

STEPS primary care mental health team, Glasgow

The Whole Life Booklet

Ruth Jamieson
Katie Lynch



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Life is full of ups and downs. Life can throw up all sorts of challenges and surprises. Some things are out of our control. But there are always things we can do to cope better with life. This booklet is packed full of ideas – small steps you can take to feel good.

You have the whole of your life to improve your life – there's no rush, so start small and take it a step at a time.

This book gives you top tips to get on top of your life. Have a flick through and pick out the ideas that will help you feel better. Then start to work on it.

We hope our top ten tips in these areas are of help:

- **Eat well**
- **Watch what you drink**
- **Be more active**
- **Get a good night's sleep**
- **Stay on top of things**
- **Get involved**
- **Helpful websites**

Eat Well

We all know it – what we eat affects our body. When we eat too many fatty foods, we expect our body shape to change. When we eat too many sugary snacks, we expect our teeth to suffer.

But what about our mood? Well, we know that what you eat can make your mood worse. **But** we also know that what you eat can make you feel good. So here are our 10 top tips to eating well and feeling good.

10 top tips

1. To feel better in the short term, eating more carbs and less protein can help. So the night before a stressful day, have a meal full of carbs like potatoes, rice, pasta and bread. You'll feel less stressed the next day.
2. Start off the day on the right foot. Have a high-carb breakfast cereal. Try a bowl of muesli.
3. Eat food like turkey and eggs. They contain Tryptophan. This makes more of a special feel good chemical (serotonin) in the brain.
4. Eat more oily fish, like mackerel. It contains fatty acids called Omega-3, which can lift your mood.
5. 'The Fighting Five' (vitamins A,C and E, Zinc and Selenium) are winners in fighting stress. You find them in things like plums, kiwi, dark green veg., seafood and sesame seeds.
6. Keep an eagle eye on how much caffeine you take in. A nice cup of coffee makes us more alert and awake. But caffeine isn't just found in coffee – it's found in tea, chocolate, fizzy drinks, energy drinks and some medicines. Too much caffeine can leave you jittery and tense.

7. No doubt about it, cakes, biscuits and sweets are tasty treats. But they do have lots of refined sugar. They can give you a fast burst of energy, but the effects are short-lived. They end up making the body more stressed. Have a treat from time to time. But keep a close eye on just how many sugary snacks you have in a day.
8. Take time to enjoy your food. Eat with friends. Invite people round and cook for them Eat out of you can afford it. Plan and prepare your food. Take time over cooking. Spend time making your food look good (as well as taste good). Make every meal an occasion – set the table and switch off the TV.
9. Vitamin supplements can be dear. Unless your diet is very poor, they'll not help much. Taking too many can be as bad as taking too little.
10. Of course, feeling good about our health, and about the size and shape of our body can help us feel good overall So...getting away from fried and fatty foods (save fish suppers, full English breakfasts, rolls and bacon for special occasions). Cut down on salt. Eat more fruit, veg. and whole-wheat bread. You don't need to eat 'rabbit food' to eat well and feel good. Find healthy foods you like and stick to them.

Watch what you drink

Nothing wrong with a few drinks. It can make us more chatty and friendly. It can help us to relax and enjoy being with friends.

But watch you don't go over the score. Too much drink makes you feel low. It can make you feel tense. It can make you panic. It can make you feel bad about your life.

Here are our 10 top tips to drinking well and feeling good.

Ten top tips

1. Try low alcohol beers. Stay clear of strong beers and lagers.
2. Pace yourself. Take your time. Sip it and savour the taste. Make every second drink a soft drink or water. This helps the body cope.
3. Have a meal or snack before you go out for a drink. Drinking on an empty stomach means that the body absorbs alcohol too quick and you'll soon feel drunk. Food slows this down.
4. Eat food *while* you drink too. Snacks, like peanuts and crisps, slow down the speed drink gets into your blood.
5. Keep active when you drink. Don't just sit around. You are more aware of the effects of alcohol when you're active. Take a break between drinks, maybe even go for a walk.
6. A hangover makes you feel groggy and low, so...
 - ..stick to one type of drink. Beer with wine or spirits will lead to a bad hangover the next day.
 - ..drink a pint of water before you go to bed

7. If you make a plan to cut down what you drink, don't keep it quiet. Tell people about it – your husband/wife, mates etc. It's easier to stick to plans if you've told someone else about it. They can help and support you.
8. Keep a drink diary. This will give you a clear idea of how much you drink in a week. You can see what makes you most likely to drink – what people, events, feelings etc. Once you've worked this out, look at ways to cut your drinking down – i.e.:
 - Start to drink a bit later than usual
 - Steer clear of friends with whom you tend to drink too much
9. Decide on a set of drinking rules and write them down, e.g.....
 - "I'll never drink before 8pm"
 - "I'll never drink for more than 3 hours at one time"
 - "I'll only drink 3 nights a week".
10. Work out the most you will have to drink in one go – e.g. "I'll never drink more than 2 pints of lager in a night". Then stick to it.

