

LIFE ON A PLATE

SEASON 2, EPISODE 8: ADRIENNE HERBERT

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SPEAKERS

Adrienne Herbert, Jimi Famurewa, Alison Oakervee

Jimi 00:00

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Hello, and welcome to the second season of Life on a Plate, the podcast from Waitrose. In each episode, we talked to some very special guests about what food means to them, asking about their comfort foods and favourite dishes, their food memories and go-to ingredients – and finding out a lot more about each of them in the process.

Hi Alison, how are you?

Alison 01:25

I'm alright, thank you. How about you, Jimi?

Jimi 01:27

I'm pretty good. I am... I am trying to be fit. I think we all are, aren't we? Maybe our fitness regimes have ebbed and flowed throughout this time. But I've actually hit upon something that I didn't think would work but that has been a real joy and been really fun. Which is me and my eldest son – who is eight – have been going for a run together. And it's something that I resisted because I tend to think of running as space and time away, and I unlock things that I'm trying to figure out in my writing and work and you're trying to get those stresses of the day to melt away. And I thought: 'Oh, if he's with me, I'll still be in dad mode'. But it's been really fun. It's been a total joy. We did a couple of kilometres. He's really chuffed that we've done this distance together – it's really fun to work through it together. And actually, weirdly, I've been in a bit of a running rut maybe, and struggling to get out there – struggling to

stay motivated. And so it's given me like a lovely little boost. And it's this nice shared thing that we've got. How is your running going? I'm almost loath to ask you.

Alison 02:41

[Laughs] I've got into a bit of a rut. I was doing so well. And then I stopped. So I need to have that motivation – something like your son is probably really good for giving you a boost on those days where you can't be bothered. But yeah, you do know when you go out and do it, however long – whether it's a long or short one – that you do feel so much better.

Jimi 03:00

You're absolutely right. There's something really calming and soothing about the process the repetition of putting one foot in front of the other and it just seems to make everything seem manageable. This all feels like really fitting conversational ground for the person that we are going to be speaking to today. We are meeting Adrienne Herbert. She's a fitness blogger, a podcaster, a TEDx speaker, a mother. And as of last year, she's also an author. Her book and podcasts are both called *Power Hour*. And they're about boosting your mood by reclaiming specific points of your day. I know she's going to be a really great guest. But how are you feeling about meeting her, Alison?

Alison 03:49

I can't wait. I first came to know of about Adrienne when she started working with the *Waitrose Health* magazine team. She is their guest editor for the 10th issue. And she's kind, she's funny. And above all, she's got a really sensible approach to fitness and life in general.

Jimi 04:06

I couldn't agree more, and I can't wait to hear her tell us more about it. So without any further ado, here is our conversation with Adrienne Herbert. Thank you so much for joining us. It's really, really lovely to be on a call with you, to be saying hello from a distance. Really good to have a podcaster in one of these situations, because you're like on it.

Adrienne Herbert 04:34

Yeah, thank you for having me. It's really nice. As you mentioned, I'm a podcaster but I'm usually the host. So I'm usually the one curiously asking the questions and then nodding along, so it's really nice to be a guest and to be on the other side of the mic.

Jimi 04:47

You mentioned your podcast and also your book that came out last year. That's called *Power Hour* as well. And this is the part where I tell you that I actually tried to do my own 'power hour' earlier this morning. I got up extra early. I didn't look at my phone. I did the whole cold water in the face thing. And at first I was like: 'Oh my god, this is horrible, I can't do this'. But then I did some exercise. And it was good. I felt the power, I felt the buzz. And it was really contagious. You seem to have this great handle on being motivated. But where does that come from? Is it something that's just innate or natural?

Adrienne Herbert 05:25

Yes, interesting question. And I'm glad to hear that you started the day with a few of my tools and hacks.

Jimi 05:33

I was slightly cursing you this morning? I was: 'Oh my God, I feel I've got to do this. I feel bad.' But no, I agree. I benefited – definitely.

