

4 PILLARS To aid wellbeing

1. PHYSICAL

Sleep Health

Winter brings short days, and lower temperatures so our bodies naturally need more sleep. Sleep deprivation causes immune system compromise and makes us more susceptible to infections. Begin your wind-down routine and head to bed 30 minutes earlier to take significant steps towards better winter health. Tryptophan-rich foods such as turkey, fish, wholegrains and spinach, support our body's ability to produce mood-lifting serotonin and sleep-enhancing melatonin - which help us create a balanced wake-sleep cycle.



Balanced Meals

Build healthy, satisfying proteins into your winter cooking, not just carbohydrate-laden, tummy fillers. Think chilli-con-carne, hearty stews and casseroles, curries, Bolognese, or fish traybakes. Rich sources of protein keep us fuller for longer, balances our blood sugars and releases nutrients slowly. If you can't get all your vitamins from food, look to seasonal supplements such as Vitamin D, 400IU daily for a robust immune system, Omega 3 Fish Oils help to decrease inflammation, moisturise the skin and support mood and mental function. Probiotics support our healthy gut bacteria which are crucial for a strong immune system, efficient digestion and production of many of the hormones responsible for feeling positive.



Exercise

Wrap up and get outside - even if it's just for 10-20 minutes. Outdoor exercise wakes up our body and metabolism to manage the colder temperatures and dressing in layers allows you to manage your body temperature more effectively. The endorphin buzz you get will help your energy levels and mood. If you really can't face getting outside, check out YouTube for some great online workouts from gentle yoga to sweaty HIIT sessions.



2. SOCIAL

Be Sociable

Aim to do something with someone else at least once a week. Long nights and cold evenings when we draw the curtains at 4pm may feel like lovely cosy moments, but the chances of feeling isolated in winter significantly increases. Try to balance your cosy rest and self-care evenings with a little social interaction.



Pay it Forward

Think of the people in your life, or those who live around you. How could you make them feel 'looked after' this winter? Maybe it's an elderly neighbour you could pop over to check in on or someone you know is housebound and could do with a pint of milk. Kindness resonates with an energy in our brains at a frequency perfect for topping up our own wellbeing too.



3. SPIRITUAL

Meditation

All too often we believe Meditation is about emptying our heads of all thought. This isn't the case, there are many ways to access meditation – supported sessions online, apps, or just sitting, breathing, and noticing. Our heads are full of thoughts – 'to do' lists, shopping, jobs to finish – and that's OK. Entering a meditative state and resting the mind isn't about silencing the chatter; more acknowledging it and letting it go, think of thoughts sitting on a passing cloud that the wind can take away. Try 5 minutes of sitting with your feet flat on the floor and focusing on breathing in and out. Can you find a little peace from the chatter? Keep practicing, it's a skill to develop.



Finding Peace in Noticing

When life is busy it can feel difficult to switch off. If you are feeling anxious about anything it can be hard to quieten the mind and lower the heartrate. A great way to distract the mind from this kind of chatter is by 'noticing'. This can work anywhere, even outside. Notice and name 5 things you can see... 4 things you can hear... 3 things you can touch... 2 things you can smell and maybe 1 thing you can taste... even if it's toothpaste, or hint of your lunch! The altered focus for our attention changes the brainwave patterns from a state of anxiousness to greater presence of the 'here and now'.



4. MENTAL

Head Dumped and Heart Full – Try Journaling

Journaling is a great way to release a head full of 'stuff' that distracts you or keeps you awake at night. *Reflective journaling* is a way to empty your head of things that are on your mind that you might be wrestling with – acknowledging these thoughts and working out what to do with them. If you write about something you are unhappy about, note what you would like instead and what first steps could take you closer to resolving that. *Intention Journaling* in the morning to plan out your intentions for the day can keep you 'on purpose'. Or perhaps it is heart-filling *Gratitude journaling* that appeals to you – listing 5 things you are grateful for every day. This fills your heart and encourages us to focus on positives for the day ahead.



Getting Organised

Are thoughts of a long winter ahead filling you with dread? Are worries about festive shopping, gift visits to relatives or managing the financial pressure of the festive season on your mind? What can you plan in now and spread over the winter months to ease the pressure on yourself? Try planning in visits to your diary now and look forward to being fully present for that visit. How can you spread the cost of Christmas with some careful budget planning as a family? Could you have those conversations now before someone else goes gift-crazy?



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