

FIT FOR LIFE with Carol Westmorland

Dear diary...a perfect way to order thoughts and dreams

Imagine being able to write to your 16-year-old self and impart some wise words of encouragement. What would you say?

A new book 'Dear Me: A letter to my sixteen-year-old self' by Joseph Galliano is poignant in its brilliance. Many well-known characters from the world of sport and entertainment were asked to write a letter to their 16-year-old self. I found it an inspiring and fabulous read. I, for one, know that my 16-year-old self would have loved to receive such a letter.

Recently, during one of our so-called Wednesday wanders, a day we close office, I locked eyes with my past whilst enjoying a coffee in Hoopers. Standing before me was the man of 1986. Judging by his 'look' I would like to think he is in pantomime. He is well known and successful but has trouble remembering his age; he absolutely needs to keep a diary! Note to boyfriend of 1986: I have documented evidence.

The perfect month to start a diary is January. It's all about new beginnings. Rather like wearing skimpy clothing, a diary quite literally pulls you up. I think it is difficult to remain humourless writing a diary. It can be a wonderful way to put into perspective all the ups and downs of the day.

My trick is to imagine someone reading my diary. The very thought makes my postings nothing less than entertaining, and interesting. No-one should want to be thought of as boring when no longer around to protest.



Call me old-fashioned, but I like my diary to be in a hardback bound book and not of the electronic variety. I suppose 'Twitter' is a sort of diary but, rather like having to choose between a Wii-Fit and fresh air, I am opting for the original every time.

Writing down your day at its end not only closes the day, it helps you work out how to move to the next. My diary helps me achieve my goals and allows order in what can sometimes be a hectic day.

Often the weeks fly by but important prompts are recorded leaving my mind free to enjoy being creative.

I also believe you have to be careful what you wish for in your diary. Wishes can come true. Our sub-conscious is often an untapped but very powerful tool. Sometimes making changes for the better takes courage, but when you see the logic of your plan it can make perfect sense.

Somewhere hidden away you may also have a written gem. I would start to look.

Not always brilliantly tolerant, I have enjoyed reading my diary of 1986 to realise Miss Perfect didn't exist after all.

A rather exuberant young lady existed, full of life and dreams and I think, all said, she would be happy to know her future. Perhaps a few surprises, but all in all just as she wanted.

Letter to self would say, "get used to it, you may never feel like a grown-up!"

Carol Westmorland lives in the Eden Valley. She is a Cycling Time Trials national champion, clocking up 445 miles in 24 hours. She also teaches pilates. www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk

LIFE COACH with Marion Dunlop

On a global scale, perhaps life ain't too bad...

Now that work beckons and the time with family or friends fades into history, January by tradition is a time to make plans for the next 12 months.

Before you pack away the holiday experience how about considering what it felt like for you to be with your family? Perhaps the workaholics among you needed to keep busy and couldn't switch off; those feeling lonely may have found it even sadder for a while; those who had to work might have wished they'd been at home and some of those at home might have wished they'd been at work to get away from relatives! How easily we can default to the negatives in life.

Certainly in our therapy centre, January often sees an increase in referrals from people needing to explore relationship breakdowns or regrets around being with their families over the festive season.

Recently a colleague sent me a thought provoking email. It set out statistics for the world, if the entire population was shrunk into a village of 100 people with proportions of the people on Earth kept the same.

Six people would possess 59 per cent of the wealth. Eighty would be in poverty, 70 would be illiterate, 50 would suffer from malnutrition, one would own a computer and one would have a degree.

Whatever we are feeling, however tough it might be, we know that the majority of us never need to go hungry or homeless for long periods of time. We have a choice to express our opinions, to be with loved ones (or not) when we choose, and to not fear for our lives in the process.

For me it emphasised that some things can't be bought by money – time together; laughter; health; hugs and love. Happy New Year!



Marion Dunlop is a Carlisle-based life coach and therapist www.cumbriatherapies.com