



## Leap Year

*Helen Russell*

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FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE YEAR OF LIVING DANISHLY - How to make big decisions, be more resilient, and change your life for good. Having spent the last few years in Denmark uncovering the secrets of the happiest country in the world, Helen Russell knows it's time to move back to the UK. She thinks. Maybe. Or maybe that's a terrible idea?

Like many of us, she suffers from chronic indecision and a fear of change. So she decides to give herself a year for an experiment: to overhaul every area of her life, learn how to embrace change, and become a lean, mean decision-making machine. From how to cope with changing work lives and evolving relationships, to how we feel about our bodies, money and well-being, Helen investigates the benefits of new beginnings, the secrets of decisive people and what makes changes last - and uncovers the practical life lessons we can all use thrive when change is afoot - and inject some freshness and magic if it's not.

## Leap Year Details

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Author : Helen Russell

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## From Reader Review Leap Year for online ebook

### Kirsten says

I really enjoyed The Year of Living Danishly and this follow up (of sorts) is more of Russell's engaging wry style as she investigates all manner of change. From career to relationships to health to finance to home to the mind, this is self improvement taken to the next level.

As in her previous book Russell seeks out expert opinion (and there's an expert for absolutely everything) and I have to say I did find this a little tiresome by the end but I enjoyed how she adapted and adopted these bits of advice into her own life (and the lives of her family and friends).

Lots of food for thought here (and I'm very appreciative of the introduction to Justin Trudeau's baby balancing trick!) and I'll certainly be revisiting and trying out some of Russell's suggestions in my own life. A perfect new year read.

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### Jessica Shelley says

I loved Helen Russell's book on living Danishly! So as soon as I saw Leap Year in my local library, I grabbed it like Golem and devoured it. It was an entertaining and super interesting/insightful read. I loved learning about the idea of Kaizen (essentially the philosophy that small changes lead to big changes) and the different layers of our brain (how the fight or flight response, located in the midbrain, can shut down the other parts of our brain (reptilian/cortex) and this causes our amygdala to flare up with fear. Especially prominent when making changes and doing something outside of our comfort zone. As Russell puts it 'you can't look at cute cat videos, when your body thinks it's being chased by a sabre-tooth tiger.' And I think that's a pretty accurate way to describe anxiety.

By becoming more aware of how our brain and body works, I was able to create a sort of healthy distance between myself and my diagnosed anxiety. It gave me a new perspective on how to view it. That in times of change, stress, and unknowing, it was just my old ancestral instincts kicking in, completely unaware of our modern day generation and situations. (And still trying to catch up!) My body was just, in essence, trying to protect itself. In that thought, I feel a little more soothed.

Yet again, Russell's research and experimentation have opened my eyes, to new ideas and concepts that I cannot wait to try and implement into my own life!

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### Zoe says

I am not a reader of 'self-help' books! Ha! I heard an interview with the author on the radio and what she was saying really resonated, so I went straight to the library to reserve a copy!

I really liked the way this book was divided into different areas of life e.g. money, relationships, health etc. so if there is something in particular you want to focus on improving, you can dip into the relevant chapter. Having said that, I read it cover-to-cover and I think there are different things to try which could be relevant in any area of life.

I also liked the overall conclusion that you don't have to stick religiously to techniques for them to make a difference to you.

I shall be going out to purchase my own copy for future reference, not only because I think my husband could do with reading it and I can leave it lying around indefinitely if I own a copy!

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### **Kate Henderson says**

Really enjoyed 'the year of living danishly' but hated this. Didn't really feel it had a main plot point. Just felt it went on and on. Really didn't enjoy this.

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### **Dominic Carlin says**

Don't tell anyone, he writes in yet another public review, but young adult novels aren't my only not-so-guilty pleasures. I kind of enjoy life improvement books too. ?

