

Your guide to keeping well during lockdown

created for you by



HELLO

With us in the middle of yet another lockdown, life is hard for so many of us right now and can feel like Groundhog Day where we wonder if we will ever see "normal" again. We wanted to be able to reach out to you in some way to help you get through this time, so we came up with the idea of this guide. We hope you find it useful!

Stay safe and well.

Suzanne, Michelle, Simon and Craig



Remember Pandora's box. All the troubles of the world came flying out and all she had left was hope. Hold on to hope - better days WILL come

CONTENTS

We have colour coded each of our relevant areas:



Suzanne - Lakeside Therapies

Stress

Taking care of yourself and your well-being

Reflexology

Aromatherapy

EFT

Nutrition



Michelle - Nurturing Body and Soul

Walking for your health

How the body systems are connected

Posture

Exercise guide



Craig Smith Coaching - Craig

Home working tips for productivity



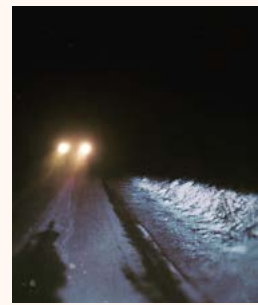
Simon's Garden and Countryside
Services- Simon

Gardening - a gym for mind and body
February gardening jobs

STRESS AND HOW WE HANDLE IT... OR NOT

Things happen in life that we can't control and it can throw us into a tailspin of worry. We can be like a rabbit in the headlights, frozen and not knowing what to do. We could want to run away from it, or it could go another way, where we get angry about the situation and want to rant and rage at the world and everyone in it.

Fight Flight Freeze



We have a built-in response to a threat of danger to our survival. When this response is triggered through us being afraid or angry or anxious, stress hormones are released which could make us initially freeze, but the instinct to fight or run will inevitably kick in.

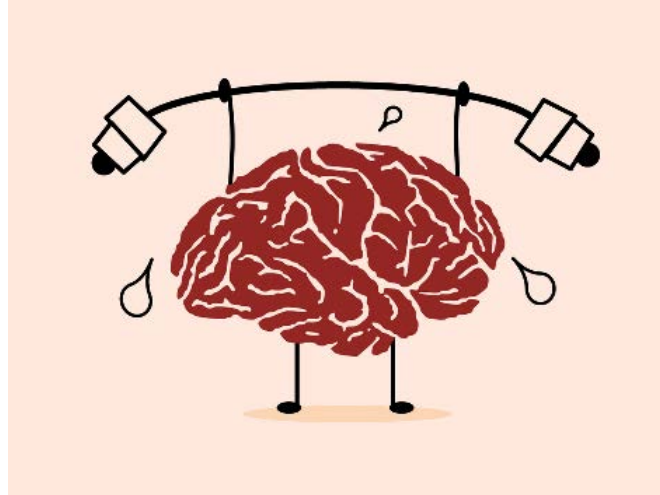
This instinctive response comes from our limbic system which is a part of the brain which deals with our primal behaviour necessary for survival, so food, reproduction, looking after our children, and our fight or flight. The amygdala is a part of this system and it's where we store our emotional memories and is the main driver of the fight or flight response. When we are in extreme stress, we are operating from the limbic system so all rationality goes out of the window.

The frontal lobes are the part of the brain which deals with logic, reasoning and making decisions. We usually operate from here so we can take those initial emotional responses and process them logically.

When we have something that creates a very strong fear response, it's the amygdala that takes charge.

Wouldn't it be great if we could stop that amygdala causing havoc? Here's the good news. There is a way...

Building Resilience



First of all, you have to be able to recognise when you're going from rational to instinctive when under stress. This could be looking for physical clues in your body, like breathing changes or faster heartbeat. There could be several triggers for you. There's usually a series of things that happen or have happened to evoke a stress response in you. Learn what these are as the more you familiarise yourself with them, the more you will be able to spot the pattern. The next time something happens to cause stress, you are then able to get more of a handle on it and get the rational part of the brain to respond rather than the irrational part.

Remember knowledge is power. Even though we may face situations which are out of our control, we CAN control our response to it.

Learn techniques to combat stress to relax your body and mind as this will get the frontal lobes back in the driving seat.

This guide has been created with this in mind. It's full of things you can try to bring down stress so that you can feel more in control.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR WELL-BEING



When we are stressed and anxious, we can feel overwhelmed about everything that's going on in our lives. It's the constant loop of thoughts that takes over and we start to lose touch with our feelings and emotions. We are in our heads and not in our bodies. Mindfulness helps us to move us back out of our heads and into our bodies by us tuning into our awareness of our bodies and the world around us.

When we get stressed, we tend to either be worried about things that have happened or worried about what's to come in the future. Worry is basically sapping us of energy and enjoyment of life. Mindfulness brings all the thoughts and feelings back to the centre - the present moment. It helps slow everything right down so you can begin to experience calm.

You start to notice things that you've probably not paid much attention to, like how the ground feels under your feet, or water on your skin, the different tastes and textures of the food you eat, and so on. If you're not used to bringing your thoughts back to the present it can feel hard at first. There are different ways to help you do this, so it's a case of finding what works for you.

Breathing



It sounds so obvious, but deep breathing is fantastic for helping to slow down all the thoughts racing around in your head.

Inhale through your nose for the count of 4 and exhale through your mouth for the count of 8. Repeat several times. You will notice that you start to feel calmer and are coming back into your body.

Meditation

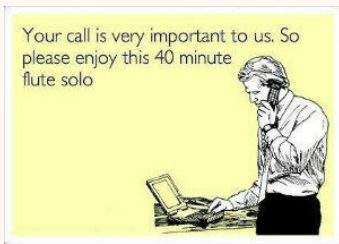


Meditation is another great way to reconnect with your body. There are lots of guided meditations out there. Have a look on YouTube and you'll find meditations for a whole raft of issues.

There is no wrong way to meditate. You may notice that you have thoughts that keep coming in a lot at first. It's okay. Just let them come and then let them go. You don't have to focus on them. The more you do it, the easier it becomes.

I listen to Deepak Chopra's meditations first thing in the morning. He made it easier to focus on just the breath by getting you to think of the word "so" on the in breath and "hum" on the out breath.

Music



Music is one of the best things around for lifting mood. Whatever kind of music relaxes you, be it classical, jazz, easy listening, pop, or even sounds in nature, listen to whatever feels good to you.

Mindful Walking



Getting outside and in nature is a great way to feel calmer. We are so lucky to have the moorland and lake on the doorstep where we have lots of different routes to explore. If you have to stay home though, you can still benefit from being out in your garden.

When we are extremely worried and stressed, it can be hard to even get a coat on and venture outside. The hardest part is taking those first few steps outdoors. Once outside, build it up so you can go a bit further each time.

Mindful walking is really lovely. I tried forest bathing in the Lake District last year which was my first experience of mindful walking. Take a few paces and notice what is around you, the sensation of the air on your face, the smells, the sounds, the colours. Breathe slowly and allow yourself to just enjoy taking it all in.

Walking slowly outdoors helps you to become calmer and gets you thinking more clearly. If it's pouring down or too cold for a walk, then have a look at the Forestry England website. They explain forest bathing in more detail and also have 360° videos and an online gallery.

