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Kit Powell & Lorna Ough:
Help. I Don't Know
What I'm Doing.

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A year has passed and in that time HELP. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING has completed zero podcasts, zero publications and zero surveys.

HELP. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING was a call for comfort from our peers, our role models and strangers online.

This project grew from the contradiction of having the privilege of feeling like we had too many options but not enough talent, time or money to pursue them. These worries felt melodramatic and selfish but all consuming.

We wanted to create something that offered the permission to publically wallow without feeling exposed. We decided on an anonymous online survey. We launched the survey for 72 hours and received 21 responses. All we knew about the participants was the time they completed the survey.

After the survey ended I had a friend approach me and say 'I know you don't know whose is whose but I just want to say don't worry about what I've written, I'm okay. I just had to get all that out of my body'.

Maybe HELP. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING was an exorcism, summoning all the worst-case scenario angst from our bodies and sending it off to live out its days on a computer hard drive. However I'm not naive enough to assume that one survey can expel all angst for good.

A year ago this project boasted so many grand plans and ideas, which, like many projects, never came into fruition. However it wasn't due to lack of funding, time or talent but need. We no longer needed this project. HELP was created from a need to release worry and to hopefully help others to do so. Once our stress was released so was our urgency.

Revisiting this project feels similar to reading a teenage diary, a rush of embarrassment and empathy. The work walks a thin line between sincerity and out right self-help cringe. Not dissimilar to your favourite sitcom or feel good guilty pleasure that you save for your worst days. I think we all agree that their scarcity of consumption is part of their charm and healing power.

Although HELP has been inactive for the past year I don't consider the project closed as the need to not feel alone is universal and timeless. I know I will revisit the same feelings and fears of inadequacy and loss in the future, whether it is in 4 months, 4 years or 4 days time.

Written by Kit Powell

The following pages feature texts by Kit Powell and Lorna Ough and 18 of the original 21 responses, which are from the participants who gave consent for their answers to be used in all future projects.

HELP. I DONT KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. THE FIRST ATTEMPT.

Introduction

Help. I Don't Know What I'm Doing, is founded in loneliness and panic. Forged from the mounting pressure of life we found comfort in talking to each other and relief in our collective floundering. We knew there must be more of us.

Using publications, podcasts and surveys we aim to create a space of recognition and release for the everyday limbo.

This is the first step in Help I Don't Know What I'm Doing's exploration of helplessness. We are asking anyone who feels undecided and misguided in their direction to answer this survey. We hope to collect the responses and document them through publications and audio artwork. All responses will be anonymous but you can opt out of documentation if you want to use the survey as a purely venting exercise.

Content Warning – Questions could cause personal introspection. Answer as deeply or flippantly as you wish. Some of these questions are lighthearted others could be closer to the bone.

The Questions

- Q1 Do you ever just laugh at your life?
- Q2 Who do you think has it sorted? And how?
- Q3 If your future was an animal, what animal would it be and why?
- Q4 Do you feel weighed down by your potential? Do you feel that 'anything is possible' for you?
- Q5 How long can you be in limbo? And how low can it go? Are you happy in limbo?
- Q6 What's the risk you're scared to take? And are you scared to ask for help?
- Q7 On a scale of 1-10 how much does the question 'So what's your plan for next year?' fill you with existential dread?
- Q8 Do you ever feel a sense of competition about who's the most lost or who's found it all? Do you compete in the race?
- Q9 Do you have any methods, tricks or tips on how to handle these feelings?
- Q10 Do you consent to your answers being used in future projects by Help. I Don't Know What I'm Doing?

