

Mastering Your Mental Wellbeing



It's no secret that when you're stressed, you don't feel 100%. And it's all too easy these days to find that the stressors in your life have built up over time, growing and multiplying until it feels like you're suffocating.

You start to feel exhausted, start overreacting to small things. You get frequent headaches, you get sick a lot, struggle to get motivated and sleep is just a distant memory.

This isn't what life is supposed to be like, or what you are supposed to feel like on a daily basis. The good news is, that you will get through this. You'll be able to get back to feeling yourself, find your motivation and your health again, and get back to living your best life.

This booklet is designed to help support you while you go on this journey with your healthcare practitioner to nurture your mental and physical wellbeing, and restore vitality to your life. We'll talk about the gut-brain axis, help you get back to sleep, and provide you with some lifestyle changes and practical tips.

We believe in a holistic approach to health, nourishing your body and mind and getting every system in your body to work together in harmony, helping you achieve optimal health. Don't forget, your healthcare practitioner is here to support you, every step of the way.

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THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

Stress is an all-too-common feature of our modern lifestyle. Daily life is made up of so many little stressors: traffic, meetings, social pressures, deadlines, parking, the list goes on. You already know that stress affects both your physical and mental wellbeing, but how does this happen?

Why is the gut so important?

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 in charge of more than just processing your food. Your gut has what is called a "microbiome", a collection of trillions of microorganisms, each with their own genetic material, and each running functions that are crucial to your health and wellbeing. In fact, there are significantly more bacteria in your microbiome, than there are stars in the milky way.



How does the gut talk to the brain?

The gut is connected to the brain through a bidirectional link between the central nervous system (the network of nerves controlling your body's activity, including that of your brain) and the enteric nervous system. The enteric nervous system, located all along the lining of your gastrointestinal system (from mouth to anus), is often referred to as your "second brain", thanks to its direct connection with the central nervous system. Your gut and brain send messages to each other through this link, so if one is underperforming, so will the other.

What does that mean for my mental wellbeing?

With both systems working together so intimately, this means it's impossible to separate your mental wellbeing from your physical wellbeing. If you don't manage stress long term for example, that stress will then affect your gut health, which in turn, chips away at both your mental and physical wellbeing.

This vicious cycle can wear you down over time, but it is a cycle you can break! A couple of simple lifestyle changes can make a big difference and if you can maintain some consistency, building on those changes can completely change your life.



STRESS AND YOUR BODY



Why Po We Feel Stressed?

Stress is an evolutionary response from ancestors who operated in an environment where "fight or flight" were options in everyday situations. The physical feeling of stress happens as your Hypothalamus releases

stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, which prepares your body to react quickly. Your Hypothalamus is the part of your brain linking the nervous system to the endocrine system, via your pituitary gland.

The stress response isn't needed as much in modern life as it may have been at the start of evolution, but it does still have a place in certain situations. The key is to manage that stress response and ensure it doesn't stick around for a prolonged period of time.

What Are The Physical Effects Of Stress?

The immediate physical response of these stress hormones is to find your breathing and heart rate increasing and your muscles tensing, ready for action. If you remain stressed for an extended period of time (think - all those little stressors throughout the day resulting in being stressed all day), there will be additional physical ramifications.

Long term stress can have physical effects such as: frequent headaches, heartburn, insomnia, a weakened immune system, high blood pressure, gastrointestinal conditions and even fertility problems.

How Can We Prevent This?

Reducing long term stress and its effects requires a multifaceted, holistic approach. Using techniques to deal with stress in the moment, as well as making sure your body is getting the right balance of nutrients can help to reduce these long term effects.

Some techniques that can help you manage stress and break the stress cycle include regular exercise, paying attention to your sleep, breathing techniques and of course, proper nutrition.

NUTRITION AND STRESS

While nutrition isn't the only thing that plays a part in reducing the long-term effects of stress, it plays a very important role. The right nutrition can support your gut health which has a direct connection to your mental wellbeing. There are certain nutrients that can help alleviate your stress response and certain nutrients that will amplify that response. Here are some key ones to look out for!

Stress-Busting Nutrients

During times of stress, your body will tend to use up reserves of these nutrients, so topping up those stores could help your mental wellbeing.

Magnesium

Magnesium plays a vital role in the body, responsible for hundreds of enzymatic reactions. Magnesium can be found in whole grains, spinach, green leafy vegetables, quinoa and dark chocolate.

Zinc

With prolonged stress, your body can become severely depleted in Zinc, and may struggle to absorb it. Some foods that contain high levels of Zinc include meat, shellfish, legumes and eggs.

