

EQUILIBRIUM

Your Total Wellbeing & Resilience Guide

PART 02

MINDSET & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



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RAWenergy

Resilience - Authenticity - Wellbeing



Welcome!	3
How To Use This Guide	4
Equilibrium	5
Meet Your Team	8
Mindset & Emotional Wellbeing	11
How To Manage Your Emotions & Feelings Effectively	14
Gaining Mental & Emotional Clarity: An Ayurvedic Perspective	19
Experiencing The Knowing Of Your Heart	21
Mindfulness Meditation	25
Applying Mindfulness	30
Reasons To Keep Your Gut Cheerful	35
Breathing Exercises	38
Is The Vagus Nerve The New Solution To Anxiety?	42
My Journey Towards A Holistic Lifestyle	44
Finding The Opportunity In Adversity	49

Welcome!

You are not your thoughts.

Never before in history has something invisible brought the whole world together. It's incredible to see the impact that COVID-19 has had in record time. Wherever you are in the world, you have been affected in some way, and will continue to be for some while to come. For how long, nobody knows.

But what is for sure is that we are living through a history chapter which future generations will study to understand the causes, the impact and the aftermath. History does tend to repeat itself, and when we look at other disruptive cycles, we see that those who can ride out the storm, emerge on the other side in a more resilient and solid form. On the other side of adversity is growth.



The dark side of COVID-19 is obvious to everyone: sickness and death is no laughing matter, and even if you don't get the virus, the impact of economic hardship, social distancing and lockdown can have a serious impact on your mental wellbeing.

The good news is that whilst you can't change the events happening around you, you can change your reaction to those events as outlined by Victor Frankl in the brilliant book - *Man's Search for Meaning*:

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Victor Frankl





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How To Use This Guide

We've pulled this series together to help you make the most of this time, to upgrade your habits and come out the other side of this pandemic in a healthier state than when you went in. What better opportunity than now to have a break from booze, get your recommended sleep, hone your healthy cooking skills, and more!

The whole series is based on the RAW Philosophy that sees people as individuals with whole lives that are interconnected with others and all other forms of nature.

I created the philosophy years ago, to help me cope with the enormous amount of disruption and uncertainty I was experiencing, working in the publishing industry through the first phases of the digital revolution.

Though the model has been refined over time, the essence is the same, helping people move towards Total Wellbeing and Resilience, whatever their starting point.



Equilibrium

Each and every one of us has a deep inner strength that enables us to adapt and survive whatever the external context.

Activating and nurturing that inner strength starts with a simple decision that only you can make: to prioritise your physical, mental & emotional wellbeing & resilience.

That simple decision will enable you to show up in the best state so that you tackle life's ups, downs, twists & turns. A state of Total Wellbeing will give you the energy you need to thrive. We call that state EQUILIBRIUM which is based around the RAW Philosophy helping you identify which aspects of your life are out of balance so you can take steps to improve them.

RAW Stands for:

RESILIENCE

Resilience is all about building a core inner strength and a toolbox ready at hand, so that you can get back to EQUILIBRIUM when you need to.

AUTHENTICITY

Each of us has natural strengths and also areas of development. Learning about ourselves gives us the courage to show up as our true selves and experience more joy in life.

WELLBEING

Total Wellbeing is the outcome of achieving EQUILIBRIUM in your life.



This guide is organised around the RAW model, with each part focused on a different pillar:



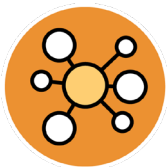
Physical

Your body.



Mindset & Emotion

Your thoughts and feelings.



Connection

Your relationships, your work, your purpose.



Money

Your financial wellbeing.



Time

How you use your time.

These are all interconnected and when EQUILIBRIUM is achieved, we move to a state of Total Wellbeing. Life contains challenges, but if we develop skills and healthy habits, we will support ourselves to travel safely through the present storm and emerge on the other side stronger and more prepared for any future crises.

Knowledge is power, but in a world full of misinformation, confusion and isolated tactics, it can be hard to see the bigger picture and to feel confident that you are on the right track.

That's why we've brought together these amazing people to share their wisdom to help you regain and maintain EQUILIBRIUM through the lockdown period and beyond.

There are **5 principles** that underpin our guidance:

- 1.** We are all different - which means there is no "one size fits all". Each of us is unique and requires an individual lifestyle plan to keep us healthy in mind and body.
- 2.** It's not what you do occasionally, it's what you do every day that makes the difference. In short, it's all about habits. Transform your habits and you will transform your experience of life.
- 3.** Food, movement and sleep are the foundational habits that will support us every day.
- 4.** Do what you enjoy. Willpower doesn't work over the long-term, so find things you enjoy and you will look forward to doing them.
- 5.** We are not separate from nature, we *are* nature. We can't be healthy in a sick world.



Start Where You Are

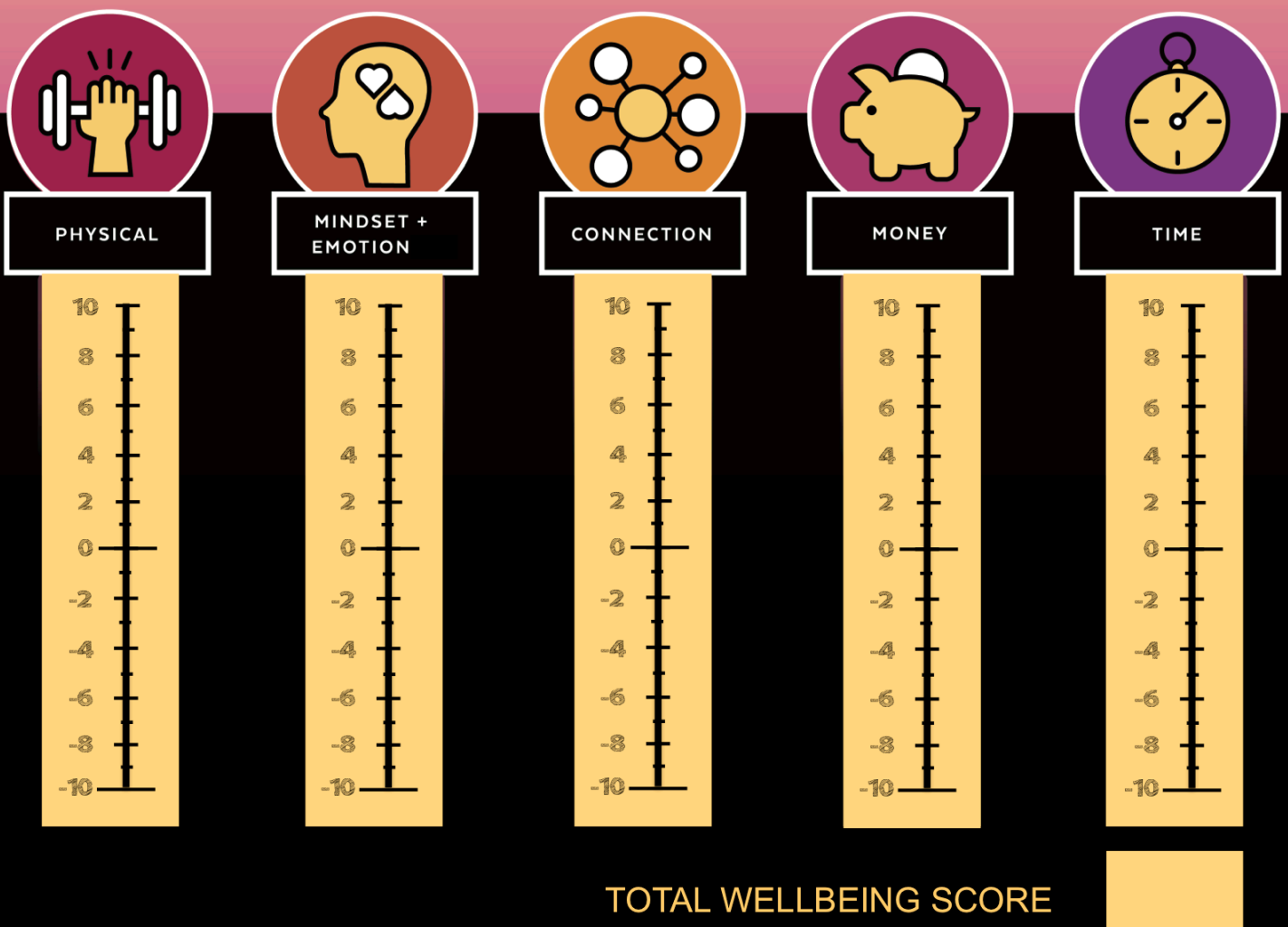
Wellbeing is an individual experience and our aim is not to overwhelm you with information, but to give you the knowledge, skills and support to upgrade your daily and weekly habits.

Everyone has a different starting point, so let's start by finding out where you are.

Using the **framework below:**

1. Mark where you are on each pillar from -5 to +5
2. Connect the dots
3. Add your scores together
4. Keep a note of this score - this is your starting point. This is your EQUILIBRIUM score.

Right, let's get going...





FROM TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM: Ashleigh James, Lawrence Mitchell & Chibs Okereke

Meet Your Team

That's me - **Lawrence Mitchell** - in the top right-hand corner. These days I describe myself as a Wellbeing & Resilience Advocate and Coach. I'm British, have lived in Australia since 2016 and you can read all about my story here: www.lawrencemitchell.co

To my right is **Ashleigh James**. I first met Ash when I was working as Chief Customer Officer at SumoSalad. Ashleigh is a coach and nutritionist, focused on helping young female entrepreneurs with their business and health.

