

## Would you pay £90,000 for the ultimate health MOT? After decades of stress and low self-esteem, LIZ JONES enters the world's most expensive clinic (and learns a few home truths)

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By [LIZ JONES FOR YOU MAGAZINE](#)

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'You haven't seen a gynaecologist since 2006?' says Dr Bettina von Seefried, aghast. I'm in her Zurich clinic and she can't believe that I'm 64 and have never had a mammogram or smear test. There's no **cancer** in my family. I'm **vegan**. I've never smoked. A former anorexic, I didn't really go through puberty (too underweight) and barely noticed the **menopause**. She asks me to remove my bra. 'Ah, you've had a breast reduction,' she booms. 'The surgeon did a good job!'

I'm at the world's most comprehensive and expensive check-up programme: Paracelsus Recovery, founded in 2012 by Jan Gerber, 42, a former management consultant. It's the first clinic to treat mental and physical ailments: as he says, the two are intertwined. For example, the vagus nerve runs from your brain to your large intestine. Over three days, I am to have a battery of high-tech tests designed to identify and prevent the ten biggest killers.

The cost? £90,000. Clients are the super-rich: CEOs, royalty, pop singers. Film stars are particularly damaged, Gerber says: 'Being in the public eye, being away from home, being admired for something that is not the real you; imposter syndrome.

'I would say that 80 to 90 per cent of the rich and famous have an addiction of some kind,' he explains. Wealth can make a person more likely to abuse **alcohol**, and narcissistic personality disorder is common among patients. Studies have shown that the more wealth one acquires, the more morally ambiguous one can become.



Home for the next few days is a penthouse with a view of the lake, a grand piano, a terrace and a personal chef, Juliette. I meet Sandra Liew, who will accompany me to appointments. I am the only patient at the clinic. There's only ever one – it's super-private, just the way high-net-worth individuals like it.

Blood samples are taken to test my liver, kidneys, thyroid and hormones; my body composition is scanned to measure fat and protein (my BMI is 20; the average for a woman my age is 28). Genetic testing will tell me my emotional and mental state, and any predisposition to **Alzheimer's**; I cannot wait to find out if I was born anxious or

have learnt to be so. I have an ECG to monitor my heart. For maldigestion markers and leaky gut they take a stool sample then conduct a microbiome (gut biology) test. I also have epigenetic tests to find out from my DNA how stressed I am.

I sleep wearing a Sleepiz: a data-recording device attached to my index finger to detect whether I have sleep apnea syndrome. I must swab my mouth three times a day to monitor cortisol, or stress levels. I give urine and stool samples. Dermatologist Dr Valérie Enderlin examines my skin with what looks like a microscope. No cancerous moles, though she says the skin under my eyes is thin, the skin on my legs dry. I've had worse reviews. Thank god the only family holidays I was taken on were to Frinton and Sidmouth. She says we should never go out without factor 50. What about vitamin D? 'You can go outside without a sunscreen for a few minutes, before 8am.' The early-morning light is all about regulating your circadian rhythm. Basically, you'll sleep better.

Cardiologist Dr Anna Ostant attaches monitors and puts me on a bicycle. I can watch my heart beating. I realise that I've wasted my life focusing only on being afraid.

I also realise I'm just a collection of cells that I have abused: too many hours working, too little good food. My heart is 'well preserved' and 'unremarkable'. Even when I pedal hard, my blood pressure and pulse barely budge.

All those dog walks mean I've been doing something right.

My day will end with a massage, but first I have an hour with world-renowned psychiatrist Dr Thilo Beck. I now understand transference: when you fall in love with your therapist. He's so kind and wise. I tell him I've become borderline agoraphobic, caused in part by lockdown (Gerber tells me a mental-health time bomb is looming among high-flyers due to WFH). Dr Beck practises ACT: acceptance and commitment therapy. The clinic also offers dialectical behaviour therapy: talk therapy for high-risk, suicidal patients, those with substance abuse, bipolar, PTSD, eating disorders. It aims to replace all-or-nothing thinking with a more balanced approach to emotions via mindfulness, crisis survival skills and communication.