Journalling

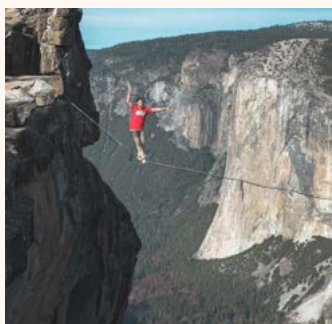


Journalling is a very personal way to connect your thoughts and emotions. Writing down all the things on your mind and how you feel is quite powerful. Getting it all out on paper can help you to understand yourself better and it also has a lot of benefits. It can reduce anxious feelings, encourages clearer thinking so you are better able to solve problems, helps you to deal with stress, and can strengthen your immune system too.

Gratitude

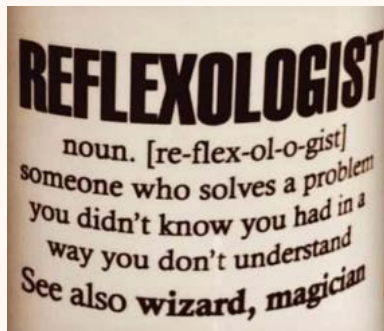


Being grateful for what we have is often taken for granted. It is the negative things that we tend to focus on more. Flip the script and you will benefit in lots of ways, like being more interested in things and having more enthusiasm for starters. For a lot of us, work issues due to lockdown are a big factor in creating feelings of frustration and resentment. You may be in a job you really don't like very much but look at how it helps you, such as money to keep a roof over your head and food on the table. You may be in a situation where you aren't able to work in your current job. Lockdown has given you an opportunity to take stock of your life and assess where you want to go from here. It's also an opportunity to discover other ways to do things that you may not have done otherwise or even to try something new.



We always have a choice. Do you stay thinking and doing the same things or do you try something new? Stepping out of your comfort zone is where the magic happens!

REFLEXOLOGY



A lot of people are in the dark as to what reflexology actually is. I've heard people say it's just a foot rub or a massage. Some people think it's some form of faith healing or far out hippy thing.

A simple explanation is that reflexology works by applying pressure at specific points on the feet or hands which correspond to the parts of the body. This pressure sends a message from the peripheral nerves to the central nervous system which then prompts the body to alter the tension and encourages relaxation. It then has a positive effect on all of the systems of the body.

Did you know there are over 7,000 nerve endings at the bottom of each foot? Nerves connect to every organ, every limb and region of the body through the brain and spinal column. The strange bit is that there is a correlation of the bottom of your feet to every region in your body. It definitely exists!



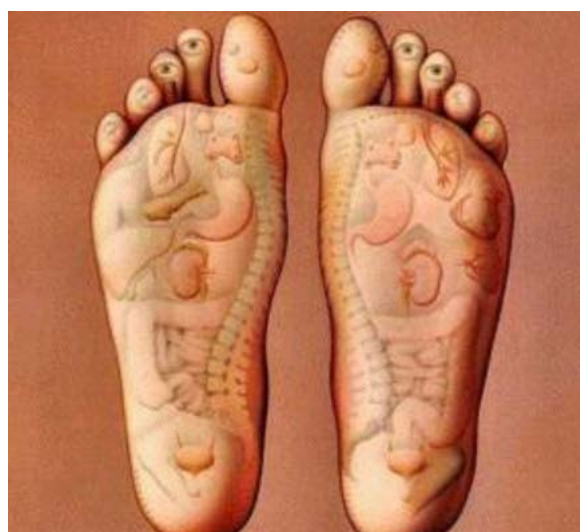
Contrary to popular belief, it doesn't tickle!

Reflexology has its origins in ancient Egypt, China and India. There have been images found dating back to that era where foot therapy was shown. In the 20th Century, Dr William Fitzgerald, an ENT surgeon in Connecticut, took the principle further and developed zone therapy. He found that by applying pressure to the feet or hands, the patient experienced pain relief and the cause of the pain was relieved also. Dr Shelby Riley, who was trained by Dr Fitzgerald, took this further again and added horizontal zones to both the hands and feet. Eunice Ingham found during her work as a physiotherapist that the reflexes in the feet were a mirror image of the whole body and mapped them into reflex points on a chart.

Reflexology is a modality of Traditional Chinese Medicine, where the approach is to consider health as a balanced state and disease as an unbalanced state. It focuses on the body as a whole. Western medicine has a different approach with its foundation in chemistry and anatomy and is evidence based.

I'm from a scientific background so I was very sceptical at first and probably the least likely convert going! It was only when I went for a treatment session that I started to think there was something in it. When you've had a shoulder and knee injury in the past and someone you've never met before touches your feet and tells you this, it certainly makes you wonder! I wanted to learn more.. and so I did the training (which took a year), got my qualification and now with hundreds of treatments under my belt, I'm here to help you discover the benefits not only physically, but mentally and emotionally too.

We think of feet just being there at the end of our legs to get us from A to B and don't tend to pay too much attention to them. They are so much more than that. They connect us to the earth, and they reflect everything that's happening to us. They really are a mirror of your body.



What kind of things can reflexology help with?

Reflexology is gentle, non-invasive and is very relaxing. It can help ease the aches and pains of the joints and muscles, relieve many issues, such as headaches, toothaches and earaches, and generally improves the functioning of the major systems of the body. It's a great stress reliever. Stress is at the root of many illnesses, so reflexology works in a preventative way too, as potential issues can be found before they have a chance to fully develop.

Reflexology is like an MOT for your physical, mental, and emotional health and it's suitable for everyone, from babies to the elderly.



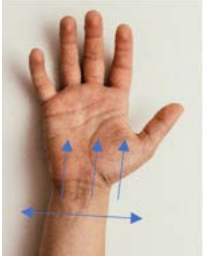
We get our cars checked regularly to make sure they are roadworthy and in good condition, so it makes sense to do the same for our bodies!

It's not the easiest thing in the world to do foot reflexology on yourself. If you have someone at home with you who is willing to touch your feet, have a look on my website as I have made a small video for you on how to do a basic reflexology routine for stress relief.

If you would prefer to try hand reflexology, then have a look at this little routine and give it a try!

HAND REFLEXOLOGY FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY

Try and focus on your breathing when doing the moves, so slow, deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.



Hold your wrist between your thumb and fingers. Gently slide them up together over your hand and then repeat on the other hand. Do this three times.



Turn your hand on its side with the thumb at the top. Move in small circles down the outside of the thumb on the bone to the bottom, where it joins the wrist. Repeat on the other hand.



Hold your hand and press on the solar plexus reflex with your thumb. This reflex point is situated under the middle finger on the top line of the palm. Press your thumb into this point three times.



