



Mental Health & Wellness

A Pocket Guide

Barry Crisp



Mental Health & Wellness

A pocket guide to increase happiness and
find more balance.

Barry Crisp

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To my children. And all those who have found
their way to this book.

In times of adversity, take a step back and
breathe. In times of prosperity, stay humble.

Earth Blessings.

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INTRODUCTION

*"Let everyone sweep in front of his own door, and
the whole world will be clean."*

- Johann Wolfgang van Goethe

Welcome to the Mental Health and Wellness Pocket Guide. This book offers a straightforward introduction to personal wellness and mental health. The concise chapters are designed to provide you with the knowledge needed to cultivate a healthier lifestyle and achieve a balanced sense of well-being, fostering greater confidence and empowerment. Each bitesize chapter caters to those with busy lives.

At the end of each chapter, you will find simple activities aimed at enhancing your resilience and helping you find more happiness and balance. These activities can easily fit into your busy schedule

without disrupting your work or personal life. The exercises included in this pocket guide have been tried and tested, ensuring a practical and effective approach that can be incorporated into your daily routine, regardless of your age, profession, social status, budget, or background.

In the past decade, the world has undergone significant changes. Increases in childhood poverty, homelessness, and mental health issues have strained the resources of communities, governments, and nations. Additionally, the challenges posed by climate change and political instability have intensified. To compound these issues, the recent pandemic of COVID-19 has affected lives globally.

Now, more than ever, it is essential to prioritise mental health and well-being to safeguard your happiness and manage stressful situations effectively. However, in order to support others, you must first care for yourself. While there is an

abundance of information and statistics available regarding mental health and wellness, this pocket guide focuses on sharing practical insights and techniques that have personally benefited me.

This concise guide aims to help you reconnect with your inner self without evading your environment. I hope these chapters will assist you in embracing both yourself and the world around you.

The ideas, reflections, and exercises presented here are based solely on my personal experiences and are not endorsed by external organisations or individuals. I encourage you to engage with the contents of each chapter for a month, and then reflect on how they have impacted your everyday life. I am confident that you will find the experience rewarding. To begin, let us start with a couple of definitions.

Holistic – emphasize the importance of the whole and the interdependence of the whole's

parts.

In medicine we would note that holistic 'relates to the medical consideration of the complete person, physically and psychologically'. So then why would you not want a doctor, a friend, or a loved one to look upon you as a complete individual and to attend to both your physical and psychological conditions and needs? Think about that for a moment.

Wellness - the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort.

Its definition is simple yet your (sense of) wellness is influenced by many interconnected factors that affect your wellness from relationships to fitness, health, food, work, and so much more. In order to become more

aware of your wellness it is important that you take all these factors into a more holistic understanding of yourself and the world we live in. Take a moment and ask yourself: **What gives you a sense of wellness?** *I want you to pause and think about the factors that contribute to your wellness.*

LOOKING BEYOND & OUTSIDE

THE BOX

Beauty can be found in many places, from the walls of your home to a solitary tree by a busy road. Embrace these seemingly insignificant, beautiful objects, whether they are man-made or natural. By learning to appreciate what many overlook, you begin to establish a foundation for holistic wellness. To strengthen this foundation, knowledge and awareness are essential for navigating our societies and sustaining the infrastructures we rely on. With this knowledge, you can improve your reasoning and decision-making, equipping yourself to handle unexpected practical and mental challenges.

I believe we are at a pivotal moment in

human history, where a holistic perspective is not just sensible, but essential for the survival of our species and the planet. Our fast-paced society, digital distractions, and subliminal messages often prevent us from pausing to observe. It is crucial to allow yourself the opportunity to step back, as no one else will do it for you. Through observation, you can develop a better understanding and appreciation of your surroundings. Humans are constantly adapting to a world that is ever-changing, leading us to question whether true satisfaction is possible.

Before you can embark on your own journey of wellness and awareness, you must move beyond the belief that you need to escape society to find inner balance. Most of us cannot retreat completely, as we are inherently social beings. We engage with society to work, socialise, and experience life. Therefore, it is

essential to reconnect with yourself while leading a fulfilling life within society. Integrate nature into everything you do. This may seem daunting, but it can be as simple as pausing to breathe under a tree.

As you progress through these chapters, you will gain a deeper understanding of yourself, enabling you to create ripples of change for the future. I encourage you to consider this change not only in the present but also as a legacy for future generations.

To build a solid foundation for wellness, all you need to do is actively engage in manageable activities. Holistic wellness is not only about transforming your own life but also about positively influencing those around you, benefiting our communities. The small ripples you create can ultimately be felt by many.

I invite you to try a simple exercise: close your eyes and listen to your breath for a few

minutes. Do not hesitate to focus on yourself. For the activities in this pocket guide to be effective, it is essential to approach them with an open mind. Now, **breathe** deeply!

WHO AM I?

"There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through into action and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost".

- Martha Graham

To achieve true holistic wellness, it is essential to understand who you are. This self-discovery can be a lifelong journey, but having a basic awareness and understanding of yourself is crucial. It provides a solid sense of grounding and confidence, equipping you to better handle stress when it arises. Understanding your identity forms the core foundation of your existence and serves as the vital thread that connects all aspects of your life.

The question "**Who am I?**" is one we all ponder at least once in our lives—some of us even contemplate it weekly. However, many struggle to find a truly satisfying answer. Often, our quest for self-understanding gets sidelined due to the busyness of life, or the depth of the question can feel overwhelming, leading to frustration when a clear answer seems out of reach. To begin addressing this question, I believe you should first explore three sub-questions.

1. Where do you come from?
2. What do you care about?
3. What are you doing now?

Let us tackle these questions very personally and really break down our answers. You can use any medium to do so (i.e. note pad,

drawings, typing, voice recorder and so on).

Question 1: Where do you come from?

My simple response:

- ∂ Family on my mother's side come from Jamaica, and their ancestors from Africa
- ∂ Family on my father's side have a mixed heritage of English, Welsh and Dutch roots
- ∂ My DNA test suggests very strong Irish roots also
- ∂ Both my parents were born in England
- ∂ I come from my parents
- ∂ We are all creatures of Earth - I belong to Earth
- ∂ Earth is a planet within a solar system - I belong to the solar system
- ∂ The solar system is one of many within the

Milky Way galaxy

- ∂ The Galaxy is one of many within the cosmos -
I am from the cosmos
- ∂ The cosmos is still expanding - I am expanding

From my simple response, it is clear that I identify with multiple cultural backgrounds, but more importantly, I see myself as part of the broader, evolving universe we inhabit. I have moved beyond just being "Barry from London, England, United Kingdom."

My in-depth response:

I am a human being connected to the universe, encompassing all its elements. I represent the cosmos, continuously expanding and evolving. Born from stardust—whether through natural processes or divine creation—I am a unique individual with a diverse heritage and complex

emotions. I embody the evolution of all existence. My physical form, which radiates light into the universe, is rooted in rich cultural histories that span the UK, the Netherlands, Wales, the Caribbean island of Jamaica, and ultimately trace back to Africa, the cradle of humanity. I have been shaped by poverty, influenced by my English and Caribbean heritage, and conditioned by British politics and the streets of Hackney, London.

By approaching the question of my identity from a holistic perspective, rather than merely focusing on my immediate physical reality, I recognise that I am part of something much larger, constantly evolving beyond the confines of Earth. This understanding deepens my awareness of who I am, who we all are, and where we are heading together.

If you view your existence as limited to the present moment, it's easy to feel powerless and frustrated. However, when you acknowledge that your existence extends from the cosmos and that your light radiates as photons into the vastness of space, you realise that your current life is just a grain of sand in the grand scheme of things. If you can positively influence even one individual, you will create ripples that can eventually resonate with the masses.

Question 2: What do you care about?

Before I delve into my personal thoughts again, I'd like to share a collection of what others care about. Through face-to-face conversations, emails, and online interactions, I gathered responses from various parts of the world. Notably, these responses reveal similar

concerns and desires, highlighting our shared humanity despite our unique differences.

The key concerns and desires identified globally include:

Financial security, friendships and relationships, health, fitness, happiness, entertainment, the future, family, success, career, exploring, adventure, death, freedom, equality, living, community, education, wellbeing, inner peace, wellbeing of others, children, children playing freely, relaxation therapy, finding time, volunteering, life, marriage, a need to put oneself first, a need to change working habits, work and life balance, expectations of growing up, property ladder, social mobility, etc...

