated nylon is made from, you guessed it... nylon waste, and with an emphasis on closing the loop, this brilliant and innovative brand confesses to having an appetite for creating an infinite quantity of new products, but all using existing resources. In short, we've come a long way since the 1980s.

With 10,000 tonnes of Econyl raw material saving 70,000 barrels of crude oil, this fabulous fabric is being used to create everything from carpets to swimsuits.



Econyl chairs

PIÑATEX

Piñatex is a leather alternative made from the leaf waste of pineapples. This fluff-like leaf fibre (PALF) gets mixed with a corn-based polylactic acid (PLA), undergoing a mechanical process to create Piñatfelt, a non-woven mesh that forms the base of all Piñatex collections.

Coloured using natural pigments and coated with resin to give additional strength, durability and water resistance, this luxurious leather alternative is already doing its bit to lessen the environmental impact of mass leather production and chemical tanning.



Piñatex furniture

Photo credit: westelm.co.uk, econyl.com, 21gstudio.com



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Top tips for Loving your Cooker this month

Invest in a non-stick oven liner

They help to catch all of those annoying drips that stick to the bottom of your cooker, which later can become a burnt-on mess. Easy to wash or pop in the dishwasher.

Do not use harsh chemicals inside your cooker.

Instead, try a safer homemade option using items found around your household. For an all-purpose cleaner and deodorizer, mix together four tablespoons baking soda with one litre warm water.

Get the wiping habit!

Wipe away any spillages immediately with a damp cloth. Don't give the mess a chance to stay. I know this sounds easy and as hard as you try it is a chore, the oven can still be hot and some of the stuff just doesn't want to come off but stick with it. Get a microfibre cloth and use it wet with washing-up solution.

Cover your roast!

You need to stop the grease spitting all over your lovely clean oven. To do this just put a lid on your roast tin or cover with foil or try a roasting bag. This way the inside of your oven and your grill (if it's inside your oven) won't become completely coated in grease when you are cooking. This grease, if left in the oven, becomes burnt on carbon in the long term and is very difficult to get off.

Get a professional in to Glean It!

If you really can't get all the dirt and grime out of your oven yourself then maybe call and book someone that can. A newly cleaned cooker will be sparkling and clean and if you follow our other tips you will keep it clean, won't you?

Need some professional help? Then call Rob at OvenGleaners on 01277 361760 or go to www.ovengleaners.com for more details.

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HOME & DIY



making MEMORIES

Whether you are looking for a birthday present, graduation gift or unique anniversary offering, a memory quilt is the perfect choice. Allowing you to create a personalised and completely original gift, expect tears of joy when you present one of these to your loved one.

Alternatively, you can make your own personalised fabric by transferring photos onto a piece of white or coloured cotton.

Step 2: Determine the desired size of your squares and quilt. For a large quilt, use 25 t-shirt squares 5x5 – see step 4.

Step 3: Cut your fusible interlining slightly larger than your quilt to allow for cutting back later.

Step 4: Cut off the necks and sides of your t-shirts. You will be left with two squares from each one.

Step 5: Following the manufacturer's instructions, lay the fusible interlining on the back of your squares and fuse using an iron.

Step 6: Once all pieces are fused, cut to size.

Step 7: Decide upon the layout of your squares and pin together before starting to sew.

Step 8: Using your sewing machine, start to sew each row together before attaching the rows to complete your quilt top. Remove pins.

Step 9: Make a quilt sandwich using backing and batting which needs to be 5cm bigger on all sides. Fuse the batting using an iron and then attach your backing with an adhesive spray.

Step 10: Complete your quilt using the stitch-in-the-ditch technique using your sewing machine, or use free-motion quilting.

Congratulations. Your memory quilt is complete.



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I think we can all agree that the sooner we see the back of 2020 and this dreadful corona virus the better. That said, there are also some heart warming positives that we can take out of this situation. It has often been said that we can only really get to know one another and realise what is truly important in times of crisis. I think few would argue that in this case what has proven to be important is local community spirit.

When talking to the Manager of Cloudy2Clear windows Chris Miller it became clear that these values have been held dear for a number of years. Since starting the business some years ago Cloudy2Clear have remained true to their core values of

supporting the local community by providing a service that saves the public money.

The Cloudy2Clear service only requires the glass to be replaced and not the whole window once the unit has failed. Chris commented "Cloudy2Clear were able to assist our community through the last financial crisis in 2008 due to the savings that can be made in using our service. Unfortunately we might be going through something similar again soon and the public can rest assured that we will be there to help again".

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LOCAL NEWS BRENTWOOD

LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



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Royal recognition for town residents

A doctor and a philanthropist from Brentwood were named in the New Year Honours list when it was published recently.

Dr Tayyab Haider, the medical director at Basildon Hospital, was awarded an MBE for his services to the NHS, including during the COVID-19 response.

Dr Haider said: "I am delighted and very proud to receive this honour, which is a recognition of the extraordinary hard work of the staff at Basildon Hospital, and across Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, while responding to COVID-19.

"It was humbling to be nominated, let alone to be awarded the honour.

"I hope it inspires doctors developing their careers. I am so fortunate to work in a great team, enjoy a career in medicine and be in a position to influence

the profession."