He agrees I have complex PTSD and low self-esteem. I need to say, 'I feel anxious' instead of 'I am anxious'. I should think of my gravestone: what do I want the inscription to be? 'It's not thrilling to be anxious. It's a waste of time.' I'm to imagine I'm driving a bus of life, and those feelings are passengers. 'Be kind to them. Say, 'Welcome to my bus.' He says my self-critical attitude has 'made you excel at your work, precisely for this reason. Think of anxiety like a parrot on your shoulder,' he tells me. 'You're noisy today! Pipe down!'

I tell Dr Beck I've been too afraid to take my antidepressant, citalopram. He suggests I try meditation. I went on a week-long silent retreat, I say, but my thoughts continued to spiral. His only answer is: practise.

The next day I meet neurologist Dr Nikolina Brcina. I have an EEG (electroencephalogram), which measures electrical activity in the brain, and lots of tests: how is my memory? I tell her

I suffered from vertigo two years ago due to an ear infection. I'm profoundly deaf, which has made me more nervous.

The most enlightening session is with nutritional scientist Priscilla Sanchez, a vegan from Ecuador. I learn that I'm lacking in vitamins B12 and D as well as omega 3, and I'm not eating enough protein. She prescribes supplements: B-complex, omega 3, vitamin D3 and red yeast rice, a natural statin, suggesting I add hemp seed to my morning porridge. I'm so low in B12 I'm given an intravenous infusion.







On my last night, Gerber takes me to Alex restaurant, with its windows overlooking the water. To my surprise, he says I can have a glass of champagne. Between treatments, many of his clients like to try something new, such as hang-gliding. Any whim is catered for: one movie star brought five dogs.

I'm to meet my team from Switzerland in a few weeks for the last results, which take time in the lab: my DNA, gut health, stress levels, sleep patterns, pap test result. At the Langham Hotel in London, I quiver in my shoes. The team have flown from Zurich to give me my results. My gut health is good: no colon cancer, although I'm intolerant to mushrooms and, damn it, wine. My DNA? They discover no markers for Alzheimer's or addiction. Surprisingly, there are also none for arthritis, which blighted all the women in my family.

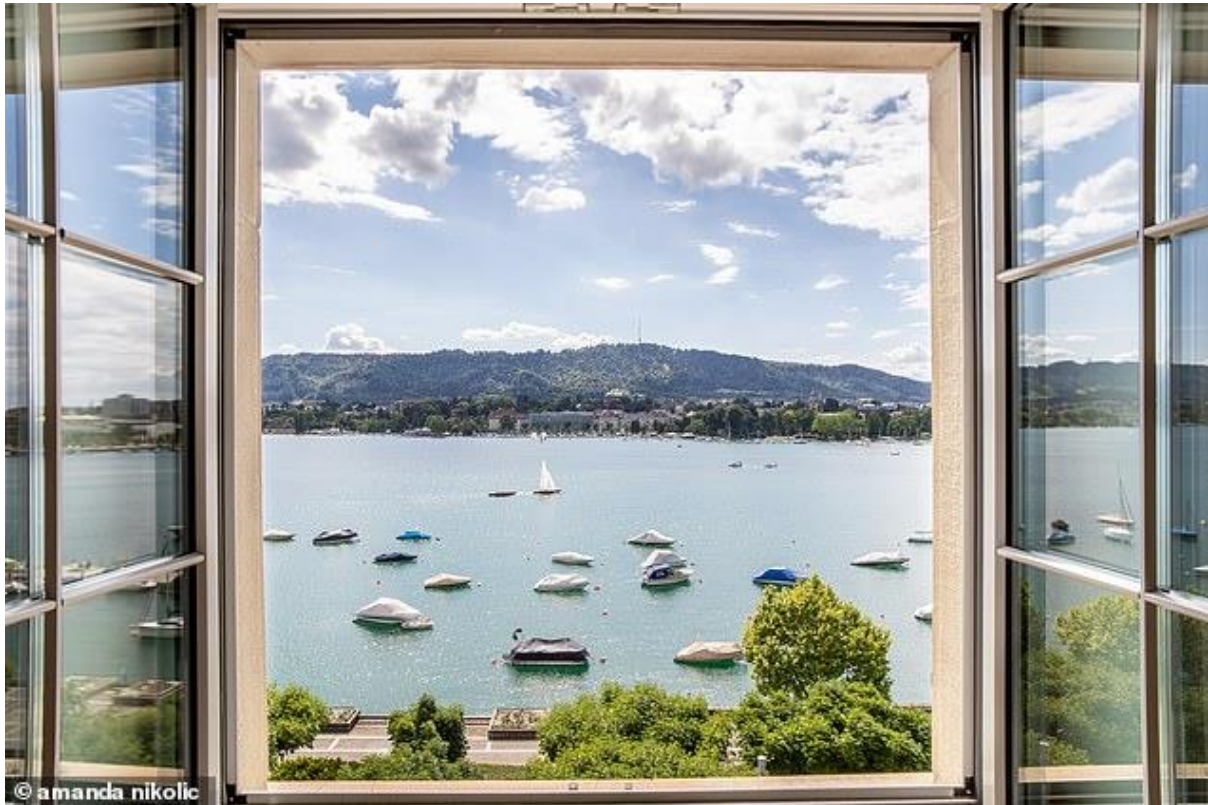
'But was I born terrified?' I ask Sanchez.