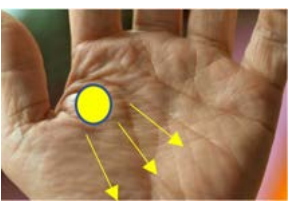
With palms upwards and starting at the index finger, stroke your thumb across to the other side of the hand at the base of the fingers, then do the same on the other hand



Turn your hands over and then put your fingers on top of the knuckles of the other hand. Move them slightly over and glide your hand down so that the fingers slide between the spaces of the finger bones



Either hold your hand up or put it flat and press your thumb into the fleshy part between the index finger and thumb, then breathe deeply and massage for a few seconds. **Do not use this point in pregnancy**



Turn your hand and starting at the point between the thumb and index finger, move across the palm with your thumb, making small circles until you have covered the lower part of the hand. Repeat on the other hand.



Hold your hand out, palm upwards. Using the palm of the other hand, start at the little finger and make small circles all the way down the side to the wrist. Then slide up and down three times. Repeat on the other hand.

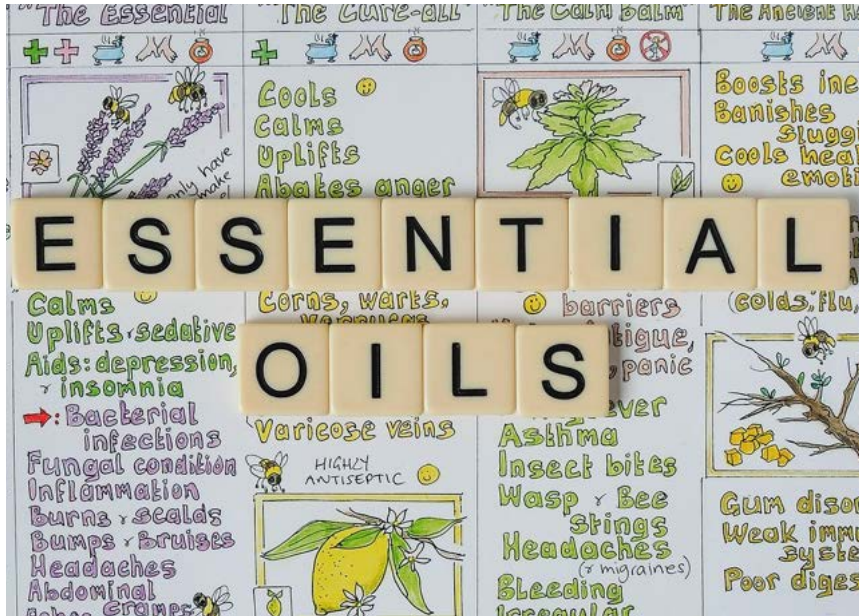


With palms up, hold the tip of the index finger and rotate in one direction and then the other, then gently pull. Do this on all fingers and then do the same on the other hand.



With palm up, place your thumb in the dip at the bottom of the hand next to the wrist crease on the same side as the little finger. Rotate in the dip for several seconds and then repeat on the other hand.

AROMATHERAPY



Aromatherapy uses extracts from plants for health and well-being.

By breathing in the essential oils or using them on the skin, they have an effect on your emotions and can affect your body in positive ways. For stress relief, they can lower your blood pressure and heart rate which will calm you down.

They can also help to boost the feel-good hormones – serotonin, dopamine, endorphins, and oxytocin, and reduce the stress hormones – adrenaline, norepinephrine and cortisol.

There are lots of essential oils out there so you need to make sure they are of good quality and safe. Tisserand, Naissance, and Neal's Yard are 100% pure and are reputable brands used by therapists. Their websites have lots of useful information and guidance for you about oils and well-being.

I've selected a few main essential oils here for you that can help with stress and anxiety. I use these regularly in my treatments in various combinations. You can buy them to use in a diffuser, as massage oils or lotions, a roller ball that can be applied to the pulse points, or even candles, so there are several ways you can reap the benefits.

My top 5 essential oils for stress and anxiety



It's the one oil that everyone knows, it's used in lots of blends and is also safe to use during pregnancy. Lavender is known to balance the nervous system, so has a calming and sedating effect. It is therefore the top choice for relieving stress and anxiety. It also has anti-viral properties so can help your immune system too.



Rose is known to soothe the emotions and has a sedating effect. It also eases symptoms of depression. It's calming and can create feelings of security.



Vetiver is a very earthy aroma and is really good for stress, anxiety and depression. It has a sedating effect so is calming. It can also help with insomnia. It's good for the immune system too as it has antioxidant properties so slows down any damage to cells. **Avoid vetiver if you are pregnant.**



Chamomile has a relaxing and calming effect and is commonly used with lavender. It's used mainly for nervous tension and stress issues. It's also good for insomnia.



Frankincense is known for having a calming effect and is soothing. It is therefore a good choice for anxiety, tension and stress issues. It has an effect on your breathing as it helps you breathe slower and deeper. It also helps to clear the lungs.

You probably know these already, but as a reminder for your safety:

Do not ingest any of the oils.

If you are not trained in how to blend oils, please do not try it yourself. You are dealing with chemical compounds and these can be harmful in the wrong doses. Buy ones that are already blended for you.

Some oils are not suitable for children, or during pregnancy, or those who are frail. Always check the oils you are buying are suitable for you.

Some aromatherapy oils can be toxic to pets, for example, peppermint or tea tree, so please be careful.

Always read the labels for how to use.



TAPPING FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY WITH EFT

Emotional Freedom Technique, or EFT, is a great self-help tool which helps to clear physical and emotional blocks in your life. It is an effective way of helping you to deal with things that have caused stress, anxiety or trauma without having to talk through and re-live painful events.

It is really simple to do and it enables you to release the emotional charge that is associated with your situation. It works on the principle of meridians. These are the energy channels which run along the body and is part of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Instead of using needles to balance the energy like acupuncture, we tap on the meridians instead at specific points using the fingers. It looks strange but it really does work!

Usually this therapy is more in-depth and would be done one to one where we use different phrases or dialogue and tap at the same time; however, you can still get benefit if you focus on the feelings that come up while you tap.

It is useful to rate how stressed and anxious you are feeling before doing a sequence, with 0 being no stress and 10 being extremely stressed.

You will then get a clearer picture as to how much your stress level has reduced after completing each sequence.

All you need to do is find a quiet place, take some deep breaths and follow the tapping sequence while focusing on your feelings around stress and worry.

TAPPING FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY WITH EFT



Tap on the point shown at the arrow for about 30 seconds. This is known as the karate chop point



Tap at the end of the eyebrow 7 times



Tap at the side of the eye 7 times



Tap under the eye 7 times



Tap on the point between the nose and top lip 7 times



Tap on the chin 7 times



Tap on the collar bone 7 times



Tap under the arm 7 times



Tap on the top of the head 7 times

This is one sequence. Take a deep breath and now check your stress level. On the next sequence, you don't need to tap the karate chop point. Instead you can start by tapping at the end of the eyebrow. Try saying to yourself "I feel calm" when tapping each point, Keep repeating the sequence until you get to 0.

NUTRITION

Eating Well

Being under stress can cause our immune system to be less effective, which makes us more susceptible to picking up germs and getting ill.

We therefore need to be aware of what we are eating in order to stay strong and healthy. It sounds so easy but unfortunately when we are under stress, we tend to crave sweet things and foods high in fats and carbs. It initially causes the body to calm down but we all know comfort eating leads to weight gain and other issues.