9:36pm

- Q1 many a time
- Q2 Harry and Meghan - prince and princess
- Q3 A Flamingo because the future is pink and flamingos are very lucky as humans don't eat them and that's what I want for all the other animals in the future.
- Q4 Actually yes, sometimes when there are too many options, subjects of interest that I could do well in.
- Q5 I think I am quite good at getting out of limbo pretty swiftly.
- Q6 I am not quite sure yet.
- Q7 Thankfully this year not too much, vague travelling plans help with that.
- Q8 YES YES YES, competitive negativeness is the worst, I try to end such conversations quickly.
- Q9 I don't think I realise them if I do them, sub-conscious sorting out is my trick

10:26pm

- Q1 Yeah its all a joke
- Q2 Everyone could have it sorted nice and simply. But most people want to be rich, own a house and impress.
- Q3 A whale because they just float around slowly living life happily and freely.
- Q4 I feel everyone who is successful says anything is possible, which i think is true. But it makes you feel you are never doing enough, therefore you don't reward yourself for all the amazing things because you have high expectations all the time, this definitely weighs you down.
- Q5 I am happy just living life. But at the back of my mind i always wonder if im doing enough to be successful
- Q6 Il pretty much do anything, so i dont feel scared to do anything and il always take help if offered and i dont feel bad about asking for help.
- Q7 I I dont dread anything.
- Q8 I do see people i think wow you're doing well. But i never compare myself. And i will do what i have to do and not worry about hurrying up my life.
- Q9 No.

10:37pm

- Q1 Yes. Normally when I am so stressed from work or from feeling anxious, I actually have a little laugh at myself and my life. I can't say it lasts long though.
- Q2 There is no one I know who has it sorted! As I've got older the few people I thought did have it together have revealed things about their life that most definitely mean they do not have it sorted.
- Q3 Not a clue. I'd like it to be my little dog who does nothing but eat and sleep and go on lots of nice nature walks.
- Q4 Not really. I actually feel like I'm not very good at anything and I have no idea what I could be capable of as I'm too anxious to try.
- Q5 Limbo is where I always am. I am sometimes happy and accepting there and other times it is horrific.
- Q6 I'm scared to move jobs in case I lose the few friends I've made here. I don't make friends well!
- Q7 100!
- Q8 Haha, yes - everyone loves the competition of who has it worst. I don't think I'd ever win by a long shot but I like to wallow in misery with other people.
- Q9 Only the usual cliches - walks on nature, or the beach really let my mind wander. Sometimes that's not the best thing for it as it can make me feel extra alone but sometimes it does the mostest!

11:11pm

- Q1 You have to
- Q2 Megan Markle. Right prince, right time.
- Q3 A dolphin, they're up and down yet enjoy the waves. They're not afraid to dive deeper.
- Q4 I am a special snowflake, but will eventually melt.
- Q5 It depends.
- Q6 The risk of getting stuck in 9-5. You can't ask for help, if you could you wouldn't get stuck.
- Q7 2. I like planning, the goalposts just move a lot.
- Q8 I compete against people who don't realise they're playing. I compete against my self.
- Q9 Fill out Facebook forms

11:40pm

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 Nobody, you never know someone's true lives when looking at their Instagram, or from how they portray themselves to be
- Q3 A pigeon. Because I can live in cities and be surrounded by other pigeons
- Q4 No. I feel the pressure to have a career goal and a large friendship group, when looking at others instagrams
- Q5 this Can't be determined because everyone sees limbo differently. I personally am not happy in limbo and know I need to do something to change it
- Q6 I'm scared to pay and study for a career I may not end up liking. I'm scared to admit I need help at times
- Q7 A 10 as I have no idea what I want to do
- Q8 Yes, mainly due to everyone on Instagram appearing to have their lives sorted, I don't know how to compete in the race, as I don't know how to sort my life
- Q9 Yes, I try to think that it won't be forever and I will decide what direction I want to take my life in

