

It takes courage, determination and a whole lot of self-belief to start a trend that changes people's attitudes. These women jumped in head-first – and we're going to follow their lead

I'm making it cool to be kind

On the surface, **Cheryl Adamson**, 32, had an enviable life – but in reality she was very unhappy. She found a new way to feel better, and as hundreds of followers attest, it really does work

From dreamer to leader

'Five years ago, I was a high-flying finance lawyer in a long-term relationship, and my friends thought my life was picture-perfect. But the truth is I felt lonelier with my boyfriend than by myself, and utterly exhausted. I knew I was spending all my energy on a career I just didn't feel passionate about. I assumed there were lots of people like me who put up with a relationship and a job that didn't fulfil them, and came to accept that life is just so-so.

Then a huge shock brought my whole world crashing down – my stepfather was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. I didn't realise how much I loved him until I found out he was dying, and I felt so ashamed that while he was heroically fighting to live for one more week, I was wishing my life away. I saw then that I'd been far too blasé about my own happiness, and I needed to make some big changes. I steadily dismantled the life I'd so carefully built, walking away from my job and ending my relationship. These were scary choices, especially when I had no plan B, but I knew I had to figure out what I wanted from life and start all over again.'

My rallying cry

'I eventually twigged that I felt most content when I wasn't thinking about myself but doing small things for other people. So I started being nice to strangers. I handed out daffodils at my local railway station, I left a kite for people to use in a park, and I hid a treasure hunt for strangers to follow. Doing thoughtful things made me feel good, and I started a blog about my random acts of kindness called makemejoyful.com. Now, more than a thousand people have signed up for my newsletter, and every week I receive moving messages from people who have been inspired to do something special for someone else. In the past two years I've also found a job at an online learning organisation that I love, and I've got a new partner who makes me truly happy.'

'Doing something thoughtful makes me feel good'



Blaze your own trail

'When you're full of positivity and vitality, it shines through – that's when you'll attract the people and opportunities you've always wanted. I've realised there's no point settling for a mediocre life, and I'll always be striving for joy from now on.'