I kind of hated this at first. Every person in her life had a stupid nickname. (You're a public figure, Helen; it's not going to take much effort to find out your husband Lego Man's real name, you tit.) The books contained all the tropes you'd expect too. Seneca, hygge, meditation and our good pal Marie Kondo to name just 4 of them. Most grating of all, the narrative style really, really annoyed me.

The narrative format ultimately became the book's greatest strength though. Getting annoyed led to me skimming past all my boredom, only reading chapters and sections that interested me. And then to my shame I started laughing and I started laughing a fair bit. So I went back and read at least one of the chapters I'd initially skipped.

So how can I be too harsh? A book that halfway through I was preparing to give 1 star became a 2 star when I'd finished. And a guilt-induced 3 star when writing the review and realising just how many times I'd chuckled.

OH WELL.

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### **Alyce Hunt says**

This was EXACTLY what I needed. I've had a few big changes in my life recently, and when I think back I can feel my hands starting to shake and my heart starting to pound as I wonder if I've made mistakes. This book is more than a self-help book, because instead of giving you specific steps to take or routines to

follow, Helen tries lots of different things to tackle a range of issues, meaning you can pick and choose which pieces will personally help you.

She's also absolutely hilarious: it's been a while since a book has made me laugh out loud as frequently as Leap Year!

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### **Charles Baird says**

I read A Year of Living Danishly after my wife recommended the book. I really enjoyed the book. I found Helen Russell to be very funny and entertaining. I especially enjoyed her descriptions of LEGO Man and family and Friends.

I decided to continue on to Leap Year as it's a bit of a continuation book of sorts. I can see to some extent why it was not met with as much acclaim as Russel's earlier book. That being said, I think those who were fans of A Year of Living Danishly would enjoy this book as well.

Hellen offers fun perspective on different "life topics" and offers practical advice she derives from various sources (some from notable interviews etc.). Russel's themes of being comfortable getting out of your comfort zone is a great reminder to readers to embrace life's unexpected turns.

My wife and I have introduced Hygge to our lives and have thoroughly enjoyed this Danish concept!

Enjoy the read!

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### **Nina says**

While still enjoyable, I didn't like Leap Year as much as The Year of Living Danishly. The chapters seemed less connected to each other, and they didn't turn me into the annoying person who only starts her sentences with "Did you know that in Denmark..."

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### **Jenny says**

A fun and uplifting account of the author's "leap year"; a year spent trying out new strategies to combat problems in diverse areas of life, from family and relationships to finance and fitness.

Although the book is far from enlightening, it is uplifting and there were definitely some nuggets of information that were interesting to take on board, even if I might like to explore some of them beyond the few paragraphs attention given to them in this book!

I picked up this book because I had enjoyed "The Year of Living Danishly" and, on the whole, it did not disappoint as a follow up. Although labelled as a 'self-help' title, I would argue that it actually follows in the footsteps of its predecessor and is more of a practical memoir? Nonetheless this was a good title to begin my 2019 reading with, and would recommend it to anyone looking for some light-hearted tips for self improvement in this new year!

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## **Damaskcat says**

This is part memoir, part self help book. The author knew she needed to change her life but as she does her best to hide from change - like many of us - she has to overcome this fear before she can sort out her problems. She decides to set herself the task of making changes over the period of a year. With the help of friends - who are willing to act as guinea pigs - and experts on various aspects of life she works through the various facets of her life that she wants to change.

The book covers all aspects of life - friends, relationships, money, career, health, mind etc. The author consults a variety of experts with mixed results. She tries out all the various therapies and self help techniques and chronicles the results with self deprecating humour. I found the humour a little irritating by the end of the book - but that is a personal reaction and many people will enjoy it. As well as reading the book I also listened to the audio version - which I did find irritating. The narrator was good, but this sort of writing does not seem to come over very well when it is spoken.

The main reason I found it irritating is that the author often uses the '/' between words and when you have listened to this being vocalised as 'slash' about ten times each half hour it starts to have the effect on the nerves of squeaky chalk. That said the book is good and because it covers a variety of self help techniques it would be a good book to read if you are seeking to make changes in your life but don't know where to start. If you're looking to work on certain aspects of your life you could just read the relevant chapters.