I am sure at least one of these resonates with you. Interestingly, you may have noticed that

neither "Earth" nor "the environment" was mentioned. This suggests that many people tend to view life through an "I" perspective rather than an "us/we" perspective. We often see the Earth as something that belongs to us, assuming it will manage itself regardless of our actions. Perhaps this viewpoint arises from the perception that nature is separate from our existence, something over which we believe we have little influence.

However, when we consider individuals as part of groups, societies, and countries, a different picture emerges. We quickly realise that our individual influence, when mobilised collectively, can be transformative. We have the capacity to alter landscapes through both ignorance and innovation, so surely we can also strive for a more sustainable and holistic way of living together? It is essential to initiate this change now to benefit future generations,

thinking and acting holistically.

I care deeply about the preservation and sustainability of natural life, as well as the injustices that permeate societies worldwide. However, I do not live under the illusion that change is simple, nor do I believe that I alone can wear a hero's cape and save the world. I am fully aware that I do not possess the power to solve these complex, human-made issues on my own, as they are deeply rooted in history. Nevertheless, this does not diminish my concern; I believe I can lead a positive life and influence future generations, starting with my own children.

While I value financial security, success, and the future, my definition of success does not hinge on financial gain or career advancement. Instead, it is measured by my interactions with individuals, society, and nature, as well as my satisfaction with what I

have and who I am. My true wealth lies in enriching the lives of others and living as sustainably as possible.

So, let's return to the question: **What do you care about?** Understanding what you value is crucial for gaining insight into who you are. Take a moment to breathe and reflect. What truly matters to you?

Question 3: What are you doing now?

Currently, I have organised my life to prioritise spending most of my time and energy with my family. I recognise that this focus may change due to the economic climate and various interconnected factors. My primary efforts are directed towards writing and engaging in social enterprise projects that aim to create positive

social and environmental impacts worldwide. As I strive to make a difference and plant seeds of change through my work, I remain open to supporting the creativity of others. I also enjoy volunteering from time to time.

In private conversations, I often observe a disconnect between what people genuinely care about and what they are doing in their lives. This disparity can lead to a persistent feeling of discontent and emptiness. Although people may seek temporary escapes and adventures, this sense of void often resurfaces when they return to their daily routines. Understanding your origins and aligning your actions with your true values provides a solid foundation for personal development and a clearer understanding of who you are.

It is important to recognise that your identity cannot be encapsulated in a single sentence or paragraph. We are complex,

evolving beings shaped by a myriad of thoughts, emotions, and desires that fit together like jigsaw pieces, constantly expanding, shifting, and transforming. Your identity must be felt and lived in everything you do.

Know you, embrace you, love you!
Because if you do not, then you can never
expect others to.



Activity

Answer the three questions explored in this section. Record your answers and reflect upon them after a month and then from time to time to see if they have changed in anyway.

Where are you from?

When you answer this question start from the basics and expand into a more in-depth answer.

What do you care about?

Think about this carefully and give honest answers no matter how brief or extended. Think about what you care about with regards to personal targets, family, friends, community, future and so on.

What are you doing now?

Think about the little things; habits and hobbies, and expand upon other things like chores, clubs/memberships, commitments, work, projects, and so forth. Check to see if what you are doing takes you away from what you really

enjoy and care about in life.

Once you have answered these three key questions you can further solidify the knowing of who you are by recording answers to the following:

- ∂ What do you like about you?
- ∂ What is unique about you? What makes you different?
- ∂ What are your strengths?
- ∂ What are your weaknesses? (be honest, then work on these with a friend, parent/guardian, partner or family member).
- ∂ What is your mission? / What are your targets, now and in the future? *Please note, that though it is positive to have future targets as it gives us something to work and move towards. You*

must always live in the now and enjoy every moment possible.

∂ What is your personal philosophy? / What code of ethics or saying/proverb do you live by?

BOARD OF ELEMENTS

"All that we are and will be is decided by our choices and those of others around us."

- Barry Crisp

So now you have a better understanding of who you are and what you are doing in life to some degree (it is ok if you do not, so long as you are continuously asking), let us now create some manageable targets that will keep you focused and on track. Whilst you must always live fully in the present now, goal setting however is essential for the sustainability and evolution of our own existence. It is like a thread that pulls you along and keeps one on track.

Get yourself a Board of Elements (BOE). It can be a white board, black board, A3 paper, back of an envelope, or whatever medium you

like. The important thing is that it is big enough to remind you of its existence. A Board of Elements is known by other names like a 'Vision Board' or 'Future Board', and so on. You will divide your BOE into four sections for short-term targets, long-term targets, communication, and health and hygiene. In the centre create a fifth section titled values. It is always good to have a constant reminder of codes and ethics you live by. If you rather have your Board of Elements private then that is totally fine so long as you refer to it on a regular basis.

- ∂ Short-term targets (a few weeks to a few months)
- ∂ Long-term targets (6 months to a year)
- ∂ Communication (ongoing) - You can rename this to something more relevant to you – This

really focuses on how you present yourself outwardly in the public domain

- ∂ Health & Hygiene (or just health - but be honest with yourself, as some of us have some bad habits)
- ∂ Mission & Values

Try to always use the present tense when referring to your targets, i.e. *"I am learning about how I can become an art therapist"*. If you keep everything in the present then it is a reality that is happening right now and not something that may happen in the future.



Activity 1

Within each of the sections (short-term, long-term, communication, health and hygiene, mission and values) write down a list of two-four things you need to improve on. Once you have done this, carefully map out in your mind or record how you will go about improving these elements of your life.

Remember! Be happy in the present, and do not let the setting of goals grade and develop your happiness. Otherwise, your mind will forever be chasing the meaning of happiness.

Activity 2

List the tools you need for each section. These can be things that can help you on your way to

your target, such as equipment, habits, friends and so forth.

Activity 3

Create a Board of Elements with somebody else and encourage them to do the same with someone they know.

COMMUNICATING & RELATIONSHIPS

"Intelligence is our ability to formulate and express our thoughts in a coherent way. As well as engaging to the practical challenges of our world/society."

- Howard Gardner

An ancient Buddhist story tells of two monks traveling down a road back towards their monastery. One elder (the leader), and the other, younger, (the apprentice). They came across a river with an elderly lady wishing to pass. The river was not deep, however, there was no means to help her cross. The elderly monk decided that he would give the old lady a lift on his back across the river. The young monk was shocked at this gesture for a male monk

should have no physical contact with a female.

'We can't help her,' said the young monk, 'but we will send someone who can.'

'No, that will not do,' replied the elderly monk, and so without hesitation the elderly monk carried the old lady across the river.

Of course, as you imagine, she was most grateful. The two monks then continued their journey. Two hours later into their journey, the younger monk in growing frustration suddenly blurted out 'How could you carry that old lady when it is against the rules.' The elderly monk turned to smile at the younger monk and said, 'I put the old lady down two hours ago, but she is still on your mind'. The elderly monk turned and said nothing more. They continued the rest of their journey in silence.

It is an interesting story that illustrates how allowing thoughts to linger and fester in

your mind can lead to frustration and anger. This only serves to negatively impact your well-being.

I often wonder whether humans have yet to experience emotions and perceptions beyond our current capabilities. If our technologies and lifestyles can evolve over time, surely our minds, imagination, and emotions can also be expected to evolve. While this is a lovely thought, relationships and communication are practical, tangible experiences.

It's important to remember not to limit your emotions to mere words. Emotions have originated from the cosmic explosions that created us, as we are all elements of the universe. Often, our feelings are more complex than simply "like" or "dislike," or "love" and "hate." During my three years in Japan, I noticed that the Japanese express love and gratitude

not just through words but through actions. Frequently, it is the unspoken communication that carries the most significant meaning. When advising others about relationships, I always emphasise five simple principles:

- ∂ Let your actions do the talking
- ∂ Observe
- ∂ Compliment
- ∂ Find a new word or phrase to express yourself and your love. I prefer to say that 'I am in harmony with you', as opposed to 'I love you' most of the time. After all, we are all unique individuals, so why use an expression just because most people do. This thought shift alone could change the way we approach the use of the word 'love' and its apparent necessity
- ∂ Be love/harmony without reservations and

people will naturally gravitate to your existence

The global average life expectancy may be sixty-seven years, but in developed countries, it is typically between seventy and eighty years. Throughout our lives, we experience six to eight dimensions (or stages), each with key focuses. While this overview may not apply to everyone, the primary focuses generally include:

0-10 years: Toys, friends, playtime, family, mum, dad...