Adrienne Herbert 05:40

Great! Well, and also – I guess I should give a little context, if anyone's listening to us thinking: 'What is she talking about? What is the Power Hour?' In a nutshell, it's essentially the first hour of your day and I encourage people to reclaim that hour and to do something in that time. Their choice – whatever they want to do in that time – but it's going to set the tone for the rest of your day. Something that's going to make you feel good. Maybe it's exercise, maybe it's meditation, maybe it's working on a passion project. But yeah, just utilising that first hour. And when you said – you know you're right – I am an eternal optimist. I am Mrs Motivator. And I always want to encourage people to do whatever it is that they want to do. It's not about just: do more, achieve more. It's actually what are the things that you really want to do? But for whatever reason, you don't make it a priority, or you haven't been able to make it happen, or it hasn't worked out for you yet. And I think that I often say that I see people's potential before they do – like their full potential. I'll say to friends: 'Oh, you're brilliant at that you should do this. Or, you know, have you ever thought about that?' And sometimes it's just that confidence boost, or that permission of someone else seeing – in you, what you're capable of. So when you ask me – where does that come from? – I'm really thinking about... you know I grew up, I was an older sibling, I've got younger siblings. I was raised by a single mother in a low income household and she had to work incredibly hard to do all the things that she did: to get us to school, and to dance classes, and athletics practice. And, to be honest, I don't really know how she did that with all of us, because myself and my siblings were all big characters. We're all extroverts. We're all you know... I don't know how she did that. But I think even back then – if I think back to being maybe 10 years old, 12, 13 – I think I really learned from a very young age that the world isn't fair, and we don't all get the same things, we don't all get the same circumstances, or education, or experiences, or opportunities. But you can either see those things, as you know – barriers, perceived limitations – and say: 'Well, I can't because x, y, and z; I can't because I didn't have this; or, I can't because I'm a woman; or, because I'm a woman of colour; or, because I...' you know, all of these barriers, perceived barriers. Or, you can focus on creating better for your future, for yourself, for your life, for your day. And I don't think you can do both. You have to choose you cannot simultaneously do both. So I always felt like maybe it was just born out of necessity. That was like, actually, if I want to do something, if I want to learn how to do something, I guess I'm just going to have to figure it out.

Alison 08:10

I want to say growing up in a family like that, what would meals look like?

Adrienne Herbert 08:14

Yeah, well, again, I'm thinking back... I'm going well what was it like? And it's interesting, because there was definitely an element again, of you know, I was in the kitchen, and I learned how to cook and I learned how to make things – and not always...

Jimi 08:24

Wow.

Adrienne Herbert 08:29

Well, you say that, I think that sounds the picture of... there wasn't always lots of fresh ingredients. And it wasn't necessarily like a cookery lesson. Sometimes it would probably be taking something from the fridge or the freezer, and putting it in the oven. Other times it would be making things – and actually my grandma's Jamaican, and when I visited her, she would often make things and she never really taught me how to make them. But I would always watch and think... to me some of the dishes that she made were a bit... maybe a bit strange, and they weren't the things that were in my fridge and freezer. So I definitely had that influence there of watching her cook and prepare food. And she always made things... she would make so much food for someone who lived alone. So my Jamaican grandma she lived alone, but she always made so much food. It was like she would make enough for eight people. And whether it was, you know – then, like that kind of batch cooking idea.

Alison 09:19

Are there any dishes that you really remember her cooking?