Anita Goyal, chief executive officer of the Hemraj Goyal Foundation, also received an MBE for services to diversity and female empowerment.

She was honoured for her work on addressing female genital mutilation, menstrual discrimination and human trafficking within minority groups.

Anita said: "I was not expecting any recognition for my work but was equally pleased that people from my community were championing me.

"I felt pride but also gratitude that this could be a platform to further the philanthropic work of our family foundation, and the workshops we run.

"I am honoured and proud to have received this recognition as it will help me serve communities even more."



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Grace Millane killer loses appeal bid



The killer of Brentwood schoolgirl Grace Millane has lost an appeal against his conviction and sentence for her murder.

After Jesse Kempson's bid to clear his name was overturned, the Court of Appeal in New Zealand lifted an order banning the publication of his name.

Grace was travelling in Auckland when she met Kempson. After strangling her the day before her 22nd birthday in December 2018, he stuffed her body in a suitcase and buried it outside the city, where she was later found.

Kempson was found guilty in November 2019 and was jailed for a minimum of 17 years in February last year.

Kempson, 28, was convicted in October 2020 of eight other charges relating to various attacks, including using a knife against a woman.

In November 2020, he was convicted of raping another woman in April 2018.

He was sentenced to 11 years for these nine offences, which will be served concurrently with his sentence for Grace's murder.

Woman and her Cocker Spaniel attacked by dog

Police are appealing for information after a woman and her dog were attacked by another dog in a Brentwood park last month.

The woman and her son were walking their black Cocker Spaniel in Merrymeade Country Park at 1.20pm on January 15 when it was attacked by a brown and white Pointer-type dog that was off its lead.

The woman was injured when she tried to separate the dogs and the Cocker Spaniel required treatment for an ear injury.

The Pointer may have been called Louie and was wearing a multicoloured woven collar. Its owner was present but left the area soon after.

He was described as white, aged around 45, 5ft 9in

tall and wearing a light blue puffer or bomber-style jacket and a beanie hat.

It is believed that a family was in the park at the same time.

If you witnessed the incident or have any information about the dog and its owner, please call Essex Police on 101, quoting the crime reference number 42/8145/21.

You can also report information at essex.police.uk or by contacting Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Home raided as teen charged with terror offences

Anti-terrorist police descended on a home in Brentwood recently in connection with the arrest of a 17-year-old boy from Essex.

The police raids, which also targeted a property in Chelmsford, took place on December 29 when the youth, who cannot be named because of his age, was taken into custody.

The operation was led by Counter Terrorism Policing North East and supported by Eastern Region Special Operations Unit and Essex Police.

A warrant of further detention was approved by the court on December 30.

The teenager was charged with a string of offences on January 3, including engaging in the preparation of an act of terrorism, disseminating a terrorist publication and four offences of possessing material likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.

He appeared before Westminster Magistrates' Court via video link the following day.

It's understood he had drawn up plans for a storage bunker, provided information for the manufacture of firearms by a 3D printer and sent money to another person so he could buy the materials to manufacture them.

The plea hearing is set to take place on April 9 and the trial hearing on June 7, both at the Central Criminal Court.



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Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar





welcomed, and made to feel safe and happy and reassured after they have received their vaccine. Everyone has played their part to ensure those most vulnerable to the deadly effects of COVID-19 receive the first, and often the second, dose of the vaccine.

I've spoken to the teams running the vaccination programmes for the Brentwood and Ongar Primary Care Networks (groups of GP surgeries) and they are pleased uptake is high. There was certainly an air of great enthusiasm at Brentwood's vaccine hub, located in The Brentwood Centre, when I visited last month.

This month should see the majority of the top four priority groups receiving the first dose of one of the available vaccines. You will be contacted by your GP surgery with an appointment date, so please do not make their lives busier by ringing up to ask when you will be called.

For those with a mind for numbers, you can keep in touch with the roll-out on a weekly basis via this link: www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/

This is all good news, but we must remember to stick to the basic message of this pandemic – hands, face, space – until we can be sure the rate of infection is down and the most vulnerable have had the second dose of the vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme is well under way across the Brentwood and Ongar constituency.

I cannot praise all those involved in the roll-out of the programme locally too highly. In particular: the staff at the Clinical Commissioning Groups securing supplies of vaccines for the Primary Care Networks to the GPs, and nurses and admin teams at the GP surgeries who are administering vaccines and making appointments for their most vulnerable patients to attend the vaccination hubs. Additionally, the volunteers at those hubs who are making sure everyone who arrives is

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£20,000 raised for church repairs

A campaign launched to repair the damage caused after an illegal rave was held in a disused church on New Year's Eve has raised more than £20,000.

The Friends of All Saints, East Horndon, say they are relying on donations to pay for the repairs that are required to the window, the door lock and the electrics, as well as a deep clean.

The campaign launched to pay to repair the damage has raised £21,764 at time of writing. The initial target was £2,000.

To donate, visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/historicchurchillegalrave repairs





LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Want to have your say on future development of area?

People in Ongar are being urged to have their say on the future development of the parish.

The Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group has put together the Neighbourhood Plan, a document to give the community an opportunity to shape the development and growth of the area. The plan is at the public consultation stage.

Mary Dadd is chairman of the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group.