We have to be more mindful of what we eat so that we don't have these big spikes in blood sugar and those guilty feelings afterwards of having polished off that massive piece of cake or the "sharing" bag of crisps! We also have the little problem of the gyms being closed in lockdown too so we can't even go there to burn it off.



Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food -
Hippocrates

Clean Eating

To keep our Immune system strong, we need to be choosing foods that are as natural as possible as well as cutting down on salt and sugar. We also need to be careful with caffeine as it's a stimulant and makes the body produce more of the stress hormone, cortisol.

Starting the day with a slow release carbohydrate like porridge oats gives us these benefits:

Not feeling as hungry

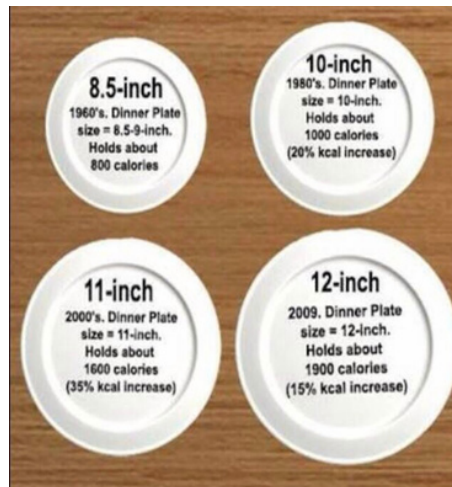
Increases fat metabolism

Better for your heart and cardiovascular system

Helps to lower cholesterol

Energy levels are maintained so we stay alert and think clearly

Portion size is important too. The plate on the left shows us what we should be having. Bear in mind the size of the plate as we may well be filling a large dinner plate and having more than we need.



The main vitamins and minerals to keep our immune system strong

Vitamin A (retinol)	apricots, mango green leafy veg, (e.g. cabbage), carrots, sweet potato, red and orange peppers, cheese, eggs, yogurt, milk, oily fish
Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)	Green leafy veg, peanuts, soybean, potato, bread, wholegrains eggs, poultry, pork, fish
Vitamin B9 (folate)	Green leafy veg, spinach, asparagus, sprouts, broccoli, peas, chickpeas, oats, wholegrains, eggs, bananas, liver, seafood, fortified cereals
Vitamin B12 (cobalamin)	Fish – sardines, salmon, trout, tuna, clams, beef, liver, kidney, eggs, fortified cereals, milk, yogurt, cheese, marmite
Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)	Citrus fruits, strawberries, blackcurrants, pineapple, raspberries, blueberries, potato, sprouts, broccoli, peppers
Vitamin D (ergocalciferol)	Eggs, mushrooms, salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, red meat, Liver, fortified cereals and fat spreads
Vitamin E (alpha - tocopherol)	Avocado, fish, nuts and seeds, olive oil and vegetable oils
Copper	Shellfish, nuts, offal
Iron	Dark green leafy veg, brown rice, red meat, liver, beans, nuts
Zinc	Bread, breakfast cereal, shellfish, beef, pork, chickpeas, lentils, beans, seeds (pumpkin, sesame, squash), eggs, milk, cheese, whole grains, dark chocolate
Selenium	Pork, beef, turkey, chicken, shellfish, tuna, cod, eggs, fortified cereals, brazil nuts, walnuts

A little note on Vitamin D from the NHS website:

"It's important to take vitamin D as you may have been indoors more than usual this year. You should take 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D a day between October and early March to keep your bones and muscles healthy. There have been some reports about vitamin D reducing the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). But there is currently not enough evidence to support taking vitamin D to prevent or treat coronavirus".

Resveratrol

Resveratrol is a chemical compound found in lots of plants and some of our food and has antioxidant and antiviral properties. It protects the heart and can lower cholesterol. There have been several studies and the most interesting was that it has been proven effective in inhibiting both SARS and MERS, which are also coronaviruses. It wasn't tested on humans though.

I've not seen any studies on resveratrol for Covid-19 but my personal view is that if it can be seen to be beneficial in the two other types of coronavirus, then it would perhaps help with this one.



Resveratrol is found in foods that we normally eat, so the good news is that we don't have to go out of our way to find them. We can enjoy some dark chocolate and red wine too!

EXERCISE GUIDE

Walking for your health

I really love this quote as movement really does create so many benefits for the mind and body.

One of my first pieces of advice is to always get moving! There are many forms this can be taken but one of the simplest is walking.

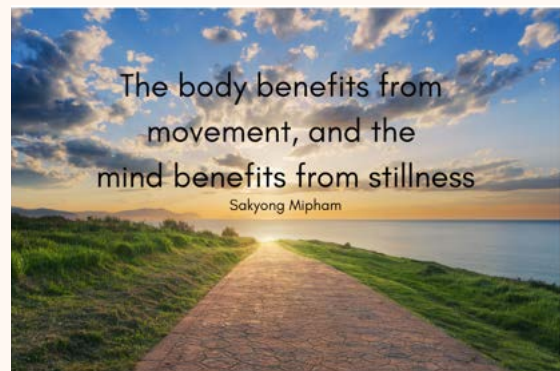
I do not know about you but most of my inspiration and clarification comes when I'm walking. There is something about being in nature that helps to clear the cobwebs and the fog and allow you to take the time to see things clearly.

It may be an idea that comes to you on something you have been working on or maybe something you have been struggling with, the answer suddenly becomes clear. I also find that going for a walk with a friend allows me to talk over any challenges and by the time I have finished, I find the answer appears. I find that my brain needs to verbalise the issue for my mind to find the best solution. From a physical point of view, walking has many benefits including improved Respiration, Circulation, Mobility of the joints, strengthening of the bones, Lymphatic flow, strengthening of the core and other muscles. These are to name just a few.

The human body really is an amazing piece of engineering and all components really do work together synchronistically. I have always loved how the systems of the body work together and this infographic sets out how they fit together.

Quote

"Our own body is the best health system we have — if we know how to listen to it." - Christiane Northrup



Disclaimer

The information set out here is designed to help educate and entertain you with health and fitness advice. Although I am a fully qualified and experienced fitness professional, I am not a physician, nutritionist, dietician, or a health care professional. With this in mind and to reduce and avoid injury please check with your doctor before beginning any fitness program.

HOW THE SYSTEMS OF THE BODY ARE CONNECTED



REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Where our Journey begins! How we are created and how we grow. In order for this to happen we rely on a range of sex hormones which are produced through our Endocrine system.

ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

This secretes hormones into the blood stream, where they will travel to specific organs to create an effect. As we exercise, hormones such as Endorphins, Dopamine and Serotonin are released and play an important role in regulating our mood. As we improve metabolism through exercise this aids in the burning of fat cells and releases Leptin hormone. Leptin and Ghrelin are hormones that regulate our appetite. Balancing hormones therefore links to the choices we make and how we act, which is controlled by the nervous system.



NERVOUS SYSTEM

A system that receives information, processes this information then decides on a plan of action. As above if you have a healthy balance of hormones you are less likely to over eat and have improved moods, which leads to clearer thoughts and healthy choices are made. A healthy habit is simply a choice we make time and time again until this choice is hard wired into your brain.