8:17am

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 People who have a career they like and are good and successful in it e.g. doctors, writers, Chiefs, entrepreneurs. They've studied and/or worked hard and enjoy their everyday life and find time for hobbies and drinking enough water etc.
- Q3
- Q4 Yes, or I used to, now I'm panicking and super scared cause life started feeling limited for me due to my own fears - I'm never gonna do those impossible things if I'm actually not doing them now.
- Q5
- Q6 To do something which doesn't work out / have value in the end. And yes.
- Q7 10
- Q8 Not with other people, no. I do believe no one really has found it all or has it all together. We're all figuring it out in our own ways. If someone finds a perfect job they might still struggle with relationships/health/loneliness/etc so you can't really look it that way.
- Q9 For me, it helped to make a list of people who I'm jealous of. I listed their name, the things I'm jealous of or compare myself to, and then reasoned why the things aren't that 'amazing' in the end - I even listed some of their negative qualities even though that's probably not healthy. But it made me feel better.

11:02am

- Q1 always
- Q2 nobody x
- Q3 sea slug because it is colourful x
- Q4 sometimes x
- Q5 limbo can be good if it helps u discover the right way.
better limbo than the wrong way x
- Q6 moving in with other half x yes x
- Q7 8.5
- Q8 hate the rat race !!
- Q9 you do you x dont stress about what others are doing x

11:48am

- Q1 No
- Q2 My colleagues, seem so certain that what they're doing is the right thing. My friends who know what they're doing isn't but are comfortable going with whatever comes their way.
- Q3 Ostrich - Burying it's head in the sand
- Q4 My potential and my expectations are constantly at war - When I feel confident I feel lost, when I feel useless I feel trapped
- Q5 You can be in limbo for the rest of your life, it's a matter of assessing and accepting what the important things are.
- Q6 Setting foot into the unknown - I know there must be something good out there but how are you supposed to find it when everything/everyone expects you to go down the path you're already on.
- Q7 8
- Q8 yes, I feel like I'm constantly comparing myself to others, but I know I set my expectations much higher so it always feels like I'm losing. I want to know how to let go.
- Q9 Meditation

12:09pm

- Q1 Yeah, when i need to.
- Q2 All my friends and everyone i know, except my dad. They seem to always be pro active and talented.
- Q3 Probly a herd of frightened animals moving way too fast in no clear direction, just running away. i'd like to be like a snake and go with the flow.
- Q4 I do feel that anything is possible, and then become overwhelmed picking one thing to focus my energy on.
- Q5 Forever but i don't want to be. Limbo is boring and stressful and characterized by doing nothing but worrying about everything.
- Q6 To really try to put my heart and soul into something and it not be any good. Or no one else approve or to just fail.
- Q7 10 there are no plans, there never have been. Who are you cold robots with your plans?? I pretend i dont like to make plans cuz i wanna go with the flow but really they just fill me with panic.
- Q8 Yeah i feel pretty lowin the race and regularly assume everyone else is winning.
- Q9 Staying far away from social media where you can compare yourself to the best of them and meditation, exercise and general self lovig practices to boost ones confidence. Stepping outside of your own shoes too.

3:19pm

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 People doing well in uni who have money and are in good relationships
- Q3 A goat because they're a bit mental and they're funny
- Q4 I hate that saying makes it sound like whatever you're actually doing is not enough
- Q5 It depends on the time
- Q6 Moving, getting a new job, telling people how you feel and manly scared of these and everything else just in case I change my mind and it's too late
- Q7 5
- Q8 Yes everyone does
- Q9 Not really just get drunk take risks and hope things change

