



## ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

### FINDING THE RELAXATION EXERCISES THAT WORK FOR YOU

For many of us with hectic, stressful lives, relaxation means zoning out in front of the TV at the end of the day or snatching some extra sleep at the weekend. Unfortunately, this does little to help reduce the damaging effects of stress on the mind and body.

### Do things for others

Scientific studies show that helping others:

- Increases life satisfaction
- Provides a sense of meaning
- Increases feelings of competence
- Improves mood
- Decreases stress levels.

Kindness is contagious

### Connect with people

Experiencing positive emotions together. Being able to talk openly and feel understood. Giving and receiving support. Shared activities and experiences.

### Take care of your body

How are you staying active and healthy? Remember body, feelings and mind are connected.

### Notice the world around you

Ever felt there must be more to life? Well good news, there is! And it's right here in front of us. We just need to stop and take notice.

Learning to be more mindful and aware can do wonders for our well-being in all areas of life like our walk to work, the way we eat or our relationships. It helps us get in tune with our feelings and stops us dwelling on the past or worrying about the future so we get more out of the day-to-day.

### Keep learning new things

Learning affects our well-being in lots of positive ways. It exposes us to new ideas and helps us stay curious and engaged. It also gives us a sense of accomplishment and helps boost our self-confidence and resilience.

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## Have goals to look forward to

Feeling good about the future is important for our happiness. We all need goals to motivate us and these need to be challenging enough to excite us, but also achievable. If we try to attempt the impossible this brings unnecessary stress.

## Find ways to bounce back

All of us have times of stress, loss, failure or trauma in our lives. But how we respond to these has a big impact on our wellbeing. We often cannot choose what happens to us, but in principle we can choose our own attitude to what happens. In practice it's not always easy, but one of the most exciting findings from recent research is that **resilience**, like many other life skills, can be learned.

## Take a positive approach

Positive emotions - like joy, gratitude, contentment, inspiration, and pride - are not just great at the time. Recent research shows that regularly experiencing them creates an 'upward spiral', helping to build our resources. So although we need to be realistic about life's ups and downs, it helps to focus on the good aspects of any situation – the glass half full rather than the glass half empty.

## Be comfortable with who you are

No-one's perfect. But so often we compare our insides to other people's outsides. Dwelling on our flaws - what we're not rather than what we've got makes it much harder to be happy. Learning to accept ourselves, warts and all, and being kinder to ourselves when things go wrong, increases our enjoyment of life, our resilience and our well-being. It also helps us accept others as they are.

## Be part of something bigger

What gives your life meaning and purpose? Do something that is aligned with your values, beliefs.

## Grunt Questions

- What do you do to help others?
- Who matters most to you?
- How do you stay active and healthy?
- When do you stop and take notice?
- What new things have you tried recently?
- What are your most important goals?
- How do you bounce back in tough times?
- What are you feeling good about?
- What is the real you like?
- What gives your life meaning?