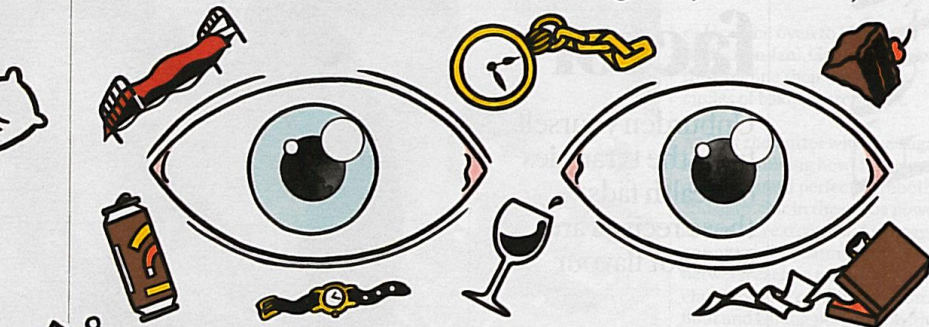


Body

The eyes have it

A healing class where you and your guru stare at each other supposedly sharpens focus. Is it a life-changer or just mumbo jumbo?



Life



Matt Rudd

This fitness lark isn't working. Other things keep getting in the way. Things like wine and beer and then tiredness and then cake. Time for an intervention. If my mind can stop procrastinating, the body will follow.

Step forward Jody Shields, an intensive-meditation guru, no less, who has half of London's high-flyers on her books. Her tailored 1-2-1 healing session helps to relieve stress, clear the mind and find new focus. On paper, it sounds like just the ticket. In practice, it borders on terrifying.

After a brief chat about what's wrong (nothing specific, I just want to be more focused), we sit facing each other in upright chairs, eye to eye, and Jody begins to talk. Something about life, something about energy and

experience, something about connecting with minerals. My mumbo-jumbo klaxon is already going off and, if I'm honest, I want to run not just for the hills, but over them and beyond.

"Honour your resistance," she says every time she senses my scepticism, which is frequently. "Allow your thoughts to be here. But when your mind tries to take control, just say, 'I surrender.'"

After an unspecified period of time — possibly days — we move into more traditional meditation: eyes closed, deep breathing, focusing on different parts of the body. "Connect with your heart," she says. "You might not have done this for a while. It's safer and easier with the brain."

As I try to connect with my heart, whatever that means (honour your resistance), Jody suggests we do the next part of the session maintaining eye contact. This is, as billed, intensive. I've never stared into anyone's eyes for more than a few seconds. It's just not British.

As the staring competition continues, she talks about blocks. I'm blocked creatively, she says.

Can I feel the block? She sways a bit as we take deep breaths together. My mind is rolling its eyes and sniggering, but the rest of me is gradually and then completely overwhelmed. She asks how I'm feeling and I know that if I try to answer, I will burst into tears. I can't explain why. I'm a happy person. Stressed, yes. Easily distracted, yes. But, you know, generally happy. What's going on?

Several layers deeper into whatever we're digging at, the journey finishes, and I can't tell you exactly what changed, but something did. Something lifted. I trudge home exhausted, but the next day I feel light and excited, which is very not me. I find myself making resolutions. I'm going to stop putting things off. I'm going to get on with things now. Well, not now, because I've got to go to work, but tomorrow. Not tomorrow, seeing the in-laws. But soon, definitely soon. Damn it ■

Jody Shield has monthly group sessions from £33 and private sessions from £150 (jodyshield.co.uk). Jody will lead a group meditation at the SweatLife festival in east London on July 30 (£20; thesweatlifefestival.co.uk)



BLINK AND YOU'LL MISS IT

15-20

The number of times the average person blinks in a minute. That's up to 1,200 times every hour

SOURCE: OSAKA UNIVERSITY, JAPAN

Health Hacks How to maintain radiant skin

EARLY TO BED

It's called beauty sleep for a reason. Sleep deprivation lowers circulation, which is why you look pale if you only get a few hours.

DE-STRESS

Stress hormones lead to excessive oil production, which results in whiteheads. Add relaxation time to your schedule and your skin will clear.

EAT WELL

Vitamin C-rich foods such as broccoli and oranges smooth the skin by mopping up the free radicals that cause wrinkles and sagging.

COOL IT

A steamy shower may feel great, but it's one of the worst things you can do for your skin. Heat strips the skin of essential oils, leaving it ruddy.