5:30pm

- Q1 Yes constantly, but more the situations that arise than the overall life.
- Q2 Those ladies with blow dried hair and clothes that are perfectly clean and pressed. To have that much time means your life must be sorted. But also those people who are just really comfortable in their own skin have it sorted in a different sort of way, they just ooze confidence.
- Q3 I've literally no idea - maybe a dog, always eager to please and getting in to mishaps but ultimately surviving.
- Q4 I feel weighed down by the options of potential, of how to choose what area to pursue, to focus on. Anything is possible to such an extent that nothing is, the leap would be too far to choose one of those potentials.
- Q5 Like in a hammock? That kind of feels like limbo and is good.
- Q6 To leave the country, to leave permanent stable housing in favour of working or living abroad. I don't know who I'd ask for help for in that.
- Q7 It depends who asks it, if it's someone I'm comfortable with then quite low, its a chance to explore your options and come up with wild plans. If its someone you want to impress then a stock answer and not really engaging with it. But maybe if my mum asks at the wrong moment its a solid 10/10 dread.
- Q8 Yes. Wouldn't it be best to be the biggest mess rather than the middle ground ambler whose settled for mediocrity? (and it's easier to compete for failure than for success).
- Q9 Make lists make plans have ideas. But then focus on something immediate and small and real like reading a book or making a great cup of coffee and dunking a pastry in. Cooking.

8:28pm

- Q1 sometimes! sometimes at how many jobs I have had over the past year; how chaotic it can all seem...but also it is easy to laugh at the unnecessary stress that we all put on ourselves sometimes to get jobs (that we might not even want) and to appear a certain way to other people. I sometimes laugh and think that I should cut myself a bit of slack.
- Q2 People like Hans Ulrich Obrist - he seems to have carved out his own way of doing things and people want him to keep doing it!
- Q3 Maybe something that could shed its' skin?? An animal that could adapt to new surroundings, but not a chameleon kind of way. It would be sure of who it was, but able to challenge itself in new situations. what would that be? Maybe some kind of bird?!
- Q4 I feel like I push myself quite a lot in my working life, so don't particularly feel weighed down my potential at the moment. I don't feel like anything is possible either though! I guess I feel like I am going to try to take risks and rise above seemingly stifling or difficult circumstances to make sure that the option of anything being possible for me is there, because it should be.
- Q5 I suppose you can always be in limbo. And sometimes limbo is a positive thing; it means no commitment (which can often feel scary to me). I think I can be happy in limbo, as long as I have a vague ending of the limbo in sight...
- Q6 I am quite scared about moving away from my friends/relationships/current (vague, ever-changing) work situation in a years time to go and pursue a masters course in Scotland. It could be a risk for some elements of my life, but potentially extremely valuable and fulfilling in lots of ways. I am scared about the financial risks it involves, but I am also scared and unsure when to judge when the right time to go might be (it might not be next year).
- Q7 8/10
- Q8 I do feel it, yes. Both of these are not conducive to trying to stay true to your own way of living and own ambitions for the future (near or distant). why would people want to compete to be the most lost? And yet we do because it feeds into that 'my life is harder than yours' silly social construct. people are also uncomfortable about expressing job satisfaction/feeling like they've found 'it all', because what if it all disappears? I think I probably do a little bit of both.
- Q9 Not particularly. I think I just sometimes remind myself to be less hard on myself. I only graduated a year ago (almost) and I have learnt and done lots since that I didn't think I would do. Talking about these feelings to other people in a similar state to you is almost always beneficial. Safety in numbers and all that. I also sometimes imagine what I will think about myself now in 10 years time...I'd probably congratulate myself for taking (financial and otherwise) risks and being quite adaptable.

11:22pm

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 A man who comes to work walks like he has the world on his shoulders and is strong enough to bear it
- Q3 An endangered one
- Q4 Yes but I feel doors closing
- Q5 I presume this is how it is until I can find my own way out
- Q6 I'm scared to be me to everyone around me at once. I don't really believe anyone can help but myself
- Q7 6 - not so much
- Q8 I try and avoid it because I don't believe in it
- Q9 I am still looking for someone with that answer

10:48am

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 People who look immaculate, people without mortgages and people who appear calm & content
- Q3 A wolf. They work as a team and protect each other, I hope my further is surrounded by support of loved ones.
- Q4 No I don't think anything is possible, money is a huge limitation on doing what I want to.
- Q5 Limbo is frightening because of uncertainty but I'd say most teenage years & 20s people spend in limbo until they establish firm relationships and a stable career.
- Q6 Leaving a stable career to Perdue post graduate education. I'd love to learn more and go into academia, but funding and financial support is very limited! I'm not scared to ask for help, I don't know where to ask for it.
- Q7 10!
- Q8 No but I definitely compare notes with my friends, I feel better knowing I'm not the only one who hasn't got everything worked out yet.
- Q9 If I feel overwhelmed or scared, I try to remember it's not just me, no one knows what the future holds.