There are plenty of notes on the text and plenty of books mentioned in the text itself which you might want to read to follow up on particular topics which arouse your interest. Overall this is a useful book for those who want to try and work out which self help technique works for them

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## **Steve Haywood says**

Leap Year is a sort of self-help memoir book, about the author's attempt to spend a year improving her life, by examining and working on a different topic each month - family, finances, relationships, work etc. This follows a similar format to the author's first book 'A Year of Living Danishly' except this time it is about self help generally rather than life and happiness living in Denmark. The author reads some academic papers, consults experts and tries out different remedies and strategies for improvement. In this book she also enlists various friends (with amusing nicknames like Table Flipper, Head Girl, Pan Solo etc) to also try out these self help strategies and report back on their success.

I bought this book because 'A Year of Living Danishly' was one of my favourite books of last year, which in part was down to the author's fun and folksy charm. There's a lot more of that this year, a bit too much if anything. It is a light and fun read, and it does have some useful ideas and nuggets of truth in them (albeit mostly common sense), however it doesn't really get much beyond the surface, never exploring in depth any of the areas it touches on. In many cases it suggests kooky ideas without getting into the issues. The chapter on money/finance was particularly poor - this could have been the high point of the book covering one of the most important issues for many people these days. Instead it limits itself to discussing how to help shop-

aholicism! Very middle class 'we've got plenty of money but it is probably something we should get a handle on'.

Overall though despite its flaws this is enjoyable and interesting book.

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### **Andy Klein says**

The bloom is off the rose. I'm sad that I had to give this book 2 stars as I absolutely loved the prequel and as I find the author to be amusing and engaging. But this one felt formulaic as opposed to organic. It was if she put together 20 essays on millennial self help and improvement to form a book. And no essay had even close to the depth necessary to be helpful or particularly informative. Insert sad emoticon here.

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### **Jaclyn says**

Dear Helen-

I can't say that your book is life changing the way that Gretchen Rubin's The Happiness Project or Brene Brown's The Gifts of Imperfection were. But I still thoroughly enjoyed your ups and downs as you attempted to figure out how to get more comfortable with life and change. I identify so strongly with some of your challenges that the fact that you added wit and humor to them made me feel better about the world. Your way of describing things is so clever and at times, hilarious, that I couldn't help wishing I was one of your friends and you had given me a not-so-subtle moniker. Perhaps I could be something the "American who wishes she was a Brit"...I'll let you decide when somehow we stumble across each other's paths someday. A girl can dream--

Love,  
Jaclyn

ps. Your audiobook reader is everything. She helps make the book.

pps. Am I allowed to say that your original title "The Year of Living Danishly" would have been closer to a five star read, but lost points for the weirdly candid details on Danish sex lives, and this one would probably be more of a 3.5, but I was so happy to listen more of your anecdotes that it gets a four? You won't read this for real, so I'm going to assume yes. Thanks for understanding.

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### **Alyssa Berg says**

Helen Russell's writing always makes me feel that the hours I spend listening to her books are spent with a dear friend. I felt, upon finishing my listen (as I did with "..Danishly") that I really missed Russell and wished I could spend more time in conversation about our shared difficulties with change and decision-making. But I also felt equipped with new tools and tactics to handle such situations with confidence, courage, and excitement. Where "..Danishly" was part memoir, part anthropological study of the Danes, "Leap Year" is equal parts memoir and toolkit for resilience. The balance is perfectly struck, and the read is satisfying and valuable.

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**Jill Lamond says**

A light skip around various change theories. This book was an enjoyable read and I think I will have a go at some of the techniques. I have been power posing and meditating a bit but the suggestion of starting a workshop with some freestyle dancing to get the creative juices flowing at work didn't go down well  
#toobritishfordance

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