



MASTERING YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING



orthoplex®



{ intro }

IT'S NO SECRET THAT WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED, YOU DON'T FEEL YOUR BEST

In today's fast-paced society, it's easy for day-to-day responsibilities to take priority and for stress to accumulate over time until you feel overwhelmed. Or, you may find yourself suddenly struggling to cope with unexpected changes and challenging circumstances that inevitably arise throughout life.

Many people may overlook tell-tale signs and symptoms of poor mental health or push these out of mind, persevering until the effects take their toll physically. You may start to feel exhausted and overreact to small things. You might experience frequent headaches and get sick a lot. Your mind may feel clouded as you struggle to concentrate or maintain motivation. Refreshing sleep becomes a distant memory and you may lack libido. Unhealthy habits and distractions can creep in as you try to soothe the stress.

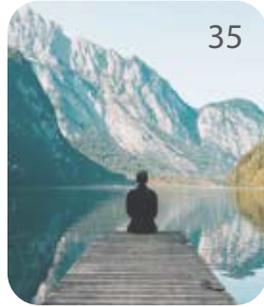
While you may become "used to" feeling this way, it is not the way life is supposed to be long-term or how you're supposed to feel on a daily basis. Ultimately, all of these things have a detrimental effect on your health and can eventually lead to feeling as though you have lost control.

The good news is that you will get through this. Whether you're going through a trying

time or have been experiencing sustained stress, you can and will get back to feeling like yourself again and living your best life. You can and will master your mental wellbeing and restore your health.

While it's not always possible to prevent stressful situations or adverse events, you can strengthen your capacity to deal with them, both physically and psychologically. Simple changes to diet and lifestyle can have a significant impact on potentially reversing symptoms of stress and help you to regain control of your life – promoting peace of mind and vibrant energy; supporting sound sleep and an effective stress response; nourishing your nervous system and happy hormones; and optimising gut-brain function.

This booklet has been designed to support you with stress management, providing recommendations and resources that can accompany the advice made by your healthcare practitioner. Together, we believe in a holistic approach to health – nurturing both physical and mental function so that your systems operate together in harmony, helping you to achieve optimal wellbeing. The information in this booklet is generic in nature, so please consult your healthcare practitioner before making any dietary or lifestyle changes.



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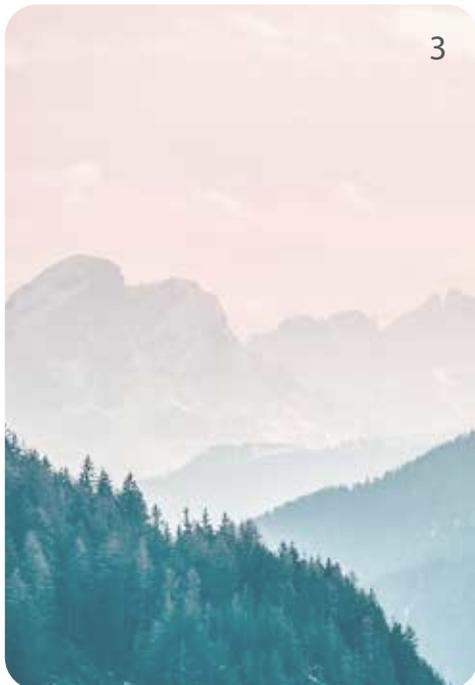
18



33



43



3



40

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 06 What is Mental Health?
- 07 Stress and Your Mental Wellbeing
- 08 Anxiety and Depression
- 10 Stress and Your Physical Wellbeing
- 12 Yoga for Stress
- 14 Fun Ways to Move Stagnant Energy
- 16 Healthy Habits Checklist
- 20 The Gut-Brain Connection
- 22 Nutrients and Stress
- 26 A Herbal Helping Hand
- 28 The 5 D's
- 30 Wellbeing Stress Test
- 32 Colour Code
- 33 Colour Me Calm
- 34 A Matter of Mindfulness
- 37 Hacks for Hitting the Hay
- 40 Recipes
- 44 Sip Away the Stress
- 46 Get Appy
- 47 Further Assistance

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health (or mental well-being) refers to a state of wellness rather than the absence of illness. It's about being cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally and socially healthy – the way you think, feel, behave and form relationships all contribute.

The *World Health Organisation* defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

You can also think of mental health as a sliding scale with feeling good and functioning well on one end. At the other, are symptoms affecting your thoughts, feelings and behaviour which can be characterised as a mental health condition (or mental illness).

High levels of mental health are positively associated with increased learning, creativity, productivity, positive social behaviour and relationships, physical health and life expectancy.

Mental health conditions can negatively impact day-to-day functioning and relationships and are associated with poor physical health and distress.

Beyond Blue explains that whilst you may not be experiencing a diagnosed mental illness, it's still possible that your mental health may not be flourishing. On the other hand, it's possible to be diagnosed with a mental health condition while also feeling well in many areas of your life.



STRESS + YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING



COGNITIVE CHANGES

Poor memory and concentration; mood swings and irritability; brain fog; cognitive dysfunction; constantly worrying and looping anxious thoughts are all related to experiencing long-term stress and can lead to anxiety and depression.



EMOTIONAL & PERSONALITY CHANGES

When you're stressed, you tend to feel unhappy – perhaps sad or angry – and when you feel this way for long periods of time, you can suffer emotionally. If you remain stressed and unhappy over the long-term, it can feel as though it's altering your personality and you may even forget who you are without stress – potentially leading to more severe mental health issues.



BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

Stress can influence your behaviour in a number of ways. For example, you might turn to a specific vice to try to alleviate the feeling, withdraw from others, or start eating more or less food than you need.