Finally, occupying the bottom level is **Chibs Okereke**. Chibs is a mindfulness and resilience specialist and I met Chibs when we both attended Google's Search Inside Yourself programme in 2018.

I also want to give a massive shout out to the globally-based contributors who have shared their knowledge and wisdom throughout these pages.



Our Contributors



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As a Wellbeing coach and integrative nutritionist, his Total Wellbeing philosophy sees people as whole people with whole lives. He works with business owners and leadership teams to create high performance cultures that drive growth during periods of rapid change and uncertainty.

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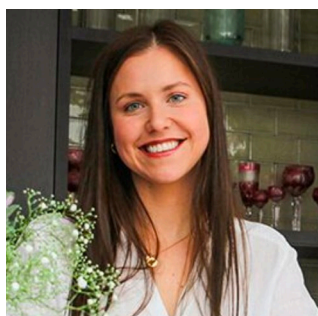


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Ashleigh James

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Ashleigh is a nutritionist and holistic health and wellness coach that helps driven women find balance and alignment in their bodies, minds and spirits. Ashleigh also has training in psychology, yoga teaching and various other healing modalities.

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The clinic and herbal Apothecary is based in Sydney, specialising in Ayurveda. He holds a double qualification in Ayurveda, and sits on the board of the Sydney Astrological Research Society. He is also a partner at One Health organisation – a Not-For-Profit supporting disadvantaged communities both here in Australia and abroad.

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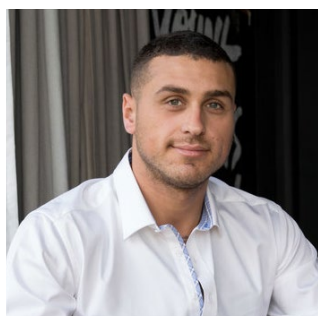


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Luke Baylis

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SumoSalad serves 6 million nutritious meals each year in SumoSalad restaurants, and via the MySumo digital platform, catering services and Sumo Well ready meals.

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Mindset & Emotional Wellbeing

by Lawrence Mitchell

Your mind is not separate from your body.

Your thoughts impact your feelings and your feelings impact your physical body. Mother Nature, in her brilliance, has designed your body to be able to survive in the face of life-threatening situations. In the middle of a pandemic, or economic hardship, your body's stress response, commonly known as Fight, Flight or Freeze will kick in automatically to protect you and enable you to fight the threat, run away as fast as you can, or stop still until the threat has passed.

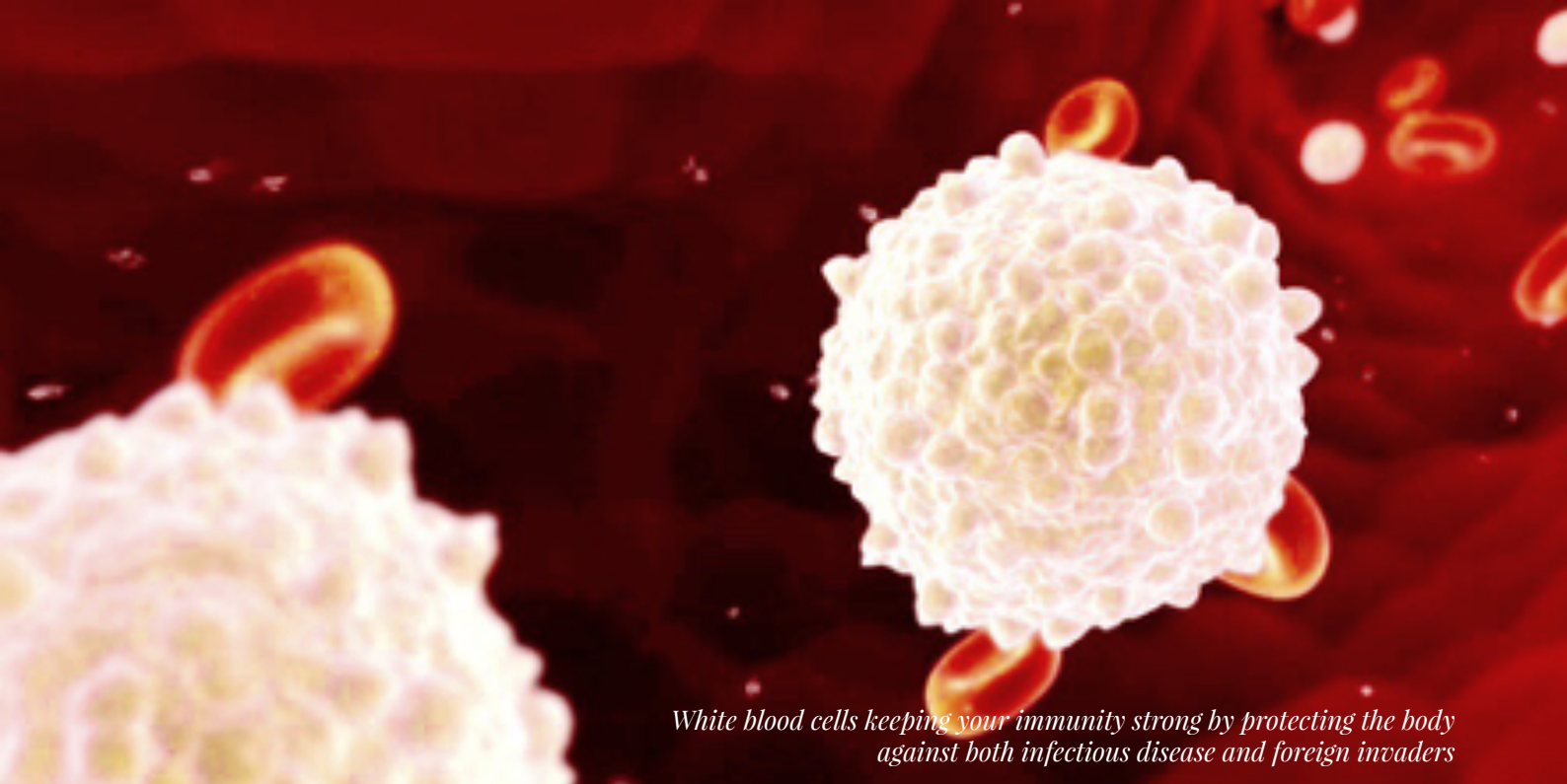
Total priority is given to the threat, to the exclusion of everything else. This response has been in place since the beginning of time and though the stressors have changed, the physical response is the same.

Since the start of the pandemic, much focus has been given to ways to increase hygiene and bolster our immune system to help to defend us against foreign bodies like the COVID-19 virus. However, building strong immunity requires the mind and the body to work together. Research has shown that a state of constant fear and anxiety will actually compromise your immunity.



Image by geralt from Pixabay





White blood cells keeping your immunity strong by protecting the body against both infectious disease and foreign invaders

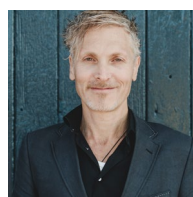
For example, in the early 1980s, psychologist Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, PhD and immunologist Ronald Glaser, PhD found that medical students' immunity reduced during exam-week. And in 2005, Sarah Pressman, PhD and fellow researchers at Carnegie Mellon University's Laboratory for the Study of Stress, Immunity and Disease, found that social isolation or feelings of loneliness both weakened the immunity of first year students.

When we are stressed, chemicals that are released can suppress the effectiveness of the immune system by lowering the number of disease-fighting white cells (lymphocytes) available in the blood, making us more susceptible to infections.

Whilst short-term suppression of the immune system isn't dangerous, when the stress becomes chronic or intense, the immune system is consistently compromised.

Given we're all going through a period of huge stress from uncertainty, social distancing, conspiracy theories and 24/7 news bulletins, it's more important than ever that we take control

of our thoughts, and recognise and channel the energy of our emotions, to keep ourselves physically healthy.



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Time traveler: What year is it?

Me: 2020

Time traveler:





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In This Issue

Here to help us is Resilience and Mindfulness specialist, **Chibs Okereke**, who will show us the huge benefits that we can gain by integrating mindfulness into a daily practice. Chibs includes some short, practical meditations to help you get started straight away, as well as some awesome breathing techniques to get more oxygen into your body to help you relax.

We have **Benjamin Haynes** who is sharing the Ayurvedic perspective on emotional and mental clarity, followed by **Lisa Jayne** who opens up the possibility of living life through our hearts.

We are also showcasing **Sam Minkin** who will outline his cutting-edge practise of Vagus nerve stimulation. He'll be sharing some things you can do to stimulate your Vagus nerve to

help you shift from a state of "fight or flight" to "rest and digest". What's the Vagus nerve? After this issue, you will know!

Speaking of "rest and digest", **Ashleigh James** is going to teach us how food enhances our mental health.

We have a case study from **Oier Ruiz Trevino** who moved his family from a Sydney city life to a small hobby farm in the Blue Mountains - we can learn so much from his experiences and the process he went through to make the shift.

Last but not least, we have some great insights from **Luke Baylis**, CEO of SumoSalad and Thr1ve, maintain EQUILIBRIUM whilst running a fast moving, fast changing business.





First, let's hand over to Chibs Okereke to help us understand the thing that makes us humans, human: EMOTIONS!

How To Manage Your Emotions & Feelings Effectively

by Chibs Okereke

"Feelings are much like waves, we can't stop them from coming, but we can choose which one to surf."