10-20 years: Friends, study, adventure, finance, community...

20-30 years: Finance, career, future, identity, relationships, children...

30-40 years: Finance, career, family, future, children...

40-50 years: Finance, community, family, future, children...

50-60 years: Family, community...

60-70 years: Family, death, community...

70-80 years: Family, death, community...

If you keep these stages in mind, you may find that the primary focus of someone you know correlates with their age. Their motivations and activities in life could be influenced by the categories outlined above. Understanding the dynamics of someone's life can greatly enhance communication and mutual understanding.

One of my favourite musicians once said that the secret to his success was observation. This principle has been essential in managing and developing my relationships, whether intimate or friendly. If you learn to observe

before jumping to conclusions or making comments about a situation, your input will be more valid, and your perspective may even shift. Avoid being too quick to comment or assign blame; instead, take a step back and observe with an open mind. This approach will help to validate the words you choose to express later.

Dealing with Conflict

Dealing with conflict can be a stressful experience for everyone involved. I remember a team meeting some time ago where I suggested that we move on from our current topic, as it wasn't leading anywhere. In response, I was shouted at, pointed at, and sworn at, amidst a wave of negative emotions. More often than not, I find myself on the receiving end of others' frustrations, largely because I have developed good communication with most people I know. As a result, I am seen

as someone who can handle their rants, as I am willing to be there for them. This often means that I remain a supportive presence even after the conflict has passed

How I dealt with the situation:

Experience has shown me that on occasion when the fault is not your own then a person's ill temper and feelings towards another may not be personal at all, nor is it a reflection of anything that you might have done. It can happen for four possible reasons:

- ∂ The person quite simply is rude and/or has lost temporary control
- ∂ The person feels a certain closeness to you, which has enabled them to let loose
- ∂ The person may well be displacing their ill-feelings, which were relayed onto them

- o The person could have unresolved frustrations, sadness or anger that fester from elsewhere

My response was to calmly absorb the rant and then attempt to rebalance the atmosphere by politely addressing the person's wrongdoing. I encouraged them to take a moment to reflect on the source of their sudden emotions. Often, feelings of frustration or anger stem from unrelated issues. Meditation, as discussed in an earlier section, can be beneficial, as it trains the mind to slow down and clarify thoughts.

We should always strive to explore the depths of our minds to uncover the sources of negative emotions and unhelpful thoughts. Pressure can build up, particularly in small teams and communities, especially in today's chaotic world marked by financial crises and societal shifts. It's also crucial to have a partner—whether in personal relationships or

business—who not only supports you but also challenges you constructively. This dynamic can elevate your activities and interests to a higher level.

Note: Fear and greed are two of the most destructive human emotions. It's important to recognise and address these feelings as soon as they arise. Stay mindful and aware. Don't forget to apply the insights from the section on friendships and relationships in the chapter about resilience.

Key elements to help establish better communications for work and private life:

- ∂ Allow for personal/private space
- ∂ Allow for freedom of expression and imagination

- ∂ Embrace the interests of others, as you would your own
- ∂ Do not let failure fester into frustration. Failure is essential for our growth. Often, we let our failures affect how we communicate with others both in short and long-term relationships
- ∂ Listen and advise, but do not enforce your ideas and opinions upon others for this is a most vile behaviour to inhabit
- ∂ Face massage - massage the face. Now, you probably were not expecting to find this on the list. However, this is so relaxing and very therapeutic. As is the massaging of one's feet
- ∂ Be harmony and love. Others will gravitate to your existence. Above all, you need; food, water, sleep (rest), air and shelter. Everything else is a medium for the evolution and experience of our existence. If you take away the illusory need

for a relationship, then you will find yourself better positioned to embark on and deal with one when the opportunity arises

Overcoming a Relationship/Friendship Split

So, you break up or stop talking, but still inhabit the same environment whether it be at work, at home, within friendship circles and so on. What do you do?

You read, meditate, walk, stretch, and learn the meaning of LOVE; Listen, Observe, Value and Evolve. Most importantly, you forgive. Forgiving somebody even if the break down was no fault of your own, releases you from harbouring negativity. Why let a bad apple ruin your whole appetite?!

Perhaps a new year passes by at which point you feel that the best way to progress through this year is to make some tough

changes, and along with a new found determination you breathe new life into your creative lungs, you believe everything will be alright. May I suggest at this point going for just four New Year resolutions and not twelve. One for each season if you like. This is more manageable and achievable.

Now, although you may be separated from the situation with no intention of returning for either good or bad reasons, you must however find peace with it. Otherwise, it will be a burn in your memory and become a scar on your future emotional acceptance. Nothing is perfect, we are all 'carry-on couples' or 'carry-on friends'. Perhaps what you had was not lighting the sky with fireworks, but it was nice, it was complete, and you did everything together with one focus. Or maybe you were the victim of a traumatic experience that can never be forgotten. Whichever the

scenario, you need to find closure with it now. Forever harbouring the experience and ill feelings related to that experience will only serve to have a negative effect on your daily life for months and years to come.

Understand that our modern-day societies place pressures and expectations on a relationship/friendship which are far reaching and at times somewhat selfish. After all, has not the idea of a relationship and marriage been shaped and portrayed to the masses dramatically through film, television and media over the years since the television came into existence.



Activity 1

For one day (then try 3-7 days):

- ∂ Smile at a stranger
- ∂ Say hello to people you meet or walk past
- ∂ Ask a stranger how they are
- ∂ Listen to those around you and answer when appropriate. This may be new for those that find themselves centre of attention or the one usually doing most of the talking
- ∂ Pay compliments to those you work with, those you live with, and meet

Reflection: How did you feel?

Activity 2

For one day, try not to speak at all. Simply

observe people and speak only if necessary to do so.

Note down how you felt during the day and how others interacted with you as a result of your elected muteness.

RESILIENCE

"The oak fought the wind and was broken, the willow bent when it must and survived."

- Robert Jordan

My family and I live by an ancient proverb: "This too shall pass". Emotions and experiences come and go as does the wind. You must be acceptant that the difficult times you are experiencing will pass and allow it to do so without displacing the emotions with alcohol, drugs, excessive food, and so on. All of which only serve to damage your mind and body. You must also apply the same thought process to joyful experiences instead of obsessively holding onto these experiences and measuring everything else against them. This knowledge and awareness will keep you balanced in difficult times and humble in the good. "This too

shall pass”.

Resilience is key to overcoming and surviving hardships. One can live a highly successful and happy life, but as soon as something negative arises he/she may well come crumbling down. Building mental resilience and awareness can be difficult if you have yet to experience some form of disappointment, hard times, or have not yet learned from the ones you have experienced. In saying that, a continuous onslaught of negative experiences can serve to destroy one’s resilience and not allow it to build up over time. Equally, not exploring the eventualities of life and its experiences can lead to a fatal lack of mental resilience when you most need it.

Developing good resilience may well be easier if you have been exposed to a degree of negative experiences during childhood as I have, but I do not believe there is enough research to

substantiate this viewpoint, and neither should we purposefully experiment to find out. As children, we can grow better accustomed to hard times which indirectly helps one to deal with the rougher times that may await. However, there are some habits that we can obtain through practice that can ultimately help us to be more resilient. Allow me to break this down into three quick sections; relationships, finance, and death.

Relationship/Friendship resilience

Whether with a loved one or friend, having the relationship on an equal standing from the outset is vital to developing resilience for the unfortunate case of a breakdown. Equally sharing thoughts, feelings, and conversations keeps one from indirectly being elevated to the leader or downgraded to the follower. Being on equal standing will help you to make better and

firmer decisions in relation to your relationships and friendships.