{ stats }

ANXIETY & DEPRESSION

Anxiety and depression are common mental health conditions that can affect anyone, at any time. However, different people can be at greater risk, as well as people going through particular events in their lives.

According to *Beyond Blue*, changes such as becoming an adult, retiring, starting a family or losing one can put people at greater risk of developing a mental health condition. Experiencing discrimination based on sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity and religion can cause psychological distress, resulting in increased vulnerability to anxiety and depression.



45%
of Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime

1 in 6
Australians are currently experiencing depression or anxiety or both

Only half of all Australians with a condition currently seek support

Source: Beyond Blue

MEN 6 out of almost 8 suicide-related deaths each day are men	WOMEN experience anxiety and depression at higher rates than men
YOUNG PEOPLE 1 in 4 young people experience a mental health condition	OLDER PEOPLE Depression is one of the most disabling mental conditions later in life and those who experience a chronic medical condition are twice as likely to develop depression
ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE experience greater rates of isolation, poor health and depression	PREGNANCY & PARENTHOOD can be an emotional and stressful time for parents, and women in particular can experience anxiety and depression

STRESS AND YOUR PHYSICAL WELLBEING

Is stress a bad thing?

There's no shame in feeling stressed. Everyone experiences stress at some point and different things will be stressful for different people. There are no hard-and-fast rules about what should or should not stress you out.

It might surprise you to learn that stress is not necessarily a bad thing. Some people thrive on that rush of adrenaline as it helps them to work better, or faster, to meet an impending deadline. However, the modern lifestyle lends itself to long-term stress through prolonged exposure to stressors which opens us up to suffer from more debilitating effects, both physically and mentally.

How can I prevent stress?

Whilst stress is an unavoidable part of life, if it continues long-term it can cause issues for your health. Avoiding stress wherever possible is ideal, but arguably more important is learning to effectively deal with stress. The first step is usually to deal directly with the cause of the stress and once the situation is rectified, focus on recovering and returning your body to a balanced state.

Reducing long-term stress and its effects requires a multifaceted, holistic approach. Using techniques to deal with stress both in the moment and once it has passed, as well as making sure your body is physically supported by receiving the right balance of nurturing nutrients, can all help to reduce long-term effects.

Some techniques that can help you manage stress and break the cycle include breathing techniques, regular exercise, prioritising sleep and of course, proper nutrition – which will be covered in more detail throughout this booklet.

Why do I feel stressed?

Stress is an evolutionary response from our ancestors who operated in an environment where “fight or flight” were normal everyday options – like when coming face-to-face with a tiger.

Our stress response was designed to protect us in dangerous situations. The hypothalamus (a small region at the base of your brain) releases a surge of stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol which prepare your body to react quickly and either stay and fight or run away – resulting in the physical sensation of stress.

These days, however, this innate stress response isn't needed as frequently as it was at the beginning of human evolution. Fortunately, we now encounter fewer fierce felines! Instead, the perceived “danger” has become much more subtle yet pervasive. Today, daily life is made up of so many small stressors – traffic, meetings, social and family pressures, deadlines, parking, the list goes on – making stress an all-too-common feature of our modern lifestyle. From a psychological perspective, these conditions known as stressors are situations or events that you find demanding, challenging or threatening to your physical or mental health.

While our stress response does still have a place in certain situations, the key is to manage your stress response and ensure it is not stuck in the “on” position for a prolonged period of time.

What are the physical effects of stress?

When your brain releases stress hormones, your body has an immediate physical reaction, increasing your breathing and heart rate; heightening your awareness; and tensing your muscles – ultimately preparing you to take physical action.

While stress hormones are helpful in the moment when needed, elevated levels over the long-term can potentially lead to additional physical impacts on systems throughout your body:



Cardiovascular system:
increased blood pressure and risk of cardiac events



Endocrine system:
increased blood sugar levels



Gastrointestinal system:
slowed digestion, irritable bowels, ulcers, heartburn



Reproductive system:
decreased fertility by impacting sperm production and quality in men and affecting menstruation and PMS in women



Immune system:
weakened immune function

Other effects of chronic stress include frequent headaches, insomnia, weight gain, anxiety and depression.

This is why it's important to try and regulate your stress response and soothe the production of stress hormones once the situation has passed, to help you mitigate any negative effects.

YOGA FOR STRESS

A sequence to soothe stress, get grounded, restore balance and wellbeing.

Child's Pose

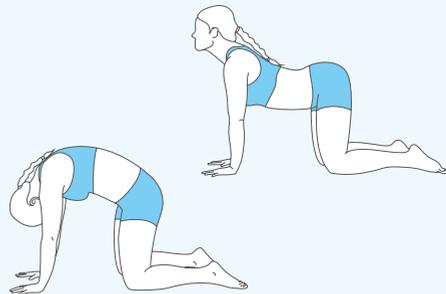
With toes together and knees at the edge of your yoga mat, sit buttocks on the heels and lay your torso down. Stretch your arms out in front and rest your forehead on the floor or a block.

This soothing pose brings your attention inwards and can make you feel safe and comforted. This pose stretches out the lower back and hips and relaxes the spine and upper body – areas that become tense when you're stressed.



Cat Cow

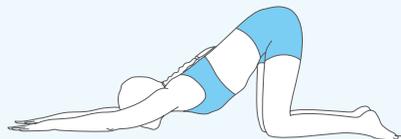
On your hands and knees, inhale as you curve your belly down towards the floor and feel the stretch in your chest and neck. Exhale as you round your spine towards the ceiling.



Extended Puppy Pose

Start on all fours with shoulders over wrists and hips over knees. Walk hands forward, keeping elbows off the ground. Draw hips back, lengthen the spine and bring forehead down.

This pose helps calm the mind and relieve stress and tension, particularly in the spine, shoulders and upper back.