Adrienne Herbert 09:22

Yeah, and it's interesting – you know RIP, I love my nan so much – I think back to when I was young in her kitchen. There's a few things that stand out for me. One is: Who is she cooking all this food for? Also her kind of asbestos hands – as she used to say she had asbestos hands – because she would turn things in the pan so she made these – I think they're like sweetcorn fritters – I think that's what she probably called them, and... I'm not sure what all the ingredients were, but I make a similar thing now, and it's you know, it's just grated potato or root vegetables – whatever you've got – and sweetcorn and an egg and salt and pepper. And she would turn things in the pan with her hands. And remember if I ever touched it, being like: 'Oh my gosh, it's so hot, how could she do that?' But yeah, she used to do that. So I remember her making those. And she used to make a lot of stews. And red pea soup was something that she used to make. So it's like a stew that's got red peas in it and obviously, rice and peas, chicken, lots of the traditional Jamaican foods. But I always remember her for some reason... I think if she were still alive, I'd probably buy her a spatula. [Laughs]

Alison 10:24

Make her use it.

Jimi 10:25

You've mentioned a couple of times dance classes. And I've seen you talk about not necessarily knowing what you wanted to do, but always wanting to be active and creative and being quite sporty, like from an early age. And you moved to London at quite a young age. Can you talk us through that? What happened there? And what was the kind of driver to get you to do that?

Adrienne Herbert 10:47

Yeah, so we all lived in Leeds – with my mum and my siblings – and as you say, I went to dance class, I went to athletics club. I was very active. And I didn't really engage in school in the academic stuff, which

is kind of ironic now because now I'm just a voracious learner. And, as you know, just written a book, as you said. But yeah in school – I kind of loved the social aspect of school, I loved the sports and the clubs – but yeah, I think I got most of my... most of the things I enjoyed and excelled at were performance. Whether that was running in a race or whether that was performing on stage. And if I'm honest, again, living at home, in that environment, it was challenging – having a single mother – you know, I think it was a challenging environment, and I saw things that maybe friends had, or just a lifestyle that wasn't available to me. I'd only ever been to London once. And it was a school trip. And I went. We went to see a show, and we went around. And I remember friends that used to go to London, and they'd say, go for weekends. And I'd only been once. So I don't know really where the drive came from – but I definitely, I just wanted to maybe have some independence, maybe have some space. You know, I'd shared a bedroom. And I think I just wanted some space. And actually, I kind of felt like I had a choice at the time reflecting back now. I thought I could either pursue athletics – and as I said, I was competing – but it was only a small casual thing. But my athletics club, I remember thinking I could stay here and I could go all in – 100%. I never really dabbled. So everything I do is 100. So I thought I could commit to this and work with my coach and maybe pursue athletics as a career. But I'll have to stay living at home, I'll have to stay living in Leeds. However, if I pursue the dance option, and if I go to dance school, drama school – you see where this is going... then I have to live in London, and I get to move to London. And that just seemed more appealing. Exciting. It seemed like an adventure. And I just said: 'Okay, great!' I went for the auditions. And as soon as I got the place, I think I actually knew – I counted down the days, it was like 60-something days on the calendar – and I counted down the days. And then, yeah, I literally got onto a coach – like the National Express coach...

Jimi 13:00

Wow. Yes, to Victoria.

Adrienne Herbert 13:04

Yes! I got to Victoria with my suitcase. Like honestly – literally like that. [Laughs] This was how many years ago? Gosh, a long time ago. And that was it. I never looked back. I never had that sense of, ooh, you know... because to be honest it didn't seem that far away. It didn't seem like I was going from Australia to London. I just thought: 'Well, here I am.' And yeah, as I say – never looked back.

Alison 13:24

And did you know anyone in London?

Adrienne Herbert 13:27

No.

Alison 13:28

That is brave.

Jimi 13:26

Having just been down once for a school trip. That was, you know, heaping a lot on that one visit. But, I mean, spoiler alert – things did work out for you, obviously. And you became a dancer in the West End show We Will Rock You. It's one that you were in for the longest. And I'm fascinated by the life of being

a dancer in one of those big West End productions. What was that like? What are your memories of that time?