It is natural to have different layers of friends (i.e. best friends, inner circles, outer circles, friends, and acquaintances, and so forth) due to shared interests, personal connectedness, and time. In any case, it is always best to have someone in each layer of your foundation and note that everyone has the potential to become a best friend. The key to developing relationship resilience is to take away your dependency on any one person. Now, you are probably wondering what if I am in a personal relationship or marriage does that mean not be so into my partner? No, it means keep your friendship circles alive more than ever and ensure that you have your time, personal relationship time, and friendship time on relatively equal standings if and when possible. Above all, it is imperative to always

have an honest and open dialogue with the other person. Being honest and open is essential, as it gives growth and stability to trust.

A relationship can swing from being a leader to a follower, like a seesaw going up and down. What is important is that the seesaw goes up and down and you do not stay at the bottom. To support and be supported by another is key to establishing a balanced relationship. Whether it be on a personal level or friendship.

If we can learn to see everybody as a friend or comrade, then our own world's become bigger and happier places to live in.

Most importantly learn to become comfortable with saying 'NO'. No, no, no, no. A balanced relationship is one where you easily and quickly say yes to the things you want to do and say and no to the things you do not.

When others learn that you do not always say yes and follow, they realise you are harder to manipulate. This in turn already from the outset frees you from uncomfortable situations.

Financial resilience

This is perhaps the simplest of all to master if you try with passion. Buy only what you need on a regular basis and buy what you want on special occasions (birthday, religious event, travel gifts, and so on). My family and I are used to making things for each other and sharing our creativity as opposed to buying grand things because we feel it has more value. This has indirectly also saved us money, as we have learned to reduce, reuse, recycle and upcycle effectively. The other things to take note of are to compromise when spending (get one thing for another) and compare (when I am on holiday, I would ask myself, would I really spend £30

back home in London to see a bunch of dead ancient mummies in a back room?), take advantage of deals and plan activities and meals ahead. By following some of these simple yet effective tips, you will begin to notice that you have more money on reserve for a possible rainy day ahead, or for a little fun. And please do buy things that can be sold at a later date (keep them in good condition).

Bereavement resilience

I have always bounced around the idea of death in my head since I was a child. I have been open to the fact that one day I will die, as will all those around me. I have embraced the concept of death with open arms and even danced through scenarios of things that would need to be done if I died or somebody close to me died. Of course, not in an obsessive manner, but in a thoughtful practical view.

Why not think of death the same as we think of love? Both will equally dominate our lives at some stage. When my mother died very suddenly at the age of forty-seven from a severe blood clot. Every thought, understanding, scenario exploring, and book read came into an unannounced and harsh reality. My acceptance of death allowed me to not only deal with my emotions better than most in my family at the time, but also the emotions of others and the practical elements that needed attending to. Did I love my mother any less than those who knew her? No. Did I have a better network of support and other people that needed me to be ok? Yes. I got through this period with time and found that I was able to be resilient because I had active commitments and had already accepted the concept of death long ago.

There are some key things that will help

you to become more resilient and better deal with stress:

- ∂ Explore and embrace change
- ∂ Explore the concept of death – this is not being pessimistic in the slightest. It is understanding that life and death are interwoven. The cruelty of life exists beneath the surface of our everyday consciousness
- ∂ Drama improvisation – this was often a powerful medium to release and explore emotions when I was growing up. An important element that helped bring balance. Find a positive outlet that helps you to release stress and frustration
- ∂ Develop self-esteem - praise yourself and embrace praise from others
- ∂ Treat and look after yourself
- ∂ Know who you are – covered in earlier section

- ∂ Socially network – quality not quantity - both the digital and real (but more real because nothing can substitute for real life interaction)
- ∂ Optimism and positivity - dance in it
- ∂ Just live life
- ∂ Compassion and gratitude - show it regularly. It will come back when you most need it
- ∂ Laugh as much as possible
- ∂ Keep to the Board of Elements (as explored in previous section)
- ∂ Develop problem-solving skills – I grew up playing games like Chips Challenge, Chess, Tetris, Zelda, and Scrabble. Whilst gaming may be frowned upon by some, these games actually helped develop vital problem-solving skills which are still with me today. There are many problem-solving mediums out there, so go check them out

- ∂ Creativity (to be explored in next section)
- ∂ Meditate (to be explored in later section)



Activity 1

Stress is connected with the body. Close your eyes, breathe slowly, count your breaths, four on the in, and four on the out. Start at the top of your body, and as you breathe out imagine the release of tension flowing from your head.

Activity 2

Look at any given situation from different angles and perspectives. Explore the inner sanctums of your mind to find out why you may

be stressed at any given time no matter how big or small the feeling or issue. The root of one's stress may not always be obvious, and it can sometimes take an incident to bring it out, even though the incident itself did not merit the resulting stressful outcome.

Really try to dissect where the source of your stress comes from. Take time with it and allow for a free flowing of thoughts. Write it down even. This exercise will enable your mind to develop a dissecting process for any related situation.

Whenever you become stressed. Sit down, write down what made you stressed, why it made you stressed, and where those emotions originate and manifest, and whether perhaps those emotions evolve from somewhere else inside of you, as well as how you could have dealt with a stressful situation differently, or perhaps better.

POWER OF CREATIVITY

"Creativity is the nourishment for one's mind."

- Barry Crisp

At the core of our development and expression is creativity. Creativity can mean different things to many people. It could be ideas that have values which are in turn put into action, or it could simply be getting off your bottom and doing something fun that is full of expression. Be it art, music, baking a cake, a science experiment, DIY, making something, or gardening. We are all creative and must take pleasure in our own creativity. What is key to note is that creativity is essential to keep you from growing stagnate, and the medium to share with others the beauty of your existence.

For time immortal people have found

great pleasure in the power and wonder of creativity from music, drawing, to dance and writing. Creativity is primitive; just imagine our ancient ancestors living in caves without the tools and security we have today, yet they still took the time to make necklaces and bracelets and draw paintings on walls. Being creative is a natural innate process of the human experience. You should embrace it!

When we wish to rest, or to experience and reflect, we usually turn to the creativity of others and/or explore that of our own. I urge you to be creative no matter your skill set or level. The process of being creative is more important than the desired output. Being creative stops you from falling into standardisation. It allows you to explore your own ideas and beliefs with greater expression and understanding. By being creative on a regular basis you feed your fluid mind and spirit

(if you believe in having one) with fuel and passion, enabling greater resilience and appreciation of other people's creativity.

It is true and understood that not everybody is blessed with a job or working environment that allows them to fully explore one's own creativity, but you must make time even for partial exploration. Previously, I set up a blog a while back as a creative initial step to keep myself creatively active and to ensure I did not neglect the thing I love most, writing. The blog had become a vital output for me, and whilst I admit I did not bless its digital pages and posts with regular activity, it was at least in my mind enough to bring me back to it and to dedicate time to do some writing. I do writing for work everyday, but my writing was for me, to satisfy my own thirst of creative exploration. The blog has long gone to sleep, but now I still continue to write.

The key is to make your own dictionary of thoughts and emotions and to not allow your life experience to be solely bound by the expressions of others. Be more than just a receiver, be an active participant.



Activity

Do something creative at least once a week. Make time for it, schedule it into your diary if you are ultra-busy.

- ∂ **Week 1:** Write a poem or dance at home to your favourite song(s)

- ∂ **Week 2:** Draw or paint a picture or create some music/songs using tools at home
- ∂ **Week 3:** Arts & Crafts - make something for somebody else or design your own postcard
- ∂ **Week 4:** Take some photos of your local area or make a short film using a smartphone

You can do one or two things a week depending on your schedule. After you have finished, please do reflect on how you feel, and how the process of being thoughtfully creative has made you feel.

TIME MANAGEMENT & RELAXATION

*"Anything can be achieved with a bit of order and
enthusiasm."*

- Barry Crisp

Never underestimate the importance of ensuring you achieve good time management. It is essential especially if you are juggling many things at once. I would not be able to function if I did not have a to-do list no matter its medium (i.e. sticky notes, scrap paper, diary, and so on). I usually use the back of envelopes from letters/bills received. Your Board of Elements will complement your time management process enabling you to keep on track and ensuring you are always engaged. You will have the feeling of being in control, which is quite

liberating.

To achieve good time management you must first be honest with yourself and prioritise what is most important to the least and what is just not necessary. Really be honest with yourself. Over committing yourself and making promises that cannot be kept only makes you feel bad. You will be forever battling against the tide if you over commit yourself. It also may well have an impact on others who are affected by your failure to achieve good time management and keep to promises and deadlines. Effective time management also ensures you have essential relaxation time free from everything and everyone. Even socialising consumes both energy and time.