Be more active

We all know that being active is good for you. It's good for your body. It helps control weight. It lowers blood pressure. It lessens your risk of health problems such as heart disease and some cancers.

Being active is good for your mind too. It can lift your mood and help you feel good. It is a great way to meet new people. Here are our 10 top tips for getting more active and feeling good.

10 top tips

1. You don't have to go to the gym to get more active. Weed the garden. Take the stairs instead of the lift. Go for a walk. You don't have to wear lycra or have super trainers.
2. Don't have the get up and go? Find out what's standing in the way of getting active and feeling better. Too busy? No child care? No trainers? Bad weather? Ask yourself:
 - Could getting more active be good for me?
 - How can I get around the things that are stopping me being more active?
3. Find something you enjoy doing or would like to try, and do it – an aerobics class or a game of five-a-side. Have a look on the internet, in your local library or leisure centre and find out what's going on in your area.
4. Set goals you can reach. Start small. Build up your level of exercise slowly. Start with daily short walks.
5. Aim for 30 mins most days of the week, but don't feel you need to do it all in one go. Break it up and spread it across the day. Try 15 mins in the morning and evening.
6. "No pain, no gain"? Nonsense. *Moderate* exercise is the name of the game. So what's that? You want your heart rate to be faster and feel your breathing a bit harder, but you should still be able to talk.
7. Get a 'get active' buddy. Someone who will join you on walks, at the gym or at an aerobics class. You can cheer each other on and help each other stay committed.
8. It can be hard to find time to be active, so think about your daily routine. Are there times when you could walk or cycle instead of driving? Could you walk the kids to school? Walk to work? Walk to the shop to buy the paper?
9. Stick to it! Some days it can be a real thought to get active, but do it, even if you don't feel like it.
10. If you're worried about getting more active, pop along to your GP and ask their advice.

Get a good night's sleep

Getting a good night's sleep helps us re-charge our batteries. Getting too little sleep, or too much, can affect our body and our mind. Most people need between 7 and 8 hours a night, but this varies from person to person. As we get older, we seem to need less sleep. Often the more active we are the more sleep we need. Here are our 10 top tips to getting a good night's sleep.

10 Top Tips

1. Be more active during the day. This can help you to sleep better. Make sure you spend the couple of hours before sleep slowing down.
2. Get to bed at more or less the same time each night. Get up at much the same time in the morning. Everyone likes a late night and a long lie now and again, but don't fall into the habit of staying up until the early hours and rising at noon. Get a good routine going.
3. In the hour or two before bedtime, build up a routine that lets your body know you're getting ready to sleep. Slow down – have a bath, read a book. Try to wind down before bedtime. Watching the TV or going a walk can make you feel more awake.
4. If worries tend to keep you up at night, try this idea – 'Worry Time'. Set time aside in early evening where you think about your worries. Note them down in a diary, and save the worries up until your 'Worry Time'. If a worry creeps into your mind at any other time, say to yourself "this isn't my worry time", and put it out your mind until then.
5. Making changes to your bedroom might help:
 - Keep your bedroom well aired
 - Make sure your room is not too hot or too cold
 - Check your mattress and pillows are still giving you good support.
6. Have a warm, milky drink, like Ovaltine or Horlicks, before bedtime. These can help you get a deeper sleep. Drinks with caffeine in them, like tea, coffee or soft drinks, are not a good idea before bed.
7. If you're in the habit of having a night cap, think again. Alcohol might help you sleep in the short term, but your sleep will suffer in the long term.
8. Avoid having catnaps during the day.
9. Your bedroom is for sleeping. Eat, read books, watch the TV, chat to friends on the phone anywhere else in the house, but not in the bedroom (sex is OK as this can be relaxing). If you have a TV or computer in your bedroom, see if you can move it elsewhere.
10. Still having problems with your sleep? Sleep retraining might be the way ahead. Visit your GP or have a look at our STEPs' booklets on Insomnia and on Controlling your Stress.