'No.'

My HRV (heart rate variability), which has been measured over a 24-hour period, confirms how anxious I am. During the day, my BPM (beats per minute) rate is 73. During sleep it is 67. A decrease of 30 per cent is optimum; my decrease is 2.9 per cent. I'm barely resting. The cause? 'Your anxiety is due to bad nutrition,' Sanchez tells me. 'We studied your cells, we studied your genetics – everything points out poor nutrient intake.'

Eating too little can be as damaging as eating too much and is linked to depression. Alarmingly, the bone-density analysis has found osteoporosis in my spine. This can be

traced back to my anorexia, from the age of 11. Damn you, Vogue – about the only thing



I did consume from 1977. I believed I had to be thin to be beautiful, for men to want me. Turns out it could cripple me.

The good news? The damage is reversible. Liew hands me a bag of supplements. I'm to be reassessed in a year. Most important is calcium for my bones, magnesium to alleviate stress and probiotics to increase my serotonin levels. I'm given a list of foods I must consume, little and often: eight portions of fruit and veg, five of nuts and seeds, four of protein and five of grains and starch each day.

I'm told I need to learn to breathe, and am handed a device called an Oxa (which costs about £300): this is a sensor strapped to my ribcage and monitored by an app, which tells me how to breathe to reduce stress. Laughter will help, too. The team say I should begin to feel less anxious after just a few weeks. Here's hoping.

As they leave, Gerber hands me a gift: a limited-edition Montblanc pen. 'Everyone receives a personalised gift, with a meaning behind it.'

I'll keep it as a reminder, every time I use it, to be kind to myself. We all deserve long and happy lives.

**For more details, visit [paracelsus-recovery.com](https://paracelsus-recovery.com)**

## The Liz Lowdown

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**Weight:** 56kg

**Height:** 5ft 7½in

**Body fat mass:** 15kg, or 27% (24-33% is normal for women in my age bracket)

**Muscle mass:** 22kg (low)

**Body mass index:** My BMI is 20 (a healthy score is between 18.5 and 24.9, but the average woman aged 65 to 74 has a BMI of 28)

**Bone density:** Osteoporosis found in spine due to bad nutrition, previous anorexia and ageing

**Percentage body fat:** 27.1% (bordering on low)

**Deficiencies:** Protein, omega 3, vitamins D and B12

**Waist to hip ratio:** 0.85 (this is good; belly fat is as dangerous as smoking)

**Body type:** C, meaning slightly lower muscle to fat. No premature muscle mass loss