Antioxidants

The word 'antioxidants' has become trendy but they are far from a fad. Antioxidants inhibit oxidation and mitigate the damage caused by free radicals. Foods high in antioxidants include dark chocolate, berries and kale.

WORKOUTS YOU CAN DO AT HOME No Equipment Needed!

The term 'workout' can send people running for the hills (pun intended), but it is so important for your body to move if you want to get your mental wellbeing on track. To start with, just try and work some extra movement into your day with the tips included below. But when you're feeling up to it, give one of these workouts a go! They can be done in the comfort of your own home and require no equipment at all.

Tips to move more:

- Get off the bus/train one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- Park further away from the shops for some extra steps.
- Take the stairs instead of the escalator.
- Bring your groceries inside, in multiple lots on purpose! Stop loading up your arms and take one bag in at a time to include some sneaky steps.

Workout One: 5 minutes

This super short workout is one that you can sneak it at any point in your day - even during the ad break of your favourite TV show!

Complete exercise at a high intensity for 45 seconds, and rest for 15 seconds between each - in total, 1 minute per set.



Fast Feet

Run as fast as you can on the spot! Try not to hunch over too much.



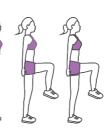
Jumping Jacks

To push yourself with these ones, touch your hands to your knees before raising them above your head!



Squat Jumps

Make sure your back is straight and your knees stay at their starting width.



High Knees

Keep your ankles strong! This is similar to the fast feet, so if you can't do these due to injury, try doing side skaters instead.

Burpees

Burpees can be hard, so if you can't do them to start don't panic! Build up to them over time, but start with doing just the top half, or just the bottom half of the movement.

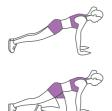






Workout Two: 10 minutes

To up your workout to 10 minutes, follow the same format as in workout one: complete each exercise at a high intensity for 45 seconds, followed by a 15 - second rest. Complete the first set: Fast feet, jumping jacks, high knees and burpees and follow with these five!



Mountain Climbers

Make sure when you are doing mountain climbers that you keep your core strong. If you find this hurts your knees, try doing the inclined version, with your hands on the edge of a table or chair instead of on the ground.



Squats

When squatting, be careful your knees do not go past your toes, or collapse in towards each other. Once you've mastered the normal squat form, you can introduce variants such as "sumo" or "narrow".



Plank

Keep your core strong, and make sure you don't raise or drop your hips!

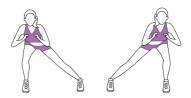


Tricep Dips

Stairs work best for tricep dips, but if using a chair just make sure it won't slide out from under you! Keep your back straight, and close to the anchor point.

Alternating Lunges

As with squats, make sure your knees don't go past your toes. When dropping your knee towards the ground, make sure your ankles stay strong and don't collapse to the side.







Breakfast Smoothie

Smoothies are a super easy breakfast option – prepare the food ingredients ahead of time to save you minutes in the morning!

Ingredients

- 1 cup frozen banana chunks (or frozen fruit of choice)
- 1 handful spinach
- 2 tblsp coconut yoghurt
- 1 cup non-dairy milk of choice

Method

Place all ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth.



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

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

Method

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

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.

Ways to Sneak More Greens into Your Piet

Breakfast Smoothie Choose-your-own-Adventure

Frozen fruit of choice: pick one

 cup frozen banana chunks
 cup frozen apple chunks
 cup frozen mango chunks
 cup dragonfruit
 cup frozen berry of choice (raspberries, blueberries, etc)
 cup frozen pineapple
 cup frozen pear

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

Veggie of choice: pick one

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

Optional Superfoods!

Chia seeds Hemp seeds Goji berries Greens powder Acai powder Maca powder

Method

Place all ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth.

CUPS OZ

Veggie Packed Omelette

Ingredients

2 free range eggs ½ zucchini - grated 1 handful spinach, chopped ¼ cup mushroom of choice, finely chopped 1 tblsp nutritional yeast Spring onion to taste- finely chopped Salt and pepper to taste 1 tblsp organic, grass-fed butter

Method

- Whisk the eggs in a bowl until fluffy.
- In a small saucepan, heat the butter on a medium heat until melted and hot make sure it coats the bottom of the pan!
- Pour the eggs into the pan and tilt so they cover the base of the pan.
- Cook for 1-2 minutes (the edges should be firm), lift the edges and tilt the pan so uncooked egg runs underneath (the top will stay slightly runny).
- Sprinkle the zucchini, spinach, mushrooms, nutritional yeast and spring onion over the egg.
- Gently fold the egg mixture in half, lifting one side and laying it on top of the veggies.
- When heated through (usually less than a minute), slide onto a plate!
- Add salt and pepper to taste and enjoy!