Jonatan Mårtensson

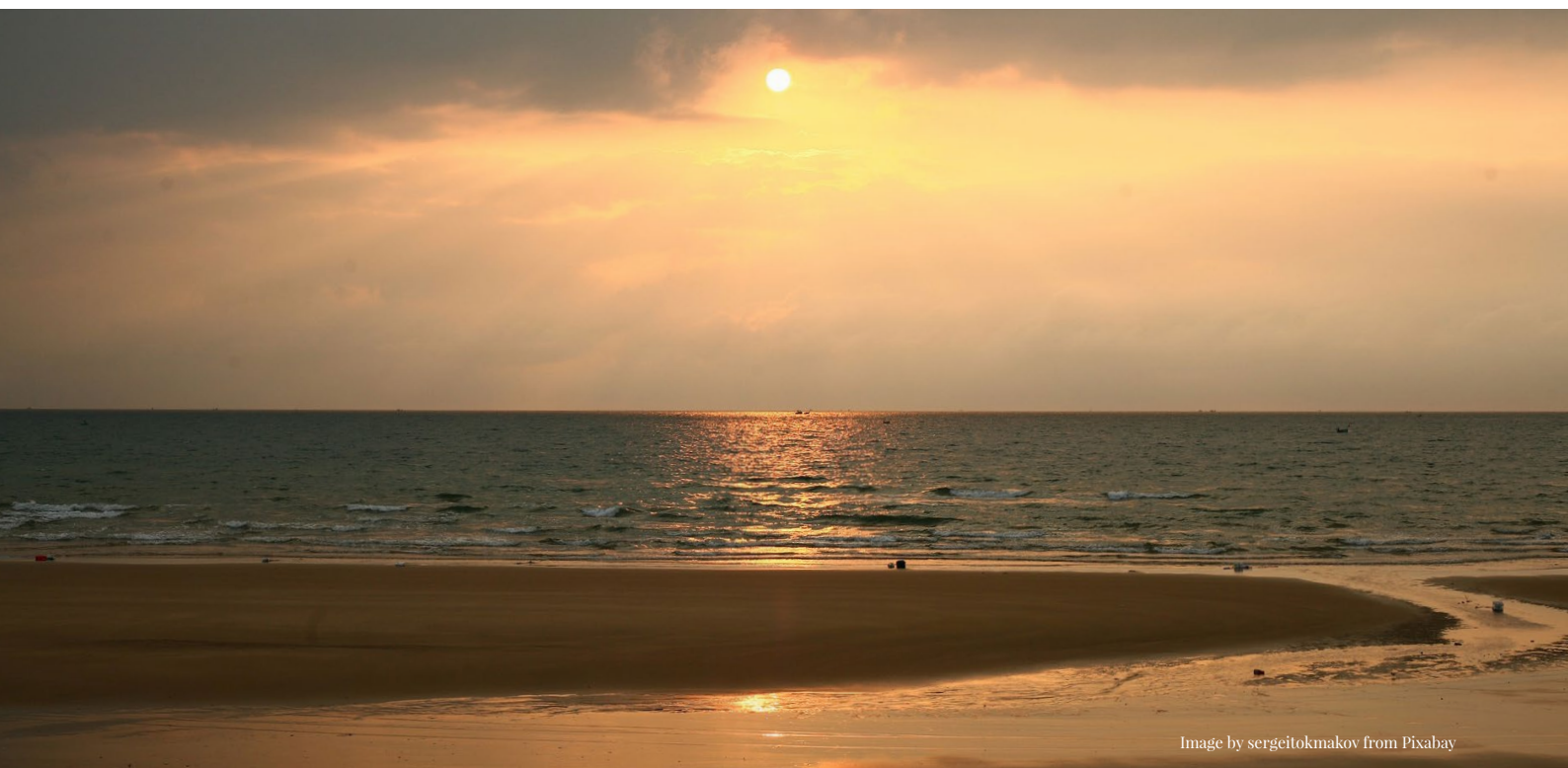


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We all enjoy feeling positive emotions like joy, love and excitement, but anger, fear, shame, grief – who needs them?

We'd all be better off without those nasty, icky, uncomfortable emotions, right? Indeed, negative emotions can sometimes get the better of us. They make us do things we regret, or even worse, they keep us from acting at all. I used to be the master of avoiding my uncomfortable emotions. However, I now know that to be able to feel emotion is a real gift.

Emotions are essential for our survival, so we have to learn to accept them. The good news is, we can avoid much of the suffering that negative emotions cause by using **emotion regulation** skills.

What are emotions? Are they the same as feelings?

"When you own or take responsibility for your feelings, you place yourself in a position of power and control."

Julie A., M.A. Ross and Judy Corcoran

Emotions and feelings are two terms we often use interchangeably. However, they are not the same.



Feelings come after emotions. Feelings occur in the brain, and they are a mental response to emotion. They assign meaning to the emotion, and they tend to be subjective. How you feel will depend on your genetics, your experiences, your beliefs and your memories. Compared to instantaneous emotions, feelings take a little longer to begin.

*Your body reacts to external stimuli, giving you a bodily experience, or an emotion. Then, your mind gives **meaning** to your emotion with a feeling.*

Emotions and feelings are something that many of us don't like discussing, and some of us may even believe that those wishy-washy, fluffy emotions are not at all helpful. However, emotions are essential, and knowing how to cope with them is where emotion regulation skills come in.

Why are emotions important?

Emotion isn't a touchy-feely, wishy-washy, fluffy subject. Emotions help us survive and encourage us to take action. When an emotion arises, and you feel it throughout your body, it's a signal, trying to tell you something.

According to author Mary Lamia Ph.D., emotions "attempt to tell you if a situation is optimal, or not aligned with your goal". And when we know whether something is good, bad or somewhere in between, it informs our decisions. You can think of your emotions as a board of directors, advising you, the CEO, on the pros and cons of a given situation.



Image by Jan Kopřiva from Pexels





Image by Mwangi Gatheca from Unsplash

If emotions are so important, why then should we regulate them?

"I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them." **Oscar Wilde**

Emotions are bodily messengers that inform the thinking, rational mind. However, even though emotions are useful and necessary, that doesn't mean they're **always** useful and necessary. Sometimes your board of directors will give you terrible advice, and since you are the CEO, the buck stops with you. Therefore, you need a way of **validating** their messages.

When your board of directors is advising you to punch the driver that just cut you off in traffic, it's probably best to step in and use your veto power. It will probably be best for you and your potential victim that you decide NOT to go through with it, no matter how much you want to. Similarly, when your board of directors is advising you to flee in terror because you have to speak in public, it's probably best NOT to run away from the podium screaming!

Therefore, emotion regulation skills are incredibly useful to utilise emotions, without becoming a slave to them.

Regulating emotions is not the same as suppressing emotions

"Instead of resisting any emotion, the best way to dispel it is to enter it fully, embrace it and see through your resistance." **Deepak Chopra**





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Usually, when you're suppressing emotions, it's because you believe you shouldn't be feeling them. Maybe you think that sadness is a sign of weakness and shouldn't be entertained? Perhaps you believe that anger isn't an appropriate emotion, so it should be swallowed down?

There's nothing wrong with disliking negative emotions, but suppressing emotions doesn't help us feel better, especially in the long run. Remember, emotions are signals, and they act like an alarm, warning us that something's not quite right. However, if we turn off the alarm, we won't get to the root of the problem, and both the problem and the emotion will undoubtedly come up again, possibly stronger and fiercer than before.

Suppressed emotions will find a place within the body and remain there, causing problems such as stress, mental and physical illness, digestive issues, and more.

Regulating emotions doesn't mean ignoring them; we do just the opposite. We acknowledge both the presence of the emotion and its validity. Then, we listen to what the emotional message is, and decide on the best way to include this message into our actions.

Mindfulness is a fantastic way of regulating your emotions. Simply noticing what we are feeling allows us to change our reactions. Other ways to manage our feelings is through cognitive reappraisal. Therapies such as CBT, DBT and Anger Management all help us gain a broader and better perception of our triggers, and react to them with more positivity.



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Gaining Mental & Emotional Clarity:

An Ayurvedic Perspective

by Benjamin Haynes

“If your head is confused, go with your heart. If your heart is confused, go with your head.”

When I first came across this quote, I felt like I had stumbled across one of the most practical and important keys to psychological wellbeing. What could be simpler? If your mind is confused take a moment to tune into your emotions, check in with your 'heart of hearts' and make a decision based on your gut instinct. Similarly, when we find ourselves caught in the agony of emotional confusion, the surest way out is to elevate our perspective from our heart to our head. Consider the facts of the matter, think about it logically, and when you weigh up all the variables, make the 'sensible' choice.

Whilst this simple advice can be a powerful tool for maintaining or regaining mental and emotional clarity throughout your life, it's worth remembering that the moments in life that challenge us are the very same moments that reveal us.

When we are under pressure and being 'pressed' from all sides, what comes out of us is what is already inside of us. This can be in the form of anxiety, stress, depression, anger etc.. While this can be unsettling and difficult, it also represents an opportunity to understand yourself better. If recognised, these emotions can be the trigger that helps you realise that something in your life needs to change.

So how do we actually make real change in our lives, once we have recognised the need to? The first thing to know, is that we often resist change - even when it's positive! Read that sentence again. Having a desire to change something is often not enough to actually make a change. In order to genuinely commit to the steps and discipline required to really change, you either need to want something even more than the thing you are giving up or you need to link the new behaviour with a bigger goal or value that you are genuinely passionate about. Change requires a very strong motivator if it is to be successful in overcoming the comfort of the familiar.

