

LIVE WELL WORK WELL



Health and wellness tips for your work and life—
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Maximise Your Circadian Rhythm

A recent study by Rand Europe, an independent not-for-profit institute, found that people who sleep fewer than six hours per day have a 13 per cent higher mortality rate than people who get more than six hours of sleep. Since those people have to be replaced in the workforce, the economy is impacted as well, leading the study to conclude that sleep deprivation costs the UK economy about £40 billion per year.

A lack of sleep can also interfere with the ability to think clearly, meaning that while employees are at work, they may not actually be ‘working’. Every day, more than 20 million people in the United Kingdom work a typical nine-to-five job. However, with varying circadian rhythms—biological ‘clocks’ that regulate alertness and energy levels throughout the day—some people get their best work done in the morning, while others work better in the evening.

Recognising your unique circadian rhythm will help ensure that you spend your time at work effectively. For example, if you notice that you’re most alert first thing in the morning, get started on your most complicated tasks as soon as you get to work. Or, if you feel more productive in the afternoon, try scheduling important meetings and other tasks for later in the day so your morning sluggishness doesn’t damage the quality of your work and leave you feeling tired all day.

‘Hygge’ and Its Health Benefits

Pronounced ‘hoo-gah’, hygge refers to a Danish wellness concept that is taking Britain by storm. The Nordic word dates back to the 18th century and describes a feeling of cosiness and contentment while enjoying the good things in life, with good people. Hygge is the antithesis of today’s modern lifestyle wherein people are constantly connected through modern technology instead of through interpersonal experiences.

In general, hygge involves blocking the negative from your life and embracing the good. For example, people are encouraged to spend time with friends and family, enjoy a cup of coffee in front of a fire, and eat cake now and then—without feeling guilty about it. The concept is very much a part of Danish life, which is frequently ranked as one of the world’s happiest countries.

Although the hygge lifestyle has been around for centuries, its popularity is booming, as people are embracing the trend—there were a slew of books written on the topic in 2016. Whilst the concept may be met with scepticism, it shouldn’t be dismissed outright, as it may provide the following wellness benefits:

- **Hygge promotes exercise.** It isn’t just about sitting around a fire and chatting. Hygge also encourages exercise as an enjoyable activity—not a chore. And if you exercise outside, such as going ice skating or hiking, you may experience lower stress levels and an increase in self-esteem.
- **Hygge reduces stress.** A recent survey found that people from Sweden, Denmark and Finland (where hygge is a lifestyle) were the least stressed of the 36 countries surveyed.
- **Hygge reduces obesity.** Despite the mentality of enjoying the good things in life without feeling guilty—including beer and sweets—in Sweden, the proportion of adults who are obese is 14 per cent, compared to Britain’s 27 per cent.

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How to Hygge

1. Have dinner with friends.
2. Light some candles.
3. Savour a good strong cuppa, hot cocoa or coffee.
4. Rid yourself of negative distractions, such as the television or your mobile.
5. Go for a hike outdoors.



10 Top Tips to Manage Stress

For many, the excess and merriment of the festive season gives way to a bleak and busy January. Under pressure from New Year's resolutions and being back in the office after winter holidays, many workers feel their stress levels skyrocketing in January.

The International Stress Management Association offers the following tips on managing your stress so you can start the new year feeling productive and in control:

1. Put yourself first by eating healthy foods, scheduling regular physical activity that you enjoy and managing your time effectively. Putting your needs first will put you in a better position to help others.
2. Start to prioritise tasks. Choose your top three most urgent tasks each morning and make them a priority. Reschedule, renegotiate or delegate any tasks that don't make the cut.
3. Start to make time to relax and mentally unwind. Consider meditating for a few minutes each day to reduce anxiety and boost your immune system.
4. Start to empathise with others. Be conscious of other people's communication styles, and work to find solutions to problems together.
5. Start to live life to the fullest. Appreciate what you have. In doing so, you may see opportunities for growth and learning.
6. Stop ignoring your needs. Take short breaks throughout the day. Recognise how and when to say 'no', both at work and at home.
7. Rid yourself of unnecessary distractions. Consider asking your colleagues and your family to help you prioritise which tasks are urgent and which tasks can wait.
8. Stop allowing others to make you feel inferior. Accept yourself for who you are. Learn from past mistakes, and focus on the things about yourself that make you proud.
9. Stop being judgmental. Adopting a flexible thinking style that includes being objective and understanding can improve your mental well-being.
10. Stop avoiding the tasks you least want to do. When you put them off, they remain in the back of your mind and grow even bigger. Take control, and promise yourself a reward when you finish.

For more information on managing your stress, consult free guidance from the following organisations:

- Stress Management Society: www.stress.org.uk
- Mind: www.mind.org.uk
- NHS: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/understanding-stress.aspx