These days most people are searching with passion for a stable work-life balance and greater time management. Would it not be wonderful to rest at least three days and work

at most, four? Recent research suggests that working longer hours does not improve productivity. In fact, Germany is one of the nations that work the fewest hours collectively in the year, yet they are one of the most productive and efficient nations across the globe. Allowing more free time to explore one's own interests and happiness generates happier, more productive and content people.

I am positive we would have much more productive societies based on happiness and wellbeing if the current working times were reversed. The whole five day-a-week work ethic is a human-made culture of doing things based on political and financial gain. Whilst I appreciate that not everyone can quite simply shift things to their desires immediately, you should nevertheless ensure you create an individually tailor-made work-life and wellbeing balance that you enforce and make

clear to others, and defend it as you would your own life. This may not happen overnight, but you should aim to make it happen, as quick as one possibly can.

Companies and senior management need to become more flexible, conscious and innovative, and individuals need to become more nature centred and put themselves first. Yes, it is tough because what this demands a total shift in the paradigms of how we approach and do things. But over time it is not impossible. After all, the effects of industrialisation on education, life expectancy and population happened within a nano second of Earth's existence, quite literally overnight.

I currently have created a great work-life balance, wellbeing attitude, agenda and schedule for myself and my family, and mindfully pass up many opportunities that would come into conflict with this. But do

remember, change within you often means other people have to adapt as well. Be mindful of this and you can better deal with conflict, especially when dealing with work related issues.

Key things for effective time management:

To-do list: Have yourself a to-do list for the week in general or for each day. You will need separate to-do lists for both work and personal activities. Write down the things you need to do for the week ahead and if anything pops up during the week, simply add it to your list immediately.

Stop being side-tracked: Try not to get sidetracked for too long on things that are not on your list because if it was truly important

within the present then it would already be on your list. Do not procrastinate whilst working on something - the moment you find yourself doing this, get up and walk into another room, come back and refocus.

Calendar: Write down key events on calendars and diaries, so that you do not miss these important moments and allow those that live with you to know what you are up to and when. Write down key events and deadlines on a digital calendar and have it synced with other electronic devices and those with your work colleagues and family. This goes a long way to avoiding any conflicts and issues that may arise. Even if you freelance from home, it is generally good practice to let others know when you are not available.

Balance: Keep to your schedule and agreed work time. Do not over do this if it is not absolutely necessary. You are far more productive as a parent, partner, friend, or employee if you keep a solid work-life balance. If your schedule remains unbalanced for too long you will burn out and become frustratingly stressed. Remember, all these key elements are interlinked and matter wholesomely.

Be present: Immerse yourself in work when it is work time and immerse yourself in the things you do outside of work when it is your own time. You will then notice that you find equal pleasure in both. Your mind will no longer stray on the other when engaged on a task. An effective practice that helps you to slow the mind down enabling it to focus on one thing clearly is meditation and stretching (to be explored later).

Additional things to try:

- ∂ Do the things you love and visit your favourite place often
- ∂ Break down tasks and goals to make them easier to achieve
- ∂ Reward yourself - go buy yourself that new book
- ∂ Go at your own pace - as a unique individual you know yourself better than anybody else. Your own rule of measurement is enough, nobody elses
- ∂ Make use of down time - usually when I am in the shower or out for a walk, I explore ideas/issues
- ∂ To avoid burn out and procrastination one should exercise, be creative and eat well (to be

explored later)



Activity

Create a weekly personal time-schedule. Leave it for 10 minutes, and then comb through it to take out the unnecessary. You may find new things popping up, which is totally fine and natural. Decide whether it requires your immediate attention. If it does not, then create an additional time-schedule for the following week and add it there.

Do the same exercise for a weekly work time-schedule. Finally bring both schedules together to see if any conflicts arise.

DECLUTTER

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

- Leonardo Da Vinci

Your mind is constantly active. It is absorbing, decoding and transmitting sounds and images rapidly. Even if you are unaware of it, your mind is still processing the mayhem, the mess, the clutter that you tell yourself to ignore, but that very process alone clutters your mind and stops you from being fully relaxed.

Help your mind to be more relaxed and peaceful by creating a harmonic environment at home and work. There are three simple things you can do to achieve a harmonic environment.

Plants create an atmosphere of relaxation and

of being close to nature. Some plants even purify the air making it fresher, like the Areca Palm and Snake Plant. It has even been suggested that having plants present can improve productivity and wellness. Think about that for moment. Would you prefer and feel more comfortable to work in a dull-looking environment or one dressed in nature?

Natural Light helps take away the gloom of a working space and living environment. Create as much natural light as possible, as this also improves one's mental wellbeing and productivity.

Create that space of Zen, that most holistic and peaceful environment for you and your working space. If you do not feel completely comfortable and at peace, then you will be

easily distracted from work and you cannot feel comfortable and relaxed at home or even in your bedroom. This zone of Zen may be different for each individual, but as long as you feel completely relaxed and it stimulates peacefulness within then that will beautifully suffice. This is also paramount for when meditating (explored later).



Activity

Stand outside of your home or workspace and carefully walk through each room and be aware of the sounds, colours, smells and shapes.

Stand still in each room.

∂ What do you like about it?

- ∂ What do you not like about it?
- ∂ How does this space make you feel?
- ∂ How can you change it?
- ∂ How can you de-clutter and create more space?
- ∂ How can you organise everything to create that peaceful atmosphere for you?

MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION

“Keep your heart clear and transparent, and you will never be bound. A single disturbed thought creates ten thousand distractions.”

- Ryokan

Mindfulness. What is that? In a nutshell, to be mindful is to be aware of your thoughts and emotions at any present given time. It is to live presently within the present now and be the watcher and observer of your mind. It is to be aware that you are aware. The aim of this short course is to keep everything as simple and as doable as possible, and to introduce you to the basics because that is all you really need.

A martial artist who hones and perfects the basic moves of defense and attack will do well against any predator who has rushed through an array of elaborate movements. No

one martial art is better than the other, but quite simply there are only different skill levels pertaining to each individual. The same applies to meditation and the different methods of meditating.

Meditation and stretching have transformed my life, and by constant practice they can transform your life to. These practices have allowed me to feel more relaxed and more focused, which in turn has enabled me to see things more clearly and remain calm under any form of pressure. Have you ever truly listened to your own breathing, as you softly and deeply inhale and release with a transitional exhale? Have you felt how happy your body resonates when you take a good stretch after a long day before bed or when you wake up in the morning? Meditating and stretching are not only essential for your heart, blood flow and mental health, but also for longevity. Your mind

and body function better when you learn to truly breath and act with clarity.

How to meditate:

The easiest way to meditate is to sit down on the floor or on a cushion with your legs crossed and your back straight or to lay down on your back with your palms facing up. You can play a relaxing instrumental song in the background if you wish. As an additional setting you may want to burn some essential oils, but this is not an absolute necessity.

- ∂ **Method 1:** Place a plant on the floor in front of you, close your eyes and create the image of the plant alone in your mind. Focus on it. As you breathe in, imagine you are taking both oxygen and energy from the plant into yourself and circulate it all around your body. As you breathe out, imagine you are letting go of tired and negative energy into the plant, which recycles it

into good air and energy back into your body. Take slow deep breaths. To help slow down your breathing, hold your breath momentarily in between the time of inhaling and exhaling.

- ∂ **Method 2:** Same as method 1, but instead of using a plant, place a stone or crystal in the palm of your hand. As you breathe in, the energy will be slipping inside your body from the palm of your hand.
- ∂ **Method 3:** If you are outside, why not find a tree and sit beside it. As you breathe in, imagine the energy from the tree is entering you at the crown of your head.
- ∂ **Method 4:** A popular meditation method that works well for many people is to simply focus on your breathing without trying to control it. Notice how it naturally transitions from inhale and exhale. Clear your mind and try to only focus on your breathing. You can do this whilst on a bus or train, or even at work when you take

a moment out to refresh yourself. You can do this sitting down or standing up. Whenever you feel tired or lack some focus and energy, meditation can help to rejuvenate you.

If you find your mind wandering, gently bring it back to your main point of focus, whether it be your breathing, energy from a plant, a key word, tree, or crystal. Five to ten minutes is enough meditation time, but you can go longer once you find the process easier to achieve, and of course if time allows.

