

askfiona

Write to FIONA CAINE at mail@askfiona.net. Fiona regrets that she cannot enter into personal correspondence nor pass letters on to other readers



MY PARTNER WANTS TO HIDE ME FROM HIS DAUGHTER

I am 21 and going out with a guy who is 43. I like him a lot but our relationship is difficult. He is widowed and has a daughter who is the same age as me, and as a result he wants to keep our relationship secret. He and his wife had separated some time before she died 18 months ago, but he doesn't think his daughter is ready to accept our relationship yet. I hate the way we have to sneak about and keep things secret. I love this man but I don't understand why he seems ashamed of me.

He's probably not ashamed of you as much as the fact that he's dating someone young enough to be his daughter. He is probably finding it hard to sort out his feelings about you - seeing you as a woman he can love - and his daughter - seeing her as a child he still needs to protect. Have you told him how you feel, and have you asked him when he thinks he can be more honest and open about your relationship? If he is determined to keep your relationship a secret then you have to decide if you are prepared to put up with this. If you're not and if he won't back down then there is probably little you can do to change him. You may feel, though, that it's better to lose him than lose your own self-respect, so if he won't be open about your relationship, it may be time to end things.

MY ABUSIVE HUSBAND DESTROYED MY CONFIDENCE

I'm a single mum of three children all under 10 years old. I was married to a cruel man for six years and am now finding it hard to rebuild my life again - he has left me with no confidence in myself at all. I've always known I was ugly - even my Dad used to tell me I was - so I have no confidence in making friends. I'd like to get out and do more with my life but I can't afford babysitters and although my mum used to do it sometimes, she died last year. Once I've got the kids off to bed on most nights, I feel so useless I cry myself to sleep. My doctor suggested counselling but that made me feel worse.

If counselling was making you feel worse I wonder if it was because you were being asked to face up to some painful realities. Any father who tells his daughter she is ugly should be ashamed of himself - he certainly has a lot to answer for because he almost certainly undermined your confidence from the start.

You probably married an unsuitable man because your Dad had led you to believe you would be lucky to be asked at all. Both these unpleasant men are now in your past, and that is where you should leave them and move on.

It isn't easy getting over a difficult childhood but you have three children who are depending on you to give them a positive future. If you could reconsider the counselling, I do think it would help you eventually, but if you can't then do think about joining social groups for single parents. One Parent Families/Gingerbread (oneparentfamilies.org.uk) has groups all over the country, you can contact them on 0800 018 5026 to find out more.

When they organise events they expect to have children along too, so you wouldn't have to worry about babysitters.

I would also encourage you to think about training programmes with creche facilities. If you could boost your skills I think it would improve your confidence and you might then start to feel a whole lot better about yourself.

You deserve to after the rotten start your father gave you!

The Barefoot Doctor

Author and teacher of self empowerment

The Barefoot Doctor's approach to recession and the credit crunch:

"In recession, the old status quo changes - even the seats of money and power shift and are up for grabs. Opportunities may look as though they are dwindling, but actually opportunities come with change. "Recession brings change. It teaches you to let go of what isn't working and to look for and spot the opportunities. You sharpen your focus and start to think outside the box.

"On a personal level when you go through change your first reaction is often fear - you don't like to lose comfort or control. Fear inhibits personal power and, at times of recession, we need more personal power. "The ancient Taoist way teach-

es you to find a place of security inside yourself which is unshakeable, regardless of what happens on the outside - you find you, pure you.

"And because in recession many people become defeated by what's happening on the outside, you can take advantage of opportunities and compete more effectively if you have confidence and inner strength." The Barefoot Doctor's "You Don't Have to Be Good to be Pure" workshop takes place on Saturday, October 18. Barefoot Doctor's latest book, Pure - The Pure Path to Peace, Prosperity and Power, is out now through Hay House Publishing.



John C Parkin

Recession Therapy: Why Recessions Can Be Good For You

It's the automatic response to assume that a recession will be bad news for everyone; after all, with house prices falling, people losing jobs, businesses suffering and going bust, who's benefiting here?

