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10 steps to boost your sense of wellbeing with ease and grace.



We all want to feel healthy, happy, and relaxed. Simply feel our best and go through the day managing life's challenges with ease and grace.

Here are 10 easy steps to follow to get you started.

**1. Meditation - start your day with a few moments of mindfulness.**

A lot of research has been done into meditation and its effect on us. It has been proven that even short, consistent moments of mindfulness has a calming effect on our nervous system and can reduce stress. By concentrating on your breathing, you stay in the present moment. You are pulled away from other thoughts and worries. The reward is a few moments of silence and inner peace.

Start your day with a short meditation in the morning.

Sit comfortably with your back supported and your head free. Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths; inhale to the count of 2, hold your breath to the count of 4 and exhale to the count of 4. Sit quietly and just feel your breath going through your body, feel how your breathing expands your body and contracts your body. Notice how it feels.

Set an intention for the day. It can be something you want to accomplish that day, or how you want to be and feel that day.

Think of a meaningful phrase and advice to yourself. Use your inner voice to say this phrase to yourself while you meditate. It could be something like:

"Today I will be patient with myself and the people around me."

"I accept myself just as I am." "I am enough just as I am."

"All is well in my world, and I am safe."

"Today I will stay calm and not get frustrated by what other people say or do."

Open your eyes slowly after about 10 - 15 minutes. Take a few deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth, perhaps you want to let out a little sigh when you exhale. Start your day feeling calm and focused.

Longer inhalations increase the oxygen levels in your blood.

Longer exhalations purify your lungs by allowing elimination of carbon dioxide.

Breath retention, for instance when you hold your breath for the count of 4, strengthens the nervous system.

**2. Keep your inner dialogue positive - the things you tell yourself, mostly about yourself.**

Be mindful of your inner dialogue, your inner thoughts, your inner pictures of what is going on around you - what you say to yourself. Is your self-talk positive? Or negative? It's not important what other people think or say about us - the most

important thing is what we think about ourselves and what we say to ourselves.

Our thoughts control our feelings, and our feelings control our actions. If our thoughts are negative, they are likely to create negative actions.

We often say things like "I am so stupid" if something goes wrong, or "I will never be able to do this", "I always mess things up". We look in the mirror in the morning and say things like "I look awful today". This is not going to make us feel very confident and good about ourselves.

Choose new thoughts to think about yourself and choose new words to say to yourself.

We can do something about our negative self-talk - we can consciously change it. Start turning it around, saying positive things to yourself, like "I am good at learning", "I love learning new things", "I can improve my life taking small actions starting right now", "I have great coping skills", "I am resilient, and I am good at coping with life's challenges". "Even though I don't like the shape of my legs, I am happy with my body and my personality, and I accept myself just as I am". "I embrace my imperfections and accept myself just as I am".

We grow our confidence and sense of self-worth when we stop looking through the lens of what we think other people are thinking about us. We grow our confidence when we start accepting ourselves just as we are, and when we start liking, yes, even loving ourselves, just as we are.

### 3. Calm your mind and manage your stress when you feel overwhelmed.

Many studies have been made into the effect of stress on our overall health. When we are stressed, our brain releases the stress hormone Cortisol. The longer we are stressed, the more Cortisol is released. Too much Cortisol is not optimal for our health; it can cause headaches, migraines, anxiety, depression, difficulties falling asleep and even weight gain, usually from comfort eating when we are feeling stressed.

Stress shows up in more ways:

We may have problems with our digestion with symptoms such as acidity, heartburn, and reflux. When we feel stressed, our breathing becomes shallow which also makes it hard for our brain to focus and concentrate.

It's safe to say that when we are very stressed our bodies and minds don't feel well.

You can release feelings of stress by doing simple breathing exercises.

When you're feeling really stressed about something, take a few minutes to calm your mind. Find a place where you can be undisturbed and sit down on a chair with your back supported and your head free.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, inhale to the count of 4, hold your breath to the count of 4 and exhale to the count of 6. This will send a message to the brain to slow

down and relax. Take 10 in- and exhales like this and you will feel yourself calming down and feeling less overwhelmed. This breathing exercise can take as little as 5-10 minutes.

The minute you consciously slow down your breathing, your brain gets the signal to relax and let go of the tension. So, just by sitting down quietly with your eyes closed concentrating on your breathing, you will start to feel better. Less stressed. Better focus.