Adrienne Herbert 13:57

Well, I guess the first thing I should start off by saying – because it's interesting when you say it turned out and it's a success – and yeah, I feel very fortunate that I've had a lot of success and a lot of things have really gone really well. But there's also been the reverse of that. There's been highs, lows – everything in between. And so I think what I start by saying is that when I graduated I was auditioning for every show in the West End. I was auditioning for dance jobs. I was auditioning for dancing in music videos in live performances. And I was getting the odd job so I did... I danced at the MOBO Awards for Lamar, if you remember? But at the same time, I had to pay rent in London, one of the most expensive cities in the world. So I had to work in two jobs. I worked in a clothes shop in the day and I worked in an Italian restaurant at night. So I was doing all of that. And then yes, I got a job and did a UK tour of a musical first and then went into We Will Rock You which was at the Tottenham Court Road Dominion theatre. So it's a huge theatre – 2,000 seats – so 2,000 people watching you every night. It was such an incredible experience. It really felt like this different world – like I was in this bubble of West End life.

Alison 15:06

Wow. I'm always fascinated with people like that. And the hours they're working. They must be eating just to get the energy, but kind of how do you fit it in? Because you can't dance on a full stomach? And what do you eat?

Adrienne Herbert 15:16

Again, it's interesting, because now – maybe we'll talk about this – but my diet is probably so different to what it was then. And then yeah, I guess the adrenaline and the energy and the dancing and the performance. You can just eat and eat and eat, but you're not necessarily eating the right things. And it's interesting, people might assume that dancers – who have these incredibly toned bodies, and people must think: 'Oh, you must have this really strict diet', but ooh honestly...

Alison 15:40

Is it a Mars bar?

Adrienne Herbert 15:42

Yeah. I was eating Haribo sweets backstage, and I definitely used to... at midday I'd have my main meal – because as you said, I wouldn't eat an evening meal at six o'clock, because you're getting ready to go on stage. But yeah, I don't know. Maybe because again, being 20, 21 – maybe I didn't care so much about nutrition, and about balance. I think I just kind of... I was, I don't know – maybe just living on, you know... Just fuel. [Laughs]

Jimi 16:11

Yeah, yeah. It does seem... especially in the context of how you're known now – in your life now. And we were talking about being an early riser. And it's almost on its head, like you have this more kind of nocturnal existence. Did it feel like a fit at the time? So I've seen you talk about the fact that – you said

it already – that you're very naturally optimistic. And you're a morning person generally. How did you balance it at the time?

Adrienne Herbert 16:42

Yeah, well, it's good I guess that I've kind of lived both because I can now relate when people say to me: 'Oh, but you know, have you always been a morning person?' Or... and I can say to them, when people talk about the night owls and morning larks, and ask: 'Well, can you shift from one to the other?' So as a result of that job, I had to become a night owl. I was working until 11 o'clock at night. So you're a night owl. So I wasn't getting up then at 5am or 5.30am like I do every day now. So I do think it's definitely possible to shift your body clock due to your environment and your lifestyle choices. You can definitely shift to being one or the other. What I'd say was, I guess I did lean into it – I enjoyed it. I never felt like I was: this is 100%. This is everything that I embody. And I don't think I really realised it. I think you're at 20 years old, even 30, 40 I think we transition and our lives have ebbs and flows. And I think at that point, I often talk about having seasons, and I felt like it was just the season I was in, and I just leant into it 100%. But now, yeah – it's not that one maybe was right or wrong. But I think this is a different season of my life. And it definitely feels like... I talk about when I'm with runners, or when I'm with... I feel like I've found my tribe. I've found my people now... my early risers, people who understand the same, I guess, motivations, maybe that I have – you know we're all different. We have different motives, we have different likes and dislikes. But I think you feel it when you know that feeling, when you're amongst your people.

Jimi 18:17

Seasons is such a great way to think about it. Because I think you can get the sense that people are like: 'Oh no, I'm just like this, I'm kind of innately like this'. And there are those sorts of opinions of your personality is formed at a very young age, and people reel off facts about that. But it's really good to know. And it's a really nice way to think of it and come at it, that your life does have seasons and ebbs and flows. And you're the constant throughout that, but you can be open to change.