Chocolate Overnight Oats

Overnight oats are a wonder-breakfast that are incredibly easy and cheap to make and save you precious time in the morning! You can make these in a glass jar so they are easy to take to work if you run out of time to eat beforehand. And who doesn't love chocolate for breakfast?

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup plain rolled oats (not quick oats)
- 1/4 cup greek yoghurt (or coconut yoghurt)
- 1/4 cup non-dairy milk of choice (or coconut water)
- 2 tsp cacao powder
- 2 tsp chia seeds
- 1 tsp organic honey

Method

 Add all ingredients to your jar (or into a bowl/ramekin) and stir to combine. Simply place in the fridge and leave overnight.

Top with cacao nibs, raspberries, strawberries or even a little bit of natural peanut butter to mix it up! You can also add acai powder into your mix for some extra antioxidants.

Make-at-Work Mediterranean Bowl

No meal prep needed, this bowl can be whipped up in just a couple of minutes at work (or at home for a super easy weeknight dinner).

Ingredients

½ cup cherry tomatoes
½ can chickpeas, drained
1 small cucumber
7 olives
1/2 red onion
1 tsp olive oil
2 tblsp hummus
1 can line-caught tuna, drained (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

- Dice the cherry tomatoes, olives and cucumber and add to your bowl.
- Finely chop the red onion and add to bowl.
- Add the chickpeas (and tuna if using) and toss everything to combine.
- Top with hummus, salt and pepper to taste and finish with a drizzle of olive oil.

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

- Preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
- Chop the vegetables into 2mm (approx) thick slices.
- Place the chopped vegetables on a paper towel and pat dry.
- Combine the sea salt and rosemary in a small bowl.
- Place all the veggies in a separate bowl, and drizzle oil on top move the veggies around with a spoon and make sure they are all lightly coated in oil.
- Arrange the veggies on a tray lined with baking paper.
- Place the tray(s) in the oven and bake for approximately 30 minutes or until golden.
- When they're cooked, transfer to a bowl and sprinkle with the rosemary and salt mixture.

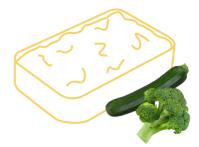
Hearty Shepherd's Pie

This version of a shepherd's pie is a healthy spin on the traditional version. Easy to make, it's a good one to make for dinner and freeze the rest for later, or to take to work if you want a bigger lunch option.

Ingredients

3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced 2 tblsp coconut oil 1 ½ tsp sweet paprika Sea salt to taste

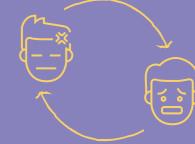
500g mince of choice
2 large zucchinis, grated
1 brown onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, grated or finely chopped
1 head broccoli, coarsely processed or diced
1 can organic diced tomatoes
1 tblsp olive oil
2 tblsp fresh oregano, chopped
1 tblsp fresh rosemary, chopped
1 tblsp fresh coriander, chopped
Pinch of cumin powder
Chilli powder if desired



Method

- In a large pot, place sweet potatoes and cover with cold water, adding a pinch of salt. Bring to the boil and reduce to a simmer until sweet potato has softened (approximately 20 minutes) once cooked, drain.
- Preheat oven to 200 degrees Celsius.
- In a saucepan over medium-high heat, heat the olive oil and add your mince, brown onion and garlic. Sauté until cooked through.
- * Add grated zucchini, processed broccoli and herbs and stir to combine.
- Add the can of diced tomatoes and stir to coat mixture.
- * Add salt and pepper to taste, and chilli powder if desired.
- Transfer the mince mixture to a (20cm approx) baking dish.
- Transfer the sweet potatoes back to pot, adding coconut oil and paprika (salt and pepper as desired) and mash.
- * Spread the sweet potato mash over the mince mixture.
- * Bake in oven for approximately 30 minutes until the top has browned.

WELLBEING STRESS TEST



	Never	Rarely	1-2 times a month	Once a week	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		2	3	4	5
Do you feel tired?	0		2	3	4	5
Do you have trouble sleeping?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you find it difficult to exercise?	0		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		2	3	4	5
Do you feel overwhelmed or helpless?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel insecure?	0		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		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		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 utilise 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.

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 10 minutes of mindful breathing.

You can say "NO"

It is all right 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.

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.

THE 5D'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.