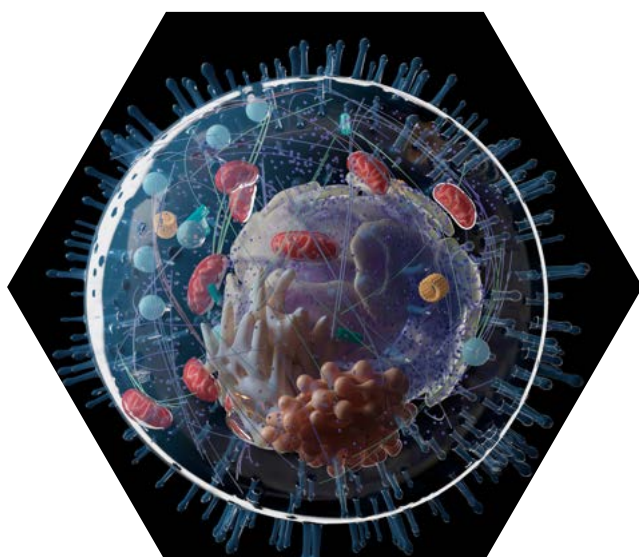
DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

Now that we have made a choice to eat healthy our digestive system will come into play. Ultimately our food is broken down into smaller molecules starting in the mouth and ends in the small intestine. Nutrients will be absorbed from our food then turned into energy. Our body will also use these nutrients for growth and repair. Our Energy system will then take over.



ENERGY SYSTEM

In order to create energy, our body needs to uptake food in the form of Carbohydrates. This will then be converted to glucose and then ATP within the cells. The body can then utilise this ATP as an energy source to carry out physical activity.



MUSCULAR SYSTEM

Now that we have ATP for energy we can use this for our Cardiac muscle (Heart muscle), Smooth muscle eg digestive muscles and our Skeletal muscles (Biceps, Quadriceps) All of these muscles can be trained to become stronger and more efficient. We can do this through exercise.

SKELETAL SYSTEM

Our Skeletal muscles play a huge role in creating movement of our bones and joints within the skeleton. For example the Intercostal muscles attach to the ribs and create movement of the rib cage and assist in breathing. This brings us onto the Respiratory system.





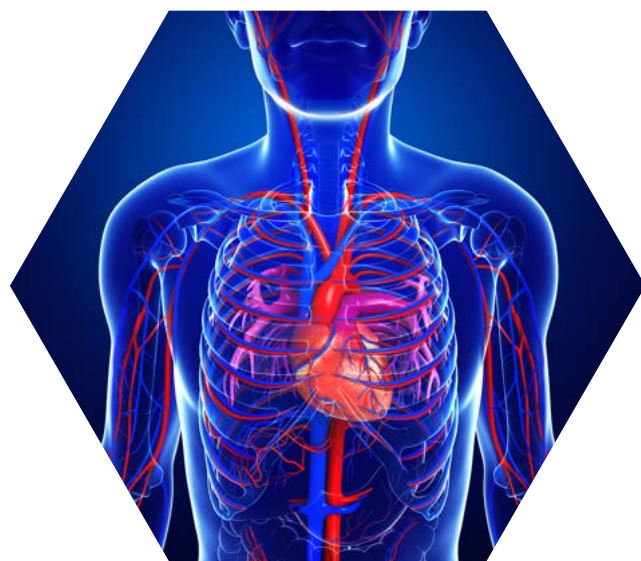
RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

This system is responsible for the exchange of Oxygen and Carbon dioxide through inspiration and expiration.

As we ensure we open our chest through good posture and effective breathing techniques we will help to improve our effectiveness of taking in and utilising as much oxygen as possible whilst removing waste products like carbon dioxide. This oxygen can then be transported through our blood stream to the body via the Circulatory system.

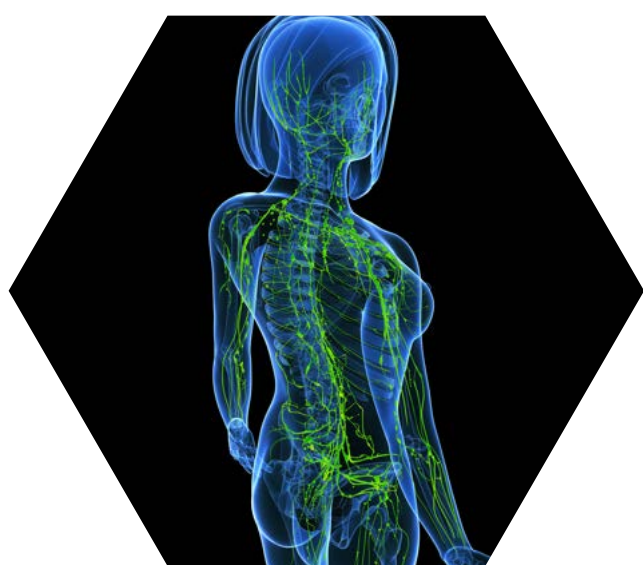
CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

Now that we have a healthy supply of oxygen in our blood stream our heart can now pump this to the rest of our body. As the heart is a muscle, like any other muscle in the body it can also be trained to be stronger and more effective. If our heart is healthy it will be able to propel more blood per beat reducing the pressure put on our heart.



LYMPHATIC/ IMMUNE SYSTEM

The Lymphatic system is in effect a sewerage system that removes unwanted toxins, waste and excess water from the body. This system contains white blood cells that are used to fight infection and removes the waste products from our cells. White blood cells are responsible for protecting the body against infectious disease and foreign invaders. Exercise can help to improve the immune system.



As you can see exercise really does contribute to the many systems of the body in the fight to help improve our health, fitness and immunity.



The Importance of posture and your immunity



No doubt you have heard on many occasions to ensure you have good posture!

Statements like stand up straight are used regularly whilst growing up as well as when we get older, but why? What are the reasons why we should have good posture? And how do we do this?

Posture relates to the way we hold our physical body and how the bones and joints are held in a certain position by our muscles. In anatomy terms we would call it the Anatomical Position. Here you can see an image of the correct anatomical position from the anterior aspect.



To further understand correct posture, we also need to look at the alignment of the spine itself.

This is known as the neutral spine seen here.

The spine has a natural “S” shape therefore is never “Straight” although this term is commonly used.

Imbalance in Posture



To check your posture a simple test can be completed using a plumb line from the lateral, anterior, and posterior angles. This test will help to identify any miss alignments in the body. Once this test has been completed a plan of action can take place to start to look at how these can be corrected.

Most often the imbalance in the body is created when we over work certain muscles in one plane, and they become too tight in one direction and too loose in another direction. This can be developed over time due to several reasons but here are some common examples.



1.
Overuse of computers. Generally, most of what we do is in front of us for example regularly using a computer or device. So its not surprising that the muscles at the front of our bodies are worked more.

2.
Over training certain muscles in the gym. It's quite common that people who over train the muscles of the front of the body but neglect the muscles of the back, can create a postural imbalance. For example, over training the chest muscles but not the back will create a forward rounding of the shoulders, over stretching the back and reduced respiratory capacity.