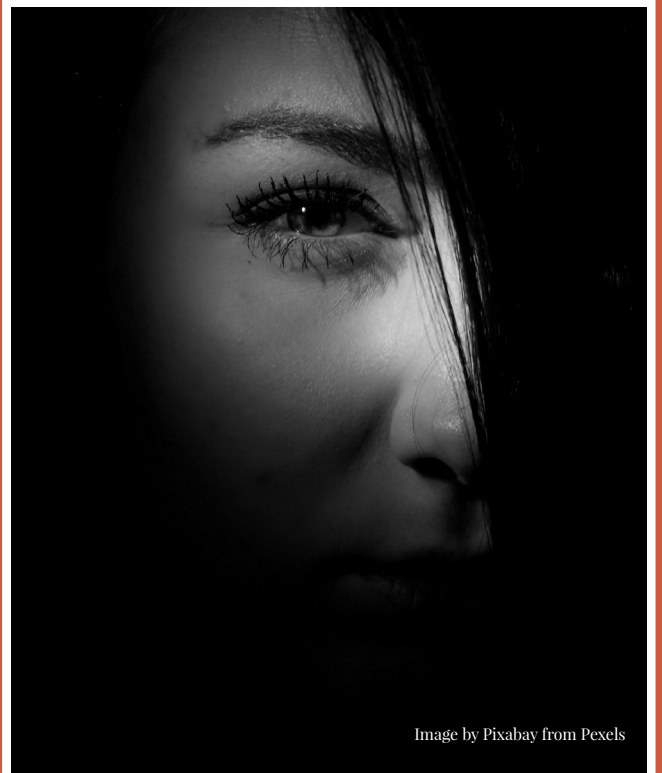


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The second secret to successful change, is that we need to do it from a stable physical base. This means that we need to be physically balanced and strong in our bodies before we dive into the complex world of emotions and the mind. Cleaning up our diets, maintaining regular exercise, and reducing stimulants such as alcohol and caffeine are good places to start.

Once you have identified your motivator and are feeling strong and balanced, you can begin the task of consciously re-writing particular narratives. According to Ayurveda, the cells that make up your body can be programmed consciously by the mind. When a particular mental loop has been playing for a very long time, we unconsciously imprint the new cells in our body with an old story – often a story that is long past it's use-by date. Fortunately, new cells are being created all the time, so we can literally reprogram ourselves to think or feel differently. At first we need to do this on a conscious level, by using mantras or affirmations. Eventually however, all the new cells comprising the body are programmed with the new information and the process is no longer dependent on conscious intention.

Ready to begin?

- Choose an emotion or issue that you are currently wrestling with. Eg: anger
- Develop a mantra that can help you to rewrite this narrative: eg. "I feel calm and peaceful"
- Select an activity where you genuinely do feel calm and peaceful to act as an anchor for your mantra and make sure that you schedule this in at some stage every day: eg: your morning cup of tea or walking your dog
- Every time you perform this activity, repeat your mantra – in this way, you physically embody the mantra while you are saying it and imprint it deeply in your cells.



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20



Experiencing The Knowing Of Your Heart

by Lisa Jayne

Heart is about love, isn't it?

Of course. Yet the experience of heart, I've discovered is something so vast, so infinite, it's like holding a few pieces of a trillion piece puzzle... but even with these few pieces, living from the heart has filled my life with the most incredibly satisfying and fulfilling 'power' of purest love.

For me, unlocking the knowing of my heart came when I ventured through the doorway of my emotional world. Maybe 'ventured' is not the right word because sometimes I wanted to run the other way!

I spent the first 37 years of my life (and thousands of dollars!) accumulating information about heart and self-awareness. None of it wasted mind you, however, it was only when I let it all go and began to truly FEEL, that I was able to stop searching. As my emotional world matured, so did my ability to live from my heart, instead of my head, and the more I experienced the freedom of being me.

What was it that changed?

While I thought I knew about heart, it wasn't until I 'owned' everything I felt and became



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Image by JillWellington from Pixabay

engaged with my feelings that I had the true experience of heart. I began to see my feelings as my friends and started using them to take back my inner power and grow. Instead of 'doing' my feelings in my head, analyzing and figuring them out - which actually kept me in similar (fear based) dynamics - I was emotionally evolving. I was earnest and did not stop investigating my motives, those little niggles that disturbed my inner peace, those feelings of 'not quite right'. I was enjoying my life even more as a new world was opening up to me - there was more of me here.

But even when I felt my life was sailing, I still paid attention to those 'feeling' prompts and inquired into them. I began to see that when I did not pay attention to my feelings, I was not loving myself enough - because they held a gift for me.

And that was when it happened.

On my morning walk, looking at the beauty around me I actually FELT my heart. It was expanding out into the world around me, pure love flowing through it. It was in that feeling moment that I understood what it meant to be in heart. It's a long way from the head to the heart, they say - true, because we can't force it. It comes upon us as a result of earnestness, but in truth, it's who we really are. It's always there, it's just that our unaddressed emotions, hurts and pains prevent us from being able to let go of the fear-based behaviors that keep us in our head and separate us from the pure love we long to live in.

It's tricky when you've spent so much time learning about yourself and then have to be willing to put it all aside. I used to think I 'knew'





about things. I'd created an identity around it. When you live through your heart, you have no identity. You're willing to allow others to 'show you the way' as you know this is the way to connection; when their motive is right, you learn from each other. There's nothing for you to protect or defend. You don't NEED to know anything more to feel better about yourself - but connection and growth is the movement of life through you.

This is what heart is. It's knowing who you truly are and FEELING the incredible power of your own essence - which was always there and will never change. It is complete acceptance of yourself and those around you.

But let's not stop there. We ARE in a human body. We are here for a magnificent experience and the evolution of our emotional world is a significant part of that. If we stopped here, something would come up and derail our bliss, something we had not addressed, hidden within our subconscious.

For me, learning how to navigate my emotional world (not just thinking my way through it) has been a critical skill. What I've come to see is

that my body will show me these unconscious patterns at the right time for me to heal them. I have to be courageous and strong and, sometimes, it will get messy. I might have a massive emotional trauma to deal with ... these things are part of the human experience.

Earnestness, my willingness to pay attention to the things that interrupt my inner peace, have opened up a grace to me that supports me to heal from old behaviors that may have bothered me for years. I had to let go of the short term relief I got from the unhealthy behaviors and strategies I was using to meet my emotional needs, and be determined to replace them with the inner power I knew was mine to reclaim. I've changed behaviors, stopped behaviors and started new behaviors - all as an expression of how much I love and honour myself. A lot of times I couldn't figure any of it out, so I just kept returning to my heart.

Living from the heart is a feeling that continues to expand. It is the most powerful and empowering expression of doing life and the bridge I crossed into this alternative



reality was through the evolution of my feeling world - embracing fear when I saw it stopping me and using the love that I am to activate my conviction, my courage and my emotional strength.

I encourage you not just to connect to your heart. I encourage you to live through your heart ... let it not be an effort, an action, but let it be the way you experience your life naturally. As who you really are.

1. Practise letting go of what you think you know and be willing to have it all debunked.

2. Pay attention to your feelings - even the little niggles. They are your heart showing you there is something you need to take time to investigate and address.

3. Fear may arise. This is your opportunity to decide to love yourself so much that you won't let fear stop you. It's your opportunity to acknowledge the fear and then activate your conviction and emotional courage to cease behaviors that no longer serve you.

4. Practise bringing awareness to the heart centre throughout your day.

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Reader Offer:

Lisa is offering an exclusive 10% discount to EQUILIBRIUM readers for her private consultations.

To qualify for the discount, contact Lisa via www.iamlisajayne.com/contact and quote **EQUILIBRIUM2**

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Mindfulness Meditation

by Chibs Okereke

Today, Mindfulness can be found everywhere, from schools to prisons to corporations to sports teams.

One of the people to thank for bringing it into the mainstream is the Godfather of Mindfulness Jon Kabat-Zinn, the creator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). MBSR is an eight-week course with over four decades of scientific research behind it. It is widely considered the gold-standard for mindfulness training.

MBSR began at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Medical School, where Jon Kabat-Zinn was a professor of medicine. He took a modern, scientific-based viewpoint to traditional Buddhist principles and practices of Mindfulness and meditation. He developed a clinical, evidence-based approach to reducing stress. It was Kabat-Zinn's scientific approach that inspired me to travel to the US to train as an MBSR teacher at UMASS.

There are virtually no barriers to the application of Mindfulness. If you have a mind, you can be mindful. And if you've lost your mind, all the more reason to practice Mindfulness!



What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a state of deliberate, non-judgmental focus in the present moment. [Click here to read about the origins.](#)

You can practise mindfulness informally (being aware of sounds and sights as you're walking around for instance), or formally (by practising mindfulness meditation). The line between mindfulness and mindfulness meditation is somewhat blurry; I like to keep it simple. I define formal practice as anything that is 10 minutes or more, and informal practice as anything less than 10 minutes.

Mindfulness includes the following components:

AWARENESS

Being attuned to what is happening in the present moment, including sights, sounds, tastes, smells, physical sensations or thoughts you might otherwise overlook.

FOCUS

Paying attention to whatever is happening in the present moment, not thinking about the past or the future.

ACCEPTANCE

Accepting whatever it is you might be feeling or thinking, without judging it, changing it, or changing your reaction to it.

OBSERVATION

Recognising unpleasant sensations, thoughts, and feelings as temporary and fleeting, observing them objectively without reaction or judgment.



What are the benefits of mindfulness?

Over four decades of research has confirmed several benefits for physical and mental health. When added to existing medical or psychological treatments, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has shown to assist with:

- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Asthma
- Cancer
- Chronic illness
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Fatigue
- Fibromyalgia
- Gastrointestinal distress
- Grief
- Headaches
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Pain
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Skin disorders
- Sleep problems
- Work, family, and financial stress

Common Mindfulness Techniques

Here are some well-known mindfulness exercises, and you can also access several audio guided meditations [here](#).

Mindful Breathing Focus your awareness on your breath in and out, without trying to change the breath in any way.

