

‘Passion drives me forwards!’

Fearne Cotton talks to *H&F* about her new wellbeing gift range and how she balances her busy career with family life

WORDS: Jo Ebsworth

Fearne Cotton seems to have it all – a thriving career, good looks, amazing friends and a happy home life. But the TV and radio presenter-turned-wellbeing guru is the first to admit that juggling a multitude of projects with motherhood can take its toll on her physical and mental health. Indeed, it’s her quest to find solutions to help relax or re-energise her body and mind that has inspired the Happy Place podcast and festival founder to create her very first wellness gifting collection for Christmas – Fearne Cotton Happy Place (available at Boots stores nationwide and online, boots.com), featuring everything from inspirational cards and essential oils to candles and body care products, all designed to help soothe or perk us up as we try to survive our hectic lifestyles. To find out more, we caught up with Fearne to discuss all things wellness and festive, and to discover her secrets to surviving the party season.



Fearne enjoys the challenge of helping people feel they are not alone, but part of something

Q WHAT INSPIRED YOUR GIFT RANGE?

‘Ever since I’ve had kids, everything’s been a bit more difficult – sleeping included! Because my energy is lower and things require more effort, I’m always looking at what can help me in life. Simple things like exercise, eating well and going to bed early help, but anything that can give me an extra pep up, or even the opposite – a little calm down – throughout my day, is quite vital. So, my range is based on that premise. There are three themes, Calm, Sleep and Energise, and each has its own individual scent to support very busy lives.’

Q HOW WAS THE CREATIVE PROCESS?

‘After working out the three pillars of the range, I started on the fun stuff, like working out which scents were the most invigorating or relaxing, and designing the packaging. It was important to me that the collection was affordable and not excessive, and that the packaging limited the use of plastics. All the bottles are made from partly recycled plastic and are fully recyclable, and the outer packaging is non-laminated so the cardboard is recyclable and can be doodled on for a calming experience. Wanting eco-friendly packaging caused a lot more work – I’ve had sleepless nights over this project – but it was worth looking at the bigger picture and making it happen. I really hope people see the effort that’s gone into making the products, and that they enjoy using them as well as giving them as gifts.’

Q WHAT DOES THE FESTIVE SEASON MEAN TO YOU?

‘It’s all about my kids these days, and making sure they feel completely engulfed in the fairy tale of Christmas. I set out to ramp up the magic throughout December, getting them to help with decorating the house and the tree, and going to see Father Christmas. I go full-throttle as my kids are at that great age where they’re amazed by it all.’



Q DO YOU KEEP CHRISTMAS GOING AS LONG AS POSSIBLE?

'When it comes to Christmas, I like to be grateful my family are all here still, and to be grateful for the time we spent together. But once Christmas Day is done, I'm over it. Even on Boxing Day, I'll be thinking, "I'm done with this, I need this to all to magically disappear". I find the excessiveness of Christmas quite overwhelming and I can't deal with the fact it hangs around afterwards. I would like January 1st to be Boxing Day, because I'm ready to start afresh. I have a big clear out on Boxing Day and send our old clothes and toys to the charity shop.'

Q IS THIS ABOUT GEARING UP FOR A FRESH START IN THE NEW YEAR?

'Not at all. I just need my house to be clear of all the crap! I never put too much pressure on myself when it comes to starting the new year – I put myself under so much pressure all the time with my work projects, the last thing I need is more rules. I don't really adhere to the idea that you need to be a "better you" just because it's a new year. Every day of my life, I exercise and eat healthily, so I don't feel the need to do more of what I'm already doing, or think about what I should change about myself. There's so much pressure put on people in that way.'

Q THE WELLNESS THEME RUNS THROUGH MANY OF YOUR RECENT PROJECTS. HAS THIS BEEN A NATURAL EVOLUTION?

'It's all been accidental. I never decided "Right, from tomorrow I'm going to have a career in the mental health and wellbeing sector". It's all been in increments of change – first my three books, *Happy*, *Calm* and *Quiet*; then the Happy Place podcasts; and now the Happy Place festivals. I'm still doing my regular bits of radio and TV work – recently presenting BBC2 show *Interior Design Masters* – but another area has opened up to me that I've been able to explore and learn lots from personally. I'm not sure where it's all heading, but I'm going with it.'

FEARNE'S PARTY SURVIVAL TIPS

'There have been times I've said "yes" to every party invitation and then regretted it – the last thing I feel like doing after a hard day's work and putting the kids to bed is getting dressed up and going out. So, my top tip is to say you're busy and don't go!'

'There's nothing worse than going to a party full of drunk people you half know, all shouting to have a conversation. Instead, I choose more nourishing things to do. My favourite thing is to meet up with my six girlfriends from school for a meal every year before Christmas. It's non-negotiable, and we have the best laugh ever.'

'Life's too short to do stuff you don't want to do. Instead of suffering from FOMO (fear of missing out), I embrace JOMO (joy of missing out). I much prefer being at home in front of the fire and relaxing with my husband. I like a nice, cosy Christmas!'