I would recommend mediating at least twice a day. In the morning as you roll out from bed and before you get into daily routine, and in the evening before bed (you can even do it in bed). If you have children needing your attention at these hours, then wake up ten minutes earlier than you usually do. The moment you open your eyes you can meditate

in bed. I also recommend meditating whenever you feel stressed and tired. This will help your mind and body feel more balanced. You will feel a positive transformation within days.

To complement your meditation, I highly recommend that you stretch both morning and night. Your body can easily become tight and riddled with knots and tension. Stretching really helps you to relax and release the buildup of tension that accumulates in your body over the course a day(s), week(s) and month(s). Good stretching also helps growth and stability of one's body. You do not have to be actively involved in sport or dance to apply the necessity of stretching to your everyday routine. Treat it as a vital moment in your day just as necessary and important as brushing your teeth and having a wash.



Activity 1

Find a quiet space. Meditate by focusing only on your breathing. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back.

Activity 2

Meditate by following energy from a plant/flower/tree. Give that energy a colour.

Activity 3

Try more advanced positions as you progress. You only need to do an internet search on meditation positions to get some ideas.

The main thing is to feel comfortable in your position, otherwise your mind will not be able to truly focus.

Important. Stretch each time before you meditate. A relaxed body helps assist in creating a relaxed mind.

FITNESS & EXERCISE

"The clouds come in all different shapes and sizes."

- Barry Crisp

This is the real pickle for many. How to get a good work out and remain fit whilst living a busy lifestyle. The clouds come in all different shapes and sizes, and so do people - we need to accept that fact in ourselves and others. Embrace those subtle differences in body shapes and types. I am not saying that being obese should be embraced because any condition or weight that is harmful to one's health needs immediate addressing. However, do embrace that little love handle, those hairy arms, or whatever qualities that make you different from others.

Now that you are meditating and

stretching every day you already have the perfect foundation to continue to build upon. But remember, everybody is different and so you need to find the exercise and pattern that best suites you. Just because you see people jogging who are in seemingly good shape does not mean it is going to work for you. Many people are mystified after doing so much exercise, but find their weight is not as they would like it to be.

I have found that a combination of simple exercises is an effective way to manage your weight ambitions. In addition to meditating and stretching, as well as eating right (next section), you can do the following exercises:

- ∂ Ditch that car unless it is vitally essential. Inconvenience is good for our growth and for society!

- ∂ Walk before eating. Try to go for a walk for a few minutes, even if it is in the garden, around the flat/house before you eat. This activates your body and helps break down food faster and more effectively
- ∂ Try to walk everywhere and leave plenty time to do so. If the distance is too great, then cycle. If it is far too great to cycle, then use public transport, but get off a stop before and walk the rest of the distance
- ∂ Try brisk walking
- ∂ Yoga
- ∂ Always use the stairs
- ∂ Dance and laugh at every opportunity. Dancing is a great way to lose weight. And it is said that those who are constantly laughing add ten years on to their life expectancy. I do not have any proof for this, but it is a fun fact
- ∂ Try high intensity exercises with bursts of three

to five minutes within an hour's exercise if time allows. Apparently, you only need three minutes high intensity exercise once a week. However, if time does not allow then challenge yourself to do high intensity exercises for five to ten minutes before each time you have a shower/bath every day. How simple is that? In around the same time it takes to make a good cup of tea

Examples of high intensity exercises are (and done at high tempo): press ups, sit ups, planks, mountain climbers, star jumps, burpees (squat thrust), on the spot sprints, high knees, box and move (shadow boxing), kicks, and so forth.

You can use a range of exercises during the three to ten minutes high intensity sessions. I would recommend changing every thirty

seconds to ensure focusing on different areas of the body. But during every-other-thirty-second passage you may want to go super-fast and fast or medium and fast. It all depends on your current health and fitness condition. You know your body best, so listen to it when it is trying to tell you something. Do not overexert yourself unnecessarily. Take these new strategies in small doses and work your way up to longer sessions. Remember, you should always consult with your doctor first before embarking on health and fitness changes that will impact upon your body.

You can help your body to be more effective with weight management by ensuring you are not sitting down for long periods of time. Research suggests you should get up and move around even briefly after every 45-60mins. And no, I am not suggesting getting up during a cinema viewing, but you can do this

whilst at work, whilst watching TV at home, and whenever the opportunity allows. As a rule of thumb, it is important to be up on your feet and active for as long as possible throughout the day. Also helps you to sleep better at night.

Stretching is an essential practice to undergo whilst working and before and after any exercise session. You must embed this practice into your working schedule. After every 45-60 minutes of work or study, why not stretch your arms, legs, feet and neck to release tension in your body and relax your mind. Give your eyes some deserved rest. Close your eyes and take in four slow deep breaths.

Think of it this way. For any twenty-four-hour period, calculate how many hours you sleep, and how many hours you sit down, as well as how many hours you are actively on your feet. How many hours is your body inactive? Whilst resting is particularly

important for your body, there is plenty of research out there that suggests you should not sit for longer than three hours a day.

Now for many of us this is not possible or is it? Have you ever tried standing up whilst at your desk? Standing is considered similar to walking as it increases energy, burns extra calories, tones muscles, improves posture, increases blood flow and raises metabolism.

In addition, you could and should add one of the following within your schedule for at least thirty minutes two to five times a week. Cycling, jogging or outdoor swimming. The reason I have only suggested these three is because they are outdoor activities and will bring you closer to nature. You can find other similar activities for there are plenty. You should be outside as much as possible. Allow your body to become conditioned by the different elements that the natural world has

to offer you.

Start exercising! I guarantee you will see changes and feel a difference within a month, so long as you are eating right as well (explored in next section). However, do take your time. The race is only within yourself and being too drastic on your body can have the reverse affect you were hoping for. Your body is a sacred temple and it needs to be looked after with care and gentle transitions of change.



Activity

Implement the exercises and practices for a week and see how you feel. Adapt them until it

all fits snugly with the rest of your schedule.
Then cement it into your routine for a month.
After a month reflect on your progress and
make adjustments where necessary.

EATING RIGHT

*"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one
has not dined well."*

- Virginia Woolf

We already know that fruit and vegetables are a must in any diet, so we do not need to explore that (and we need to eat more fruit than the recommended daily intake because although a marvel in science, genetically modified [GM] mass produced foods do not carry the same amount of nutrients organic fruit and vegetables do). We also know that if everybody could afford to buy only organic food they would, so let us leave that topic alone. And we already know that eating too much junk and processed foods, as well as fizzy and from-concentrate drinks are a real killer to your

health. And yes, you should by now know that anything that claims to be low fat, or 0% fat merely has lethal substitutes hidden within to substitute for taste. Furthermore, we know that sugar is as addictive as class A drugs. Seriously! And try not to forget that too much meat just sends you round on an anxious enzyme bend.

So then what is my answer to complement everything you already know about healthy eating? It is dramatically simple! Considering what was said in the previous paragraph, the most effective way to eat right is to watch your food intake. Love yourself enough to watch your food intake. Set yourself a calorie intake target (nothing below 1200 Kcal a day) and monitor the foods and the respective calories that you intake. It is said that you can lose around 2-3 pounds a week if you lose 500 Kcal more than you eat each day by way of

exercise.

What is important is self-discipline and self-love. You must truly dedicate yourself to yourself and protect yourself from excessive eating and drinking that will bring harm to yourself. The damage and pain of eating wrong is a silent one. It only shows its true self when you find you are no longer comfortable in your own body through restricted movement or some newly developed health condition. It is not like being physically hit. Therefore, we must ensure self-discipline is key. Love yourself more than you love that which you put into your body.



Activity

By way of the numerous food apps available or by use of pen and paper I want you to record and calculate your calories intake each day for two-weeks. And yes, this includes the weekend. You may also want to record what you eat and your mood during that time. This may help you to find patterns in your eating.

- ∂ **Week 1:** Ensure you do not exceed the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) each day (Currently for Men: around 2500 Kcal, and Women: around 2000 Kcal).
- ∂ **Week 2:** Prove to yourself you can eat less by reducing your RDA by 500 calories for men, and 250 for women.