3. **Slumping when we sit**
Unfortunately, this will place our spine out of alignment. Years ago before sofas most people would sit on a hard upright chair and although not as comfortable they did have better posture. Sitting for too long really is bad for us.

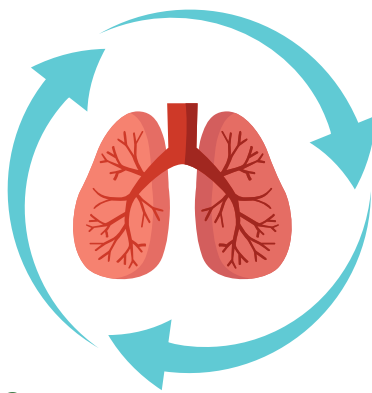


The Benefits of good posture

- Mind and Body

Increased breathing capacity

The immune system is then stronger and more effective at fighting disease.



Increases oxygen up take

Oxygenated blood increases in the cells

Waste gases and toxins are removed more efficiently and cells can perform optimally.

Increased mobility and greater range of movement

Resulting in boosting your recovery and improving energy levels.



Reduction in aches and pains

This will in turn reduce the stress hormone cortisol

Increased confidence as head held high and shoulders back.

Improved confidence as you will stand taller

Improving your ability to make healthier choices including fitness and nutrition.



Improving your self image

Boosting your mood

Reducing anxiety, stress and depression

EXERCISE GUIDE

To help improve posture and mobility

Now that we understand the importance of good posture and the health benefits associated with it, let us look at the exercises that will help to achieve this.

The exercises below will help to maintain and improve the muscle tension to hold the body in correct alignment, as well as improving the range of movement within your joints (flexibility). Simply remembering to sit up or stand straight cannot be achieved all day, therefore creating muscle tension in a balanced way will hold you in good posture consistently.

The first 11 movements can be completed on their own as a daily movement pattern for people just starting a routine. To build on these movements and to further improve the strength and tension of the muscles the next 6 exercises can be completed. I would always suggest practising your technique first to ensure you can complete the movements in correct alignment before then moving on to use any weights. Please ensure before you begin any exercise program that you check with your Gp first that these exercises will be suitable for you.

Movements 1 to 11 start with 5 reps per side per session until the body is used to these movements then build up to 10- 12 reps per side per session. Only work to your current range of movement and what feels comfortable for you. As the muscles and joints develop the range of movement can gradually be increased over time.



Each exercise here will be completed with correct posture. This includes.

- Head facing forward.
- Shoulders down and pulled back.
- Stomach held tight.
- Hips central.
- Knees slightly bent.
- Feet facing forwards.

On each movement breath in through the nose and out through the mouth ensuring you are fully utilising the respiratory system.



Side to side.

Correct posture. *Breathe*

Move ear towards shoulder. Left then right. Keep shoulders down and relaxed.

The aim here is to release the muscles of the neck.



Neck semi circles.

Correct posture. *Breathe*

Look right, move head down to the middle then to the left.

3



Shoulder shrug.

Correct posture. *Breathe*
Lift shoulders then lower.

4



Shoulder circles.

Correct posture. *Breathe*
Lift and roll back the shoulders then bring down in a circular motion.
Complete the set forward and one set backwards.
The aim here is to release the muscles of the upper back and the shoulders and to mobilise the shoulder joint.

Dynamic pectoral (Chest)

Correct posture. *Breathe*
Keep shoulders relaxed and down.
The aim here is to open the chest to improve breathing capacity.

5



Diagonal dynamic Pectoral (Chest)

Correct posture. *Breathe*

6



7



Torso twist

Correct posture. *Breathe*

Keeping the knees slightly bent and the lower body relatively still twist to the side.

The aim here is to mobilise the thorax and loosen the lower back.

8



Anterior/ Posterior hip tilt.

Correct posture. *Breathe*

Tilt the pelvis forward to create an arch in the lower back (image 2). Then tilt the pelvis backwards tucking the bum underneath. Finally return to the middle position.

The aim here is to mobilise the pelvis, engage the muscles of the hip and lower back and observe the correct position of the pelvis to achieve correct posture. The pelvis should be in a neutral position.

9



Hip Hinge.

Correct posture. *Breathe*

Try to only bend the knees a little here as this will increase flexibility in the hamstrings. You can bend the knees further if your range of movement is restricted in the hamstrings. Hinge forward from the hips, keeping the back straight and bottom pushed behind. Use a mirror to check your back is straight.

The aim here is to mobilise the hip and lower back, increase flexibility in the back of the legs (hamstrings) and engage the muscles of the hip flexors and lower back. Practising this movement will help to reduce back aches and when complimented with a squat is the correct technique for every day bending and lifting to reduce injury.

10



Dynamic Squat to overhead stretch

Correct posture. **Breathe**

Keeping the back straight, bottom behind and knees bent in squat position extend up and bring both arms above the head.

The aim here is to mobilise the ankles, knees, hip, lower and upper back and to engage the muscles of the lower, upper, front and back legs, the hip flexors and the lower and upper back.

Plantar/ Dorsi flexion of the ankle

Correct posture. **Breathe**

Keeping the supporting leg knee slightly bent extend the opposing foot to the floor. Use a chair or wall for balance if needed or complete seated. Bring the foot back up pointing the toe upwards. A circular movement of the ankle is also beneficial too.

The aim here is to mobilise the ankles, knees, hip, lower and upper back and to engage the muscles of the lower, upper, front, and back legs, the hip flexors and the lower and upper back.

11



The speed of exercise should be around 2 secs on the effort part of the exercise (lifting) and a controlled 4 secs on the return. Controlling the weight on the return will maximise the muscle tension and help to build strength over time. Whenever completing any exercises always remember to fully engage the core muscles (Stomach, Back and pelvic floor) as these are the muscles that help us to hold our shape. The stronger your core the less pressure will be placed on other areas of the body. Consciously engaging the core muscles consistently will strengthen these muscles quicker. Begin with 5 repetitions of each exercise. Then progress to 8, 10 then 12. Once you reach 12 reps you can start to complete 2 sets of 6 then 8,10, 12. Ensure you have a rest of 30 secs in between each set.

1



Upright row.

Correct posture. **Breathe out as you lift, in on and the way down.**

This can be completed without weights to practice the technique and build strength first or dumbbells, kettlebell, or a barbell. Keep elbows high and control the movement slowly on the way down. Engage the Core.

The aim here is to strengthen the upper back muscle (Trapezius) and the shoulder muscle (Deltoid). The Traps stabilise the shoulder blade and play an important role in posture by supporting the spine.

Squat.

Correct posture. Breathe out as you stand, in and on the way down.

This can be completed without weights to practice the technique and build strength first or dumbbells, kettlebell, or a barbell. Squat down as far as is comfortable for your range of movement. If balance is an issue you can squat onto a chair for support. Keep the back straight, bottom pushed behind you, heels stay down on the floor, push up through the heels and engage the glutes (bottom) as you rise. As you stand tuck the bottom in (hip thrust) and bring the shoulders back and down. Engage the Core.

The aim here is to strengthen the leg and bottom muscles which support the core of the body. This will also engage the lower back and hip muscles. Learning to squat effectively will help you in your everyday life by bending and lifting in a safe and effective way, reducing injury and aches and pains.