Adrienne Herbert 18:45

Absolutely. I really want people to hear what you just said about change, because there's a science behind that too. And, you know, I talked about that in the first chapter of my book *Power Hour*. The reason I wanted it to be in the first chapter was because I really wanted people to read the rest of the book with that open mindset and understanding that there's a science behind our minds and change. And if people are familiar with neuroplasticity – essentially – it's just that the brain is malleable. So everything from learning a new skill, to learning a new behaviour, to adopting a new attitude. And as you said, just thinking about yourself as this malleable thing. Not that: I am like this, so therefore, I can only do this or that. But actually in a season you might be like that, but we're all able to change and to become something else. So with intention, with repetition, with practice, with a desire to change or to grow, or to learn. We can all become something and it can be completely different to what you were in the past. Your past doesn't have to dictate what you become.

Jimi 19:55

In your TEDx talk – which I would really recommend people listen to – you talk about a shift in your outlook on life based on a very challenging situation that you went through. It was a real pivotal moment in your life and the journey you've been on since. How do you reflect on that time?

Adrienne Herbert 20:12

I think that, again – going to seasons, I've definitely had really challenging seasons. And there was one. And essentially when I was in We Will Rock you, I was newlywed, I was newly pregnant. And I was just as I described, doing the show every night and just enjoying myself. And then my husband, one night – literally out of nowhere – he became really critically ill. He had a subarachnoid brain haemorrhage. Out of the blue. Literally like lightning striking you down. He was healthy, 29 years old, a healthy person – didn't even have so much as a headache. So to have a brain haemorrhage is something that, you can imagine, is so life changing. And I didn't go back to the show – ever. I walked out of the theatre and said: 'See you tomorrow,' and never went back. So that was a change. And then the next few months was a big change – understanding, trying to understand... trying to learn what had happened. And then the consequence of that for him, which was developing epilepsy, and then the change in our family when our son was born. So – so much change. That wasn't change that I would have chosen. And I think often when I talk about change, and how exciting it is, and transformation, it's something that is a choice. You choose to change. But actually when change is thrust upon you, as it has been for us in the pandemic, as it is for people when they experience grief or loss, or all of these things. They're not changes we would choose. But they happen. And so yeah, I guess, again – talking about the choice of what can I do now? I wanted to do something, and I knew that I had to. And so it wasn't an overnight thing of: 'Oh, you know, I'll just suddenly grab my shoes and run out the door and everything will be great.' It wasn't like that at all. But I did discover running. I'd never been a runner before. My son was born and he was probably about nine months old – so anyone with a new baby will know that nine months is challenging and sleepless at night.

Jimi 22:10

Yeah, I relate to that impulse of I want to leg it around the block a little bit, or maybe run away.

Adrienne Herbert 22:18

Exactly! [Laughs] Run away and escape. But that's what I did. I figured, you know... I felt like after... I just felt like I needed something to re-energise myself and to have some time on my own. Some solitude to just... it was summer as well. I'm not ashamed to say – I think even to this day – I'm probably still a little bit of a fair weather runner, which I shouldn't admit.

Alison 22:39

That's reassuring to hear, because that's what I am.

Adrienne Herbert 22:42

And so yeah, it started off with 20 minutes around the block, which again, wasn't easy. I remember running around thinking: 'Everyone talks about this runner's high, and isn't running great'. And 10 minutes in I'm thinking: 'This is awful, actually'. [Jimi laughs] But I stuck with it. I stuck with it. And over the weeks and months and years that followed, I really just discovered a new passion. A new part of myself, a new part of my life, which yeah, became part of my identity, essentially – as a runner.

Jimi 23:09

Absolutely I can relate because I'm a runner as well. I've done a couple of marathons. And I think my serious running did coincide with family times of stress and people being unwell and things like that. And I wonder how many other people do have that where it does clear your mind, it gives you something to focus on. If you run that marathon for a charity that gives you a way to – I don't know – see some control from this really uncontrollable situation. Was food any sort of comfort at that time?

