

Keeping it simple amidst complexity: tips to improve your wellbeing.

Simple evidence-based strategies can transform your life

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NOTE: This is the introduction to a series of modules exploring strategies to enhance well-being by effectively managing stress – and the science behind them. You can find the whole series here: [HETI Wellbeing Resource Corner | HETI Higher Education \(https://heti.edu.au/resources-and-links/heti-wellbeing-resource-corner\)](https://heti.edu.au/resources-and-links/heti-wellbeing-resource-corner)

These strategies all improve autonomic nervous system function and promote a sense of calm. They are described in this module, with references and links.

1. **Segals' Hand Brain Model** as a great short cut to emotional regulation is described at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFTljLo1bK8>
2. **Slow (diaphragmatic) breathing**: “autonomically optimised respiration (6-10 breaths /min), with ↑tidal volume achieved by diaphragmatic activation”. Russo et al state: “Controlled, slow breathing...is an effective means of maximising HRV and preserving autonomic function, both associated with ↓mortality in pathological states and longevity in general population”. **It is a basis for many other techniques that promote mental and physical health and can add 10-20 years to your healthy life!**
3. **Some of the ideas for stimulating your vagus nerve are found at** <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/vagus-nerve-stimulation>
 1. **Ideas from Eastern practices include** humming and tapping for emotional regulation and yoga, for sleep. Mindfulness, meditation and tai chi are considered in the following module.
 2. **Healthy diet.** Mindful eating and drinking (in the next module) are also useful.
 3. **Benefits of exercise and recommendations about various types of exercise.**
 4. **Improving sleep quality.** For yoga exercises for sleep in Staying Sane for Teams.
 5. **Tending social network.**

Some of the many resources available

Slow breathing

Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art, 2020 by James Nestor. A book devoted to breathing well.

Russo MA, Santarelli DM, O'Rourke D. The physiological effects of slow breathing in the healthy human. *Breathe* (Sheff). 2017 Dec;13(4):298-309. doi: 10.1183/20734735.009817.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-recovery-breathing-exercises>

Ideas from Eastern practices

Trivedi GY, Kathirvel S, Sharma K, Saboo B. Effect of various lengths of respiration on heart rate variability during simple Bhramari (humming). *Int J Yoga* 2023;16:123-31

[Tapping 101 – Learn the Basics of the Tapping Technique \(thetappingsolution.com\)](https://thetappingsolution.com)

Bernardi L, et al, Effect of rosary prayer and yoga mantras on autonomic cardiovascular rhythms: comparative effect of rosary prayer and yoga mantras on autonomic cardiovascular rhythms: comparative study, *BMJ* 2001;323:1446-1449.

Huston P, McFarlane B. Health benefits of tai chi: What is the evidence? *Can Fam Physician*. 2016;62(11):881-90.

Healthy diet

Jacka, F. Brain Changer: The Good Mental Health Diet, 2019

Loughrey DG, et al. The Impact of the Mediterranean Diet on the Cognitive Functioning of Healthy Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Adv Nutr*. 2017 Jul 14;8(4):571-586

Fu J, et al. [Association between the mediterranean diet and cognitive health among healthy adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis.](#) *Front Nutr*. 2022 Jul 28;9:946361. doi: 10.3389/fnut.2022.946361.

Physical activity

Garcia L, et al. [Non-occupational physical activity and risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality outcomes: a dose response meta-analysis of large prospective studies.](#) *Br J Sports Med*; 28 Feb 2023;

Piché F, Daneau C, et al (2023) Characteristics and impact of physical activity interventions during substance use disorder treatment excluding tobacco: A systematic review. *PLoS ONE* 18(4): e0283861.

Slomski A. Exercise delivers brain benefits. *JAMA*. 2019 Mar 26;321(12):1149. doi: 10.1001/jama.2019.2495.

Commonwealth of Australia | [Department of Health and Aged Care](#). Physical activity and Exercise. <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise>.

Inoue K, et al. Association of daily step patterns with mortality in US adults. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023 Mar 1;6(3):e235174. Doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.5174. Erratum: *JAMA Newt Open*. 2023 Apr.

Stimpson N et al. Jogging' the Noggin: Towards a physiological understanding of exercise-induced cognitive benefits. *Neurosis Biobehav Rev*. 2018 May;88:177-186

Sleep

Michael Moseley, Fast Asleep, 2023, 2nd Edition. Short Books

Slomski A. Exercise delivers brain benefits. *JAMA*. 2019 Mar 26;321(12):1149.

Online program for insomnia <https://thiswayup.org.au/how-we-can-help/courses/managing-insomnia/>

Lillee A, et al. Effect of inhaled lavender and sleep hygiene on self-reported sleep issues: A randomized controlled trial *J Altern Complementary Med*. Jul 2015;430-438.

Yoga exercises for sleep in Wilhelm K, Staying Sane for Teams. 2022 <https://www.svhs.org.au/patients-visitors/wellbeing>

Tending social network

Fowler JH, Christakis NA. Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network: longitudinal analysis over 20 years in the Framingham Heart Study. *BMJ*. 2008 Dec 4;337:a2338. doi: 10.1136/bmj.a2338.

Kelly ME, et al. [The impact of social activities, social networks, social support and social relationships on the cognitive functioning of healthy older adults: a systematic review.](#) *Syst Rev*. 2017 Dec 19;6(1):259.

Waldinger R. [How to add new life to your relationships \(even your best ones!\) | \(ted.com\)](#)