By following this exercise, you really begin to

learn what foods contain what calories, allowing you to become more health focused and attuned with your body. After two weeks, the knowledge gained will help you to naturally select healthier foods and to know roughly how much of the RDA you are consuming throughout the day. You will find yourself selecting healthier foods whilst at the same time keeping within the RDA. You will become better aware of what is going into your body and how much, and you will find a lot of surprises about yourself and the foods you usually eat.

If you find yourself slipping back into bad eating habits, take up the two-week challenge again to retune yourself. But do not be hard on yourself. Be gentle and approach this with an open forgiving mind. The world average life expectancy for humans is around sixty-seven years of age, so give yourself a year of

dedicated health focus that will undoubtedly have lasting positive effects. Take your time with your body and allow it to transition gradually over the course of a year. Otherwise your body will struggle to adapt to the irregularities of your actions and the fluctuations of your thoughts and emotions.

QUICK TIPS FOR CHILDREN

BY MY CHILDREN

‘Wellbeing Guide’ and ‘How to Conquer Stress and Tiredness’

The following quick tips come from my daughter and eldest son. As a family exercise I asked them to create a wellness leaflet aimed at their friends. The tips they wrote down are those based on what works for them.

The Wellbeing Guide – by my daughter

What is it all about? - Wellbeing is about staying positive and healthy (physically and mentally). The following are different ways to improve your wellbeing.

Be Kind – Being kind to other people makes them feel loved and happy whilst also making yourself feel good., which is a win-win situation. The more you be kind, the more you feel good about it and the more you do it! Try it out yourself now!

Show Gratitude – Just taking the time to stop and think of what you are grateful for – even the tiniest things – can help you to become happier and remind you to live every moment fully. Who knows what’s going to happen next? So, what are you grateful for today?

Handling Anger – Everybody feels this emotion from time to time. What matters is that you recognize the signs of this feeling and stop it from getting worse. When you get angry it gives out a negative effect to everyone else.

Techniques for Handling Anger – whenever you feel anger surfacing:

- ∂ Count to 10
- ∂ Talk to someone
- ∂ Do something you love
- ∂ Engage in physical activities / Exercise

Drink Water – Drinking water is a vital part of your health – to keep you hydrated. Without water you would not be alive right now. Before you drink your water, channel good thoughts into it, appreciate it. It will make such a big difference.

Try Yoga – Yoga is a group of spiritual, mental and physical practices. It helps to calm you down and focus you on the present, whilst also keeping your body happy and healthy.

Handy Hint! – To improve your wellbeing and flexibility, stretch every day and try some breathing exercises. Stand tall, sit tall. Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Stretch and breathe nice and slow.



How to Conquer Stress and Tiredness – by my son

Are you stressed out about homework/work or constantly tired? Well, the following information is perfect for you.

Stress is when you have so much things to do, you get worried and upset. For example, you have lot of homework and the deadline is just around the corner. It is important you control your stress because it could get worse. Here are four tips on how to deal with stress in

any situation:

Speak out – It is important to talk as it makes it easier to organise your problems. Talking with a friend or family member is a good way as they could help you. It is important that you prevent yourself from getting stressed. If it goes too far, it could lead to depression and that is not good. Depression can lead to something even worse. So, speak out!

Meditate – Meditation is a good way to relax and clear your mind. Just forget about everything and concentrate on nothing (or just one thing). This may sound hard, but it really helps you to calm down. You should meditate daily so you can remain calm and do not get worried so much.

Exercise – This is important if you feel tired or your body feels weak or tight. Do some lounges, body weight plyometrics and stretches every day, and especially if you feel stressed.

Breathe – simple breathing exercises, like counting in for 3 seconds and out for 5 seconds may sound simple, but it will help in make you feel calm. This simple breathing technique is very useful if you are ever anxious or worried.



My youngest son's method of dealing with a problem is to remove himself from the situation/environment and go and do something that he likes, for example drawing, playing with his cars or reading. He says this helps him to feel calm and completely forget

about it.

His favourite relaxation exercise is to curl up into a ball and then slowly rise and stretch out towards the sky.

CLOSING NOTE & THANK YOU

*"Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the
one less traveled by, and that has made all the
difference."*

- Robert Frost

Thank you for taking the time to read this pocket guide to mental health and wellness and for incorporating the exercises into your daily routine. I sincerely hope you found some, if not all, of it useful and applicable. From the beginning, I aimed to keep this book free from technical jargon, complicated practices, and advanced spiritual theories that might push you too far out of your comfort zone too quickly.

My goal was to introduce simple and practical advice that you can easily integrate into your daily life. While much of this may

seem like common sense, it's easy to overlook the basics when you're busy. These straightforward approaches can make a significant difference in our lives, helping us achieve balance and effectiveness.

It's crucial to approach all the activities and insights with a holistic mindset. An imbalance in one area can disrupt your overall well-being, and multiple imbalances can lead to serious consequences. Always consult your doctor before starting any new exercises or habits that may affect your health and fitness.

From a young age, I was fascinated by the concepts of meditation and well-being. I imagined it could unlock powers similar to those seen in Dragon Ball Z, Naruto, or Star Wars. While that thought faded over time, it reflects a deeper truth: unlocking the potential to free ourselves from the limitations we impose on our minds. The human body is an

incredible organism, and the Shaolin Monks of China serve as a powerful example of what can be achieved through focus and connection with both inner energy and nature.

Throughout my life, I've had the privilege of training in Tai Chi and Wing Chun Kung Fu, and I've integrated these experiences, along with others, into who I am today. I've always been an enthusiastic cyclist, walker, and meditation practitioner. Over the years, these activities have provided me with confidence, clarity of thought, stability in my health, and a deeper connection to nature.

Growing up in poverty and witnessing domestic violence did not break me; rather, it compelled me to develop the key practices outlined in this book, which have helped me navigate many challenges. As a parent, I've learned the importance of selflessness and actively sought to achieve a healthy work-life

balance through the ideas and practices shared in this guide. Using every experience—both good and bad—as a learning opportunity has enabled me to lead the humble lifestyle I currently enjoy, one I hope others can also achieve.

My work on international health programmes within the social enterprise sector, alongside mentoring and living abroad, has provided me with valuable insights into health and wellness. I've met many inspiring individuals committed to making our world a better, more holistic place. The knowledge in this book is not derived from formal education; it comes from real-life experiences and conversations with friends, clients, and passersby.

I hope the words and exercises in this pocket guide lead you to better holistic well-being, creating positive ripple effects for those

around you. Please use this book as a template to shape a lifestyle that best suits you. For those wanting to delve deeper and explore new experiences and ways of thinking, I invite you to check out the bonus section titled "Elements of 'O' and Earthing – A New YOU."

Wishing you energy, light, and harmonic blessings,

Barry Crisp

ELEMENTS OF 'O' & EARTHING

A NEW YOU

"To evolve oneself, you need to step outside of yourself and shed your skin."

- Barry Crisp

'O' is not pronounced or spoken as the letter O. Instead it is a sound. 'O' represents the whole, the oneness, the circle, the completion. It represents the mouth - after you inhale through the nose and exhale with a deep and rejuvenating 'O' breath.

Know that the ability to appreciate and embrace nature, and each other, is FREE. All the different cultures and languages around the world are united by earth's diverse umbrella of life. As the gates to the next dimensions open (that is to say as more people become

conscious of the need for change), we all have a chance to transcend our spiritual energy and return our minds to nature. We live within this busy world, but we can breathe outside of it.

The aim of the Elements of 'O' and Earthing - A New YOU, is to bring each individual closer to nature and life itself. After dedicating yourself to this practice, you will begin to notice that the elements will enter into your everyday life and consciousness. Earthing is an ideal process to introduce, sustain, and transcend your peaceful and harmonic spiritual development on our beautiful Earth and beyond.

Elements of 'O' Concepts.

Darkness and Light

As night turns into day and day into night,

we come to realise that there are no true opposites; everything complements and harmonises with one another. Within each of us exists both light and darkness. Darkness resides within the light, and light within the darkness. By observing your thoughts, you can liberate yourself, embracing both your darkness and light with pure awareness, love, and harmony.

Nature and Universe

Consider the vast array of life: animals, birds, trees, water, flowers, fish, humans, mountains, lakes, rivers, clouds, the sky, stars, the moon, the sun, planets, and galaxies. By learning to appreciate them, exploring through science, and understanding through spirituality, we remind ourselves daily of the preciousness and wonder of both nature and the universe. The Earth cannot exist without the moon and the

sun. Observing nature and the universe reveals that life is intricately woven within a grand, delicate, and harmonious cosmosphere (a blend of cosmos and atmosphere).

