

GRAZIA'S LIFE SKILLS

WORK WISDOM

Use criticism to help you grow

Elizabeth Uviebinené is author of five books, including *The Reset* and *Slay In Your Lane*, and founder of Storia

Criticism is inevitable, no matter how experienced you are, but it doesn't make it any easier to hear. Early in my career, I presented a piece of work to the head of marketing. I thought I'd nailed it, but afterwards he said, 'It's clear you've worked hard on this, but honestly, it feels... old hat.'

I walked out of the room replaying his words on a loop, feeling like I'd fallen short. But over the years, I've learned that how you handle feedback often matters more than the feedback itself.

First, always pause before reacting. Criticism can sting and it's easy to let emotions cloud your judgement. Taking a breath helps you separate the comment from how it makes you feel.

Also, ask for clarity. Feedback is a gift, but it's only useful when you understand it. I later asked what he'd felt was missing. He gave me practical advice I could use to strengthen my work.

Finally, reframe the situation. Not every piece of feedback is valid and that's OK. The key is knowing which notes to take onboard and which to let go. Funnily enough, 'old hat' became a joke between me and my best friend, shorthand for those times when we feel stuck. It's a reminder that criticism can become part of your growth story.

So take the note, leave the rest and let it sharpen, not shrink, you.



ASK THE EXPERT

How to navigate life's most difficult moments

Dr Julie Smith, clinical psychologist, mental health influencer and best-selling author

When life gets complicated and you find yourself overwhelmed or confused about which way to turn, the most powerful aid we have is each other. But the problem is that we often find ourselves alone in these moments. Friends get busy, relatives move away, and the people who usually bring the words we need to hear are not always available when we need them.

I was in the middle of writing my book *Open When...* a 'break in case of emergency' book for life's twists and turns, when I found myself in the eye of a storm. Maybe the biggest storm of my life. My doctor leaned forward and told me I had breast cancer. In the days that followed, I deleted the chapter I had written on *When Fear Shows Up* and re-wrote it with the words that I needed. To face this challenge head-on, I needed

to take command of my attention and use my fear as fuel. Here are some tips I've learned for navigating one of the most difficult curveballs I've been thrown.

Resist the temptation to judge or condemn yourself. It is not who you are. It is an experience; a set of sensations that each offer information about what you need. When overwhelmed, don't let that rapid thought process influence your state without going unchecked. What narrative are you buying into that could be keeping you stuck in overwhelm? What alternative script would you need to write for yourself to be ready to move forward? And don't fear the feelings. You can create panic and will miss what your body is trying to say. Instead, allow the feelings to wash over you naturally and focus on soothing yourself through. *'Open When... A Companion For Life's Twists And Turns'* by Dr Julie Smith is out now (£20, Michael Joseph)

GOING GREEN

How to declutter sustainably this year

Ginnie Chadwyck-Healey
@ginniech00; vchstyle.com

As January is the ultimate declutter month, here are three charities to help you feel lighter in the wardrobe (and bathroom cabinet) stakes, whilst simultaneously doing good.

1. Smart Works' London headquarters coordinates a nationwide network of centres where women can receive interview and CV training and styling advice, having previously been out of work. Styling sessions require donations of quality items you no longer rely on, owing to changes in working from home dress codes. Find your nearest drop-off at smartworks.org.uk

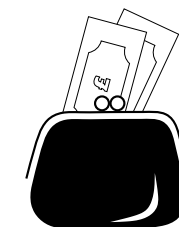
2. Sharewear is a Nottingham-based charity on a mission to clothe the thousands suffering from clothing poverty in the UK. If you can cover the cost of a small parcel to their warehouse, Sharewear will offer your clothes, free of charge, to those in need. sharewearclothingscheme.org

3. Finally, Beauty Banks need your help for those tackling hygiene poverty. Essentials like tampons, shaving foam, soap, flannels or toothpaste are key. (Opened or slightly used toiletries are not permitted.) Visit beautybanks.org.uk to organise a DHL collection (£9.60) from your door. Good deed done.

Need some expert advice on money, work or anything else? Let us know what you'd like to see on this page at feedback@graziainmagazine.co.uk

MONEY TALKS

A little mental accounting goes a long way



Laura Whateley is the author of *Money: A User's Guide*

Money is, by its nature, fungible. In other words, every £20 note is worth the same as every other £20

note, wherever it comes from and wherever it goes. That's not how it feels though, is it? Take my Vinted balance. Not 'real' money. See also anything I spend in an airport. Doesn't count. My Boots Advantage card points. A tax refund that lands in my account from HMRC.

Behavioural economists call this mental accounting. We attach different values to our cash depending on our moods, where we are spending, the work that went into earning it and so forth.

Inevitably we waste a lot, through irrational decisions or missed opportunities, like not doing the smart thing and using your Vinted balance to pay down a credit card that is

charging 20% interest, meaning you would have more money long-term.

My main tip is to work with rather than against it. Seeing my Vinted money as 'free' cash to spend on new clothes is silly, but it helps me maintain my one-in-one-out only wardrobe policy for 2025, and stops me dipping into other cash reserves for clothes. If I haven't got the money in my Vinted pot, then I can't afford it.

THREE STEPS TO... MANIFESTING THE LOVE LIFE YOU WANT

Emma Mumford is an expert in manifestation

1 Write your dream list. List the qualities you seek in a partner, then embody those traits yourself to become a match for them. Reflect your values and relationship goals in your Tinder bio to align your energy with the person you're manifesting.

2 Create space. Successfully manifesting love means making room for it. Dedicate time for self-love and open space in your home for someone new. Open your heart to possibilities.

3 Honour how you feel. Stay true to your emotions. Ensure you're dating in a way that aligns with your best self and prioritise self-discovery. To help singles manifest their desired dating life, Tinder has partnered with Emma Mumford to co-create the *'Manifesting Love: Your Guide to Empowered Dating in 2025'*

LIFE DRAWING | BECKY BARNICOAT

MY HOUSEPLANTS



VS MY ONIONS & GARLIC



BECKY BARNICOAT