Will this exercise solve the problem that stresses you? No, but what it will do, is calm you down; you'll have a calmer mind, and with better focus you'll be able to see things with more clarity and make better decisions.

A steady breath and a steady mind!

#### **4. Move your body - boost your mood and energy**

The quickest way to change how we feel is to move our body and get energised. When we are being passive, for instance sitting for too long or just being inactive, our mood is not always very positive and the less we move the more tired we begin to feel. So, it's time to move our body.

What type of exercises are good for you? The physical activities that you think are fun to do will be the best choice for you. That will make it easier to stick to, and you'll reap the benefits of regular physical activities.

So many studies have shown that there are multiple benefits from doing regular exercises:

Reduced stress symptoms, strengthened immune system, improved self-esteem, more energy, improved gut health, sharper mind and improved focus, better sleep, improved productivity, feeling happier, and a younger body.

Regular exercises slow down the ageing process.

Find a physical activity that you enjoy and aim at practicing at least 3 times a week. Think about incorporating cardio exercises that raises the heartbeat and increases your lung capacity. A brisk walk, jogging, using a skipping rope, swimming or cycling will do that for you. A 30-minute brisk walk in the morning will boost your mood and energy.

We also need flexibility and strength in the body. Building up stronger muscles and bones will reduce the risk of muscle strains and joint injuries.

Why not do a dance in the morning to your favourite music, or anytime during the day, when you want to boost your mood and energy - that's if you like dancing, of course. A dance a day keeps the doctor away. It may also keep negative thoughts away - thoughts about concerns and issues in your life at the moment. Dancing is a happy movement, it releases the feel good endorphins and energises us - again, only if you enjoy dancing.

Practising Yoga is very good for gaining more flexibility and strength in your body. It's a wonderful combination of exercises that strengthens your muscles, stretches your whole body, and creates more space and flexibility in your body. Start with basic yoga movements, preferably in a class with a teacher or find an online course. Yoga is very soothing

and healing and teaches you to be kind and patient with yourself - and others.

There are many types of yoga - find the one you feel comfortable with. If you are looking for an online course, I can highly recommend "*Yoga with Adrienne*" on YouTube.

It's important for our longevity and good health to exercise regularly. It is equally important to consciously avoid sitting still for too long - for instance, for several hours at a desk. Stand up and move about every 30 minutes or so - stretch your legs, walk around, get yourself a cup of green tea, a smoothie, or a glass of water. Do something different for a few minutes - dance to energising music, do a few exercises, water your plants, anything you like to do that involves moving about. Notice how you start feeling more energised.

To counteract sitting still for too long, consider working standing up. Perhaps you have the possibility to adapt an existing small table or desk. You might be able to put something underneath the legs to make it higher so that you can stand up working at your desk.

Working standing up activates the body and it may even increase the rate at which you burn energy. You are more engaged and focused standing up, and it's easier to concentrate. It's a bit strange in the beginning but you get used to it very quickly. It's also great for your health, actively standing up with a straight back, as opposed to passively sitting down.

## 5. Yoga Nidra for relaxation and sleeping.

Having a good night's sleep is essential for our mental and physical wellbeing. It is while we sleep that we restore our bodies. Perhaps you find yourself unable to relax when you go to bed. You might be thinking too much about what's going on in your life, what you need to do the following day, or the news you read before going to bed.

I encourage you to try an online **Yoga Nidra** session, which you can easily find on YouTube. My favourite teacher is Ally Boothroyd who has many of Yoga Nidra videos on Youtube.

Yoga Nidra is a type of yoga especially for deep relaxation. The instructor will guide you through a mental body scan. You will be asked to rotate your attention to different parts of your body, often from head down to the feet, sometimes starting with the feet moving up to the head. This method is very relaxing. It will calm your nervous system and reduce stress and anxiety.

All you have to do, is lie flat on your back in your bed, arms loosely to your sides with palms turned up and let the instructor guide you into deep relaxation. You can look forward to a good night's sleep.

Relax and enjoy a Yoga Nidra session on YouTube with Ally Boothroyd by clicking [here on this video link](#).

[www.AllyBoothroyd.com](http://www.AllyBoothroyd.com).