Side Stretch

Sitting cross legged on the floor, place your left hand on the floor with your elbow slightly bent. Reach your right arm up and overhead, leaning into your left side. Hold, then switch sides and repeat.

This pose stretches the neck, shoulders, back and obliques, relieving stress.



Seated Forward Fold

Sit on the floor with your feet together and legs extended in front of you. Exhale as you bend at the hips and lower your torso to your thighs. Lengthen your spine and hold your feet or calves.

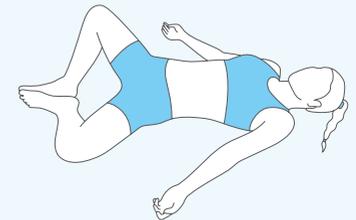
This pose calms the nervous system and quiets the mind.



Reclining Bound Angle Pose

Lie flat on the ground, bend your knees and allow them to relax to each side.

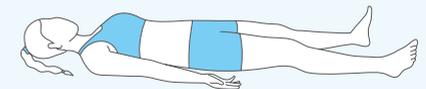
This pose opens up the front side of the body which can close in when you're feeling stressed and anxious.



Corpse Pose

Laying on your back, extend your arms and legs, letting your feet drop open at the sides with your palms facing up. Close your eyes. Look for any tension or tightness in your body and consciously release it, allowing your body to melt into the floor. Focus on your breathing.

This is considered one of the most important poses in yoga, where your body integrates all of the previous poses, receiving all of their benefits. It also allows your body and mind to fully relax and restore.



FUN WAYS TO MOVE STAGNANT ENERGY

Don't let stress stagnate in your body – move it to maintain your mood! Find a form of movement that you enjoy and you're likely to keep doing it - turning it into a sustainable, healthy habit. It can be fun to find a friend to exercise with or join a group; this also encourages accountability.



Playing with your children

Swimming



Dancing or Zumba



Walking, Running or Hiking



Gardening



Boxing or Martial Arts



Cycling

Water Aerobics

Yoga or Pilates



Roller Blading

{ tips }

HEALTHY HABITS CHECKLIST

To function well both physically and mentally, you need to look after yourself. As the aeroplane motto goes, you need to fit your own oxygen mask before you can help others! Which of these healthy habits have you done today to support yourself? Taking action in one or more of these areas may help soothe your stress.

Eat Nourishing Food

A healthy, balanced diet, low in processed foods and sugar, and loaded with vegetables, fruits and healthy fats can help maintain normal levels of stress hormones.



Move Your Body

You don't have to become a gym junkie, but adding a gentle walk or short yoga routine into your day can work wonders for your mental health. Moving your body and being in the fresh air and sunlight can boost your mood, while taking time to stretch out your muscles can soothe stress. Our muscles tend to tighten inadvertently during tense times.

Skip the Stimulants

Avoid drugs and alcohol, quit smoking and skip sugar. These can seem like tempting coping mechanisms during tough times, but they all influence the way your brain and body operate and can make matters worse over time, further impacting your sleep, mood and behaviour, as they're addictive substances.



Stay Social & Participate in Life

During stressful periods, it can be tempting to become a recluse. But staying connected to others through positive relationships and community can help you maintain your mood or provide a supportive space if you are unwell.

Schedule Down Time

Being busy all the time and taking on too much can add to your stress and drain your battery. Schedule time in your calendar to do something slow – or nothing at all. Allow yourself to get the rest you need, when you need it, without feeling guilty.



Practice Relaxation

It's important to take time to yourself to switch off and engage in a positive practice to soothe your strung-out nervous system. Cultivate calm by taking a bath, booking in a massage or acupuncture, practicing yoga, tapping, reading, journaling or meditating.



Prioritise Quality Sleep

Sleeping while you're stressed can seem like a struggle, but it is key to stopping stress from getting the better of you. Stress can greatly affect sleep, but it's important to maintain a consistent sleep-wake cycle as much as you can and to make bedtime a priority. If you're having trouble falling asleep, try a relaxation or mindfulness technique to calm a busy mind.



Journal or Talk It Out

Expressing your thoughts and emotions can help you release them. Acknowledge your feelings and if you're comfortable, share them with someone who can hold space for you, such as a friend, family member or professional. Alternatively, journaling can be helpful when people aren't available to speak to, like in the middle of the night.



Engage in a Hobby

Focusing your full attention on a distraction can make something else seem more important to your stressed-out brain, rather than dwelling on your problems. Pick a healthy hobby that will stimulate your senses and get you out of your head, like concentrating on a puzzle or game, having a conversation with a friend, painting a picture or playing an instrument.



Let Nature Nurture

Get outdoors and spend time in nature. This literal breath of fresh air and sunshine on your skin can be cleansing and reinvigorating for both body and mind. Try taking a dip in the ocean if it's close to you! These practices can help you return to a calm, grounded perspective.

Meditate & Be Mindful

Meditation and mindfulness tools are proven to help manage stress. Set aside time each day to meditate, be present in the moment, set intentions and acknowledge current feelings. Once it's part of your daily routine, it's easy to maintain! There are meditation and mindfulness apps that can provide guidance. Simply stopping to take a few deep breaths in a stressful situation can help.



Breathe Easy

When you're stressed, your breathing pattern changes, becoming short and shallow in your chest which can perpetuate feelings of anxiety. When you're relaxed, you breathe in a slow, even, gentle way. Check in with how you're breathing. Conscious deep belly breathing can help calm the nervous system, encouraging the body to relax. Techniques to balance the breath include alternate nostril breathing and focusing on a longer exhale.