1:51am

- Q1 yes
- Q2 Richard Branson- he owns an island equally my neighbours- who all own property
- Q3 a sloth- slow moving but happy to embrace the slow place
- Q4 unsure
- Q5 no
- Q6 no im not scared to ask for help. im scared to move and feel uprooted and ask for a salary that matches my skill level
- Q7 2-very little dread
- Q8 no
- Q9 watch a good documentary or really bad reality tv to zone out from the world and distance myself from it

1:05pm

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 the cockneys
- Q3 wild horse (hopefully)
- Q4 Anything is possible but in order to achieve anything you have to leave all the other potential things behind, that can be hard
- Q5 I get depressed in limbo but I also question everything when I have a direction.
- Q6 I'm scared to risk social embarrassment. I find it really hard to ask for help.
- Q7 I don't have a plan but that doesn't bother me too much. Just gonna take whatever opportunities come my way.
- Q8 I'm not super competitive but other people's success can be motivating
- Q9 Focus on your own work and acheiving your own goals

2:41pm

- Q1 Yes
- Q2 People that generally don't. People that are my peers or older than me. Folks that either have clear "careers" or individuals who live artistic and counter-culture lives with confidence, a smile and compassion.
- Q3 A leopard. They are fierce. Beautiful and live in beautiful places. As long as I don't get poached or put in a zoo.
- Q4 Yes I do. Its scary, because choosing one option means saying "no" to many others.
- Q5 I currently feel I have been in limbo for three years, I am tired of it. I would like to not be in limbo within a year. However I also believe limbo is very much a state of mind.
- Q6 I am scared of failure, scared of financial insecurity but mostly I am scared of wasting my life and not making the most of it. I talk to friends sometimes but often feel "needy" when ask for help, so I don't do it as much as I would like.
- Q7 7
- Q8 I feel jealous of those that seem to have it all together sometimes, but I also recognize that jealousy has its rooms in the same place as celebration of someone else's successes. So I try to focus on the celebration not the competition/jealousy. Try...
- Q9 Sit down and journal about my feelings and have a rational chat with myself as if I was talking to a friend and shine light on all that I have accomplished and create tangible goals.

7:37pm

- Q1 All the time
- Q2 Alexa Chung and Beyonce because they just are goals. But also people who admit to not having it sorted are sorted
- Q3 A sausage dog, waddling through not knowing what's happening
- Q4 I tend to look back more than forward because it makes me feel more secure. Proud of where I'm at and no clue where I'm going
- Q5 Always and forever in limbo, that's literally life. Happy sometimes.
- Q6 Travelling. Scared in work environments to ask for help but forever asking for help in personal situations.
- Q7 Complete dread.
- Q8 Sometimes but not with anyone I'm close to. I feel supported.
- Q9 Cry in the toilets and blame it on hayfever.

Conclusion

After 72 hours we have our first attempt at collective reflection.

We called out to people we know and beyond and have found the responses comforting, amusing and often poignant in their honesty.

There is sense of calmness in the storm but no decided path out. When asked for their tips and tricks most respondents were at a loss to give any. In a world saturated with guides, articles and answers it appears there's still a gap.

The main purpose of this survey was to check we weren't alone and now we know we're not however knowing and feeling are two different things.

It is okay not to know. Although sometimes these feelings can be overwhelming and dangerous. We want Help. I Don't Know What I'm Doing. to fill those gaps or at least help cushion the blows.

This is the first step out of the storm together.