She said: "Until Ongar's emerging policies are at public consultation stage, district council planners may decide not to give any weight to them.

"This is a real chance for local people to have their

say on the proposals."

The plan sets out policies including encouraging new local employment, diversification of Chipping Ongar High Street, further protection of historic buildings, ensuring that new development includes sufficient parking and maintains the present housing mix and that all new builds must have high-speed broadband connections.

Visit www.ongarneighbourhoodplan.uk or the Ongar Town Council website to find out more.

Paper copies of the draft Ongar Neighbourhood Plan are available by contacting Ongar Town Council. Call 01277 365348.

Floods cause chaos for town residents

Heavy rain fell across much of Essex last month, causing surface water flooding across the county, including in Ongar.

The A14 by the Vojan Restaurant on Epping Road was hit particularly badly. Many locals called on Essex County Council to urgently address the situation.

Another area of Ongar submerged by floodwater was the Cripsey Brook Nature Reserve, the photo of which was captured by Nicola Alcock.



Photo credit: Nicola Alcock

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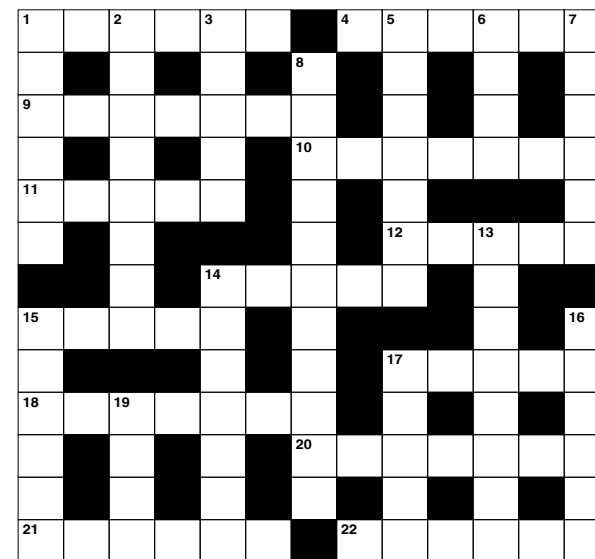
Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

1. Straighten out (6)
4. Vocalist (6)
9. Animal fat (7)
10. Not friendly (7)
11. Oozes (5)
12. Compassion (5)
14. Expect; think that (5)
15. Word of farewell (5)
17. Wedding assistant (5)
18. Supervisory worker (7)
20. Burdensome work (7)
21. Short choral compositions (6)
22. Entertains (6)

DOWN

1. Except when (6)
2. Musical pieces for solo instruments (8)
3. Regulations (5)
5. Annoying (7)
6. Large desert in Asia (4)
7. Make less dense (6)
8. Residents (11)
13. People with auburn hair (8)



14. Furthest away (7)
15. State publicly (6)
16. Tremulous sounds (6)
17. Deprive of weapons (5)
19. Speak in a wild way (4)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Adélie penguins breed and raise their offspring in Antarctica
- ▶ Puffins can flap their wings up to 400 times a minute. They can fly at around 55 miles an hour
- ▶ The bald eagle, which was once on the brink of extinction, has been the national symbol of the United States of America since 1782
- ▶ Once a flamingo lays an egg, the parents take turns sitting on it to keep it warm. The egg usually hatches in around 30 days
- ▶ The ostrich is the tallest and heaviest of all the birds
- ▶ As a male snowy owl gets older, it turns whiter. Males are often whiter than females
- ▶ Red-tailed hawks can spot a mouse from 30 metres up in the air

SUDOKU

		8				7	3
1	7		2	3			
		5		4		8	
	8	1	7		5	9	
	4		3		7		
			1	9	2		5
4	6				9		



The infectious personality of
ALISON HAMMOND

The presenter who has chuckled, chortled and guffawed her way through almost two decades on camera... and we're all better off for it.

The Brummie whose laugh-a-minute approach to presenting has won her admirers across the entertainment world... and we include Harrison Ford and Ryan Gosling in that number.

As if proof were needed that Alison Hammond, while always kind, enthusiastic and respectful, does not subscribe to the idea that celebrities and film stars are unreachable demigods not worthy of our time, in a hilarious 2017 interview for *This Morning*, Hammond charmed and bewildered two of Hollywood's finest in a recording that had more than 12 million YouTube views. You could say she upstaged her two guests by laughing them into submission.

Having first appeared on our screens as a contestant in the *Big Brother* house, Hammond is another example of a reality star who has maximised the possibilities out of what is a very simple and short-lived platform.

She has swept her way through a variety of entertainment shows over the past decade, appearing in *Celebrity Fit Club*, *Celebrities Under Pressure*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *Celebrity Ready Steady Cook* and many, many more; she has been a panellist on *Loose Women*, and made it to the seventh week of *Strictly Come Dancing* when she partnered Aljaž Škorjanec.

"I've always been someone who wants to grab life by the horns and go for a ride," she laughs. "It's very rare that I'll turn down an opportunity, and if I do it's because it's taking me too far from home and being around the people I love, and those are the ones who must always come first."

And Hammond's reputation as a brilliant reporter on *This Morning* has borne fruit in a way she wouldn't have imagined – in the middle of December 2020 it was announced that she and Dermot O'Leary would take over full presenting duties on Fridays from regular incumbents Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langsford.