Adrienne Herbert 23:47

You know what, interestingly, especially because I'm someone who loves food so much, and I love to cook, I love to eat, I love to have meals with others – whether that's in restaurants or in my home. But when I think back to that time, that was probably the only time in my entire life, when food became probably just a part of a function, something that I wasn't passionate about. Something I didn't have the time and energy to give to. I didn't feel like I was making delicious food to nourish. I just felt like... I think it was probably the only time in my life when I've probably not had much appetite... felt a little bit... which again, even saying that, it's like: 'Really?' You know, I love food so much.

Alison 24:26

I guess it's how you just went into survival mode. If you know what I mean, and it's understandable with everything that was going on in your life at that time. So what changes have you made to your diet? You alluded earlier that you eat very differently now to what you did when you were 20?

Adrienne Herbert 24:43

Yes. So now I would say that it's much more... I'm very fortunate I'm able to buy fresh produce and I buy as many things as I can that are fresh. I'll make things from scratch. I'll make pasta sauces, instead of opening a jar of sauce. I will try to have lots of different colours. Lots of different textures and lots of diversity. And I think understanding that – whether it's our exercise regime – we need variety. It's exactly the same with our diet – we need variety. And again, I talk about seasons, but there might be a season in your life where you need more of something. And even just throughout the year, with the way the weather changes, and our activity levels change, and even within a month for women with how their cycle changes. I think I'm much more aware now of saying: 'Okay, am I getting... it sounds so boring, doesn't it: balance, balance?' People say: 'Oh, it's so boring.' It would be much more exciting to say I have this strict regime, but actually, I just... I strive for balance. And that doesn't mean every plate or every day, but balance overall. Sometimes more of this, sometimes more of that. But yeah, lots of fresh things. So lots of... I mean, every day, I probably have bananas, oranges, blueberries. If I'm putting a salad together, there will be 20 things – whether, it's you know, honestly from seeds to rocket – I'll put in sunflower seeds, I'll put in cranberries chopped up, nuts, some apple, grated carrot, just everything goes in basically. Again, for parents listening, there's definitely been times when I could just cook anything and blitz it up, and he'd eat it. And that was fine. Then it got to a point where he would, you know, his little finger would just pick out one little piece of basil, and say: 'I don't like this.' [All laugh] And you go: 'Excuse me. You've been eating that for years.' But suddenly that one piece of spinach, or that one thing, and they suddenly become aware of different textures saying: 'Oh, I don't like this, I don't like that.' So again, it's a challenge. There's things that he will eat and as I said pasta just seems to be the theme. I've got so many different sauces. I make this green spaghetti sauce, which has got blended

up basil and peas and avocado and spinach and all these things. So he's eating that, but if I gave them to him on a plate individually: no chance! So I think it's about trying where you can, pick your battles – find the things that they like, that they don't like. Getting them involved, I think is nice. And so with Jude, if I'm making, again – it's pasta – but if we're making a pasta bake, he will actually... I'll say: 'Come and wash the tomatoes, come and wash the sweetcorn, come and put this in.' And he'll take a few out and eat them raw and I think those tactile things are quite nice. Saying you can try this, and try that, and understanding food and learning a little bit about it and getting them to actually come and help you if you can to experiment with new foods. But he certainly doesn't eat everything. And at the moment he won't eat anything that's a little spicy, so we need to work on that a bit.

Jimi 27:36

It feels completely appropriate that you've spoken about pasta – even going back to your Italian restaurant days – because I really think of it as a food for runners. Like the pasta parties that you have when you're carbo loading before the London Marathon. When you cross the finish line after a big race, or a running event, what do you crave?