Body Scan Focus your attention on one body part at a time, noticing any physical sensations without judging or reacting to them.

Mindful Eating Eat very slowly and deliberately while paying attention to the sensations of seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting, chewing, and swallowing the food.

Loving-Kindness Meditation Direct your kind or generous thoughts and wishes first to yourself, then to loved ones, then to more distant acquaintances. And if you're feeling brave, send kindness to someone that you have a challenging relationship with.

Mindful Movement While walking, moving or stretching, pay close attention to your breathing, your body movements, and your surroundings.





Image by Engin Akyurt from Pixabay

What are some ways to practice mindfulness?

- There are many helpful smartphone apps on the market. My recommendations are Insight Timer (my personal favourite); Mind Mechanic (a meditation app specifically for men); Headspace; Calm; and Brightmind.
- Go to YouTube and search for *guided mindfulness meditations*.
- Your local community centre or hospital may also offer in-person mindfulness classes.

How does Mindfulness help you manage stress?

1. You don't immediately react. Instead, you take a moment to pause and then use your rational mind to come up with the best solution.

2. You become more aware of your thoughts. This awareness allows you to step back from your thoughts and not take them so literally. That way, your fight-or-flight response will not be initiated in the first place (see my article 'Applying Mindfulness').

3. You have greater focus. You're able to complete your work more efficiently, and you're more likely to get into "the zone" or "flow".

4. You can shift your attitude to the stressor. Rather than just looking at the negative consequences of the stressor, Mindfulness offers you the space to think differently about the situation itself. Observing how the increased pressure helps to energise you has a positive effect on your body and mind.



5. You are more sensitive to the needs of your body. You may notice tension and pain earlier and can then take appropriate action.

6. You become more aware of the emotions of others. Your emotional intelligence rises, and you become less likely to get into conflict.

7. You have an increased level of care and compassion for yourself and others. This compassionate mind calms you and inhibits your fight-or-flight response.

8. Mindfulness turns on your "being" mode of mind. Your being mode is associated with the rest-and-digest response. Your "doing" mode of mind is associated with the fight-or-flight response.

9. Mindfulness reduces activity in the amygdala. The amygdala is the part of your brain central to switching on your fight-or-flight response.

Each one of us experiences stress in our everyday lives, and sometimes it can feel overwhelming. There are many different ways to address our stress and overwhelm. Still, for me, Mindfulness is the technique that carries the most additional benefits.

Mindfulness not only addresses the stress that is currently in your life - it will also help you defend against future stress. A daily Mindfulness practice, even for a few minutes a day, will support you in creating a deep and lasting sense of peace. Sounds relaxing, doesn't it? Happy meditating!



Written by:

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Reader Offer: Vitality Boxes

Small things can lead to big changes. That's why we have created the Vitality Box - a small box of surprise wellness goodies, delivered with a personal note of appreciation and recognition.

For this exclusive offer email amy.bettiol@innerorigin.com and quote the code **EQUILIBRIUM2**



Vitality Box \$25*

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- Divine Company Bath Salts
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- Nudus Lipstick
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To view the complete range, go to www.innerorigin.com/GiftofWellness

*Costs in AUD





Thanks Chibs, that's an awesome overview and thank you also for your daily guided mindful meditations that are really helping a lot of people to set up their days for success. You can catch these 10 minute, live meditations on Instagram @Beyond28Days. If you're more into a DIY approach, Chibs has outlined some detailed instructions to help you bring a mindfulness practice to your day...

Applying Mindfulness

by Chibs Okereke

Before you read on, I want to borrow you for 30 seconds. I invite you to follow my instructions:

Sit in a comfortable position.

Breathe in... Breathe out... now pause for a second.

This time do it a little bit deeper and slower. Breathe in. Breathe out.

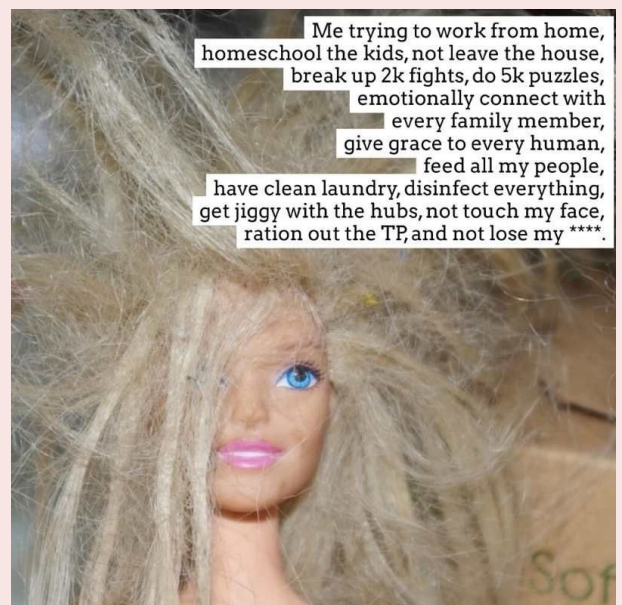
How do you feel? Probably a tiny bit more relaxed. Congratulations, you just did a micro-med!

When we are in fight-or-flight and stressed out, the nervous system is communicating danger and urgency throughout the mind. It will feel as if there isn't enough time in our day to meditate.

So for those moments that we are triggered and time-poor, micro-meditations are the

answer. Not only do I use these meditations when I am stressed and low on time, I use them informally throughout the day. These meditations balance my nervous system and keep me in a flow state.

No matter how busy you are, there is always time for a micro-med! Each of these takes less than a minute, some less than 30 seconds.



Mindful Micro-Meditations

How do you respond to stress?

Sometimes just noticing that you're stressed can help you feel better. Knowing that you have a choice on how you respond to stress can be liberating in itself. Is your mind racing? Is your heart rate elevated? Are your fists clenched? Are your shoulders high and tense or low and loose? Once we train ourselves to use stress as a cue, we can implement a relaxing breathing exercise (see 'Breathing Exercises' article below). We could also put one of the meditations below into effect.

Counting the Breath

Sit in a comfortable position with a straight back. Most people prefer to do this with their eyes closed, but you can leave your eyes open too.

1. Notice if any areas of the body are tight or stiff. If there are, try breathing in and softening those areas.
2. Do a quick scan of your body. Notice how your back feels against the chair, and notice the feel of your feet touching the floor. Notice the gentle pull of gravity.
3. Breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Notice your belly rising and falling.
4. Now, as you inhale, mentally count "one" and slowly exhale.
5. Inhale again, counting "two", and slowly exhale.
6. When you get to "ten", start again from "1".

If you lose count (which I always do!), forgive yourself for getting distracted, and without giving yourself a hard time about it, start again from 1.



Image by User ID 46173 from Pixabay





Image by Vetrom from Pixabay

The STOP Technique

The STOP technique helps you manage stress, anxiety and worry by creating some mental space.

Even if you've done your daily meditation, it can still be easy to get caught up in the daily stresses of modern life.

By applying the STOP technique, you can drop into the present moment, and you have some space to choose a response rather than react to the stressor.

STOP is an acronym for:

S = STOP.

Whatever you're doing, stop for a moment.

T = TAKE A BREATH.

Take 2-3 deep breaths. Aim to breathe down into the bottom of your belly.

O = OBSERVE.

Notice how you are feeling. What's happening inside your body? Note the thoughts, feelings or emotions that are running through your mind.

P = PROCEED.

Continue doing what you were doing, or perhaps don't? Use the insight given from the previous step to decide whether you should be doing something else that could better support you in the moment.





Image by Free-Photos from Pixabay

"Notice 5 things" exercise

Have a look around and notice five things you can see, then notice four sounds you can hear. Now notice three sensations you can feel (an itch on the arm, the feeling of clothes fabric on your skin, a tingle in your hands). Notice two things you can smell, and finally, one thing you can taste (perhaps you taste nothing. If so, notice what "nothing" tastes like).

Not only does this ground you in the present moment, but it also encourages "beginners mind". You may notice unique or previously unseen things.

Put your emotions into words

"Angry." "Anxious." "Scared." Studies have shown that merely labelling emotions has an

immediate calming effect. Putting words to our emotions shifts the brain activity from the emotion centres of the brain to the rational, thinking areas of the brain.

Accept your thoughts as "just thoughts"

You may notice that as you go about your day, the mind likes to wander off. It often creates disturbing mental stories and fantasies. There could be ruminations about the past or worries and anxieties about the future. When these upsetting, repetitive or unpleasant thoughts come up, neutralise them by saying "just thoughts" silently in your mind. Then take a slow deep breath and refocus on the present moment.



Deepen your experience of eating by being Mindful

Instead of rushing to finish your meal, savour each bite. As a starting point, set an intention to be fully present for the first three bites of each meal. Eat slowly and deliberately. Notice what the food smells like, what it looks like, and how it tastes. Notice what the food feels like inside your mouth, and bring awareness to the sensations of chewing and swallowing.

Not only does Mindful eating help you to relax, but it also makes your food taste better, and you to feel fuller, faster. More

importantly, it optimally activates your digestive system, so that you can absorb all the nutrients correctly.

Focus on gratitude

Reduce stress by taking 1 minute to think of three things for which you are grateful. Noticing the positive aspects of your life, along with a few deep breaths, is the perfect way to calm the mind and body.

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Reader offer:

Fight | Flight > EQUILIBRIUM Challenge

Believe it or not, it is truly possible to get out of that feeling of fight-or-flight and unease, no matter who you are and what's happening around you. It is possible to get into that state of equilibrium where life flows, and you're at ease, relaxed and focused on the present moment.