Humankind and Animals

Humankind and animals have coexisted in the wild across the globe since the dawn of time. By observing the beauty in the patterns, movements, and stillness of the animal kingdom, we can learn valuable lessons. Animals can be profound teachers for us. We live in communities and socialise to appreciate our differences and learn from one another, fostering greater personal development, spiritual awareness, and expression.

Water and Trees

Imagine that water has the ability to receive,

store, and transmit energy. We drink the same water that ancient civilisations and dinosaurs once consumed, and we breathe the same air provided by trees and plants. Without water, trees cannot thrive; without trees, water cannot exist. Without both, humans cannot survive. Therefore, we should honour the majestic beauty and power of both trees and water. Listen to the sound of leaves rustling in the wind, and the gentle movement of water as it flows over rocks and carves out rivers. Observe and listen, then see and hear.

The Elements (of 'O')

Harmony, Friendship, Valour, Knowledge,
Imagination, Enthusiasm, Wisdom, Honesty,
Observation, Listening, Creativity, and
Patience.

Focusing on these key Elements of 'O', will bring you closer to a purer harmony/love and an appreciation for all mediums of life in both the physical and spiritual realms. Write these down and explore what each one means to you and how it can be appropriately applied to your daily life. Be mindfully present with each of these elements and be aware whenever you are applying one at any given moment. You can even pop them up around your place of residence and workplace as little reminders to; embrace friendship, be free with your imagination, listen to others, and so forth.

Earth Shadow

Earth Shadow is an improvisation shadow dance dedicated to Earth. Each day during Earthing (continue reading) you will pick two elements of life in any combination (i.e. water

and tiger) and merge them together into an improvised shadow dance where you imitate the movements of your two elements.

The key is to let yourself be free and become one with nature and yourself. Be slow, light, and free with your movements.

Earth Kiss

Earth Kiss is a harmonic kiss between family, friends and loved ones.

- 1.** Touch palms - one palm facing up, one palm facing down
- 2.** Touch foreheads together and close eyes
- 3.** Inhale slowly, hold breath, exhale slowly
- 4.** Keep eyes closed, now place both hands on either side of the other's face
- 5.** Kiss the centre of his/her forehead, pull away

and open your eyes

Tree Palm

Tree Palm is to be done throughout Earthing in particular. It is all about reconnecting with nature. It is a very simple activity. Stand beside a tree and place one hand on the tree (any tree is fine, and it can be a different tree every day). Close your eyes and inhale. Hold your breath, and converse with the tree within your mind (imagine your thoughts flowing from your mind down your arms and into the tree). Anything is fine, from 'hello' to telling the tree a secret. Once finished, exhale slowly, open your eyes and carry on what you were doing.

'O' Earth Mantra

This mantra is used during Earthing and is to be used when you start to stretch and/or meditate. You can also recite at any given moment to remind yourself that your existence is part of

something far greater.

[inhale, exhale]

We return to you our beautiful Earth

We dedicate our thoughts to the elements of life,

We embrace nature and explore the cosmos

We harmonise with humankind and learn from
animals,

We transcend to pure harmony through darkness
and light

We allow the trees and water to balance ourselves,

We welcome the sunset to bathe us, the moonlight
to cleanse us,

and the stars to solidify us

We see beyond colour and form,

We return to you our beautiful Earth

We return to each other

We return.

[inhale, exhale]

Earthing

Earthing is the process of bringing a harmonising balance between yourself and your surroundings with the key focus on the Elements of 'O' and the Earth Mantra. Earthing takes place four times a year transcending you through the four seasons of life from one full moon to the next (one month), helping you to ascend through the dimensions (ladders of awareness). It is a period to rebalance and purify the mind, body and spirit (if you believe).

Earthing takes place:

August - September (Summer moving into Autumn)

November - December (Autumn moving into Winter)

February - March (Winter moving into Spring)

May - June (Spring moving into Summer)

Start dates will vary due to the full moon calendar. Be sure to check and mark out the dates for the year ahead on your calendar at home.

Practices during a month of Earthing:

Do

- ∂ Eat early and at set times - breakfast between 5:30am - 8am latest, lunch 12noon - 2pm, dinner between 5:30pm - 8pm
- ∂ Stretch - 5 - 10 minutes every morning and night (and mid-day if possible)
- ∂ Earth Shadow - morning and night, plus anytime the moment grabs you

- ∂ 'O' Earth Mantra - recite the 'O' Earth Mantra morning and night before stretches and meditation
- ∂ Meditate - morning, midday, and night
- ∂ Earth Kiss - anytime
- ∂ Tree Palm - anytime
- ∂ No electricity day - at least once during this month
- ∂ Earth Creativity - Create things (poems, paintings, etc..) dedicated to Earth

Encouragements

- ∂ Go bed early
- ∂ Read plenty
- ∂ Candle night dinners
- ∂ Be outdoors as much as possible
- ∂ Watch less television

- ∂ Limit your technology usage (i.e. no computer in early mornings and evenings)
- ∂ Go for long walks
- ∂ Drink plenty of water during the day
- ∂ Eat lots of fruits
- ∂ Go star gazing
- ∂ Sit in a park and observe nature
- ∂ Speak less - we learn to choose our words carefully and think before we speak

Do not

- ∂ Wake up late
- ∂ Eat meat
- ∂ Eat ready-made unhealthy food, and sweets
- ∂ Drink alcohol, fizzy, diluted or from concentrate drinks
- ∂ Smoke

- ∂ Watch TV - limit it drastically, and do not watch when eating
- ∂ Shout
- ∂ Exhaustive exercise - Earthing is a time of slowing everything down

Think of Earthing as slowing down and having a detox away from everything around you. The Do's, Do Not's are only guidelines. These may well be different for each of you and you can add or subtract from the list, which I have presented to you. I encourage you to create your own agendas and targets for the Earthing period.

Above all, do not forget to **breathe.**

FURTHER READING

To support your wider journey on mental health and wellness, I have put together a list of books that have been particularly useful to me during my search for better personal development and understanding. I hope these books will prove useful to you and find a place on your bookshelf or e-reader.

365 Tao Daily Meditations, Deng Ming-Dao, 1992, Harper Collins

A New Earth: Create a Better Life, Eckhart Tolle, 2009, Penguin

Conversations With God, Neale Donald Walsch, 1997, Hodder & Stoughton

Life Stories, David Attenborough, 2009, Harper Collins Publishers

Living Energy Universe, Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D., and Linda G. Russek, Ph.D., 1999, Hampton Roads Publishing Company

Our Living Earth, Yann Arthus-Bertrand, 2008, Thames & Hudson

Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative, Ken Robinson, 2001, 2011, Capstone 2nd Edition

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, Yuval Noah Harari, 2015, Vintage

Seokmun Breathing Meditation, Kyunghwan Min, 2004, Seokmun Press

Simulacra and Simulation, Jean Baudrillard, 1994, University of Michigan Press

The Celestine Prophecy: An Adventure, James Redfield, 1994, Bantam

The Courage To Be Disliked, Ichiro Kishimi & Fumitake Koga, 2017, Allen & Unwin Books

The Courage To Be Happy, Ichiro Kishimi &

Fumitake Koga, 2019, Allen & Unwin Books

The Grand Design, Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow, 2011, Bantam

The Hidden Messages in Water, Masaru Emoto, 2004, Beyond Words Publishing

The Power of Meditation, Sharon Salzberg, 2011, Hay House UK

The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle, 2001, Hodder Paperback

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Crisp has over 15 years' experience working in occupational safety and health and wellness, having hosted events and programmes across the globe and being part of an international team that assesses and selects the world's best workplace health and wellness programmes in SMEs, large and multinational enterprises.

On a more intimate and local level, Barry has worked with individuals and families by introducing mental health and wellness practical exercises that focus on increasing happiness and helping people to better cope with daily stress.

As a practitioner of tai chi, meditation, yoga and wing chun and through his experience of living abroad and traveling the world Barry has tried

and tested each activity presented in this short pocket guidebook. He currently also holds a master level certificate in Reiki.

Barry Crisp

