

OBSESSED

EVERYTHING WE'RE BINGE-WATCHING, DOWNLOADING + LOVING THIS MONTH

BOOKS

PHOTOGRAPHS by JERMAINE FRANCIS



Shh... Dawn French is speaking!

She's just turned 60 (WT actual F?) – and, after six decades, she's picked up more than just a free bus pass. Here are 16 nuggets of wisdom from the comedy ledge

by HELEN WHITAKER

“When I was younger I didn't believe that you still had a right to be alive at 60,” says Dawn French. “Now I'm 60, I'm thinking there are 1,000 things I still need to do.” The nation did a collective double-take when Dawn French announced on *This Morning* earlier this year that she was turning 60 in October, and we couldn't let the milestone pass without helping the comedian, actor, author, national treasure and friend of *Glamour* celebrate. Especially as her new book – *You. Me. A Diary* – riffs on that same theme. It's a joint journal between Dawn and the reader where, each month, she talks about an aspect of life and her attitude towards it, such as finding peace (though she's allergic to the word 'mindfulness'). Then there are tasks for the reader to do, such as writing a difficult letter to someone. “I'm not an agony aunt or a prescriber of how you should live,” says Dawn, who lives in Cornwall with her husband, Mark Bignell. But she seems pretty damn content to us. “What makes me happy? It's Cornwall, it's a beach, it's a dog, it's a pasty, it's my kids, my husband. It's my family.” See? Tell us more, Dawn.

1 **“I went blonde once and it was a total shock.** My complexion was weird and I didn't know how to dress or do my make-up. Plus, it was unbelievably painful. You shouldn't be sitting in a salon reading *Vogue* [when you bleach your hair]; you should be getting in an ambulance and going to hospital for help. I can't do anything that painful on a regular basis, I've definitely learned that.”

2 **“I feel grateful to get to 60.** I have plenty of friends and family who didn't. I'm going into my sixties with vigour and optimism.”

3 **“The thing I've recently learnt about love** is that it can come and grab you at any time. After I got divorced, I thought I'd have fun, but I didn't think I would fall in love again quite so much. I did.”

4 **“The most grown-up thing about me** is my attitude to time. I get a bit grumpy if people keep me waiting and I'm annoyed if I'm late, so I'm nearly always early. Sometimes by a day.”

5 **“The least grown-up thing about me** is my love of very cold Ribena. I make it into ice cubes and then put them in a Ribena drink. It's like a Ribena bomb.”

6 **“If I could relive any period of my life** it would be aged six to ten living in Cyprus, where my dad was posted with the RAF. We went to school in the morning and, because the weather was so hot, we finished at lunchtime. Someone's parent would come and gather a dozen kids and take us to the beach. We were left there for six hours, with no suncream, in the water just swimming around, pretending to be dead, hitting each other, shouting, crying, catching geckos... safe as anything, never imagining there could be a problem.”

7 **“My mum always said, ‘We don't do perfect’** when I moaned about something that was wrong or didn't look right, or if I hadn't achieved something. She'd tell me it doesn't have to be perfect, it doesn't matter. That's a massive lesson I'm only learning now.”

“I wasted too much of my time daydreaming about unsuitable boys”

8 **“I wish I hadn't spent so much time** daydreaming about boys, mostly unsuitable ones. I wasted so much time and didn't pay attention to other things in my life, like my friends. Luckily, I do have a lot of friends. I know it sounds smug, but I have a small group of inner-sanctum beloveds who have been my friends for a long time.”

9 **“I also wish I'd read more.** I worked it out and I don't have enough minutes left in my life – even if I live to 150 – to read some of the books that I know I want to read. It should have come first... well, not before people. It should be people, dogs, books.” ➤

“You can’t side-step a problem. Get things said, say what you need to say”

10 **“Some friends of mine were sad** when they turned 40 or 50, because their arses were a bit droopy. But I’ve always had a droopy arse so nothing has changed for me. I think if you are worrying about your face sagging a bit, that’s OK. That’s a good worry to have.”

11 **“I’m considering doing grey hair in my sixties,** because I would really like to stop this palaver of covering it up. But I’m not ready yet.”

12 **“I made a job of saying yes to everything** in my fifties, but I said yes to too much work. Now I need to say no more often to work and yes to fun and holidays.”

13 **“My mum used to say,** ‘The only way out is through.’ You can’t get out of any situation by skirting it. Don’t bother with the side-stepping, or faking, or denial – just go right through, because it’s quicker, easier and less painful. Get things said, say what you need to say.”

14 **“Sometimes I’ve got work-life** balance really wrong, but then sometimes I’ve got it really right. It’s depended on what’s happened in my head, my family, my energy or my health. But it’s ongoing, a work in progress.”

15 **“Being a mother is nothing like I thought** it would be; things I thought I’d be good at – like discipline and patience – I’m not so good at. And as children get older, you learn that instead of doing what you think is right, or being the perfect mother, you have to live alongside your kids. They want to be part of the family dynamic and the jokes and all those things, but they are a whole other person separate from you and will do life their way. They have their own will. That’s hard!”

16 **“Regrets? I think** I slept with the wrong person once. It wasn’t Harry Styles.” ●

Dawn’s new book, *Me. You. A Diary*, is out now



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