The shake-up is further evidence of a nation embracing those down-to-earth personalities who reflect our own thoughts, ideas and sensibilities.

"A long time ago I realised that to get on in the world you just need to be yourself," she says. "I think in the early days of getting TV work there was a temptation to be the person you thought people wanted to see, and when you do that you lose an edge."

"What people see is what they get, but it is all me – an uplifting, fun, sparky person who treats everyone as equals."

Indeed, geographically, Hammond, 46 in February, has stayed true to herself as well. Despite *This Morning* being filmed at Television Centre in White City, the presenter still lives in 'the second city', commuting to the capital for work. "I couldn't ever leave Birmingham behind – it means everything to me, as do the people."

"It's also my son's home, and I want him to grow up a proud Brummie like me... who likes to laugh."



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Valentine's traditions AROUND THE WORLD

Love is in the air with these beautiful, and in some cases bizarre, Valentine's Day traditions from around the globe.



SOUTH KOREA: In this country in east Asia, lovers celebrate the day of love on the 14th of every month. May 14 is the "day of rose", June 14 is the "day of kisses", and there is even a "black day" in April when couples eat black noodles together.



PHILIPPINES: Young couples in the Philippines are sponsored by the government to get married as a form of public service. Well, there are worse ways to serve your country.



GHANA: Known as National Chocolate Day, February 14 is used to increase tourism in Ghana, one of the largest cocoa-producing countries in the world.



BULGARIA: A simple yet highly enjoyable tradition, in Bulgaria, couples young and old celebrate their love by sharing a glass of local wine.



WALES: Lovers from Wales celebrate Valentine's Day on January 25, and rather than exchange cards and flowers, they



SPAIN: The day of love in Spain falls on October 9 and is known as the feast of Saint Dionysius. On this day, men gift their women a "macadora", which is a marzipan figurine.



ESTONIA: Still taking place on February 14 but with a slight twist, Estonians celebrate all relationships on this day rather than just romantic ones.



JAPAN: A country that prides itself on being unique, Valentine's Day in Japan is quite unlike anywhere else in the world. On February 14, women buy gifts for men, but men are not allowed to return the favour until March 14, known as the "white day".

HOW TO SAY "I LOVE YOU":

- > South Korea: Saranghae
- > Philippines: Mahal kita
- > Ghana: Me dɔ wo
- > Bulgaria: Obicham te
- > Wales: Rwy'n dy garu di
- > Spain: Te amo
- > Estonia: Ma armastan sind
- > Japan: Aishiteru

give their partners handcrafted wooden spoons.



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MOTORING



How To CLEAN AND PROTECT your Car seats

Even with the best will in the world, your car seats will eventually succumb to stains and spillages. Fortunately, if you care for and clean them appropriately, they can be restored to their original glory.

FABRIC CAR SEATS

- > The first step when cleaning your fabric car seats is to vacuum the upholstery to ensure the area is free from dirt and debris. If pet hair is an issue, utilise a pet hairbrush to lift the hair before vacuuming.
- > Next you need to apply your chosen cleaner or shampoo. Try not to make the area too wet – damp is best – and then gently rub in the solution with a soft-bristled brush.
- > Top tip: Concentrate on small areas and an even spread of solution to avoid water stains.

LEATHER CAR SEATS

- > Leather car seats are less prone to stains than fabric ones but they are also more delicate and susceptible to abrasions. Therefore, when vacuuming you need to be extra careful and take your time to avoid any scratches or tears. You also need to purchase a leather-specific upholstery cleaner, which often comes as a cream rather than a spray or shampoo.
- > Apply the product and gently rub the area with a microfibre towel.
- > Top tip: The more matt your leather seats appear, the cleaner they are.

HOW TO DRY YOUR CAR SEATS

It is always advisable to clean your car seats early in the day and when no rain is forecast. If you can keep an eye on your vehicle, leave your windows slightly open to prevent trapped moisture and let your seats dry naturally.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CAR SEATS

- > Condition leather seats to prevent cracks
- > Spray fabric seats with a fabric protector





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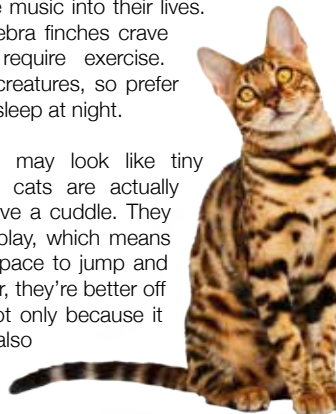
LEOPARD GECKOS: A reptile may not be the first pet you have in mind when considering a companion for your older years, but the leopard gecko is actually a fantastic little friend who's also easy to look after. Requiring little more than a cosy, heated habitat in the form of a tank, insect edibles and a bowl of water, these big-eyed beauties are not only calm and friendly, but also happy to be handled by gentle hands.

they are arguably far more desirable to look at than your common or garden goldfish.

ZEBRA FINCHES: Originating from Australia, these feathery little friends are fantastic pets for those wishing to bring a little music into their lives. Prone to loneliness, zebra finches crave companionship and require exercise. They're also daytime creatures, so prefer to play in the day and sleep at night.

