



Happy New You

Self confidence. Self love. Self made. Self sufficient. If you want the next twelve months to sound more like that (without running the risk of being self absorbed of course!), you need a good dose of self help. Dusting yourself down from the disappointments of 2008 and kicking some ass is what 2009 is going to be about for you. Really? Yes. If you don't think you deserve it, you won't get what you want.

Do I sound like I've swallowed a self help book or even a hundred? Well, that's because I have. Forgive me for sounding very un-British but I'm proud of it. Reading lessons on life - and a dose of therapy - is precisely how I got myself started on the albeit long *Road* (previously *Less Travelled*) to really enjoying my *whole* self. Long before Noel Edmonds was heard chanting about cosmic energy, I had read the prequel. Writing down what I wanted, and eventually believing I deserved it, I landed what I asked for.

Is it too easy to think you can really *Heal your life in 10 easy steps?* Or *Make anyone fall in love with you?* Even *Wake up inspired?* I don't. It's not exactly hard to gather that I'm a believer. And of course it's not just me that's fallen for the charms of my local bookshop's Improve Yourself section. Self help is now a multi-billion pound business. Whilst other items are staying on the shelves, DIY therapy books are flying off them. In fact, according to Psychologies Today, in the States there are more self help books than cook books.

The reason why I prescribe self help to myself and my mates is that they are pro-women. Many offer solutions to "problems" that are inherently female. We live in a world where women have had to learn to think like men: to be tougher, super ambitious, and dare I say it, (a concept lost on me)..logical . Given our naturally emotional dispositions, this takes work. And without meaning to sound like women are victims (though let's face it, we are still fighting for equality in many areas), many of us, through self help, have found a way to harness our inner strength and grow.

Take one of my best friends, Sheila. Like so many, she was stuck in a career that although successful, didn't fully satisfy her. All she really wanted to do was start her own clothing business but she didn't have the courage to take the big step forward. I recommended *Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway*, by Dr. Susan Jeffries. It has the underlying message that it is impossible to make a mistake or a wrong decision, and encourages assertion. Also, it aims to equip the reader with the



emotional tools to make a dream become a reality. Some would say this advice is platitudinous. But they're probably the ones sitting in jobs they hate. A few weeks after Sheila read the book, she handed in her notice and set up a boutique style kids clothes shop, www.pixiechildrenswear.com. Doing something she loves Sheila says she's not only financially better off, but happier in all areas of her life. The reason the book worked for her was that she discovered - with expert advice - what her fears were, why she had them and most importantly, she learnt how to overcome them.

So what about our love lives? Those of you in a couple will learn a great deal about your Martian lover, thanks to John Gray. You can learn more about your sexuality and as a result, enjoy sex more with Dr Ruth giving you her *Guide for Married Lovers*. Whereas those of you searching for a healthy relationship can gain a lot from books that support and develop your understanding of your love choices: bad relationships don't just happen to you. You may not be aware of it, but you seek them out. Hard to swallow, I know. I used to be one of them. But understanding why you're one of the many *Women who love too much* can be just the ticket you need to break your pathological pattern of dating losers.

Of course, as a therapist, knowing and supporting yourself is a crucial part of one's life happiness. Rather than patronize people who read self help books, I view it as taking responsibility in reclaiming the area of their life that needs work. And let's face it, in today's world, where so many pressures are laid upon us to be the perfect parent, to have the perfect career with the even more perfect salary, to have the perfect relationship, the perfect sex-life and the perfect body, who couldn't do with a little help in at least one of these areas?

So make 2009 the year of moving on. After a hard day, start off the year by hitting the books. Devour the knowledge inside them to help support you in getting what you deserve. In the same year that Jennifer Anniston stars in, *He's Just Not That Into You*, you just won't care. Because you will have realized you're worth so much more. Happy New You.