3



Deadlift.

Correct posture. Breathe out as you stand, in and on the way down.

This can be completed without weights to practice the technique and build strength first or dumbbells, kettlebell, or a barbell. Start by bending forward at the hip (hip hinge) keeping the back straight and knees slightly bent. Bend forward as far as is comfortable for your range of movement. If your hamstrings (back of upper legs) are tight you may find you will have to bend your knees more until your flexibility improves. Lower down keeping the back straight, bottom pushed behind you, heels stay down on the floor. As you stand tuck the bottom in (hip thrust) and bring the shoulders back and down. Engage the Core.

The aim here is to strengthen the lower back muscles. The leg muscles, glutes (bottom) and upper back muscles will all be used within this movement. Improving your range of movement around your lower back and hips will help you in your everyday movement and help to overall strengthen your core.

Pec Fly.

Correct posture. Breathe out pull arms together, in as the arms come apart.

This can be completed without weights to practice the technique and build strength first or use dumbbells. Arms level with the centre of the chest and elbows slightly bent. Pull arms apart until hands are past the line of your shoulders. Use your own range of movement here. Bring arms back together. Engage the Core.

The aim here is to strengthen the chest muscles and help to open the chest cavity to improve the respiratory capacity. This will also help to pull back the shoulders improving posture.



5



Side raises.

Correct posture. Breathe out as you lift, in on the way down.

This can be completed without weights to practice the technique and build strength first or use dumbbells. Ensure you are fully engaging the core muscles (stomach, back and pelvic floor) here to give you a strong base and protect your back and pelvic floor. With a slight bend in the arms, raise them up to shoulder level then control on the return. Engage the Core.

The aim here is to strengthen the shoulder muscles (Deltoids) and improve the Core strength. As the weight is taken away from the body this adds extra intensity to the Core therefore full Core engagement is needed here.

Prone Fly.

Correct posture. Breathe out as you lift, in on the way down.

This can be completed without weights to practice the technique and build strength first or use dumbbells. Either standing with a hip hinge forward or you can lean your chest onto an inclined bench. Ensure the back is straight, knees bent, bottom behind you then with a bend in the elbows squeeze the shoulder blades together to engage the posterior Deltoids (back of shoulders), Rhomboids, Traps (upper back) and the Lats (largest muscle in the back). Control on the return. Engage the Core.

The aim here is to strengthen the shoulder and main muscles of the back. These muscles are involved in ensuring we have correct posture by holding the shoulders and down and supporting the spine.



6



HOME WORKING – TOP TIPS FOR PRODUCTIVITY

I work from home...a lot, and let me tell you it has been a challenge.

I'm a social beast (most of us coaches are) so to spend so much time working alone and staying productive (not to mention sane) can be a challenge.

In this world of technology advances, concerns about unnecessary travel and spreading illnesses, home working is going to become more popular going forward.

I have used my experience and the advice of others to come up with some top tips for working from home. By following these top tips hopefully, you can stay motivated, stay sane and make a success of it



Get started early.

Believe it or not, one way to work from home productively is to dive into your to-do list as soon as you wake up. Simply getting a project started first thing in the morning can be the key to making progress on it gradually throughout the day. Otherwise, you'll prolong breakfast and let the morning sluggishness wear away your motivation.

Pretend you are going to work as normal.

When working from home, do all the things you'd do to prepare for a normal workday: Set your alarm, make a brew, and get dressed in work clothes. Internet browsers even allow you to set up multiple accounts with different toolbars on the top – for example, a toolbar for home and a separate toolbar for work.

Structure your day like you normally would.

Segment what you'll do and when over the course of the day to stay on schedule. If you have an online calendar, create personal events and reminders that tell you when to start a new task.

Choose a dedicated workspace.

Rather than cooping yourself up in your room or on the couch – spaces that are associated with leisure time – dedicate a specific room or surface in your home to work.



Don't stay at home.

Take "home working" a step further and get out of the house. Coffee shops, libraries and similar Wi-Fi-enabled spaces can help you simulate the energy of an office so you can stay productive even when you don't sit in an official workplace. Assuming these places are open and available to us.

Make it harder for yourself to access social media.

To counteract your social networks' ease of use during work hours, remove them from your browser shortcuts. You might even consider working primarily in a private or if you're using Chrome, an "Incognito" browser window. It's a guarantee that you won't be tempted into taking too many social breaks during the day.

Commit to doing more.

Projects always take longer than you initially think they will. So, just as you're encouraged to overestimate how much time you'll spend doing one thing, you should also overestimate how many things you'll do during the day. Even if you come up short of your goal, you'll still come out of that day with a solid list of tasks filed, oh and always celebrate your victories.

Work when you're at your most productive.

Nobody sprints through their work from morning to evening – your levels of motivation will naturally rise and fall throughout the day. Therefore, when you're working from home it's all the more important to know when those ebbs and flows will take place and plan your schedule around them.

Plan out what you'll be working on ahead of time.

It's important to let your agenda change if you need it to, but it's equally as important to commit to an agenda that outlines every assignment before you begin. Try solidifying your schedule the day before, making it feel more official when you wake up the next day to get started on it.

Use technology to stay connected.

Working from home might help you focus on your work in the short term, but it can also make you feel cut off the larger operation happening in the office. Instant messaging and videoconferencing tools can make it easy to check in with your teams or teammates and remind you how your work is contributing to the big picture.



Communicate expectations with anyone who will be home with you.

Make sure any roommates, siblings, parents, spouses, and children (if you can) respect your space during work hours. Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you're "home", if you know what I mean.



Take clear breaks.

It can be so easy to get distracted when working from home that you avoid breaks altogether. Don't let the guilt of working in the building you sleep-in prevent you from taking five minutes to relax. However, rather than just opening YouTube and watching some comfort clips, use your breaks to get away from your desk. Go for a walk outside or spend time with others who might also be in the house (remember those children).

Interact with other humans.

You're working from home, not the moon. Interaction with other people during the day is allowed, even if they're not your teammates. It's a good idea to see another face during the day if most of your workday is solitary.

Prepare your meals the night before.

When you're in your own home, it can be tempting to spend time preparing a nice breakfast and lunch for yourself, chopping and cooking included. Don't use precious minutes making your food the day of work and cook it the night before.

Pick a definitive finishing time each day.

In place of teammates, who are packing up and leaving reminds you to do the same, set an alarm at the end of the day to indicate your normal workday is coming to an end. You don't have to stop immediately, but knowing the workday is technically over can help you start the process of saving your work wrapping up for the evening.

Have something playing in the background.

