

Wellbeing Essentials

Exercise

“Exercise burns off any stress chemicals that are building up in the body and reduces the chances of any stress induced illness developing.”



In another of our Wellbeing Essentials series, we have looked at the human response to stress – Fight or Flight. We learnt how a build-up of chemicals released during fight or flight can become toxic and lead to illness – physical, mental or both.

Now we are going to look at one of the keys ways to combat this chemical build up – exercise.

Looking after our body is simple but it is not always easy as it requires a certain amount of self-discipline.

Firstly, we need to do some cardio exercise five times a week for twenty minutes at a time. It doesn't have to be high energy, but it does need to raise our heartbeat and make us slightly out of breath. There's no need to go to the gym (unless you particularly want to), you can simply go for a brisk walk, a cycle ride or a run. Exercising outside in the fresh air is very beneficial.

This will keep us physically fit (which improves mental fitness) but, crucially, it will also burn off any stress chemicals that are building up in the body and reduce the chances of any stress induced illness developing.

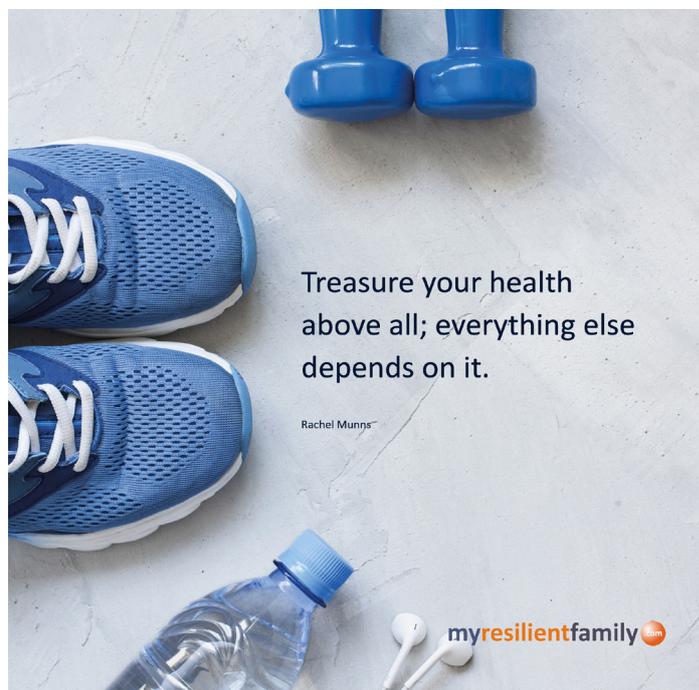
It's also important to look after our diet as this feeds our body AND our mind.

Make sure you have a balanced food diet including lots of fruit and vegetables. Try to restrict your intake of high fat or high sugar food. Use these as treats rather than regular items on your plate.

One mistake that people often make is not paying attention to what they drink. Things like tea, coffee, Coke and energy drinks contain a caffeine. Studies have found that too much of any stimulant (such as caffeine) is detrimental for our health.

Sugar is also a stimulant, so any sugary drinks or energy drinks are also bad for you. Energy drinks have now been banned for under 16s as they have been medically proven to stunt growth.

Too much sugar raises your blood sugar levels. This causes your pancreas to produce too much insulin which can, in time, lead to Type 2 Diabetes. Too many sugary drinks also affect our body at a cellular level allowing the development of problems like cancer,



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Rachel Munns

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kidney disease, heart disease, brittle bone disease, asthma and even brain damage. As if that wasn't serious enough it makes our body age faster, causes weight gain and a dull complexion.

Alcohol can also be very dangerous for mental wellbeing. In the moment of consumption it makes us feel relaxed, happy and uninhibited. BUT, and it is a big but, alcohol is actually a depressant. It will increase any feelings of sadness or anxiety and it will lead to poor sleep patterns which then leads to other wellbeing issues.

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