Priven

- 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

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





Asconnected

- Sleep is usually light and/or broker
- Poor concentration or memory
- Struggles to switch of
- 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
- Often fatigued

Perleted

- 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

Dependent

- Constant cravings
- High levels of anxiet
- 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





THE SECRETS OF SNOOZING

It's something you do (or at least, try to do) every day, and yet is something most of us don't think too much about. On average, you will spend about one third of your life tucked up in bed sleeping, or at least trying to sleep.

This might sound like a lot, but sleep is super important for your body. While you sleep, your body is hard at work processing, restoring and strengthening; repairing; and improving memory and immunity.

For some people, sleep is an elusive luxury. Getting to sleep, or staying asleep can be more of a challenge than it should be. This can have something to do with the "Circadian System" which influences almost all aspects of physiology.

What is the Circadian System?

Your Circadian System is your internal "body clock", controlled by a part of the brain called the Hypothalamus. This system regulates internal systems within the context of your external environment, predominantly in reference to the regular succession of night and day.

Why does the Circadian System matter?

The Circadian System influences a number of different bodily functions, including hormone levels, eating habits and digestion, body temperature, mood and of course, sleep-wake cycles. This sleep-wake cycle is what helps you fall sleep, stay asleep, and wake up refreshed.

How does the Circadian System get out of time?

The Circadian System is inherently linked with external stimuli. If those stimuli are misaligned with what your internal clock expects, they can get out of time, and can start negatively affecting all the physiological functions they influence.

Factors such as stress, diet, blue light, meditation, light pollution, shift work, exercise and substance use all influence the Circadian System. Jetlag is a good example of what can happen when the Circadian System is out of sync. Say you cross time zones to a place that is 2 hours ahead of your normal time zone. When you wake up at 7am, your internal clock still thinks it is 5am, despite what the actual clock says, so you'll feel as though you've woken up at 5am.

5 TIPS TO GET YOUR RHYTHM RIGHT

Stick to a pattern

"Bedtime" shouldn't just be for children. Maintaining a regular bedtime and regular wake up time can help regulate your Circadian Rhythm, meaning less time tossing and turning trying to get to sleep, and feeling refreshed, rather than groggy upon waking.

Limit the Light

Biologically, our internal clocks are built to align with night and day. Try to limit light exposure after dark (use soft lights) and try to get some exposure to outdoor light earlier in your day.

Pitch the disruptors

Limit your external stimulation close to bedtime and try to exercise, consume your media and do your work a few hours before bedtime.

Shake off the Sugar

Sugar is a stimulant, and works to the detriment of the Circadian Rhythm. The less sugar in your diet the better. But at the very least, limit sugar intake within a few hours of bedtime.

Say No to Napping

As tempting as that midday nap may be, it can be messing with your circadian rhythm. One tip we've seen is to schedule exercise in when you feel like napping to chase away the sleepiness.











5 APPS TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING

While looking at a screen is often far from the best thing for improving mental wellbeing, screens are an unavoidable part of life. As they say, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. In no particular order, these are 5 free Apps that can help you on the road to mental wellbeing.

ReachOut WorryTime

If you're someone who gets stuck into repetitively worrying, however big or small, WorryTime is for you. Based on cognitive behavioural techniques used to deal with anxiety and stress, this app helps you put those worries aside 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 for you to share with your healthcare practitioner. It also gives you access to a range of psycho-educative modules that can provide some assistance in conjunction with the strategies provided by your practitioner.

Pacifica

Pacifica provides psychologist-designed tools to help deal with stress, anxiety and depression. These tools are based on cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness, meditation, relaxation and mood/health tracking.

Happify

Happify brings you some novel tools and programs to help you regain control of your emotional wellbeing. Happify's tools utilise evidence-based interventions from fields such as positive psychology, mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Headspace

Headspace is one of the top mental wellbeing apps available, rated 4.9/5 on iTunes. Guided meditations and mindfulness techniques can help bring calm, wellness and balance back into your life. While the basic level is free, Headspace does have longer, more involved courses on a subscription basis.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

If you need some extra support, here are some resources endorsed by the Australian Federal Government.

Lifeline

Counselling services for anyone at any time. 13 11 14

Beyond Blue

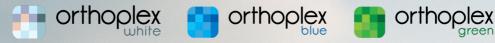
Information and referral for depression and anxiety. 1300 224 636

Doline and telephone service

Better Access

If you're needing more support, remember that you are able to access 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. For a 30-50 minute session, Medicare will rebate you \$84.80, and for a 50+ minute session, you can be rebated \$124.50.











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