This is how yoga teacher Ally Boothroyd explains Yoga Nidra:

## WHAT IS YOGA NIDRA?

Yoga Nidra is systematic method of complete relaxation. It is a completely guided & 100% effortless meditation technique that takes you into the deepest states of rest and regeneration. All there is to do is lay down, get comfortable and listen to the guidance. The process is based on your body's innate intelligence and biological ability to sleep. There is no wrong way to practice this style of meditation. The power is in the simplicity for the practitioner. With cumulative practice, sleep deficits are restored and deepened states of meditation are achieved without effort.

Over time, the benefits are endless....

### 6. Have a massage and experience its incredible health benefits.

It is amazing how a simple touch can work wonders for your wellbeing. A massage will help you reduce stress and anxiety, improve your quality of sleep and ease symptoms of depression. You will just feel any tension in your body flow away during the massage.

A massage will boost the blood circulation and get more oxygen and nutrients to all areas of the body. Muscles that are tense and shortened can be relaxed and stretched.

Studies show that not only can massage lower the levels of cortisol; the hormone we release when we are stressed and under pressure. A massage can also release the feel-good endorphins, and the happy hormones dopamine and serotonin.

The feeling of wellbeing will encourage positive thoughts and an increased sense of self-worth.

The Swedish massage, the most common, is a very gentle massage which helps you release tension and makes you relax. Your therapist will use various kneading, long flowing strokes and deep circular motions, and you will feel the tension flow away.

Deep tissue massage, is when the therapist works deeper into the muscles and connective tissue. The connective tissue is a group of tissues in the body that maintain the form of the body and its organs, providing internal support.

Having a massage can be a real mood booster; just close your eyes, take deep breaths, relax, enjoy it, stay in the present moment and forget about everything else. Just for now. You won't regret it.

## **7. How a good soak in a warm bath can improve your health.**

Imagine coming home after a long, busy day at work, it's cold outside and it's raining. You run a bath and sink into warm, soothing water. Instant relaxation, right?

Having a 15-30-minute soak in the bath not only relaxes you but it also offers real health benefits.

A good soak in a warm bath relaxes your blood vessels, the heat causes them to dilate, making it easier for blood to flow

through. When you breathe deeper and slower in a hot bath, you increase the level of oxygen in your blood.

The warm water helps relax your muscles and ease tension, and the delicious quiet time gives your mind a chance to unwind.

While you are being relaxed and in a state of peaceful, inner happiness, you may begin to feel a little sleepy. You might have guessed it - it's a perfect time to go to bed after a warm bath and have a good night's sleep.

A bath is not only about bubbles, candles and relaxing music; it's really about giving your body and mind some peaceful and mindful moments, leaving all other thoughts out of the bathtub.

Make it a ritual, once or twice a week, to sink into the soothing water and watch, how these simple moments of caring for yourself, will create more inner peace for you.

## **8. Make your own playlist with music that makes you feel good.**

Listening to music that we enjoy can have a tremendous effect on how we feel. So, what can music do for us?

Music can energise us, make us relax, help us concentrate, make us want to exercise and move and make us get up and dance. It can also help us connect with other people, getting into a romantic mood, help us forget life's challenges, release

stress and tension in the body, and release tension between people. Being in a concert listening to music with people around you who like the same music, can be a fantastic, bonding experience. Music can play a big part in our emotional wellbeing.

Make your own playlist with music that makes you feel really good. Play your favourite songs that energise you in the morning, while you are getting ready to start the day.

Why not have a dance in the morning as an energising exercise to start your day with a smile.

And while you are making playlists, why not make one for the evening with music you love, that relaxes you and can ease you into a deep sleep.

Perhaps a dance a day keeps the doctor away and makes it a great day.

## **9. Connecting with other people and feeling a sense of belonging.**

The digital world has made it very easy for us to make contact and connect with people who live nearby and far away. Never has it been easier than it is now to join a group of people, a club, a forum, or an organisation online and communicate with like-minded people. That's a wonderful thing and it can enrich our lives in so many ways.

However, nothing goes above meeting a group of like-minded people in person, face-to-face. We still need the human experience of being with other human beings, not only on the

screen, but physically being together and communicating with other human beings.

Sitting down physically having a chat with a friend is a different experience from chatting to each other online. When you are physically together you can see much more of the other person's personality, their non-verbal language - their reactions to what you are talking about, their laughter, smiles, gestures, their likes, and dislikes, it's such a different and rich experience.

