



MAKING TIME FOR ME

From being outside in nature to nurturing friendships, four famous faces tell Nathalie Whittle about how they find peace of mind

“Getting a puppy has made such a difference to my life – it’s been like having a child”

Vera star, Brenda Blethyn, 69, is married to art director Michael Mayhew and lives in Ramsgate, Kent.

I like to treat myself with a massage or some reflexology, but I don’t do it enough. I love the sensation of being pampered, so much so that I often fall asleep when I’m having my make-up done for TV! It’s that feeling that it’s just for you and nobody else. I used to get the same feeling at school when I’d take my sewing out to the nun to see if I’d done it right. She’d say, “Well then Brenda, let me see here, it would be much better if you had turned it this way.” I adored that undivided attention.

Every time I get home after filming for Vera ends, Michael tells me I’ve got back a week before my head, but this time, I returned with a puppy – and it’s made such a difference. He’s a Cockapoo called Jack and I got him from the man who owns my character’s Jeep. At first, Michael said, “You’re always busy, how are you going to cope with a dog?” and we had terrible rows. But eventually he gave in – and now I sometimes think he loves Jack more than me. We often walk him together and everyone stops in their tracks and talks to the dog, not us; it’s been like having a child.

Michael and I don’t set aside time for date nights, it’s enough just to be at

BRENDA BLETHYN PHOTOGRAPHS TREVOR LEIGHTON STYLING FAYE SAWYER AT CAROL HAYES MANAGEMENT SUIT MAXIMARA SHIRT EQUIPMENT EARRINGS VICKI SARGE HAIR JULIE READ AT CAROL HAYES MANAGEMENT MAKE-UP DANI GUINBERG AT CAROL HAYES MANAGEMENT USING CLINIQUE



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I think playing games and doing puzzles keeps my mind healthy

home together. Usually, he’s doing something arty and I’ve got my head stuck in a book, but we’re mates as well as partners, and he makes me roll around with laughter. Plus, he’s very good at buying me flowers... I think that helps!

When I was a kid, we didn’t have a TV, so my dad would give us puzzles to keep us occupied – and now I’m a fanatic. I like to think it keeps my mind healthy. I’m a member of the Times Crossword Club and my brother and I race each other every day on it. Even when I go and visit my sister who lives in Florida, we’ll spend our entire time playing games. It could be anything from cards to who’s going to walk through that door next. It must be in our blood.

If I’m honest, I became an actress by default. In my twenties, I was working for British Rail when one day a young lady came in and said, “Oh Brenda, we’re entering a drama competition and one of our actresses is ill – could you step into the breach?” I said, “Don’t be daft!” But they were desperate, so in the end I did and I loved the experience so much that I joined the group, which led to my applying to drama school. My dad always said, “Don’t be afraid of failure, always try,” which I did and I haven’t looked back. I don’t think anyone should be afraid of taking risks like that.

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actors, such as Pete Postlethwaite and John Shrapnel after their show.

At the moment, I'm having to distract myself from having an empty house. My son's gone to Australia to study and my daughter is doing her first big film role in LA. As much as we can all imagine and prepare for it, the reality of finding you don't have anyone else dependent on you is quite surreal. I didn't watch TV for years apart from *Dr Who* with my son, but now I find myself streaming TV dramas and I like to have Radio 3 or Jazz FM on to keep me company. It's funny because I've moved from Sussex to a flat in south London where I was in my twenties, so it feels like I'm back into that bachelorette lifestyle I had before children.

Now that I'm in a city, I want to make more effort to be outside in nature. My home in Sussex was in a national park and going for a walk just meant putting your wellies on and opening the back door. It's not just the fresh air and the physicality of it, it's a meditative thing. I'm big on swimming and Pilates now, but my mum, who's 84, still goes tap dancing regularly and when I'm around I go with her.

I wouldn't mind a bit more romance in my life, but if I'm honest, I probably get more excited about meeting up with an old girlfriend! When we get together and share our grumbles about living with a man, we all say: if only we could all just live together, it would be so much easier! I find I appreciate them more and more as life goes on.

I'd tell my younger self, "Never be afraid of speaking because your opinion is just as good as anyone else's." When I started in theatre, we were rehearsing *Calamity Jane* at Belgrade Theatre in Coventry with Lynda Marchal who became Lynda La Plante. The crew were trying to solve a problem with the staging and they couldn't come up with an answer and I could see it straight away, so I said, "Well, what if you did that?" The director said. "What? She speaks!" I thought it was so cruel – but then he used my idea.

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“Writing down my worries is a real form of therapy for me”

Former Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt, 33, lives in London with her husband, Max Rogers, and their one-year-old daughter, Willow.