TROPICAL FISH: You may not be able to cuddle a koi carp when you're feeling low, but bright-coloured, beautiful tropical fish are clinically proven to have a calming effect on our minds. From gorgeous, fantailed guppies to bright little neons, you can buy tropical fish in an array of dazzling colours, even creating your own underwater paradise with the addition of ornaments and plants. Tropical fish, of course, require a little more in terms of heating and pumping systems, but

BENGAL CAT: They may look like tiny leopards, but Bengal cats are actually incredibly tame and love a cuddle. They are agile and love to play, which means they do need a little space to jump and run around in. However, they're better off being kept indoors, not only because it is far safer there but also because of their high value.



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FEBRUARY BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

Violet

The February birth flower is the vibrant violet. People born in this month tend to be both modest and mild mannered, hence the popular expression "shrinking violet". Sweet violets are regularly found in the UK in woods and hedgerows and are often candied and used to decorate cakes.

WHAT DO VIOLETS SYMBOLISE?

Violets have been around for centuries and were first cultivated by the Greeks around 500BC. According to Greek mythology, violets were created when one of Artemis' nymphs was pursued by her twin brother Apollo. To protect her, Artemis turned her into a violet, which in turn led to this flower being known to represent modesty.

WHAT DOES THIS BIRTH FLOWER SAY ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

If you were born in February, you are said to be wise beyond your years. A private person, you are also prone to being a bit of a dreamer. It can take you a while to warm up to people, but when you do, you are fiercely loyal.

CAN I GROW VIOLETS IN MY GARDEN?

Violets typically grow in the wild, although they are decreasing in numbers owing to habitat loss, which means if you want to grow them in your garden, you need to recreate these conditions. Violets thrive in winter and spring sun but need summer shade, so their ideal spot is under a deciduous tree or shrub.

Violets will self-sow, but growing your own from seed is a challenge as the seeds need to be fresh. Instead, buy plants during the spring and plant immediately in moist but well-drained soil.

WHAT PESTS ARE COMMON TO VIOLETS?

If your violet leaves turn yellow, this could be the result of an attack by red spider mites. This pest strikes when your plant becomes too hot or dry.

The best remedy is to defoliate the plant completely.



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GARDEN OF LIFE

FOX IN *the box*

In the first of a four-part series that shows how even the most urban garden can be a haven for the wonders of wildlife and the nurturing of nature, we look at the faithful fox. Whether out at night or hiding in plain sight, this sly urban dweller has adapted better than any other animal to human environments.

Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised when we spot a fox meandering its way through the park, across a garden, or even on the pavement outside where we live. These beautiful creatures are, after all, past masters in urban environments, even if they are just as accustomed to survival in the rugged wild.

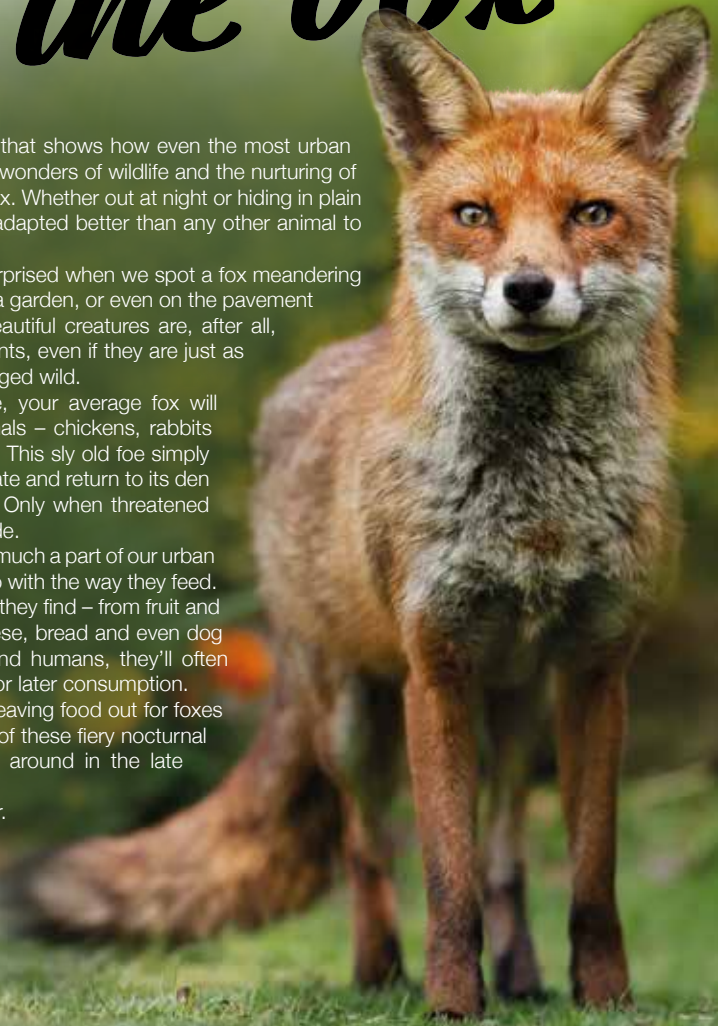
For all its impressive presence, your average fox will rarely approach humans or animals – chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs notwithstanding. This sly old foe simply wants to hunt for scraps, play, mate and return to its den to rest and tend to its offspring. Only when threatened will a fox move into offensive mode.