What I really want to say is that, in this digital age, it is still very important to connect physically to other human beings. According to Maslow's pyramid, after our physiological needs such as shelter, food and water are met, and after our safety needs are met, comes our need to connect with other people and feel a sense of belonging. We are social animals and feel very lonely without other human beings. Loneliness can weaken our health, it can lead to depressions, anxiety and feeling unwanted. That's something to avoid. We can avoid it by making efforts to meet other people digitally, but certainly also physically.

There are many ways to meet people in virtual life, but also in real life. Joining a sports club, take classes in the things we are passionate about, for example, cooking, yoga, drawing, dancing, playing an instrument, painting, a team sport, learning a new language, singing in a choir, or volunteering to help out where help is needed.

These are just a few examples to illustrate how we can connect with other people. We can all show up for our friends,

actively participate when we show up, meet people with openness and kindness and listen to what they have to say. Next time you're meeting a friend, give him or her your undivided attention, ask questions, show support and genuine interest in what they have to say.

When we smile at the world, the world smiles at us! Try it out, next time you walk in the street and people pass you, put a little smile on your face and you'll see that they'll smile back at you - even total strangers will smile back at you. Just smile at people and you'll be met with a smile.

## **10. Have a positive attitude to gratitude and forgiveness**

Last but certainly not least, let's think about two essential elements which are part of our general state of wellbeing - Gratitude and Forgiveness.

Start by journaling every day, or a few times a week, writing down your thoughts, ideas, likes and dislikes, wishes, and desires, dreams and things you would like to achieve.

Buy yourself a new notebook and spend 10-20 minutes writing down your inner dialogues. Just start writing what comes to your mind, what you are thinking about that day, what you are saying to yourself with your inner voice.

Start by writing about things that you are happy about in your life, the things you like in your life. For instance, you love your dog or cat, you love your family, you enjoy living

where you live, you love the first cup of coffee or tea in the morning etc.

It can be small things like a child smiling at you the day before, or something nice someone said to you. "I am grateful for my nice, comfortable bed", "I am grateful for my friends and family", "I love my first cup of coffee or tea in the morning" "I so enjoy reading my new book that my friend gave me", "I feel so lucky that I have a car to drive to work in", "I feel so lucky that when I go in to the kitchen I have nice food that I love to eat".

These are just a few examples of how you can express your gratitude for the good things that are present in your life.

Practice gratitude next time when you are feeling frustrated about something and see what it does for you. Gratitude is an antidote to being unhappy. When you change your focus and start thinking about what's good in your life, the little nice things that have happened, your energy moves away from the negative things you were thinking about.

You cannot be unhappy and grateful at the same time. Where your focus goes, your energy goes. If you focus on a negative event that has happened, your energy will become negative. If you focus on something positive that has happened, your energy will be positive.

Anytime you want to change your mood, think of something you like to do or experience, somebody you love, a time you had to laugh so much you could hardly stop, a wonderful meal you had - anything that makes you happy. See how quickly

your mood will change. The more you practice the easier it gets.

A journal is also useful for writing down the things that you are less happy about, the things you worry about and would like to change. It might be childhood memories you still think about, an argument with a friend, something someone said or did to you that disappointed you, or other issues that you find challenging.

Writing down these inner thoughts on a piece of paper helps processing them. It can feel as if you are writing them out of your system, just like it can feel when you talk to someone about your problems.

Once you have got it out of your system and feel less troubled by it, you might be able to forgive the person who you argued with, or who you feel disappointed you.

Once you can forgive someone for what you feel they have done to you - that's when you free yourself of the heavy burden of the problem and how it has made you feel. When you forgive that person, even if it feels strange at first, your anger or disappointment will subside and you will not be thinking of the problem as much as before, you will feel lighter.

Forgiveness is not for the other person - it's for you yourself- to help you overcome the pain you feel about it. You don't have to communicate your forgiveness to the other person. It's all done internally in your mind - visualising the other person and saying, "I forgive you" and meaning it. It is

important that you mean it. You will feel much lighter and liberated from the pain.

When we focus on the things that are good in our lives, the positive things in our lives, we become more positive people. When we forgive someone for what we experienced as a painful event, we liberate ourselves from feeling the pain. Practicing Gratitude and Forgiveness are two very essential practices that will enhance and increase the level of mental and physical wellbeing.

Buy that notebook today and start journaling about all the things you are grateful for, who you forgive and write all the things you are concerned about out of your system.

Protect your state of wellbeing with ease and grace.

October 2023

*Sarah*

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