Adrienne Herbert 28:10

Yes! Well, I always say that I've got a natural Sweet Tooth. So I like sweet things. But it's interesting that if I finish an endurance event, I don't want anything sweet. I want savoury. And maybe because when you're sweating for four hours, then you probably lose a lot of salt. So you want to replenish that. So yeah, I always want something savoury and something hot. I never want... and I think also if I'm running an endurance event I might be having those gels, which are like energy gels, and they're quite sweet and they can feel quite sticky. Or someone gives you a handful of jelly babies. So this feels like... yeah, I never want sugary things after a race. I always want something savoury. And again, it might not be what people expect, but just something plain like fries. Fries! Salty fries – that is great. But actually also before a run when thinking about fuelling, I honestly believe everyone finds their own little things, don't they? That become their like pre-race rituals. And I believe I've got it nailed. So forget the porridge, forget... my thing that I have before an endurance race is a banana with almond butter, and a croissant. And that has served me well. Every time I've had that before... I had that before I ran a half marathon PB and ever since, I'm like: 'That is the fuel.' I don't know what it is, like I say, I'm not a nutritionist, or, I don't know if I get the breakdown of what's in that but: banana, nut butter and croissant.

Alison 29:33

And that's the fuel that works for you. It does sound rather tasty.

Jimi 29:36

We wanted to ask about your journaling.

Alison 29:39

I love it. And there's some really lovely questions that I've seen that you've suggested. Tell us a little bit more.

Adrienne Herbert 29:44

Yeah I will. So it's an exercise that I share in the book that I call six questions to answer before six. And if you're someone who is new to mindfulness, or someone that doesn't really resonate with: to sit quietly, cross-legged with your eyes closed – then you can probably understand after hearing me talk just for an hour that I don't really resonate with that either. I have a lot of energy and I thrive in doing. So for me to have a mindful practice, I needed to have a bit of structure and some prompts and cues. So, that's why I use this exercise. And the idea is just to take a blank sheet of paper, or take a notebook, and answer six questions when you first wake up. To draw your intention to focus, and to, I guess just the action of writing down – committing words to paper. It's a mindful practice. And it also encourages you to really focus and think about the answer, as opposed to just running through it in your head. So some examples of those questions could be: Who could I learn from today? Or, who could I help today? Something small that you could do in service of others. Or, what am I most looking forward to today? Or, what am I most grateful for today? One that I like at the moment is: who would love to hear from me today? You know, during lockdown? Who would love to hear from you? Who is going to see your name, call them and put a big smile on their face? Is it your grandma? Is it your friend? So answering these questions, as I said, it doesn't have to take an hour – it could take 10 minutes. But I did this exercise every single day for four months, and I really saw a change. I saw that throughout my day, I would be looking for those answers. So for example, what am I most looking forward to? I'd write the answer. And then, oh, lo and behold, at four o'clock, when that thing comes, it's like: 'Yeah, this is the thing on my list today.' So it was really, really nice to do that consistently. A lot of people have sent me screenshots, or sent me messages, and said: 'Oh, I'm doing this every day.'

Alison 31:38

That's really encouraging. And it's just lovely. Not just being kind to yourself, but showing kindness to other people.

Adrienne Herbert 31:45

Yeah, and this time as well, although a lot of us would say: 'Oh, it's strange.' A lot of people are busy. A lot of people are saying: 'Actually, I've got more time than ever now. And actually, how can I... if it's feeling monotonous, if they're feeling fed up? And how can I shift that?' Often the focus is to say: 'What do I need? What can I do to feel better?' But one thing that we know really, really does boost our mood and our mental health is doing things to support and help others. So, even if it's something small, like making lasagne for your elderly neighbour – that could be a small thing that gives you a purpose for the afternoon, and is really going to help out somebody else.

Alison 32:19

And during the past year, everyone's had more time to do baking and cooking. Have you been baking or cooking, doing your sour dough loaves? Is there anything? Any other trends?