Mindfulness meditation is a simple, straightforward practice, but meditation isn't always explained or taught in a simple, straightforward way. The aim of the 7 day challenge is to teach you the fundamentals of meditation, in a systematic, no-nonsense way, using language that everyday people can understand and relate to. Research shows that only ten minutes a day of mindfulness meditation over 25 days is enough to significantly strengthen positive emotions, reduce stress, increase self-compassion and increase focus in your everyday life.

This 7-day challenge is a great starting point and it will be enough for you to notice a real difference. Each day, for 7 days, you will receive 10 minutes of meditation each day via email:

- Day 1:** Relaxing Your Body
- Day 2:** Your Automatic Pilot
- Day 3:** Concentration
- Day 4:** Mindful Attention
- Day 5:** Sensations
- Day 6:** Thinking
- Day 7:** Emotions

JOIN NOW

Join the challenge today: chibs.co/challenge

See you on the other side.



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34





Thanks Chibs! Since the lockdown, I have been making a concerted effort to practice mindful eating in particular. Being at home has meant that I have actually been able to stop for lunch and take time to eat it mindfully. It has made a big difference. On the subject of food, we often don't talk about food as a source of benefit for mental wellbeing, but increasingly the science is showing that the corner stone of total wellbeing is food. And the good news is that there's opportunity to make some significant improvement. Let me hand over now to Nutritionist, Ashleigh to tell us more.

Reasons To Keep Your Gut Cheerful

by Ashleigh James

Gut health and mental health. You might not think there's much of a link between how you eat and how you feel, but you'd be surprised at how much one impacts the other. There is now research that shows unequivocally that the gut and the brain are intimately connected. Known as the gut-brain axis, these two parts of the body constantly check-in and talk to each other. The gut contains 100 million neurons.

There are in fact so many neurons in your gut (more than in the spinal cord) that some call it the Second Brain. Major nerves in your nervous system, such as the Vagus nerve, connect them together (see Sam Minkin's article on nurturing the Vagus nerve). They send biochemical messages to each other – have you ever felt that knot in your stomach when feeling nervous? Or felt that gut feeling? That's your gut-brain in action.

According to Gut Health Australia, poor gut health is the single biggest health issue confronting Australia today. Chronic digestive issues like reflux, GERD, dysbiosis, irritable bowel syndrome and Crohn's Disease are all on the rise each year. At the same time, western culture has seen a huge increase in mental health disorders like anxiety and depression. And studies are now coming out that show that not only anxiety and depression, but also some neurological disorders like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, as well as autism and multiple sclerosis are linked to gut dysbiosis (which is when your gut microbes are out of balance causing inflammation) ⁽¹⁾.

For example, in a recent study of 1612 outpatients with gastrointestinal disorders, the researchers found that gastrointestinal disease was directly correlated with anxiety: 84.1% showed temporary anxiety, 67% showed enduring anxiety, and 27% showed current depression ⁽²⁾.



Your gut & immunity

Did you know that your gut wall houses 70 percent of the cells that make up your immune system? So, if you needed another reason, keeping your gut healthy is also important to help you fight off infections, viruses and diseases. If you are constantly catching colds, or suffer from chronic allergies, try upgrading your diet, or even investigating the makeup of your gut microbiome.

The happy chemical

Another reason to keep your gut happy: around 90% of the body's serotonin, a well-known brain neurotransmitter linked to feelings of happiness, is made in the digestive tract. As you can see, the gut plays an important, if not THE most crucial role when it comes to keeping us healthy, both physically and mentally.



Image by Brett Sayles from Pexels



So what can you do to keep your gut happy?

The first thing you can do is clean up your diet. Foods high in sugar, unhealthy fat, processed foods and stimulants like caffeine and alcohol, all affect the gut negatively. Diets high in animal protein are also not good for gut microbiome health.

A healthy whole food, plant-based diet high in fibre, based mainly on colourful fruits & vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, as well as pre- and probiotic foods like onions, garlic, Jerusalem artichoke, kombucha and yogurt, can help to promote the health and diversity of our gut bacteria, supporting

our immune system, digestion, and mental health. Another thing you can easily do is start incorporating a high quality probiotic once or twice a day – but seek advice from your health practitioner as there many brands in the marketplace and they are not all equal.



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⁽¹⁾ Rao, M., Gershon, M. The bowel and beyond: the enteric nervous system in neurological disorders. *Nat Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol* 13, 517–528 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrgastro.2016.107>

⁽²⁾ The association between gastroesophageal reflux disease with sleep quality, depression, and anxiety in a cohort study of Australian men. *Gastroenterol Hepatol*. 2017 Jun;32(6):1170–1177. On Zhi, et al



Reader Offer: Kombucha Starter Kit

Kombucha has a long and rich history that dates back over 2,000 years. The best quality Kombucha (kom-boo-cha) has been cultured for 7-10 days, and provides a wealth of health-giving microbes in every sip. It's definitely an acquired taste as it is such a contrast to the sweet processed sugar-laden drinks that many of us are accustomed to consuming. To make your own kombucha, you'll need a starter kit that includes everything you need to start brewing:

- **Organic Loose Leaf Tea** – the best blend for the finest tasting kombucha
- **Organic Cane Sugar** – the scoby eats this and turns it into the healing tonic
- **Scoby** – this guy does all the work to create the magic
- **pH Strips** – to test the pH level - you want it tasting just right
- **Instructions** – so you know how to do it of course!
- **Hemp Oil** – the magic ingredient to shake it up for optimum health and taste

All for **\$90 (Aus)**



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Breathing Exercises

by Chibs Okereke

The next time you're feeling relaxed, take a moment to observe how you are breathing. A good time to notice is just before you fall asleep or when you first wake up in the morning. You'll probably see that you are breathing slowly and deeply.

Breathing exercises can help us relax because they simulate the actions of a relaxed body. Slow, deep, abdominal breathing is an excellent way to lower stress in the body. When we breathe this way, it sends a message to our brain that we are relaxed. The brain then sends the same message to your body, and eventually, the nervous system takes your word that we are relaxed. Fake it until you make it!

When we breathe slowly into the belly, we

stimulate our Vagus nerve (see Sam's article below). In turn, this calms down our fight-or-flight system, lowering the heart rate and reducing blood pressure, for example. Deep breathing also improves heart rate variability, which is a good indicator of a healthy heart.

The way we breathe affects our whole body. Breathing exercises are a great way to relax, relieve stress, and strengthen our immune systems. Most of these exercises are easy to learn, you don't need any special equipment, and you can do them whenever you want.

Regular mindful breathing can help us feel calm, energised, and stress-free. I recommend that you try out each of these exercises, and then the ones that you find easiest to do, and relax you the most, should be added to your wellbeing toolkit.



Breathing to Reduce Stress and Anxiety:

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing or abdominal breathing is a fantastic way to reduce stress and anxiety. Breathing in this way triggers the relaxation response in the body, which allows the respiratory system to function correctly. Shallow breathing can often add to feelings of anxiety, panic, or stress. Diaphragmatic breathing allows the mind and body to slow down and relax.

1. Lie on your back, bend your knees and rest your head on a pillow. I also recommend placing a pillow under your knees if you're going to do a longer session.
2. Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your belly. Breathe in

deeply through your nose into your belly so you can feel the hand on your stomach gently rising.

3. Stay as relaxed as possible, especially in the chest area.
4. Slowly exhale through your mouth as you allow the muscles of your stomach to tense and tighten.
5. Practice this technique for about 5-10 minutes, and you can do it as often as you like through the day.

Breathing to Relax: 4-7-8 Breathing

The 4-7-8 breathing practice involves breathing in to the count of four, holding your breath to the count of seven and exhaling to the count of eight.



This technique relaxes the nervous system.

If you are new to breathing technique, you should not do more than four cycles of this breath at one time because it might cause lightheadedness.

1. Sit with a straight back and relax the shoulders.
2. Place the tip of your tongue on the soft palate above your upper front teeth and try to keep your tongue there as you breathe.
3. Inhale through the nose to a count of four.
4. Hold your breath for a count of seven.
5. Exhale through your mouth for the count of 8.

Repeat this cycle three more times.

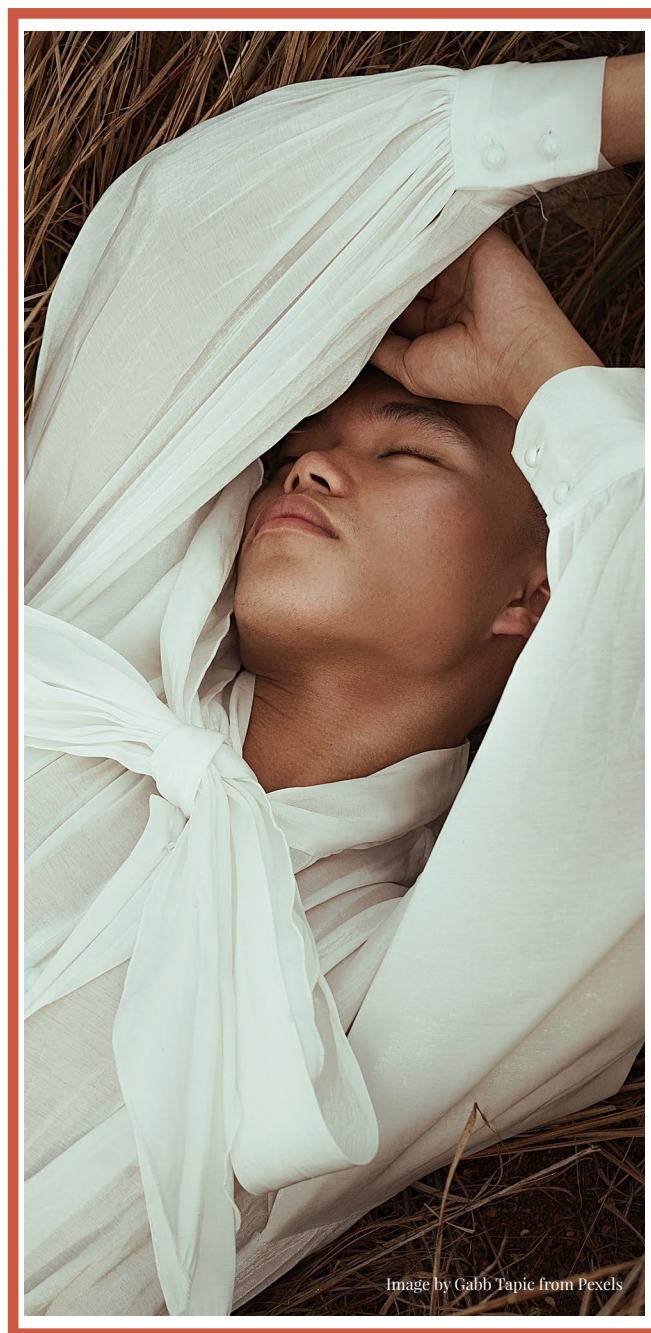
If you have difficulty holding your breath for seven seconds, you can speed the practice up and count faster. It is the ratio that is important.