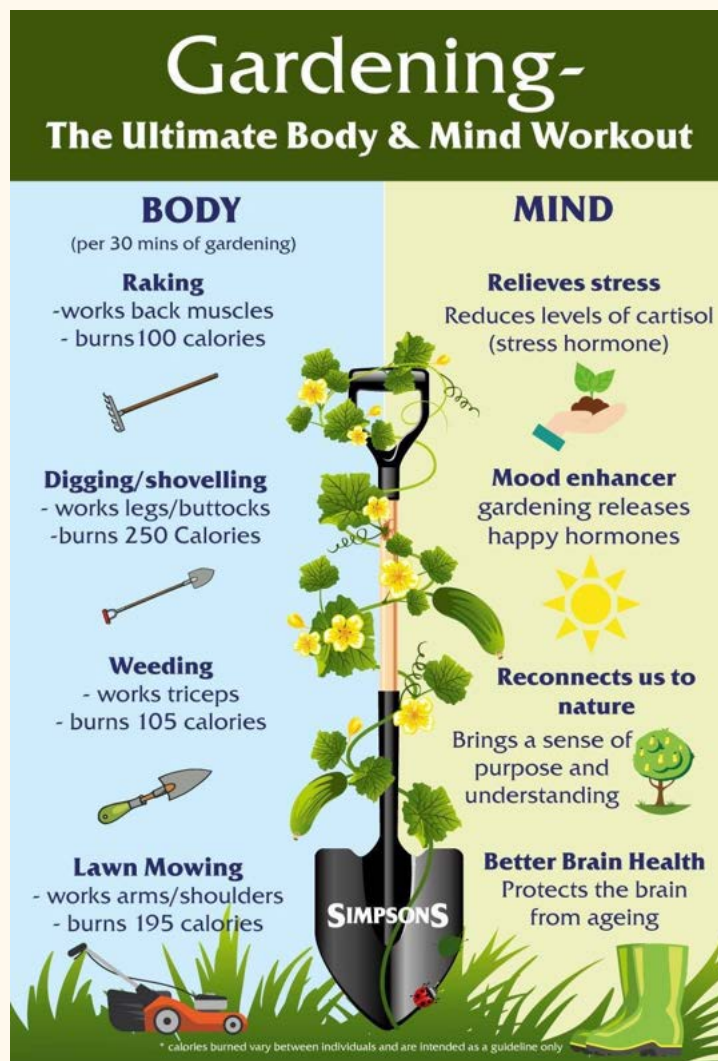
If you're alone in the house it's good to have some white noise in the background. Of all the tips, tricks, and secrets I've uncovered for being more productive at home, one stands out above the rest for me: putting on a documentary channel. I'm Serious. Just keeping them running in the background at a low volume, and I swear, I get more stuff done.



GARDENING: A GYM FOR YOUR MIND AND BODY.

There have been many studies to show that gardening is hugely beneficial to both mental and physical health, it's certainly true for me. In fact I can add financial health to that as I do it for a living so it improves 3 things in my life, possibly 4 things as my relationships and interaction with people have improved. Anyway this isn't about me so I will start again.

Take a look at this picture:



The physical benefits are obvious as the more you exercise the fitter you become. Many experts, (when I say experts I mean scientist types) believe gardening makes us feel good because it's physical exercise and exercise releases endorphins, the happy hormone and we all want to be happy. Posture when carrying out your gardening tasks is the thing to be wary of and of course not to overdo it. I'd even advise people to treat it like any exercise and to gently warm up before throwing yourself into the weeding, digging etc.

In addition gardening can be a creative venture too, something that allows us to express ourselves. You can have colour scheme planting, ornamental planting, shaped, and structured planting; the sort of thing that gives you a sense of achievement. Of course this garden artistry will need maintaining so that increases a sense of purpose, which in turn improves mental health. Gardening has been shown in various studies as a means to relieve stress.

As the diagram above says gardening can help reduce cortisol, the stress hormone. Cortisol if not checked can cause all kinds of physical issues such as weight gain and heart conditions and has just as much of an impact on our mental abilities. So not only can we be left feeling unable to think straight when we are stressed, but cortisol is also linked to depression, it's a knock on effect. Time spent time outside in our gardens, enables us to regulate our emotions more efficiently than if we were stuck indoors. Part of that is down to the Vitamin D that natural daylight provides.

As touched on earlier gardening is related to better brain function and can help improve concentration and memory, though some who know me would say the opposite is true. Some studies have found that gardening can even reduce the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's. In Australia a long term study followed around 3,000 older adults for over 15 years, tracking incidence of all types of dementia and assessing a variety of lifestyle factors. The researchers concluded that daily gardening was the single biggest risk reduction for dementia, reducing incidence by over a third - 36 percent. (<http://alzheimersocietyblog.ca/gardening-therapy-for-dementia>)

Become at one with nature in your own little green space, I practice what I preach as my green space is tiny but still allows me to escape from the daily stresses. Practicing mindfulness when in your garden is easy because it's something you want to do. You're concentrating on planting, pruning or weeding and therefore not allowing your mind to wander towards unwelcome thoughts or tasks.

I guess now it's up to you to embrace your green space and enjoy some time in the garden, reaping the health benefits to your body and mind in the process. Let it become your own little nature reserve and enjoy everything that it has to offer, all from the comfort of your own home. Banish that unwelcome stress, improve your mind and body and get out into garden.



FEBRUARY GARDENING JOBS

Gardening in the bleak cold winter months may not be that appealing but getting out there and doing a few jobs will make you feel better. Here are a few of the jobs I do in my little plot to give you a few ideas.

Trim back ivy, Virginia creeper and other climbers that have outgrown their space, before birds start nesting

Check that small alpine don't become smothered by fallen leaves and other wind-blown debris

Prune fruit trees and shrubs, removing any dead, damaged, congested and diseased branches

Provide food for birds to help them through the winter months. Remember to clean the feeders regularly.

Clear soggy leaves, algae and moss from paths, patios, decking and steps

Dig over any gaps in borders, removing the roots of perennial weeds

Give empty pots and seed trays a thorough scrubbing ready for the start of the sowing season

Top up bird baths with fresh water daily and melt ice with warm water on frosty days

Repair wobbly or damaged fences, and treat wooden structures with preservative during dry spells

Mulch the beds with compost

Trim back ivy, Virginia creeper and other climbers that have outgrown their space, before birds start nesting



IF IT'S TOO MUCH AND YOU NEED MORE HELP...

Please reach out and ask for help. No one will judge you or think you are weak or anything like that. If anything, they will admire your courage in speaking out. Tell someone. Talk to a friend, or a neighbour, or us! There are these helplines too:

Samaritans 116 123

Anxiety UK 03444 775 774

CALM 0800 58 58 58

Papyrus 0800 068 4141

YoungMinds 0808 802 5544

Crisis Text Line (text SHOUT to 85258)

Rochdale and District Mind 01706 752338

Andy's Man Club email info@andysmanclub.co.uk



It's okay not to be okay

Be your own best friend. You know that if your friend was finding it tough, you would reach out and help them.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH

Suzanne - Lakeside Therapies

Tel: 07946 404096

website: www.lakesidetherapies.co.uk

e-mail: suzanne@lakesidetherapies.co.uk

Craig - Craig Smith Coaching

Tel: 07966 525004

website: www.craig-smith-coaching.com

e-mail: craig@craig-smith-coaching.com

Michelle - Nurturing Body and Soul

website: <https://nurturingbodyandsoul.co.uk/contact/>

e-mail: michelle@nurturingbodyandsoul.co.uk

Simon - Simon's Garden and Countryside Services

Tel: 07510 574119

You can also find us individually on Facebook