Activate your Senses

Activating your senses can bring you back into your body and is an effective grounding technique. Tap into touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing, as well as vestibular and proprioception (movement, balance and body awareness) by engaging in an activity that activates that particular sense. For example, sorting your change jar, colouring in, self-massage or dancing to your favourite song.



Laughter

As the old adage goes, laughter is the best medicine! Spend time with a friend who makes you laugh, watch a comedy or silly video on YouTube. Whatever it takes, because everyone should laugh once a day!



THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

Gut health is often overlooked when it comes to mental wellbeing – after all, your gut is nowhere near your brain! But it may surprise you to learn that your gut is responsible for more than just digesting your food.

Why is the gut so important?

The gut is often referred to as the “second brain” and is lined with 100 million nerve cells. Ninety per cent of the body’s chemical messengers responsible for modulating mood are produced in the belly. Your gut also has what is called a “microbiome”, a collection of trillions of microorganisms, each influencing functions that are crucial to your health and wellbeing.

How does the gut talk to the brain?

It’s the gut’s direct connection to the brain that gives it its “second brain” moniker. The gut and brain are constantly in communication with one another, connected via the vagus nerve, a bi-directional pathway also known as the “gut-brain axis”.

This axis forms a two-way link between your central nervous system (the network of nerves controlling your body’s activities, including that of your brain) and your enteric nervous system (located all along the lining of your gastrointestinal tract from mouth to anus). Along this pathway,

messages are relayed from the depths of your digestive tract up to the highest regions of your brain.

Since your gut and brain are constantly sending messages to one another via this link, if one is underperforming, so will the other. Stress and mental health can affect your gut and vice versa, the health of your gut can affect your state of mind.

What does that mean for my mental wellbeing?

With both systems working together so intimately, it’s impossible to separate your mental wellbeing from your physical wellbeing. For example, if you don’t manage stress long-term, that stress can then affect your gut health, in turn taking its toll on your mental and physical wellbeing. This vicious cycle can wear you down over time – but it is a cycle you can break! A few simple lifestyle changes can make a big difference.



Serotonin, one of the main chemicals found in your brain that contributes to feelings of happiness and wellbeing, is actually primarily produced in your gut. This important chemical is believed to influence a variety of physical and psychological functions, including mood, social behaviour, appetite and digestion, sleep, memory and sexual desire and function. Studies have shown that altered gut microbes have a direct influence on the levels of this chemical which can subsequently alter mood and behaviour.



Your body perceives stress as a potential threat – whether it’s real or imagined doesn’t matter – and it responds by switching off the parasympathetic nervous system that’s required for normal gut function. This is often referred to as “rest and digest”. Digesting your food is not considered a priority for your body at this time, but rather, the main concern is conserving and redirecting energy to those functions required to deal with the stress at hand. The stress hormones that are pumped around your body during times of stress can also negatively impact the composition of your gut bacteria which can perpetuate gut-brain imbalance.

{ nourish }

NUTRITION & STRESS

Nutrition plays a critical role in helping your body to manage and reduce the effects of long-term stress – the right nutrition can support your physical health which has a direct impact on your mental wellbeing.

While it can be hard to care about your nutrient intake when you're in a period of mental anguish, simply becoming more mindful of, and purposeful with the foods that you're eating can be a huge help to the way you think and feel.

There are some common nutrient deficiencies that can present during times of anxiety and overwhelm, as your body will tend to draw on and use up reserves of these nutrients. Topping up these stores can provide your body with the support it needs to better manage your stress response and maintain your mental wellbeing.



vitamin c

The adrenal glands, which produce stress hormones, contain the body's largest reservoir of vitamin C. When your body is under stress, those stores can become depleted. At these times, increasing your consumption of vitamin C can nourish the adrenal glands.

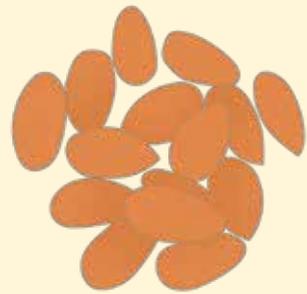
Add tomatoes, kiwifruit, berries, citrus fruits, broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts to your diet.



glycine

When you're feeling stressed, sleep can seem like an elusive dream. But little, poor quality or broken sleep can perpetuate mental health issues. The amino acid glycine can aid sleep onset, enhance sleep quality and restore natural sleep patterns. Additionally, studies have found that it reduces daytime sleepiness and improve cognitive function – all of which can help you get your head back in the game.

Ask your healthcare practitioner about how to support your stores of glycine.



b vitamins

B vitamins are depleted during times of stress. Low levels of B vitamins can lead to fatigue, as they are vital for the body's energy cycles as well as supporting your nervous and digestive systems. B vitamins also help your body manufacture neurotransmitters which improve your ability to deal with stress.

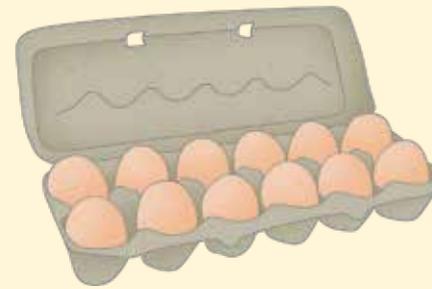
B vitamins are found most abundantly in animal products, but are also present in different amounts in whole grains, dark, leafy greens, legumes, seeds and nuts.



magnesium

Magnesium plays a vital role in a number of important functions directly related to mental wellbeing, including reducing stress hormones, increasing the major inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA, removing heavy metals and increasing brain plasticity. Magnesium is particularly supportive during times of stress; it can calm the body and aid sleep.