Breathing to Increase Energy: **Bellows Breath**

Bellows breath is a great way to stimulate your nervous system to boost your energy and increase alertness. The bellows breath is a very safe practice. Still, as with Diaphragmatic breathing it could make you lightheaded at the start until your body gets used to the increased stimulation.

Aim for no more than 15 seconds on your first try, gradually working up to a minute. Each day, you can increase your time by a few seconds. Bellows breathing should leave you feeling invigorated and alert.

1. Sit up with your back straight and relax your shoulders.



2. Start by inhaling and exhaling rapidly through your nose. Make sure you keep your mouth closed yet relaxed. The in-breath and the out-breath should be equal in length and short and as fast as you can do it without causing tension.
3. Three complete breaths per second is a good rate. As you breathe, you will notice a rapid movement of your diaphragm, like a bellows.



Breathing to Increase HRV: Coherent Breathing

Coherent breathing, also known as Resonant breathing, is when you breathe at a rate of five breaths per minute. You can do this rate by inhaling and exhaling for a count of five.

Breathing at this rate reduces stress, and maximises your heart rate variability (HRV).

1. Inhale for a count of Five.
2. Exhale for a count of Five.
3. Continue this breathing pattern for 2-10 minutes.



Mindful Breathing: Counting the Breath

Kill two birds with one stone. Do this exercise, and you can tick off your daily meditation at the same time!

Sit in a comfortable position with a straight back. Set a timer for 2 to 10 minutes. Most people prefer to close their eyes, but you can leave your eyes open with a soft gaze in front of you on the floor.

1. Notice if any areas of the body are tight or stiff. If there are, try breathing in and softening those areas.
2. Do a quick scan of your body. Notice how your back feels against the chair, and notice the feel of your feet touching the floor. Notice the gentle pull of gravity.
3. Breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Notice your belly rising and falling.
4. Now, as you inhale, mentally count "one" and slowly exhale.
5. Inhale again, counting "two", and slowly exhale.
6. When you get to "ten", start again from "1".

If you lose count (which I always do!), forgive yourself for getting distracted, and without giving yourself a hard time about it, start again from 1.



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Fantastic, Chibs, thank you so much! I know you mentioned the Vagus nerve which I knew little about this time last year. Here to help us all understand more about the Vagus nerve, what it is and why it plays such a crucial role in our overall wellbeing is one of the few Vagus Nerve Practitioners in the world, Samuel Minkin.

Is The Vagus Nerve The New Solution To Anxiety?

by Samuel Minkin

If someone told you they could help calm your mind, reduce anxiety, and fast track you to a mind state like you'd been meditating daily for months, would you believe them?

In reality, that's what stimulating the vagus nerve can do. While we all know that meditation is extremely effective long term if you practise consistently, unfortunately, today's stressors can make it hard for some people to sit still long enough to see any benefits. Well, the vagus nerve may hold the key to helping relax and de-stress your entire system.

The vagus nerve is part of our nervous system and links our brain to all of our vital organs.

It is the most critical nerve in the body, and also the most overlooked element when helping people deal with stress.

If you are stressed out from work, family, financial struggles or health reasons, it's likely your vagus nerve is affected. Stress is the leading cause of a poorly functioning vagus nerve, as well as emotional trauma. Other things that can damage the vagus nerve are food poisoning, viral infection (shingles, glandular fever, etc.) and physical trauma to the upper cervical spine (upper neck).

Cited: <https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1875813-overview>





So what does this all mean – why is it important to have a healthy vagus nerve?

The vagus nerve is responsible for major functions in the body. Inflammation, regulating our heartbeat, digestion, and of course, stress levels, are all driven by our vagus nerve. When your vagus nerve is suboptimal, you see higher inflammation in the body which can cause chronic diseases like hypertension and some cancers, your digestion does not function well which leads to poor gut health, bloating and cramping, and you're less able to cope with life's ups and downs.

Stimulating the Vagus Nerve

Thankfully, there are some things you can do to get your vagus nerve functioning at its best. These include:

Gargling - Gargling water for 2 minutes, three times a day. This particular activity helps improve digestion and reduces symptoms of reflux, constipation & diarrhea.

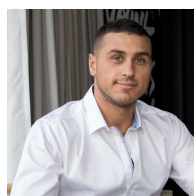
Mammalian Divers Reflex - Submerge your entire face in a bowl of ice or cold water for 20 seconds at a time. Do this 4- 6 times. This exercise helps with stress and anxiety; it lowers the heart rate and improves types of irregular heartbeat.

Vagus Nerve Flossing - Look all the way up with your head and look over your shoulder. Extend or lean back through your entire spine. Flex head forwards relieving the feeling of tension then extend your head back again 20 times each side. It is the same spine position experienced during upwards facing dog (yoga) yet seated.

Diaphragmatic Breathing - The force used to push out your stomach uses the diaphragm, which flattens out and stimulates the vagus nerve by tensioning the nerve.

Mindfulness Meditation - Mindfulness Meditation increases your Vagal tone, which assists the body in achieving an overall state of calm.

If you are suffering from severe stress, anxiety or depression, vagus nerve treatment could help. Book an appointment to see a licensed Vagus Nerve Practitioner who can do transcutaneous Auricular Vagus Nerve Stimulation.



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Thanks Sam, that was really eye-opening - I'll certainly be adding gargling to my morning ritual list that may take me up to lunch-time at this rate 😊! Now, I'd like to hand over to Oier Ruiz Trevino, who is sharing his holistic wellbeing journey.

My Journey Towards A Holistic Lifestyle

by Oier Ruiz Trevino

You could say I have been always an active person. Playing several sports all my life and always moving around, I wasn't necessarily healthy. Around 2014 I was still playing sports but combining it with a stressful job in IT and some bad habits like partying, excessive drinking and a mild addiction to sweets.

My son was born in May that year and that changed everything. During one of those sleepless nights walking around the house

trying to make him go to sleep, I had an epiphany. Suddenly I felt like I welcomed him late in my game. I just felt old and I started to worry about my health when he will turn 18. I didn't want to be one of those old unfit dads who cannot play with their kids. As I knew he was going to be my only child, I wanted to make the most of the time he will be at home and be able to keep up with his pace. If I wanted that, I had to make some changes.



That day, I started a quest to become the best and healthiest version of myself. For my son, for my family and for myself. And let me tell you, what a ride it has been so far! My life has changed forever, and I can say I am a happy person. I look forward to seeing where this journey takes me next.

The Journey

After some initial research online, I quickly understood that everything starts with good nutrition. I initially embraced a primal diet that was the catalyst for everything that happened after. I quickly shed tons of weight and I felt sharper and more energized than ever. Suddenly I had so much energy I was able to fit many more things in my life and my curiosity grew without limits! As part of the initial detoxification, I stopped drinking coffee. But I was waking up with so much energy in the mornings, I didn't miss it at all.

It's been 6 years since then and the feeling still stands. This new way of eating also encouraged me to cook every single meal and every ingredient from scratch to avoid processed products and other nasties. I quickly became very organized and methodical at planning meals for the week for the entire family.

With all that extra energy and time, I took up running. I started hitting the road almost every day. Running was getting me in this deep meditative state and I could really tune into my body. This practice culminated with the finish of the Sydney Marathon in 2015.

As my body felt better and stronger, I continued researching how else I could help my immune system and I started becoming

very conscious of the use of chemicals in our household. The presence of chemicals in almost every cleaning and beauty product we were using was alarming. With the help of the internet and after numerous trials and errors, I started making our own cleaning and personal care products, reducing the total amount of chemicals at home by around 80%.

Perhaps one of the best decisions at this stage of my journey was to break up with alcohol. I was eating healthily, moving my body, protecting it from chemicals but I was still often getting drunk after work or on the weekends. It just didn't make sense. After one of those hangover Sunday mornings, I decided to call it quits. It's been 3 years since and a complete game-changer. I feel even sharper and more focused.

People normally



People during quarantine



Our son's upbringing was always at the top of our minds. My wife and I had a strong feeling that he could really benefit from growing up closer to nature and we were also considering how to continue and expand on our health journey. Living in the city, we felt we couldn't spread our wings as much as we wanted. After much consideration, we made the bold decision to move to the country. So in November 2018, we found our forever home in a small hobby farm in the Blue Mountains National Park.

