

# Tough love

Lily-livered sickie-pullers should follow the lead of those who smile through real adversity, says **Charlotte Reather**

**W**HILE on a romantic mini-break in Switzerland with Comb Over Man (at 67, he's a mere whipper-snapper), I overheard a Helga-esque German woman, who was only marginally better looking than Mike Tindall, tell a limp Englishman that she would help him with his skiing but only if he avoided the three Ws. "Zere is to be no vthinging, no vhinng and no veeping."

Her no-nonsense attitude struck a chord; we British are becoming a nation of wets (or vets). Gone are the days when people had stiff upper lips and backbones of steel. This is the era of lily-livered lightweights who pull a sickie if they break a nail.

Only last hunting season a delicate Fulhamite insisted on being taken to hospital after dislocating his thumb. He'd taken a tumble on ground softer than a Siberian goose-down duvet. The incredulous Master shouted: "You've still got nine fingers and one thumb. What the hell are you worrying about?" (His maths may have been rubbish but he had a valid point nonetheless.) We later discovered this bottled-water-quaffing, oestrogen-addled, Y-front-wearing muppet had also demanded a brain scan even though he'd landed on his backside. (Maybe that's where bankers keep their grey matter. It's all beginning to make sense.)

Most country people are made of sterner stuff and realise it's only serious if an air ambulance is involved. Basically, if your head's on straight and you can count the fingers (although clearly this can be challenging for some equestrians), it's only a scratch.

So when my mate, Pinkie, fell under two polo ponies and was left splattered with a hoof mark on her face and her collar-bone making a bid for freedom, I was proud that she giggled her way through the pain. Even when the owner of the club, Scarface, berated her for falling in the wrong place, she kept on smiling. "If you'd have fallen three metres to the left we could have kept on playing. You've dented my best polo ground. And if they have to cut your shirt off I want a new set. People always say they'll get you new shirts but they never do."

Pinkie was such a trouper she even let everyone take pictures when she received a sizeable injection in her bottom which made her sing beautifully. While the GP, Dr Death, administered painkillers he casually whispered in her ear: "Better keep still, we've lost two Prime Ministers and a king to broken collar-bones!" My how she laughed.

Pinkie got far more attention than I had done some weeks earlier when my pony tripped mid-gallop and I was propelled into the ground chest first. Scarface seemed genuinely concerned. "Did you hit your head?"

"No," I gasped "My chest! I can't breathe!" He smiled leerily, "Don't worry, you've got airbags!" I tried to tell him that my lady lumps didn't work like that but by then he'd restarted chukkas and I needed to get out of the way.

This lack of fussing coupled with our great British humour is exactly why we won two

and left him lying in the mud. When he finally returned he found his brother in great pain but still holding up.

He drove him to the hospital, whereupon the doctor threw Paddy to the ground and

“ ‘Help,’ the soldier screamed, ‘I’ve lost my leg!’ A voice came back through the smoke: ‘No you haven’t, it’s over here!’ ”

World Wars and still have one of the best armed forces in the world. In the Falkland's conflict a soldier was blown up by an enemy shell. As he lay there in the dark he realised he was seriously injured. "Help!" he screamed, "I've lost my leg!" A voice came back through the smoke: "No you haven't, it's over here!" This black humour saved the soldier's life as his blind panic turned to laughter. So, mob up your injured friends, it's for their own good.

If we Brits are becoming softer, it would appear the Irish are still "well hard". A few years ago a Master in Ireland witnessed his brother, Paddy, have a bad fall and dislocate his shoulder. The hounds were running, so he stopped, tied up the horse, lit a fag, shoved it in his brother's mouth, force-fed him the contents of his flask, jumped back on his horse

started wrestling with his shoulder. It wasn't an easy manoeuvre and several attempts were made, causing Paddy to squeal like a stuck pig. A nurse burst in and demanded to know who was responsible for such a racket. "I've got a lady upstairs giving birth who isn't making half the fuss you are!" she yelled. An ashen-faced Paddy looked at her steadily and replied, "Well, that's as maybe, but you try putting the bastard back; that's when it hurts!"

I proved to be too much of a lightweight for Comb Over Man's vintage tastes and he's now shackled up (or is that shackled up?) with Helga in her chalet-cum-dungeon. I suppose it's what you call tough love. ■

**Charlotte Reather is winner of the Gloucestershire Glamour Award 2008**