The fact foxes have become so much a part of our urban and suburban lives has a lot to do with the way they feed. They'll consume almost anything they find – from fruit and veg, raw and cooked meat, cheese, bread and even dog biscuits. Increasingly brave around humans, they'll often take food for storage, burying it for later consumption.

That means there's little risk in leaving food out for foxes if you're hoping to get a glimpse of these fiery nocturnal beauties, who will happily roam around in the late afternoon as well.

There is a downside, however.

From fouling the garden to chewing shoes left outside, to trampling lawns and even digging up deceased pets, if you encourage foxes in, you'll have to go along with their inquisitive, playful habits.



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HISTORY



Charles & Diana

40 years on

Looking back to 1981, and the 40th anniversary of the engagement of Prince Charles and Lady Diana.

February 6, 2021, marks the 40th anniversary of when Lady Diana Spencer made a step into the public spotlight from which, inevitably, she would never return.

At just 19 years old, her engagement to Prince Charles, at 32, was celebrated the world over; 40 years on, with the benefit of hindsight, we look back on the union in a rather different way.

The fact the pair met in peculiar circumstances perhaps should have been a sign – Charles originally dated Diana’s sister, Sarah. And in later years it was revealed that the pair had only been together on 13 separate occasions, across six months, before becoming engaged.

Of course, peculiarity and the royal family are common bedfellows. In fact, February 2021 marks another interesting anniversary – the 50th anniversary of the first time Charles met Camilla, his now wife.

So while February 6 certainly won’t be looked on as a date in history to be cherished, it is at least a mark in the sand. The couple brought two boys into the world who, in their own way, have made significant contributions; and while their marriage – which was confirmed on July 29, 1981, at St Paul’s Cathedral – lasted only 15 years, it’s appropriate to remind ourselves that time mends most ills.

Diana, up to her death in 1997, did so much to cultivate her own life away from the stranglehold of the royal epicentre, and largely succeeded; while Charles has reinvented his persona across philanthropic, environmental and entrepreneurial projects, and enjoys a higher grade of popularity now in 2021 than he has at any point in the past.

Photo credit: Getty Images; Shutterstock

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NO MEAN FOOT

Why our humble feet may be the lynchpin to overall body health alignment

Never underestimate just how fantastic our feet are – sure, they will get you around the house, to work, or down to the pub, but more than that, they are the lynchpin to overall body health too.

through the body into the knees, hips, spine, neck and other joints.

Balance

Balance in the human body is finely configured so that any imbalances can have negative effects on general health, from wobbliness through to vertigo-type symptoms.

Organs

In the most extreme cases, when the mesh of nerves and touch receptors in our feet are blocked, insufficient messages can send disruptive adjustments through the body, including into our organs.

It is for these reasons that looking after our feet is pivotal to good health. Sure, get the pumice stone out in the bath, but more than that, ensure you are wearing properly fitting shoes. That might mean accepting that narrow styles are not going to work for your wide feet, or that perhaps you will need to buy flip-flops with a little more support.

Also consider a whole variety of foot exercises that can help bring not just your feet back into alignment, but your whole body back into harmony.

Consider 10 toes, more than 50 bones (that's around a quarter of all those in the human body), and more than 60 joints, plus more than 200 muscles, tendons and ligaments, and it's clear why your feet are the cornerstone to overall body health.

Mobility

In the most obvious sense, your feet are the tools that move you around. Essential for almost every form of exercise, health and well-being, which begins at ground level.

Back and joint issues

The way we walk ultimately affects the way the rest of our body functions, and this is no truer than in people who suffer with flat feet. This condition causes a misalignment with the ankle, which can move up



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Daughter of Resident, Hutton View
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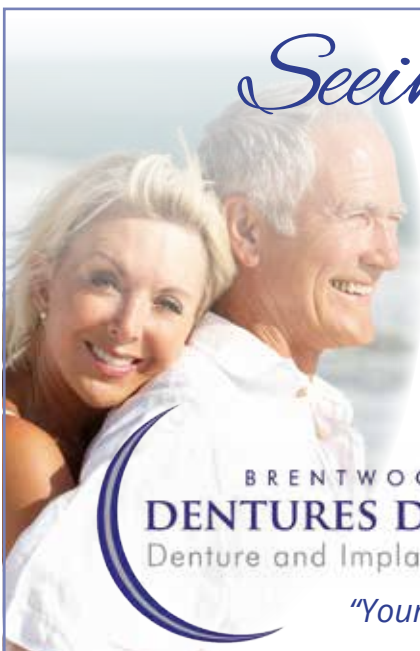
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WHAT IS RADIO FREQUENCY

Radio frequency is used to improve skin elasticity, remove cellulite, renew muscles and enhance skin rejuvenation by applying electromagnetic high frequency waves.

The goal of radio frequency treatment is to tighten the skin of the body and dilated pores, smooth fine lines and wrinkles. Collagen and elastin are boosted, cellulite is removed.

Loose skin, wrinkles and fine lines may give away one's age or make them appear older than they are. Fortunately, skin elasticity can be restored using radio frequency therapy. Collagen takes 14-21 days to synthesise, therefore you may see the best results in the 3rd/4th treatment.