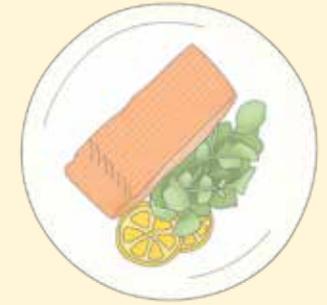
To add more magnesium to your diet, try including more green leafy vegetables such as spinach, legumes, dark chocolate and some fruits (including avocado) and whole grains including quinoa.



zinc

Similar to magnesium, zinc can help stimulate GABA within the brain, helping to regulate mood. Additionally, there are a number of enzymes containing zinc that are responsible for the synthesis of serotonin, the happy hormone. Zinc is also required for production of stomach acid and maintaining integrity of the gut lining, therefore a deficiency in zinc can affect digestion and nutrient absorption, reducing your ability to cope with stress. During times of stress, your body can become severely deficient in zinc and struggle to absorb it.

Some foods that contain high levels of zinc include red meat, shellfish, legumes, seeds, nuts, whole grains and eggs.



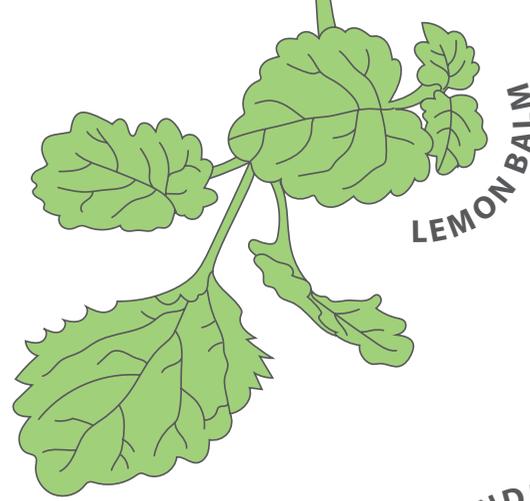
omega-3

Omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA, are a healthy type of fat essential for normal brain function. These fats may play a positive role in mood disorders, with research suggesting that Omega-3 supports cognition, emotion and mood as well as heart health and inflammation.

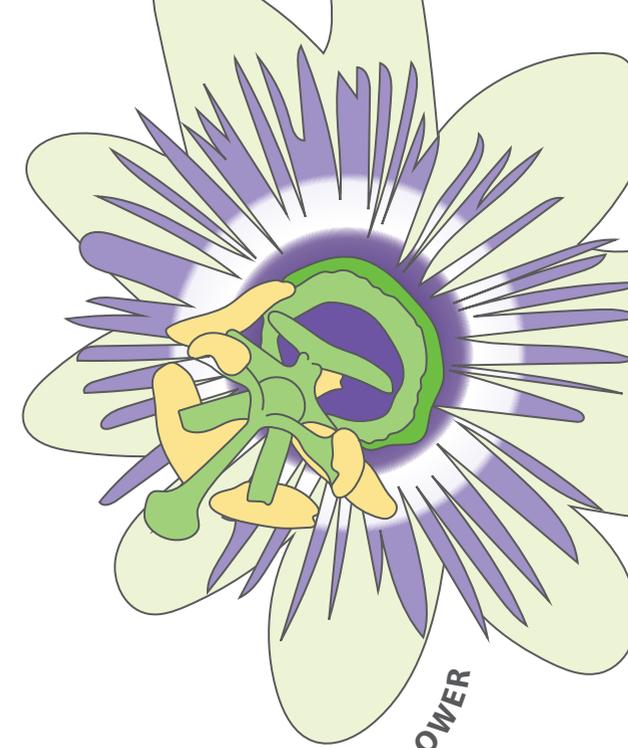
The richest food source of these essential fatty acids is seafood such as anchovies, sardines, mackerel, herring, Atlantic salmon and trout. Keep in mind that some fish can have high levels of mercury and other environmental contaminants. Walnuts, hemp and flax are also good sources of Omega-3 fatty acids.

A herbal HELPING HAND

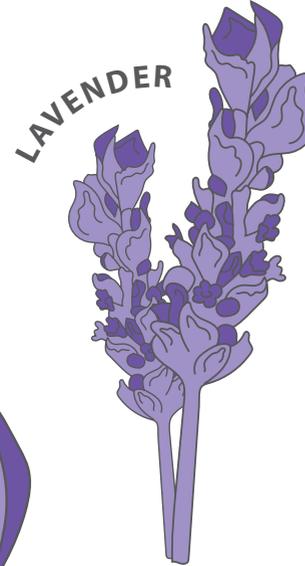
Herbs have been used for centuries in traditional medicine to support healthy body function. A number of noteworthy herbs may help nurture mood. However, herbs can interact with medication you might be taking, so always check with your healthcare practitioner to make sure they are right for you.



LEMON BALM



PASSIONFLOWER



LAVENDER



SAFFRON



WITHANIA



ST JOHN'S WORT

THE 5 D'S

Do you relate to any of these profiles? Your practitioner may use a framework similar to this as they help you work towards mental wellbeing!

Don't worry if you seem to fit in to more than one - that is perfectly normal! It's important to be honest with your practitioner about all the traits and symptoms you experience, so that the solution your practitioner designs can be tailored to your needs.