I've had a diary since I was 17 and it's a real form of therapy for me. I'm not very good at talking about my problems, so if I'm going through a period of turmoil, I write it down to make some sense out of my muddled mix of thoughts. It sounds simple, but when I've finished an entry, I've usually figured out how to move forward.

I lived in LA for 11 years before moving to the UK and now I feel like I'm living the life I love. I grew up in Missouri where lots of my friends were farmers' daughters, so I love that I can get to the countryside so easily here. My good friend JB Gill and his wife Chloe have a farm and we all hang out with our kids – I really enjoy that time.

Date nights are really important to Max and me, so we try to carve out time to get dolled up, go for dinner then see a film together. Max is a lot more romantic than I am. It's the little things that mean the most, such as him making sure I have a glass of water each night on my bed stand – and doing the housework when I'm abroad!

When I was in The Pussycat Dolls, it felt like being at boot camp, always having to work out. But now it's about feeling good more than anything. I'm still active, but I don't have to be quite as competitive with my fitness. Yoga is now my wellness practice.

One of the most important lessons I've learned is to just keep going – and get on with it. As a young girl you can get lost in emotions, but the answers will come as long as you keep looking for them. I had tons of disasters in the kitchen before I took part in *Celebrity MasterChef* last year, but it feels wonderful to be able to host dinner parties now.

Kimberly is an ambassador for the Youth Sport Trust, promoting physical activity within primary schools and encouraging more young people to get active; youthsporttrust.org



I want to make more effort to be outside in nature... it's a meditative thing

“You can prepare for your kids leaving home, but the reality is quite surreal”

Actress Greta Scacchi, 55, lives in London with her husband, Carlo Mantegazza. She has a son, Matteo, 17, with Carlo, and a grown-up daughter with her former husband, actor Vincent D'Onofrio.

When I was growing up, my mum ran a dance school in Sussex and my earliest memories are sitting in a corner of her studio with my crayons while she was at

the ballet barre. She was never one to push me, but she made it feel like the most normal thing in the world to want to be on stage, which is probably why I was eight when I announced I was going to be an actress! I didn't enjoy “normal” school at all, so when I got a place at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, I could hardly believe my luck. Some of my best moments were spent selling programmes in the evenings, trying to get a sneak peek of brilliant

KIMBERLY WYATT PHOTOGRAPH JOSEPH SINCLAIR

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“It’s easy to get boxed in by ‘shoulds’ but I’ve learned to be more forgiving”

Presenter Sian Williams, 51, lives in London with her husband, TV producer Paul Woolwich. She has four children.

I truly believe the people you love are the only important thing you have, so it’s vital to nurture your friendships. I don’t have a big circle of friends – six or seven women I went to university with – but I know I’ll have those friendships for life. They’re the friends who remember your birthday and are there when you say, “I feel really low, can we talk for an hour?” – and I’d do the same for them at the drop of a hat. But you have to feed those relationships, even it’s just a text or an email every now and then to connect.

Paul and I are guilty of spending most of our time talking about family logistics when we’re together. Who’s picking the kids up from school and what’s for tea, so we try to fit in as many weekends away together as we can. We recently had a lovely time at a pub called The Applecross Inn in the Scottish Highlands. We walked, went to a couple of concerts at the village hall and spent a lot of time sitting in front of a big log fire. You couldn’t get a mobile phone signal there, which was a joy in itself! It was bliss.

It’s easy to become boxed in by “coulds”, “shoulds” and “woulds”. Completing an MSc in Psychology last year taught me to be a bit more forgiving of myself. Just because you shouted at the kids because they were doing your head in for a moment, doesn’t make you a bad mother. Or just because you ate half a box of chocolates while you were sitting watching *I’m a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!*, there’s no need to punish yourself.

I’m happiest at home with all my kids in the same room – laughing, talking over one another and arguing about what television to watch. We have a disorganised kitchen where there are books and dinner plates all over the table but it’s that chaotic, warm and loving family environment that reminds me of what matters. Sometimes you’ll set aside these moments where you think, “Right, this is going to be our walk,” or “This is going to be the time that we play together,” but those aren’t the moments when kids tell you the important things going on in their lives – it’s usually when you’re saying, “Can you get those plates out of the cupboard?”

I spent seven years going to bed at 9pm when I was doing *BBC Breakfast* – and it’s nice to have some time at the end of the day back. In fact, I spent the same amount of time watching *Game of Thrones* last year as I did writing my Psychology Masters thesis. I’m excited about joining 5 News, but that time is the one thing I’m glad I didn’t have to give up!

Sian Williams is the new face of 5 News, which airs daily at 5pm **w&h**

I’m happiest at home with all my kids in the same room

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