

Retail therapy

Jodie Cariss and Chance Marshall are the founders of Self Space – and they’re on a mission to make therapy an everyday part of our wellness. Here, they discuss how they’re destigmatising mental health in a big way. Words: Anna Evdokimou



▲ Jodie and Chance, Founders of Self Space

“They’re in therapy.” When we hear this phrase, we might assume someone is seriously struggling with their mental health. A one-off or weekly therapy session might not be part of a regular wellness routine for many in the UK, but Jodie Cariss and Chance Marshall are on a mission to change this. The pair founded Self Space over five years ago — a private therapy clinic on the high street offering affordable mental health maintenance to the everyday individual. With the aim of freeing therapy from its clinical depiction, the founders set out to create an inviting environment where people can step in and have a one-off session.

“We’re doing everything that we can to destigmatise caring for your mental health,” says Jodie, who has over 18 years of experience in the field. “There’s this antiquated, historical idea that we have to battle things on our own, but sharing is an incredible gesture towards ourselves, to acknowledge that we don’t need to be in it alone.”

With locations in Shoreditch, Soho, London Bridge and central Manchester, people can step into the clinic during a shopping trip or even a lunch break and have a 60-minute session right there and then. “We’ve chosen these areas because they’re incredibly busy,” explains Chance. “We have a lot of clients who pop their heads in and have a one-off session, and it’s here that many of them encounter therapy for the first time in their lives. Our aim was to democratise therapy and the access to it, and that’s exactly what having clinics on the high street does.”

But while the pair have certainly made receiving therapy more accessible, it still comes at a cost, with sessions starting from £60 for 30 minutes. Chance acknowledges that this may be unsuitable for some, and notes that the team are working towards options at a lower price point, such as group therapy. They’ve also got gift cards available to purchase, through which you can gift one or more sessions to a loved one. While this may seem quite strange, Jodie asks: “What kinder gift is there than the present of self-help?”

So, they’ve got the locations, and it’s pretty affordable compared to other private mental health services on the market, but will a one-off therapy session actually work?

According to Jodie, yes. “Any opportunity we get to talk about ourselves in a challenging and supportive environment is incredibly helpful,” she says. “We shouldn’t expect miracles from therapy, and I think that’s where a lot of people get it wrong. You have to arrive with an openness to do the work.”

A great example of this is their 90-minute MOT session, which presents an opportunity to people who aren’t looking to commit to therapy for the long term but are interested in working on a particular area of their life. “You’ll leave with some objectives that feel actionable,” says Chance.

So, while therapy continues to be a stigmatised subject, Self Space really is working to change that. By having a mental health service positioned between our usual shopping haunts and foodie spots, we may all feel encouraged to take a step inside.

Self Space’s therapists are available online and in-person, with prices starting at £60. theselfspace.com

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