Fearne's new wellbeing range uses therapeutic scents to promote inner balance

Q WHAT DRAWS YOU TO WELLBEING?

'Well, just the fact that I've felt pretty shit over the years, I think. For me, it's not about preaching to everyone about how to feel amazing. In reality, I'm still trying to figure that out for myself. But the more I explore the area, and the more people

I meet, and the more conversations I have, the more I'll have a well-equipped tool kit when needed. That's the plan anyway. It's a personal endeavour, really, that just happens to resonate with other people.'

Q YOU JUGGLE A DIZZYING NUMBER OF PROJECTS. HOW DO YOU COPE WITH IT ALL?

'You're assuming I do. I often don't manage it all. I find it exceedingly difficult. After a recent Happy Place festival, I felt absolutely drained. It was amazing and I'm so grateful I got to do it, but organising something on that scale takes its toll. I put a huge amount of pressure on myself to make sure everyone was having a good time. Afterwards, I felt I needed to retreat slightly after talking to thousands of people and hearing so many stories – you feel a bit overwhelmed by all of it. It's hard enough just sorting out the school run sometimes! That's why I'm often in bed by 9.30pm, feeling absolutely done in. Preserving a bit of energy and sanity is one of my biggest challenges.'

Q MOST OF YOUR JOBS INVOLVE LISTENING TO OTHER PEOPLE. DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO LISTEN TO YOU?

'Listening has taught me a lot. Certainly, with the podcasts, I've learnt so much and I come away from most of them feeling like something has clicked, or a new perspective has opened up. But I do take on a lot of information and, while I want people to know I really do care, it can take its toll a bit. Luckily, my husband is really good at listening and talking, so we have lots of chats. And I've got some amazing mates that I talk to regularly. The best way to survive is to talk to people that totally get you – the real you – and who care about what's going on in your life.'

Q WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO KEEP WORKING RATHER THAN TAKING A YEAR OFF?

'I don't know. I do think a lot about taking six months out for self-preservation, but I find the thought of starting work back up again quite scary, plus I'm self-employed and have a mortgage

'I love walking while listening to music, sitting down to doodle while letting the time pass (I find it so soothing), and reading'



to pay. Fear stops me from slowing down, and passion drives me forwards because I love what I'm doing. I feel I've only scratched the surface of what there is to learn about other people, and how to help them more. I like setting myself challenges and finding ways of making people feel they're a part of something and not alone.'

Q WHEN YOU DO GET TIME, HOW DO YOU LIKE TO RELAX?

'I'm not very good at relaxing. I've got a great fear of stopping, which I think many people have, because then you have to deal with lots of feelings. So, a lot of the time I just keep going. I often end up doing yoga so my body can relax while, mentally, I can trick myself into thinking I'm still doing something. I also love walking while listening to music; sitting down to doodle while letting the time pass (I find it so soothing); or reading. I've just read three good books; *Three Women*, which I loved; *Daisy Jones and The Six*, which is probably one of the best books I've ever read; and Dame Kelly Holmes' autobiography, because I was interviewing her at one of my festivals – brilliant!'

Q WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR YOUR OWN WELLBEING?

'Sleep, even though I'm awful at it; doing some sort of movement like yoga or walking; and, weirdly, because I spend so much of my time with other people, I really do like some time on my own. I crave it sometimes. A bit of solitude can be really good to properly take stock about how you feel physically and mentally. As much as I'm really boosted by my amazing family and friends, I do think it's important and okay to have some time where you're completely and utterly on your own.'

Q WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT FAVOURITE WAYS TO WORK OUT?

'I love running around the park to see the trees and push my body a little bit, and I love using the Fiit app as I can work out in my house (I don't have a gym membership) – I did a Fiit cardio HIIT workout this morning after the school run. I go to the odd yoga class as I like being



FEARNE'S FAVES

'Out of the three scents, I adore the Calm range the most – it smells smoky, decadent and absolutely divine! I really love the body mist, lotion and bath bomb in the Time To Take Five Calming Collection Gift Set, £18.'



'I enjoyed doing the illustrations for my book *Do the Things you Love and Love the Things you Doodle* (£12.50, boots.com). I've created lots of sketches you can colour in and expand on to help relieve stress.'



part of a collective of people who want a bit of respite from life, but, generally, I prefer to exercise alone – it's easier to fit in around work and family. I couldn't run with someone else... I'd be chatting the whole time and that would do my head in!

Q DO YOU MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO EAT HEALTHILY?

'There's no diet. I just know what makes me feel good and what makes me feel crap, and I stick to that. I'm vegetarian, eat a lot of vegan food and, luckily, I enjoy cooking from scratch. Right now, I'm going through all the usual battles with my kids not liking certain foods, so I'm having to cook three different meals or get sneaky and inventive. It's a right palaver, but as long as they're eating good, healthy, home-cooked food, I'm happy to do it.'