Well, according to John C. Parkin, most of us can benefit when things go pear-shaped. Not in a financial way (though, of course that's possible too), but in the way such circumstances can affect your life: "I've met so many people whose lives have been transformed for the better by adverse circumstances... from serious illness to redundancy to an unexpected divorce. Such circumstances can force us to wake up and finally work out what we want to do and go for it." Parkin knows what he's talking

about. He specialises in waking people up from the chronic stress of difficult everyday lives and teaches courses at his holistic centre, The Hill That Breathes in Italy. And, with a recession looming, he's never been busier.

"Most of us can get stuck in a rut. We forget our dreams, we end up doing things because we think that's what we should be doing. Some people transform their lives of their own volition, but for many others, they need external (and often difficult) circumstances to force them into serious change." John C Parkin's workshop takes place on Sunday, October 19. His book, **** It. The Ultimate Spiritual Way, is out this week.



Nicola Phoenix

Psychologist, holistic Therapist, yoga teacher and writer

Positivity during a crisis or challenging times can be hard to find. The key is to let your thoughts be driven by you in a positive direction, instead of letting them control you in a negative downhill spiral. Each thought gains in power as we constantly think it.

Imagine one worrying thought being the size of a pea, if we think about it solidly for 10 minutes it's the size of a mountain. So, if you are constantly thinking "This credit crunch will destroy me or my business" then you are giving power to even greater fears and worries.

The whole nation is talking about the credit crunch, but in truth we are very able to adjust our lives to suit a changing environment. Change is the only thing that is never going to stop

in our lives. Learning to embrace the change and flow with it, rather than fear it, and then resist it, will help.

Take yourself to a place in history which seemed terrible and ready to destroy all. It didn't. We are resilient and although change occurs, we are never given anything in life that we cannot deal with. Use this situation as a point of creating your life rather than letting fear dictate it.

Nicola Phoenix's "New You - New Life" workshop takes place on Friday, October 17. Nicola's workshop centres around discovering how to change your thoughts and how to establish new patterns of positive behaviour.



Jimmy Petruzzi

Performance coach and NLP master

Things people can do through these worrying times:

- Start by writing a gratitude list, write as many things as possible that you can think of that you are grateful for in your life right now. For example, we can be grateful for the food we eat, technology we have, our loved ones, if nothing else being alive is a miracle.
- Exercise - and that doesn't have to be a gym. Remember when we were kids kicking a ball around the park, carefree happy, having fun? You can go for country walks, dancing, get your friends and family together and go for a game of tennis.
- Put a perspective on things. Let's face it, we still live in pretty good times. We have so many things at our disposal we take for granted, such as health

care. Just imagine being born in the 20s facing a depression then a world war. We can access free books by going to the library.

● Read a book which inspires you, watch a film, listen to your favourite music, and be conscious what you focus on, you wouldn't watch a bad film over and over so don't play negative thoughts in your mind.

● We have come out of tough times before and we will do it again we need to stop looking for an easy life and start finding the character strength to meet challenges that come our way. Jimmy Petruzzi and Sara Jones' "Get Busy Living" workshop takes place on Saturday October 18.



Something for your mind, your body and your soul

If you feel you need to get more out of life but don't know what to do, are looking for motivation or enlightenment or just fancy a glimpse into your future then the Mind Body Spirit Northern Festival could inspire you to self exploration, positive change and personal empowerment. From October 17 to 19 the halls at Manchester Central (formerly G-Mex) will be buzzing with all things inspirational, educational, fun and musical. There will be free on-stage demonstrations (including yoga,

As fans of holistic well-being prepare for the north west's biggest alternative festival, four of the experts appearing at the show offer some timely advice...

tai chi, belly dancing and guided meditation), live musical performances and the chance to learn learn meditation in a Tipi! Alternatively, you could book in for one of the transformational workshops hosted by some of the world's most prominent well-

being experts. The festival offers three days of self discovery, and exploration into all aspects of wellbeing from alternative health, books, music, aura photography, jewellery, massage, astrology, crystals, beauty, healthy eating and more.

● Mind Body Spirit Festival takes place from October 17 to 19 at Manchester Central. Doors open from 10am to 6pm each day.

● Ticket prices: Friday £6 with a special Friends Day offer - three tickets for the price of two. Saturday and Sunday: £8 (concessions for senior citizens and unemployed - £6 with ID. Accompanied children under 15 - free).

● Visit www.mindbodyspirit.co.uk for programme details and booking workshops or telephone the information and ticket hotline on 020 7371 9191.