Stay on top of things

Things can get on top of you from time to time. There are things we can all do to stay well and to feel good. Our 10 top tips will help you to stay on top of stress.

1. Talk. Don't bottle up your problems. Talk them through with friends and family.
2. Relax. Put aside 'you time' every day. Go for a walk. Read a good book Listen to some music. **Be firm.** Don't give into pressure to do other things.
3. Deal with problems on the spot. Don't avoid things. It's easy to say "I'll deal with that later". But putting it off only makes things worse. It's tempting to ignore bills when you're strapped for cash, but the problem doesn't go away. Face up to your problems.
4. If you come up against a big problem, break it up. Tackle it a little bit at a time. If you're faced with lots of problems, do the worst thing first. Once you get this out of the way, the rest of the tasks will seem much easier.
5. Do one thing at a time. We can find ourselves going a million miles an hour, and doing a million things at once. Slow down and focus on one thing at a time.
6. Do other people expect too much of you? Be brave, speak to them and sort it out. Set your own targets and goals. Don't let other people set them for you.

7. Draw on past experience. How did you deal with a problem like this one in the past? Did it help?
8. Life has ups and downs. It's common to feel you're in a bit of a rut from time to time. Think about making a change – like taking up a new hobby, looking for a new job, or taking on a new challenge.
9. Keep a structure to your day – keeping a routine in your day can be really helpful, particularly if you're not working . Build in both things that you enjoy, and 'have to do' things, like housework, making meals etc... This will keep you feeling good.
10. Are there things you are not doing out of fear? Face up to your fears. Tackle them head on. You'll find that things aren't as bad as you thought, and that you cope better than you thought.

Get involved

Getting out and about, meeting new people and doing new things can be really rewarding.

Here are our 10 top tips to getting involved and feeling good.

1. Get in touch with old friends. We all fall out of touch with friends from time to time. Pick up the phone and give them a call. Chances are they'll be pleased to hear from you. The internet is a great way to track down people with whom you've lost touch.
2. Try to meet new people. Join a keep-fit class, sign up for an evening class. These are all great ways to get to know new people.
3. Get a new hobby. Make a list of things you'd like to do, and check out what's going on in your local area. Sign up for taster sessions and find out what you enjoy most.
4. Get involved in your local community. What's going on where you live? Think about the church, the park, the school and the community centre in your area. This way, you'll get to know other local people.
5. Volunteer. Do some charity work. The world's your oyster. You can volunteer to do just about anything. Helping other people can make you feel really good. Check out www.volunteercentre.com.

6. Join your local library. It's a great source of info. and entertainment. You can surf the net for free and borrow books, CDs and DVDs. It's also a great place to find out a bit about where you live.
7. Go to college and learn new skills. Learn a new language, take a drama class or learn to cook. In some cases, you can get help to pay for classes – www.ilascotland.org.uk
8. Get to know your neighbours – sit in your front garden; stroll round the block from time to time; shop at your local store instead of out-of-town supermarkets; walk your kids to school. This way you'll bump into folks on your street and get chatting. You could even mow your neighbours grass verge or pop by and pay them a visit.
9. If you need support to get out and about, you can get it. There are organisations there to help you get connected and get involved in the community.
10. If you're thinking about ways to get more active, it can be a great way to meet new people. Team sports are a great way to bond with others. Head to your local leisure centre and find out what's going on.

Helpful websites

The internet is a great source of useful info. Here are our 10 top websites.

1. www.glasgowsteps.com

Our site offers a great deal of help for stress problems. Go to the service directory section which will show you a wide range of services that can help you.

2. www.livinglifetothefull.com

A useful site full of self-help info.

3. www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

This is a good Australian site offering free computerised cognitive-behavioural therapy.

4. www.bluepages.anu.edu.au

This is a good site related to the above one. It offers a lot of information.

5. www.nopanic.org.uk

This site offers self-help, along with on-line support.

6. www.phobics-society.org.uk

This website gives information about a helpline offering support, and also offers advice and self-help along with on-line support.

7. www.stresswatchscotland.org

Good helpline offering support and advice. Links to local self-help groups.

8. www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Free phonenumber open from evening til 2am. Advice and support. 0800 83 85 87

9. www.dascot.org

Access to self-help groups, helpline and self-help. This is the website of Depression Alliance Scotland.

10. www.volunteerscotland.com

Check out this website for a whole range of volunteering ideas.

Make sure you have a look at your local council website. Quite often they'll have info. on a range of things going on in your area.