

HANNAH IS... OUTSPOKEN

“We could all use an Uber full of kittens”

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It's official. Canada is my new favourite country. No wonder not one but three

Canadian cities recently made it onto the top ten most liveable cities list: Canada is home to more than half the world's polar bears, 80% of the world's maple syrup, and literal, actual lumberjacks. Their Prime Minister is a tall, dark and handsome feminist. It gave us *Ryan Gosling*, people. They have adorable turns of phrase – did you know that in Saskatchewan hooded sweaters are called 'bunny hugs'?

Which brings me on to the deciding factor: according to a video that's been doing the rounds on my Facebook, Canada now has bunny yoga.

Let me explain. Bringing a whole new, and gloriously literal, meaning to the term 'yoga bunny', a yoga studio in Richmond, British Columbia, has teamed up with a local rabbit rescue shelter to put on yoga classes with added bunnies. The video – currently on a loop on my computer as I write this – is a thing of pure joy. Just watching it is instantly soothing – what could be a more potentially relaxing combination than yoga stretches and nature's own fuzzy, floppy-eared stress balls?

I can't believe this isn't already a fully-fledged fitness fad causing boutique bunny yoga studios to crop up in Jumeirah. After all, countless studies show that the mere presence of an animal is a natural form of stress-relief – hence therapy dogs brought into hospitals to cheer sick patients, or libraries (again, I note, in Canada) giving

students access to cuddly animals to relieve exam stress. Some workplaces have even caught on – remember when Uber launched an Uber Kittens service and the legendary Grace Coddington ordered a cabful of furry felines to the Vogue offices?

It's a fact I can now personally attest to, having recently acquired a part-time pooch. Thanks to a dog-owning friend who travels frequently for work, I've become something of a foster mum to an elderly Pomeranian called Foxy. She has the slightly threadbare appearance of an over-cuddled teddy bear. She also has only one eye, giving the impression that she is constantly winking at you. And she has improved my quality of life no end.

It's not just because of the aforementioned soothing qualities of spending an evening on the sofa with her fat little body snuggled up against me, mindlessly stroking her fur. And it's not even because, after a trying day at work, she's there when I open my apartment door – just try staying stressed when there's a winking pompom on legs wagging its tail at you, skitterish with excitement at the promise of walkies. I think – and forgive me if this sounds narcissistic – it's because she needs me, in a very simple, straightforward way.

The other day a good friend of mine joked that my partner and I sounded like new parents, forcing her to look at an extensive slideshow of pictures of Foxy (looking *adorable*, of course) and discussing in rather too much detail how often she poops. Now, I won't dare to compare dogsitting to having

an actual child, lest I run into a crowd of torch – and pitchfork – brandishing mothers. But looking after Foxy does make me think of a conversation I had with my own mum.

Permission to get deep here: my mum was born and raised in the Caribbean before moving to the UK and used to suffer terribly with Seasonal Affective Disorder in the long British winter. “How did you get over it?” I asked her. “Simple,” she said: “I had kids. I couldn't mope in bed all day once I had you to look after.”

In a smaller way, animals can provide the same sense of purpose. After all, no woman is an island – we all need to be needed, in one way or another. Most of us are lucky enough to have friends and family that rely on us – but sometimes those needs are complex, and even fraught. All Foxy needs is a bowl of food in the morning and to be taken out for a pee and a toddle twice a day. It doesn't matter how I'm feeling: once I hear the patter of paws in the morning I have to be up, dressed, and ready for walkies. A little responsibility does us all good – and it's all the more beneficial when it comes wrapped in a bundle of fur.

Now, when's the next flight to Canada? Failing that, I'll take an Uber-full of kittens to *Stylist HQ*, please.



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