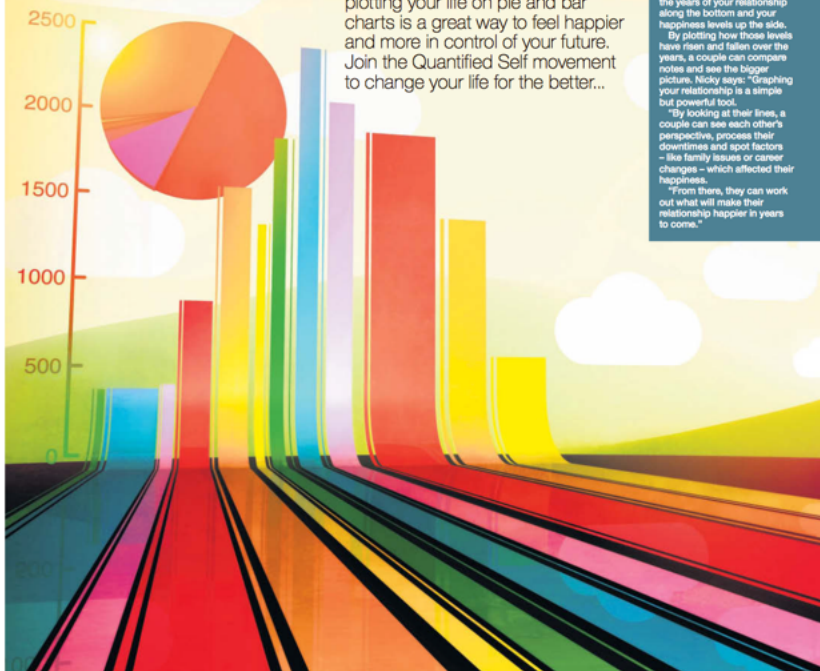


Off-the-scale happiness

It may seem weird, but experts say plotting your life on pie and bar charts is a great way to feel happier and more in control of your future. Join the Quantified Self movement to change your life for the better...



Your relationship

As a form of relationship therapy, it makes a change from poring over your hurt feelings.

When a couple separately chart their happiness levels over their time together, they can start to clearly see what really makes them happy, according to Nicky Lee, who devised the UK's most popular form of relationship counselling, The Marriage Course, taken by more than 100,000 couples.

According to Nicky, all it takes is a piece of paper with the years of your relationship along the bottom and your happiness levels up the side.

By plotting how those levels have risen and fallen over the years, a couple can compare notes and see the bigger picture, Nicky says. "Graphing your relationship is a simple but powerful tool.

"By looking at their lines, a couple can see each other's downtimes and spot factors – like family issues or career changes – which affected their happiness.

"From there, they can work out what will make their relationship happier in years to come."

Your career

Psychologist and career coach Averi Lemon asks clients to graph their careers by plotting their job satisfaction over the years. Averi, author of *Coaching Women to Lead*, says: "Studies show we tend to remember a lot more of the negatives in the short-term.

"Bogged down by the day-to-day business of getting through life, it can be hard to see the overall view. This gives you perspective on where your career is heading."

If you give it a try, Averi warns you not to expect your line to always be heading upwards.

"When you chart your career, no one gets a continuously upwards line. There

will always be ups and downs and these will allow you to spot what made you happy and what made you hit your boss.

"For example, your levels may have peaked when you had a great relationship with your boss. "You may see that it went down when that boss moved on but you stayed in the job out of a misplaced loyalty to the company.

"Sometimes the decline in your job satisfaction is so gradual you don't realise it's taken off a cliff, until you see it on a piece of paper. I had someone devastated when she was made redundant at 50. Her graph gave her the impetus to re-launch her career, based on what had made her happy in the past."



Your diet and fitness

Logging your calories and exercise is one of the best ways of getting back in touch with your diet and sticking to a fitness regime, according to nutritionist Helen Bond of the British Dietetic Association.

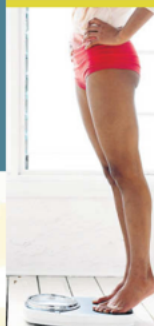
"In today's society, we tend to do a lot of mindless eating. Once you start logging what you eat, it can make you stop and think about whether you really need that extra biscuit.

"The research shows that the people who write down what they eat and how much they exercise have more success getting fitter and healthier."

Of course you could just write it in your diary, says Helen.

But the fact that apps like MyFitnessPal allow you to flash up your progress on screen in multi-coloured pie charts and diagram form makes it a stronger message which the brain can latch on to.

Helen says: "It's a way to connect visually with what you need to do and how to get them."



Your money

Four in 10 people don't have a clue how much money leaves their account each month, according to a MoneySupermarket survey.

Finance guru Simone Gnesson of financial-coaching.co.uk says using tools like youneedabudget.com, which transforms your spending into range of colourful bar charts and pie charts, will make your finances feel less scary.

"If there's anxiety about money swirling around your head, you can feel better by turning it into a picture, even if it feels shocking at first.

"There can be a lot of negative emotions associated with numbers and money.

"So if you use a tool which transforms your spending into a colourful graph you can start to get excited, rather than want to run away."



Your life balance

Turning your life into a pie chart can help you see how balanced your life is, according to NHS Online life coach Jayne Morris.

Jayne recommends a wheel of life diagram, which you can download for free.

It's like a pizza divided into "slices", like work, family, money and social life. Each

portion has a number from one to 10 radiating outwards. For each, you circle the number which represents how satisfied you feel.

Joining the dots will then give you an at-a-glance image of your life overall. The more regular the shape, the better. Jayne, author of *Bum to Brilliance*, says: "The spikes

quickly show which areas need attention. Seeing it as an image lets you connect with what's really going on.

"If you are out of balance in one area, it can show how it's affecting other areas and your overall satisfaction."

Go to mindtools.com or thecoaches.com for a chart.

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