Adrienne Herbert 32:25

Alison, I will tell you, honestly, you will never... as much as I like to optimise time, you'll never see me making my own almond milk or whatever that is. But one thing... the whole banana bread, banana cake lockdown thing. I feel a little bit put out by this because I have been making *the best* – I honestly think I have the best banana cake recipe – weekly. I made it every Sunday – weekly! And then suddenly it became a trend. It was almost like a cliché to make in lockdown. However, I'm going to share with you –

because I don't even own weighing scales – and it is just fool proof, never goes wrong. So basically I use one cup. I use one cup and that's how I measure it out. So I use one cup of self-raising flour. I use the same cup to then fill it with milk – and that can be any kind of milk – oat milk, cow's milk, whatever milk you want. And then – this is so bad for anyone listening who is a baker – but I just put in half a block of butter. That's how I measure it. Half a block. That is it. Yup. And then what else goes in? So the same cup, again – using the same cup, I use half a cup of sugar. Make sure it's the same cup.

Alison 32:28

White or brown?

Adrienne Herbert 32:30

White. Three mashed up bananas – preferably if they're going brown, then that's great. One grated carrot – again, that carrot sneaking in there.

Alison 33:41

Wow, that's your secret ingredient?

Adrienne Herbert 33:42

Yes – it keeps the moisture so no dry banana cake. And then what else goes in? Two eggs. I think that's it. And honestly it sounds simple, but please – let me know if you use my one cup banana cake recipe.

Alison 33:55

Don't worry, I'm going to go and cook it and try it out because I've not had a banana cake with a carrot in before. I've had carrot cakes with bananas in but not the other way around.

Adrienne Herbert 34:07

Alison, it's going to change your banana cake game because it's just never dry.

Jimi 34:13

That sounds delicious.

Alison 34:15

Wow. What about your son? Does he maximise his power?

Adrienne Herbert 34:21

Right. Well, it's interesting because my 'power hour' is child free. So that's why it's so early. Because I get up an hour before him. But once he does get up, I do encourage, for example – and again, it's not a judgement about what you should and shouldn't do, I'm not a parenting expert – but I do encourage you to try some of the things that I talk about. So, there's no TV in the morning – the first hour there's no screens, there's no iPads, there's no Nintendo Switch – none of that. He doesn't even ask me because it just does not happen first thing. And I'll encourage him to do movement. So sometimes if I'm stretching I'll say: 'Come and do this with me.' He likes to do it. Even though I am a qualified coach and

trainer, I feel a little bit betrayed when he puts on YouTube and watches Joe Wicks and does Joe Wicks workouts. I'm like: 'Okay!'.

Jimi 35:07

Betrayal, the ultimate betrayal.

Adrienne Herbert 35:11

But it's interesting, because obviously I talk a lot about motivation, encouragement, and empowering yourself. And it's interesting, how our children... I watch and observe and children... Jude doesn't have any concept of time. An hour, what does that mean? You could do something for five minutes, you could do something for two hours – it doesn't have that same urgency to think: must get this finished by this time. He can just be reading a comic, he's got one sock on – this idea of we've got to go in 10 minutes! What does that mean? Sometimes it's quite good for me, someone who 'optimises' to observe that and lean into that, and go: you know what, this could take 20 minutes, or it could take an hour and just let him be.

Jimi 35:50

Well Adrienne, you have definitely changed my mornings, even if just for one day. You have changed our outlook. And I'm sure you've changed many other people's, too. Thank you so much for joining us and sharing your amazing insights and positivity.

Adrienne Herbert 36:06

Thanks both of you for having me. I've really, really enjoyed this chat. I felt like I forgot it was being recorded for a podcast. Yeah, sharing my life story with you. But thank you, I really enjoyed it.

Jimi 36:22

You've been listening to Life on a Plate from Waitrose. I'm Jimi Famurewa, thank you to my co-host Alison Oakervee, and our guest, Adrienne Herbert. To learn more about the series, go to [waitrose.com forward slash podcast](https://waitrose.com/podcast) and please subscribe wherever you get your podcasts