Men's skin toning & tightening
after one treatment

Men's stomach after
one treatment

Clients can see improvements after three sessions. The recommended course is six treatments, however some clients may need additional sessions depending on the individual.

RADIO FREQUENCY / CAVITATION BENEFITS

- ✦ Fat Reduction ✦ Cellulite Removal
- ✦ Boosts Collagen & Elastin Process
- ✦ Skin Tightening & Toning ✦ Skin Rejuvenation
- ✦ Improves Skin Texture
- ✦ Smooths Fine Lines & Wrinkles

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CLEANSE ME...



Whether you are looking to remove stubborn mascara, thick sun cream or the dirt and impurities that your skin has picked up over the course of the day, a cleansing balm should be your go-to product, providing a delicate, yet effective, way to clean the skin on your face.

WHAT IS A CLEANSING BALM?

Cleansing balms are creamy and rich cleansers that gently remove any make-up, dirt and impurities from your skin without leaving it stripped of its natural oils. Unlike oil cleansers, which can be a bit messy, cleansing balms deliver oils to melt make-up, in a solidified form, meaning portion control is easier.

Furthermore, cleansing balms can be used around the eyes to remove make-up, as they are made with natural ingredients and are therefore suitable for this delicate area.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS?

- > They provide a deep cleanse which can help to prevent breakouts
- > They hydrate your skin
- > They are suitable for sensitive skin

- > They provide quick results
- > Many contain antioxidants
- > They are high in oils, meaning you can skip daily moisturiser if you wish

HOW TO USE CLEANSING BALMS

1. Take a 10p-sized amount of balm and warm it between your fingers
2. Apply to dry skin in circular motions
3. Once the make-up starts to break down, add warm water to your skin
4. Continue to massage
5. Remove with a warm, damp cloth or muslin

WHAT ARE THE BEST CLEANSING BALMS?

- > Clinique Take The Day Off Balm – best all-rounder, suitable for all skin types
- > ESPA Nourishing Cleansing Balm – best for dry skin
- > Pond's Makeup Remover Cleansing Balm – best for sensitive skin
- > Slaai Makeup Melting Butter Cleanser by Drunk Elephant – best for removing waterproof make-up
- > Emma Hardie Moringa Cleansing Balm – best for ageing skin



BYE BYE BOOZERS%

If you enjoyed an alcohol-free January, here are some alternatives to alcohol to try...

It's that time of year when we reflect on our bad habits and do our best to become healthier, happier and wiser, and if giving up alcohol is your New Year's Resolution, then all is good. Low-booze business is booming, and that means there are plenty of delicious, low-calorie options to help keep you motivated.

BEER

Any designated driver will tell you that the previous offerings from major breweries fell a little flat in the flavour department. But just as burgeoning independent brewers have completely transformed our ale habits, they too have tasked themselves with creating exciting low-alcohol options that don't skimp on that gloriously hoppy flavour. With 'endless session' IPAs, low-alcohol lagers and sobering stouts and sours, craft beer connoisseurs have a raft of options for their refined palates.

SPIRITS

For those lamenting their 5pm gin and tonics or pre-dinner Negronis, there are even more options as teetotalers use distilling alchemy to create potions that offer all the depth and nuance of an expertly concocted spirit with none of the units. There are juniper and bergamot blends that perfectly complement tonic water for that G&T experience, luxurious citrus and herb creations that mimic the dry bitterness of vermouth, and even elegant elixirs containing herbs such as lemon balm and valerian root – ideal as a soporific nightcap for those who would otherwise drink whisky.

WINE

In the past these underwhelming alternatives have often had their alcohol violently removed, leaving an unsatisfying liquid that would barely satisfy as grape juice. Now, canny cultivators have turned to nature in order to create wines that are naturally lower in alcohol by halting the fermenting process earlier. With red wines this can often lend a natural sweetness, whereas whites have a more delicate profile. The best low-alcohol wines, however, are the ones with a natural fizz, such as Pet Nat, which offer all the celebratory joy of champagne without the hangover.