1 DRIVEN



- High energy
- Highly motivated
- Mentally and physically active
- "Push through it" mentality
- Multitasker
- Thrives in stressful situations
- Trouble getting to sleep
- Frequent anxiety
- Often agitated
- Constant racing mind

2 DISRUPTED



- Maintains a chaotic lifestyle - constantly busy
- Irregular eating habits
- Highly stimulated
- Multitasker - enjoys chaos
- Trouble getting to, or staying, asleep
- Grogginess upon waking
- Energy slumps throughout the day
- Often suffering from a low mood
- Frequently agitated or aggressive
- Regular anxiety

3 DISCONNECTED



- Sleep is usually light and/or broken
- Poor concentration or memory
- Struggles to switch off
- Unable to sustain energy throughout the day
- Constant feeling of unease
- Loss of appetite or other digestive upset
- Muscle twitches or spasms
- Often tongue tied or mixing up words
- Frequently restless, agitated or irritable
- Often fatigued

4 DEPLETED



- Constantly fatigued or lethargic
- Frequent low mood
- Constant depressive feeling
- Occasional anxious flare-ups
- Apathetic, lack of interest or enthusiasm
- Lack of motivation or drive
- Low libido
- Issues with concentration and/or memory
- Emotional numbness - feeling "blah"
- High levels of inflammation

5 DEPENDENT



- Constant cravings
- High levels of anxiety
- Low energy
- Constant feeling of agitation
- Addictive tendencies
- Excessive consumption of caffeine
- Taking medications more than prescribed
- Consuming alcohol or cigarettes daily
- Constantly under stress
- Highly demanding lifestyle

WELLBEING STRESS TEST

	Never	Rarely	1-2 times per month	Once weekly	3-4 times per week	Everyday
Do you get headaches?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you get sick (cold & flu)?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you get indigestion?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you overeat?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you forget to eat?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Does your neck ache?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel tired?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have trouble sleeping?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you find it difficult to exercise?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you drink alcohol?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you drink coffee?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel irritable or easily annoyed?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you find it hard to make decisions?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel overwhelmed or helpless?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel insecure?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you respond in anger to minor problems?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have difficulty winding down or relaxing?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you want to cancel appointments with your friends?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have difficulty enjoying your hobbies?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have difficulty focusing your attention?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you set unrealistic deadlines?	0	1	2	3	4	5

RESULTS



0-30

Well done! You are handling the ups and downs of daily life and maintaining your balance. Try and avoid unnecessary stress and keep yourself physically and mentally healthy.



30-60

You're coping okay, but you could use some improvements. You may be suffering some stress-related symptoms. Find ways to reduce stressors where possible and make sure you find time to relax and wind down.



60-85

You're experiencing some significant signs of stress. Pay close attention to your lifestyle and reconsider your current diet, exercise and relaxation status. Make yourself and your wellbeing priority number one and use your support network.



85 +

You are most likely experiencing extreme stress! Contact your healthcare practitioner as soon as possible, as they will be able to support you through the changes necessary to reduce your stress.

COPING TIPS

USE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Whether it is talking with a friend, a family member, counsellor or group, having someone to talk to about what is going on in your life is incredibly beneficial. Don't underestimate the importance of a good chat

YOU CAN SAY "NO"

It is alright to say "no" to someone's request. Often, we create extra stress and anxiety for ourselves by taking on too much. If you do not have the time or the energy to do something, you have the right to say no, without feeling guilty.

TAKE TIME-OUT

Take time for yourself where you are not thinking about what is causing you stress or unease. This could be reading a book, having a relaxing bath, going for a walk, meditating, or mindfully breathing for 10 minutes.

MAKE A PLAN

Be prepared and plan ahead if you know something stressful is coming up. Start to think of strategies you could use during this time.

{ colour }

COLOUR CODE

Research suggests that the colours you wear can affect your mood and stress levels. While not a cure-all, if how you dress can give you a little extra energy or a greater sense of calm during your day, then why not slip into something a little more vibrant?!

For example, wearing a splash of yellow can create a sense of positivity and uplift – like sunshine for your mood. Whereas blue can bring about relaxation and calm – akin to the feeling you get when looking at the ocean.

Try this simple strategy when you wake up:

Decide how you want to feel for the day and wear clothes in the corresponding colour. While a small step, a brightly coloured dress, shirt or scarf could lighten your mood and put a pep in your step!



Mindful Colouring

COLOUR ME CALM





A MATTER OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is about purposefully bringing your full attention to the present moment; bringing awareness to what's going on around you and within you; and immersing yourself in the reality of what is happening.

WHY PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

Improve Cognition: The sense of calm and focus that mindfulness generates is not only great for your mental health in the moment but can actually have long-term benefits! Mindfulness helps you to focus on the task at hand while improving your ability to understand and remember information. Closely linked to the reduction in anxiety and stress, mindfulness helps to lift your mood and regulate your emotions which contributes to improved cognition if practiced long-term.

Reduce Anxiety and Stress: When anxiety takes over, it can often feel like an out-of-body experience, or as though you've lost control. Being mindful brings you back to the current moment, helping you soothe yourself and re-enter your body. By grounding yourself in the moment, it's possible to hit pause on your "fight or flight" reaction long enough to appropriately evaluate the situation and remain calm.

Get to Know Your Body: Getting in touch with your body is so incredibly important for your health. Mindfulness can help you recognise tightness and discomfort within your body, so you can give attention to whatever areas need it. Mindful eating is also a great way to stop yourself from eating to the point of feeling ill or eating foods that cause discomfort.

WHEN SHOULD I PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

The beauty of mindfulness is that it can be applied in many different situations and practiced anywhere, anytime – not only during a seated session. The best time to practice mindfulness is when you need to – if you're feeling overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or simply want to regain focus. Practice mindfulness while you eat, at work, or at home, before you go to sleep or as soon as you wake up. It's completely up to you and what you need.



HOW DO I PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

The basic principle of mindfulness is to stop, breathe and pay attention to your body, your thoughts and your surroundings. It is unrealistic to expect to be able to completely clear your mind of thoughts. Rather, acknowledge thoughts as they come into your head, without judging or labelling them, then let them pass. This helps to slow them down.

In 4 simple steps, here is a basic mindfulness practice you can try, whenever you need.

1

TAKE A SEAT

Sit comfortably – whether that is on a chair, the floor or a pillow – and begin to relax.