The Present

The move to the Blue Mountains has surely unlocked the next level of my journey. It has accelerated my self-discovery process and it has taken me out of my comfort zone. Since the move, I've learned valuable skills such as gardening, building, operating and fixing machinery... Things I never thought I could do. I truly feel I have learned more in this last year than in my previous ten.

Living in the country has allowed me to continue expanding on my health journey.

I am growing my own organic produce: fruit, herbs, vegetables and mushrooms. We have a beautiful flock of chickens that roam around the property and provide us with fresh eggs every morning. We have a beehive ready and we are considering raising our own animals soon.

Living amongst trees has brought pure calm into our lives. We fall asleep at night with the sound of frogs and we wake up with the sound of native birds. We feel closer to nature and we are grateful for it. This has influenced tremendously my daily yoga practice and breath work as I do them immersed in a peaceful environment. Consequently, we have found a great improvement in our mental health which has had a positive impact on our stressful corporate jobs, improving our productivity and concentration.



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My body is surely moving more. Farm living requires substantial physical work involving primal movement patterns such as pulling, pushing, and lifting. Whether it's splitting wood for the winter or raking endless leaves and sticks, I finish the week very tired but stronger and with a great sense of accomplishment.

And finally, we have built up a great sense of belonging to a small community. We are part of the local gardening and seed collecting groups. We attend the markets every weekend where we buy products made by locals. I've joined a group of bush runners and a Karate dojo and the list goes on (remember I have more energy now). This feeling of being part of a great community was reinforced dramatically during the devastating bush fires that took place this summer and that, unfortunately, took a big toll in our town.

Key Learnings

If you are considering embarking on a similar journey, these would be my key recommendations:

1. Set your long-term goal or your "why". This is the real secret. Knowing where you want to be long term or having a clear picture of yourself in the future is what in the end will make you stick to it. My motivation at the time was (and still is) to be able to run up a mountain with my son at the age of sixty-five and keep up comfortably with his pace.



2. It all starts with nutrition. We are what we eat. Nurturing the body with good quality nutrients will give you the energy necessary for the rest of your journey. Start by eliminating most foods at the beginning and then re-introducing them slowly. Listen to your body and how it feels until you find a diet that works for you.

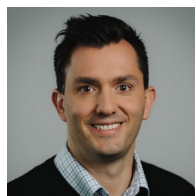


3. Don't alienate yourself. As you make more and more changes in your journey, being social will be perceived as challenging because you will feel you are going against the norm. You can totally maintain your social life and it's important you do so. It just needs a little more planning and willpower. You can also start building new relationships with like-minded people and combine both environments.

4. Anyone can do it. This journey is not only for strong-minded people. As long as you have your end goal clear and a little bit of support from your loved ones, everyone can absolutely do it. I believe this so deeply that I want to help

everyone who wants that change. That is why I started my studies in Holistic Life Coaching.

5. Just do it. Every day that passes without making changes is one more day you are missing out on a better and happier life. Don't overthink it. Don't get blocked planning a big change. Just start with a small change, embrace it, and appreciate how you feel. You will find there the motivation for the next change. Just keep going and enjoy the journey.

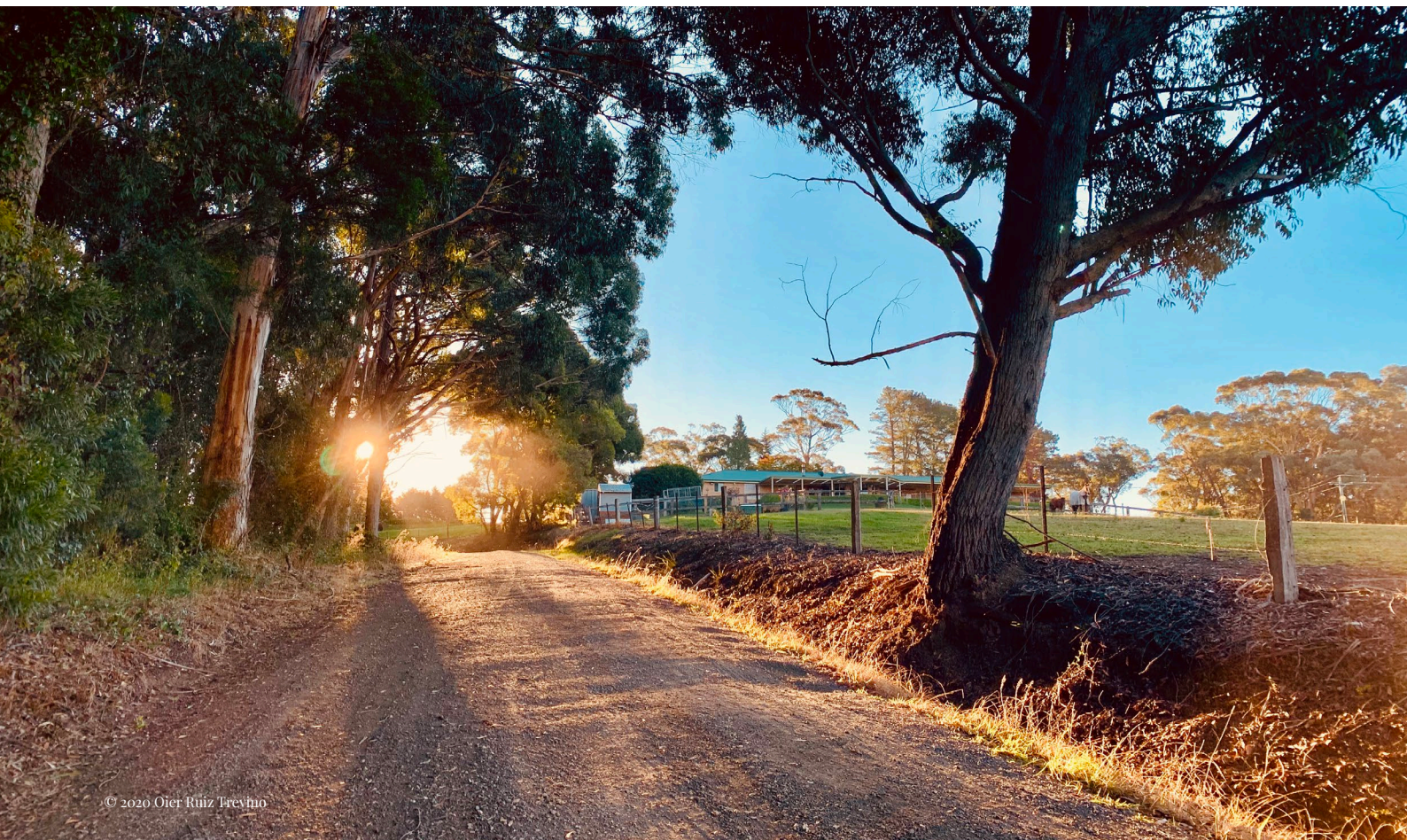


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48





Thanks, Oier Ruiz, what a journey! Thank you for sharing. Such an inspiring story that shows what's possible when you decide to upgrade your health and take consistent action. Finally, let me introduce you to Luke Baylis, the CEO and Founder of SumoSalad, a business he started with his best friend back in 2003 and grew it to become a household name with over 100 stores. I first met Luke at the end of 2016 literally two days after arriving in Australia. For the next three years, I helped Luke to pivot the Sumo business and create a strategy aligned with changing customer needs. Over those three years alone, there were many high and low moments! But through it all, Luke's single-mindedness and focus on his personal wellbeing helped him cope and survive through some significantly stressful times that would have prompted most other people to have thrown in the towel.

CASE STUDY:

Finding The Opportunity In Adversity

by Luke Baylis

For many at the moment, business is tough. Yet, it's the tough times that carve your resilience and help you become a better person, ultimately helping you build a better business. They allow you to dig deep and forge an inner strength to keep you fighting to find solutions that enable you to advance forward, rather than combust. In life and business there are always ways forward. You just need to look for them and be ready to go after them when they come.

Here are my tips for helping your business thrive, no matter what your current situation is:

- 1. You first need to start with your own health and wellbeing.** Without your energy and vitality, there will be no business. So, as a priority, build a healthy routine into your life. Here's an example of my typical morning:
 - 4.30am wake up & half-hour meditation
 - 5.00am jog to gym & workout
 - 6.00am steam & ice bath whilst listening to audiobooks & podcasts

This routine makes me feel invincible, enabling me to tackle everything that I need to deal with during the day. I also have a healthy eating routine, that keeps me physically and mentally switched on.



2. Understand your customers.

To overcome your business challenges, you need to have an insatiable drive to understand your customers. In business, it is key to figure out what customers want and to make good business decisions based on that.

The key thing is that you must be open to doing things completely differently, and bold enough to take risks and make changes that may actually disrupt your business. Your business needs to evolve; otherwise it will die.

3. Have passion and purpose.

In order to run your business you need **passion** and you need **purpose**. You need to get through the tough times and have the resilience to get back up, knowing that you are doing well for your customers. Your passion and your purpose are the things that you can rely on to motivate you to keep on going.



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So there we have it, another bumper issue of tools, techniques and strategies to help support your own personal mental and emotional wellbeing.

We are all at different stages of our individual journeys, and life will get out of balance at times. And that's fine. But with the knowledge and tools to get yourself back into balance, you can move forward with confidence and experience more positive emotions on a daily basis, no matter what the external context.

Look out for part three which will be available in June. This time, we'll be focusing on the third pillar of the RAW Energy model: Connection, such an important part of humanity. We'll include connection with people, other forms of nature as well as connection with a higher purpose in our lives.

Until next time, keep safe, keep well and keep in EQUILIBRIUM.

Lawrence

Lawrence Mitchell
Editor



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50

