

by Catherine
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FINDING out that my ex-husband Mark had taken his new girlfriend on a luxurious holiday to the Caribbean, while I was still chasing him for maintenance for our three children, was the final straw.

It was eight months since our 16-year marriage had ended after Mark started seeing a much younger woman, and I was on my knees.

The injustice of my scrimping in order to feed and clothe our children — Eliza, 14, Joe, 12, and Alex, ten — while he swanned around on luxury holidays made my blood boil. And having to deal with financial worries as well as trying to care for my fragile children was taking its toll on me.

'You can't change his behaviour,' said a friend, who had been through a very similar experience years earlier with her ex-husband. 'All you can change is your reaction to his behaviour.'

That was all well and good, but how was I going to change my reaction? I'd already tried the usual methods of coping with marriage breakdown: drowning my sorrows with a bottle of wine, throwing myself into my work, doing more exercise and different types of counselling. None of them had worked, and I was still bereft.

Mark and I had met 17 years before when I was 29 at a friend's birthday party. It was pretty much love at first sight and soon we were inseparable.

After a whirlwind romance, marriage and three children followed in quick succession and our first ten years together were largely happy. But the cracks were beginning to show by the time our youngest daughter, Alex, was born.

While Mark watched football on television of an evening, I'd be in the kitchen cooking or doing some late-night work as a freelance journalist.

We slept with our backs to each other and had a miserable 12 months in which we either avoided each other or disagreed about every little thing.

Finally, I discovered Mark had fallen for a young woman he'd met a year previously through a mutual friend of ours. I was devastated, but felt I couldn't forgive him and I asked him to move out.

The first few weeks after Mark left, the children and I went about our everyday lives in a state of shock and disbelief, sometimes still getting five plates out at mealtimes by mistake and eating in numb silence, painfully aware of the empty fifth chair.

Months down the line, the children seemed to be more accepting of the situation. But I, 46 years old and on my own for the first time in almost 20 years, was still failing to contain my grief.

AT TIMES, the level of anger and resentment I felt scared me, and I knew it was detrimental for the children as well. I would get stressed about every little thing and yell at them, or they'd find me sobbing on the sofa, feeling overwhelmed, unloved and totally out of my depth.

I knew something had to change, but how?

A friend suggested I try a new type of therapy that had helped her cope with her grief after her parents died: TRE, or Trauma Release Exercises.

The idea of TRE is that by triggering a self-controlled muscular trembling through a series of exercises, you rid



Less stress: Catherine uses TRE to help keep her calm

but I was desperate and willing to give anything a go.

American academic Dr David Berzeli, who developed the technique after 20 years of research, had come up with the idea after working with traumatised soldiers in a war zone.

He developed a set of six exercises that help to release deep tension from the body by evoking self-controlled muscular shaking.

Keen to see if it could help me, I got in contact with Caroline Purvey, one of only two registered TRE therapists working in the UK, who came to my house in Brighton to show me how it worked.

'When our body goes into a state of high stress or tension we contract a muscle deep within us called the psoas,' she explained. 'Often, we continue

Shaking
with fury!
The weird
new way
to get
over a
love cheat

such as sleep difficulties, depression, IBS, anger, back pain and fibromyalgia — even post-traumatic stress disorder.' I'd never even heard of the psoas muscle, but a quick internet search revealed it to be a long muscle, one of the 'hip flexors' that runs from the lower back to the top of the leg.

Caroline took me through six easy exercises designed to produce a low level of tension in my legs and thus contract the psoas muscles.

These included standing up and rocking back and forwards on the balls of my feet; standing on one leg and bending and straightening it repeatedly; deep breathing; and, finally squatting against a wall for a few minutes before lying down on my yoga mat.

I followed Caroline's instructions and within a few minutes, sure enough, tremors started in my legs.

Waves of emotion washed over me, and I broke down sobbing. Caroline gently reassured me that my body was simply releasing something it needed to and that I should let it happen, which I did and ended up 'tremoring' for around half an hour.

After the session, I felt calmer and more grounded than I had for some time.

The £45 cost of the session — group lessons are just £20, but I couldn't face sobbing in front of strangers — seemed like money well spent.

Two more sessions followed that week, in which I went through the same cycle of shaking and emotional release, while in the third session my whole body shook and I burst into tears three times.

After my fourth TRE session, I had a 'breakthrough' moment.