

the universe speaking to me! I actually burst into tears. For real.

The book then suggests asking for a specific thing. So I ask for something simple, as Grout recommends: a free cup of coffee. My husband unexpectedly makes me a herbal tea but I am not sure that counts. So a lot rests on the next, all-important chapter: *The Abracadabra Principle*. This is where you get to summon up some material goods.

I ask for a Sylbie Glitter Pendant Necklace from Tory Burch (cost: £230). I want it very badly and believe the universe will provide. There's no point otherwise, apparently. Belief is very important, says Grout. You can't be half-hearted about this or it won't work. Later that night I look at my inbox. A message from Tory Burch. Or at least her automated email system. 'A little thank you. Receive 10% off your next order.' Is this the universe telling me I could have the necklace? Or have I only believed 10% that I would get the necklace? Hmm.

Over the next few weeks, I try her other experiments, focusing on simple things like doing work stuff more efficiently and getting 'a new office' (which means I spruce up my old one). I soon realise a lot of what the book advises can be summed up in 140 characters from one of my favourite Twitter accounts, @TheTweetOfGod: 'Retweet this and something good will happen at some point in the near future that you can choose to attribute to having retweeted this.' In other words, once you take the vows in *E-Squared*, you're duty-bound to assume that whenever anything good happens to you, it's a direct result of your connection with the universe. It couldn't possibly be because you did a spot of self-imposed spring cleaning or signed up to the Tory Burch website for updates and so you automatically get 10% off.

On the other hand, this book reminds you that you have more power than you think. If you want something, you need to take steps to make it happen. You might not get magic cups of coffee out of the blue, but you are in control of your own happiness. If you focus on 'I want a pay rise' or 'I want a better relationship', it puts the onus on you to do the things that will make them happen. That is the 'magic'.

Claire Bradford of Straightforward Coaching says the messages in *E-Squared*



work because we are goal-focused animals. 'Goals are positive thinking in themselves. We make them when we want to move forward in some way,' she says. 'If you're a car and your goal is your destination, positive thinking is the foot on the accelerator.' She teaches a trick similar to some of the ideas in *E-Squared*: 'Just before you go to sleep, write down three things that made you smile that day, for at least a month. This trains your brain to seek out the good stuff instead of focusing on the bad.'

E-Squared has captured our imagination for two reasons, says Bradford. 'First, because change from within changes our perception of everything else. Second, because for many people, religion doesn't feel relevant any more, yet we still have an intuitive need for connection to a higher being or energy, and this fits the bill.'

Grout says our tendency towards worrying and complaining is 'why we take jobs that don't satisfy us, stay in unfulfilling relationships and keep going back to the buffet long after our appetites have been filled'. This way of thinking is a lie, she adds: you can harness the power of your mind to convince yourself that anything is possible.

The small successes the book delivered made me realise that if I focus on one thing at a time, I get more done. Once you decide you want something, you push it to the front of your mind and start to do things, consciously or unconsciously, that are likely to make it happen. It sounds incredibly stupid but I did want that necklace and so I signed up for updates. That increased my chances of getting it. I'm going to need more than 10% off, but still.

Pam Grout is fond of quoting Einstein. And after reading *E-Squared*, this piece of his wisdom makes sense to me: 'There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.' Oh, and by the way, if you bump into me in the near future, get me a coffee. It is meant to be. 📖 *E-Squared: Nine Do-It-Yourself Energy Experiments That Prove Your Thoughts Create Your Reality* by Pam Grout (Hay House, £10.99) is out now

Five seminal self-help books (and what you can learn from them)

The Secret by Rhonda Byrne (Simon & Schuster, £12.99)
Life is governed by the law of attraction: like attracts like. Think positive and it will bring positive changes into your life.

The Power Of Now by Eckhart Tolle (Hodder, £9.99)
Only the present moment matters. Forget the past, let go of the future and embrace the 'eternal now'.

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho (HarperCollins, £7.99)
The old king in this novel says, 'When you really want something to happen, the universe conspires so that your wish comes true.'

The Art Of Happiness by HH Dalai Lama and Howard C Cutler (Hodder, £8.99)
Happiness is more dependent on our state of mind than it is on circumstances.

How To Win Friends And Influence People by Dale Carnegie (Vermilion, £8.99)
Smile, be genuinely interested, be a good listener and make the other person feel important.