2

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY

Focus your attention on how your body feels, recognising and releasing any tension. Take note of the physical sensations and emotions you're feeling. Acknowledge your senses and what each of them are receiving. How do your feet feel on the floor; what is the temperature of the room; is there any breeze on your skin; what can you hear around you?

3

OBSERVE YOUR MIND

Acknowledge the thoughts that cross your mind without observing them as they come and go with curiosity – like clouds or passing cars. Let each thought go, bringing your focus back to the physical sensations of the current moment. Rather than letting your mind dwell on thoughts, this allows you to see your thoughts as they really are – temporary.

4

BREATHE

Notice your breath. Feel the air entering and exiting your nostrils, moving over your upper lip and travelling through your nose. Savour each breath that fills your lungs and gives life to your body.

{ sleep }

HACKS FOR HITTING THE HAY

Your body's ability to function well declines if you don't have enough good-quality sleep. Just because you can "get by" with less sleep, doesn't mean you wouldn't feel better and operate optimally with extra hours! Sleep is an essential component of good mental health and optimal physical energy. While you sleep, your body is hard at work processing, repairing, restoring, and improving immunity and memory.

To be able to fall asleep, your nervous system has to calm down. This is easier said than done in today's fast-paced "always-on" world, where your nervous system is constantly thrown into overdrive.



Create the Conditions

Practice good “sleep hygiene” and make sure your environment is conducive to sound sleep. Your bedroom should be cool, free from light, noise and distractions. Consider using blackout curtains, an eye mask, ear plugs, or a white noise machine.

Your body learns by association. Only use your bed for sleep to strengthen the association between the two. Separate your sleep time from activities that cause stimulation, stress or anxiety.

Consume media and do your work a few hours before bedtime. Then remove work materials and electrical devices from your bedroom or switch them off at the wall.



Stick to a Schedule

“Bedtime” isn’t just for children – go to bed and get up at roughly the same time every day, regardless of the sleep you had the night before or whether it’s the weekend.

Maintaining a consistent sleep-wake cycle as much as you can helps to regulate your “circadian rhythm” or body clock. This means less time tossing and turning trying to fall asleep, and feeling refreshed rather than groggy upon waking.



Lower the Lights

Light influences your circadian rhythm – biologically, our internal clocks are built to align with night and day.

Try to limit light exposure after dark (use soft lights). Expose yourself to natural light during the day – sunlight in the morning and sunset in the evening – to signal to your body that it’s time to wake up or go to sleep. It can be useful to go outdoors and into nature at these times.

When your body registers a greater difference between daylight and evening darkness, it creates more of the sleep hormone melatonin.



Eliminate Evening Excess

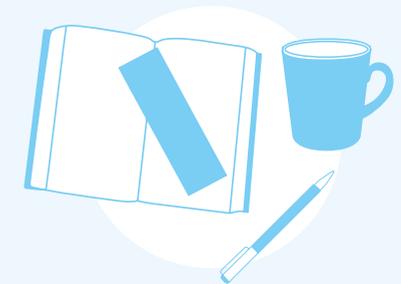
Avoid eating big or spicy meals which can cause discomfort from indigestion. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine and sugar at least 2-3 hours before bed as these are stimulants. Instead sip on a warm caffeine-free beverage.

Promote Relaxation with a Bedtime Ritual

Follow a relaxing routine before bed. Practice this routine regularly to soothe your nervous system.

Spend 30 minutes to an hour before bed doing the same things in the same order each night. This teaches the body to expect sleep and to prepare for it.

Engage in quiet, calming activities right before bed – try light reading, journaling, gentle stretching or meditating – to help soothe stress which can greatly affect sleep.

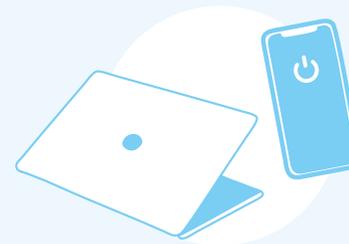


Nix the Napping

Napping in the afternoon can disrupt your sleep cycle. Only nap during the day as a one-off, not regularly. If you need to nap, do so in the morning to have less impact on the next night’s sleep.

Engage in Exercise

Exercise can help you fall asleep faster and promotes deeper, more restful sleep. Aim for 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise every day. Don’t exercise 2-3 hours before bed as this increases your heart rate and body temperature.



Switch off Screens

Avoid using electronic devices such as TVs, laptops or phones in the evening. These screens emanate a particular type of blue light that’s activating for the brain, signalling that it’s still daytime and keeping you awake.



**Sneak More Greens
into Your Diet**

Smoothies are a super easy breakfast option. Prepare the ingredients the night before to save you minutes in the morning!

CHOOSE-YOUR-OWN-ADVENTURE SMOOTHIE

Frozen fruit of choice: pick one

- 1 cup frozen berries of choice (such as raspberries or blueberries)
- 1 cup frozen banana chunks
- 1 cup frozen apple chunks
- 1 cup frozen mango chunks
- 1 cup frozen dragonfruit chunks
- 1 cup frozen pineapple chunks
- 1 cup frozen pear chunks

Veggie of choice: pick one

- ½ large zucchini, chopped
- 1 handful spinach
- 1 handful kale
- 1/2 cucumber (this will give a more watery result)

Liquid of choice: pick one

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup coconut water
- 1 cup non-dairy milk

Protein of choice: pick one

- 2 tblsp greek yoghurt
- 2 tblsp coconut yoghurt
- 1 scoop of clean protein powder

Optional superfoods!

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Chia seeds | Greens powder |
| Flax seeds | Acai powder |
| Hemp seeds | Maca powder |
| Goji berries | |

Method

1. Place all ingredients into a blender and process until smooth.



Quick Tip!

