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## Introduction

None of us would have predicted that 2017 would come knocking at doors only to be welcomed by a President Trump with an impending Brexit at his shoulder... and yet it will. "It'll never happen," we scoffed, and yet it did. The past year has shaken us out of our misguided, apathetic slumber and into a new era of worrying political polarity, but in terms of psychology, both the American election and the British referendum have rattled open entirely new Pandora's boxes of research about how we cope during times of fear and anxiety.

The welcoming of 'post-truth' as the Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year attests to how emotions seemed to triumph over logic on both sides of the pond, while a fascinating study into the psychology of binary thinking released this year highlighted how in such fraught circumstances we tend to make judgments more quickly, regardless of facts – tellingly, we are also drawn to simple, decisive leaders. Several studies have also showcased how physical differences in the brain predispose us to being either liberal or conservative, and it is our underlying thought processes which determine whether we are attracted to a certain leadership style over another. Both June and November's unexpected results were also troubling yet fascinating insights into the 'them-and-us' men-

tality and of our need to feel a sense of control when times are tough.

Nearly half of all Americans reported that it has been a source of stress in their lives, with 51% stating they were afraid of the outcome. Risky as it is to make predictions about the future, especially ones so tied into political rhetoric, Hillary Clinton's accusations of the 'Trump effect' seem to have some basis – developmental psychologists have shown that by the time they start nursery, children have absorbed many of the implicit racial attitudes of the adults in their culture. How this bodes for the next generation of politicians and voters remains to be seen.

Before we collapse into shivering shadows of our former selves, however, this year's Expert Guide sees some fascinating research from Dr David Wolgroch on how to deal with trauma. His piece on PTSD, describing it as 'a natural process...gone awry' also contains the comforting line – 'it turns out that people are much more resilient than we think'. Meanwhile, Jennifer Weston discusses how our distorted work-life ethic of more, better and faster is disrupting our eating habits, and proposes 'mindful eating' – and perhaps we could all do with some more self-awareness in these uncertain times.



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