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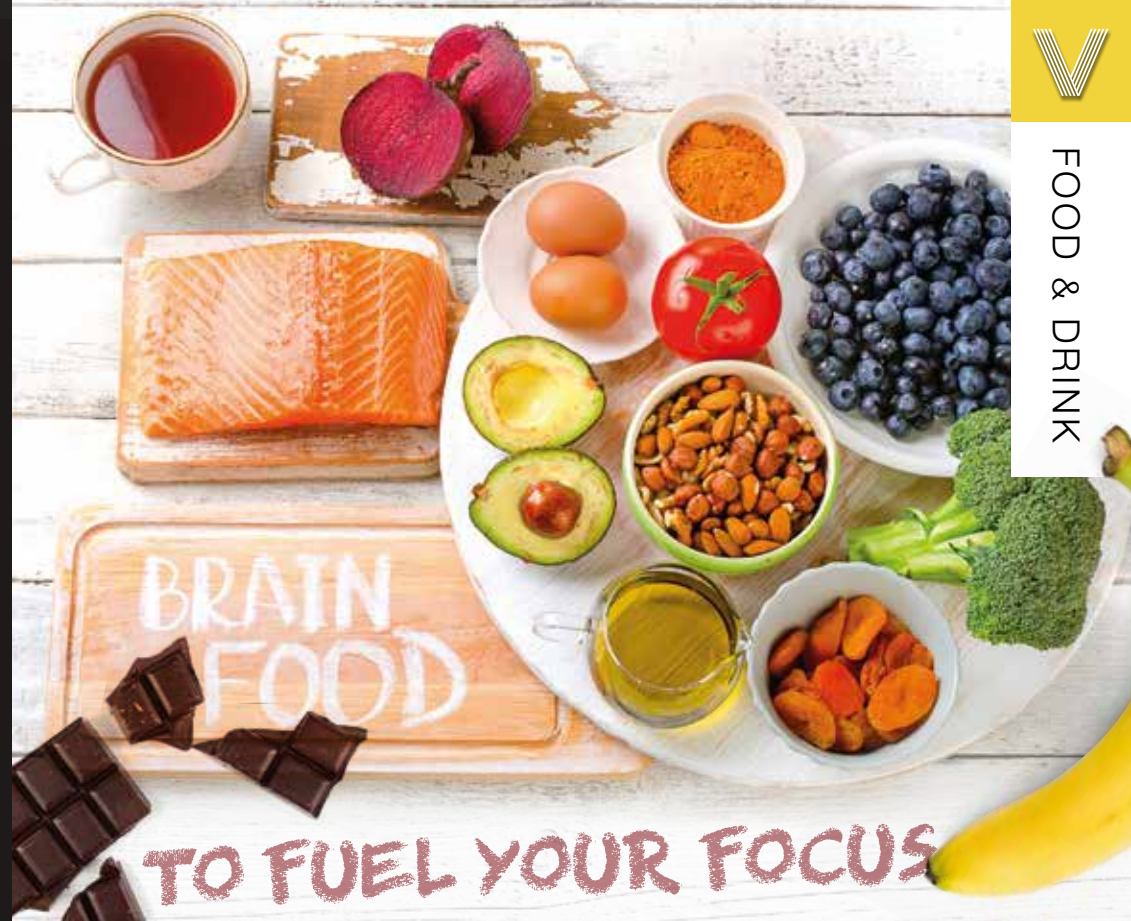
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FOOD & DRINK



If you are still struggling with getting back into a routine and could do with some help improving your concentration levels, these foods will boost your brain power and motivate your memory.

lutein and beta-carotene, this leafy green has been linked to the prevention of dementia. Aim to eat three portions a week for optimal results.

SUPER SALMON: Providing a concentrated source of omega-3 fatty acids, salmon can help to rebuild your brain cells, slow cognitive decline and strengthen the synapses in your brain that are responsible for memory.

AVOCADOS: Avocados are a bit like Marmite – you either love them or you hate them. Fortunately for those who fall into the former category, this fruit can fire up your brain cells and keep hunger pangs at bay.

BEETROOT: A shockingly underused root vegetable, beetroot contains nitrates that increase blood flow and oxygen to the brain, resulting in improved mental performance.

NUTS: The best thing about nuts is that you only need a very small serving to enjoy all the benefits of this super snack. Both nuts and seeds are great sources of vitamin E, which is associated with a reduction in cognitive decline. Plus, they contain essential oils and amino acids that help you focus.

BANANAS: Cheap, filling and high in potassium, bananas are the ideal afternoon pick-me-up for times when your concentration levels are waning.

DARK CHOCOLATE: Because we all deserve a treat from time to time, dark chocolate makes a great alternative to coffee in the morning, having the ability to boost your serotonin and endorphin levels which are both associated with increased concentration.

SPINACH: Spinach is known as the ultimate brain food and it's not hard to see why. Rich in folate,

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BRUSH UP

on children's oral health

February is National Children's Dental Health month, so what better time to tackle any tooth-brushing issues your child has?

Discover the top five reasons why your child doesn't want to brush their teeth below. Plus, how you can encourage them to practise good oral hygiene.

WHY DOES MY CHILD HATE BRUSHING THEIR TEETH?

1. They are sensitive to having their teeth brushed

Some children experience a gag reflex when brushing their teeth that can be unpleasant. Others might not like the feel of the brush against their teeth or in their mouth. Sensitivities are more common in children with autism or attention disorders.

2. They are asserting their authority

If you find yourself caught in a battle with your child every morning and evening when it comes to brushing their teeth and there is no physical reason why they won't brush, they could simply be pushing boundaries.

3. They have become anxious

You may not be able to determine the initial reason why your child started to hate brushing their teeth, but if it has become a daily issue in your household, your child may now feel anxiety around this daily activity.

4. They don't like the taste of the toothpaste

It is always a good idea to ask your child if they would like to choose a different flavoured toothpaste if they do not like the one you are currently buying.

5. They are a picky eater

Children who are picky eaters are more likely to not like the texture and taste of a toothbrush and toothpaste in their mouth.

How can I encourage my child to brush their teeth?

- 👇 Stick to a routine
- 👇 Make it fun
- 👇 Provide choice in terms of what products they use
- 👇 Stand behind younger children
- 👇 Allow your child to hold a toy they can squeeze to calm them
- 👇 Offer a reward such as an extra bedtime story



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