If you're not a fan of these veggies, you can substitute in your favourite ones. You can also add mushrooms or your choice of meat if you so desire.

MINI VEGGIE MUFFINS

These little veggie muffins are the perfect meal-on-the-go to sneak some extra veggies into your day, in the most delicious way!

Recipe makes 10 muffins.

Ingredients

- 1 capsicum, finely chopped
- 2 handfuls spinach, chopped
- 1 cup zucchini, grated
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, grated or finely chopped
- Pinch chilli flakes (to taste)
- ½ tsp paprika
- 8 large, free range eggs

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
2. Line 10 muffin tin compartments with baking paper or muffin wraps of choice.
3. Divide capsicum, spinach, zucchini, onion and garlic evenly amongst each muffin compartment.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs, add in the spices and garlic, and stir to combine.
5. Pour the egg mixture into the muffin compartments, dividing evenly amongst all of them.
6. Bake in the oven for 10 -15 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

VEGGIE CHIPS

Next time you settle down to enjoy your favourite flick, swap out the processed "potato" for these even more delicious veggie chips.

Ingredients

- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled
- 2 large carrots, peeled
- 2 beetroots, peeled and ends trimmed
- 2 large parsnips, peeled and ends trimmed
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp sea salt of choice
- 2 tsp fresh rosemary, chopped

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
2. Chop the vegetables into approx. 2mm thick slices (a mandolin makes light work of this, if you have one!).
3. Place the chopped vegetables on a paper towel and pat dry.
4. Combine the sea salt and rosemary in a small bowl.
5. Place all the veggies in a separate bowl, and drizzle oil on top - mix with a spoon and make sure they are all lightly coated in oil.
6. Arrange the veggies on a tray lined with baking paper.
7. Place the tray(s) in the oven and bake for approximately 30 minutes or until golden.
8. When they're cooked, transfer to a bowl and sprinkle with the rosemary and salt mixture.

Eat Mindfully

Pay attention to your food and eat slowly. Focus on the tastes and textures you're experiencing and when you feel full.



SIP AWAY THE STRESS

The process of making a cup of tea can be quite therapeutic in itself. Skip the stimulation of highly caffeinated beverages like coffee and black tea which can exacerbate anxiety and keep you stuck in a wired, sleepless state. As alternatives, these six herbal blends can help you relax, reduce stress and encourage a more restful night's sleep.



peppermint or spearmint tea

Peppermint and spearmint teas are naturally caffeine free, and as a bonus, contain a compound called menthol which is a natural muscle relaxant.



lavender tea

Free from caffeine, lavender tea may help to soothe restlessness, anxiety and insomnia – and it smells dreamy too!



chamomile tea

A well-known and commonly used herbal tea, chamomile does not contain caffeine and may help to soothe stress, cultivate calm and send you off to sleep.

green tea

While green tea is not a herbal tea and does contain caffeine, it's a good substitute when trying to reduce your black tea and coffee intake, but it's best to have in the morning. Green tea contains a nutrient called L-theanine which helps you relax and reduces stress.

passionflower tea

Passionflower tea is a natural sedative for the nervous system and a great caffeine-free way to reduce anxiety and stress, and support sound sleep.

lemon balm tea

Lemon balm tea is a caffeine-free, herbal tea that may help to promote calmness, reduce anxiety and stress, and support a restful sleep.

{ reach out }

GET APP-Y

6 FREE APPS TO HELP WITH YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING



ReachOut WorryTime

If you're someone who worries repetitively and can get stuck in your thoughts, no matter how big or small your worries are, WorryTime is for you. Based on cognitive behavioural techniques used to deal with anxiety and stress, this app interrupts repetitive thinking by setting your worries aside until later so you don't get caught up in them.

Moodpath

If you've struggled with depression, Moodpath can help you keep track of your symptoms over time, painting a picture of your emotional wellbeing for you to share with your healthcare practitioner. It also gives you access to a range of psycho-educative modules that can provide assistance alongside strategies provided by your practitioner.

Headspace

Headspace makes mindfulness meditation easy. This popular app provides guided meditations and mindfulness techniques that can help you feel more balanced in just a few minutes a day. The basic level is free, with 10 days of simple meditations. Longer, more involved courses are available on a subscription basis



Happify

Happify offers novel activities and games to help you regain control of your emotional wellbeing. Using science-based techniques from fields such as positive psychology, mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy, Happify helps you overcome negative thoughts, stress and life's challenges and achieve your goals.



Calm

An app for meditation and sleep stories, Calm is a guided meditation app to help reduce stress and enhance wellbeing. The 7-step program teaches you how to meditate, with adjustable nature scenes and relaxing music tracks. Sessions range from 2 to 30 minutes on the topics of focus, creativity, energy, confidence, sleep and more.



Sanvello

Sanvello provides tools to help deal with stress, anxiety and depression. These tools are based on cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness, meditation and relaxation techniques and include mood and health tracking.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Lifeline - 13 11 14

Crisis support and counselling services for anyone at any time.

Beyond Blue - 1300 224 636

Information and support for depression and anxiety.

Headspace - 1800 650 890

Mental health support for young people with local centres, online and telephone services.

Better Access

If you're needing more support, remember that you may be eligible for up to 10 sessions with a psychologist or accredited mental health social worker with a Medicare rebate. This can be helpful to supplement the plan that your healthcare practitioner is already implementing for you.

Your next appointment is:



orthoplex®

Bio Concepts Pty Ltd

19a Guardhouse Road, Banyo QLD 4014 Australia

www.bioconcepts.com.au

Practitioner support: 1800 077 113

Phone: +61 (07) 3868 0699