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WHOLE IS HEALTH



# Living a better life, naturally

10 tips for moving toward a more balanced,  
healthier & rewarding lifestyle!

By Anna M. Read





## *Living a better life, naturally!*

10 Tips for moving toward a more balanced, healthier, rewarding lifestyle.

Let's face it... If we are honest with ourselves, we sometimes feel imprisoned by our bodies, our circumstances, our energy levels, our health challenges. We want to do so many things but lack the energy. We want to be with friends and family but lack the time. We want to share our wisdom and talents but lack the confidence and connections. We want to have a hobby but lack the creative juices. We want to go on holiday but lack the funds. We feel overwhelmed and lack the resources. We want to live our best lives but lack the flow.

This booklet is not going to fix all that. What it will do is guide you through some easy steps to get the basic setup right, so that you feel more energised to tackle those other areas in your life. Once the physical body is stabilised in its overall functioning, more space and energy will open up to delve deeper into untapped resources, clear the mind, use your creative powers, develop talents and skills that you wish to pursue. Take your life in the direction you wish to go! But first things first...

### 1: 'A may is not a must'

We create a lot of 'have-to's in our lives, a lot of to-do-lists. Some based on fact and reality, others on fiction, beliefs, opinions; our minds or egos running us ragged. Living a great life requires space to have fun, find enjoyment, time to do nothing. Find out for yourself how many things you feel you 'must' do or should do, on a daily or weekly basis. Write them down. Then mark which of those you may let go of because they are a may, not a must; a could, not a should. Choose to do them if you wish, but consider your choices and why you are choosing them. Often there is some undercurrent of guilt or ulterior motive attached: If I do this...

- ✓ I will be liked/loved.
- ✓ I will feel happier/better about myself.
- ✓ I will get what I need in return.
- ✓ I am a good child/partner/parent.
- ✓ I will be appreciated for making an effort.
- ✓ I will be fitter/healthier/more beautiful.
- ✓ I will avoid...

These guilt-based motives create a sense of false obligation and false hope. If you were to do this thing, the hope is it will erase the guilt sensations and perceive yourself as a better person. This creates a never ending vicious cycle. So I invite you to consider which things you think you should be doing and what this is giving you in return. And what is the worst that can happen if you stop doing it? How much time





would you gain? Would you feel more or less stressed?

## 2: Water

The simplest and easiest tip I can give you is: drink water! It is common knowledge that the human body consists of 70% water and that it loses moisture constantly through breathing, perspiration (even if you're not sweating), tears, urine and faeces. Science has determined that a human body needs 1.5liters of fluids per day to avoid dehydration. We need H<sub>2</sub>O to digest food, to moisten our membranes (the internal lining of mouth, nose, airways, digestive and urinary tracts, even our eyeballs) and to effectively detoxify the body. However, in Western countries most of the fluid intake consists of coffee, tea, dairy, juice, lemonade/soft drinks, alcohol or energy drinks. Not much of the total fluid consumption is pure water, and herein lies the issue: any fluids that are not pure water, get digested quickly, starting in the mouth and stomach with uptake into the bloodstream from the small intestine. In other words, pure water makes it to the large intestine, anything else gets diverted. The large intestine or bowel houses the symbiotic gut flora that we need as part of our digestive system (to digest fibres, make minerals available and produce certain vitamins for us). Gut flora also has an important role in our immune system and the word flora says it all; it needs water! Is all water the same? No. The best water would be that from a high alpine stream or pure spring, but not many of us have access to that. (Store bought spring water in plastic bottles is a no-go). Second best is rain water. If you are going to use tap water that is chlorinated you can boil the water and let it cool down to room temperature in an open glass bottle or jug. This way most of the chlorine will evaporate. Fluoride is harder to get rid off and if you are drinking fluoridated water you may want to consider getting a good filter. There is no need to drink little sips all day long, buy yourself a pint size glass and drink it in one go four times a day. Make sure the water is at room temperature or luke-warm (warm water can be very soothing in the colder months). Make the first thing you do, after getting up, to drink a pint of warm water.

## 3: Food choices

Every part of the body renews itself every day. The building blocks for these regenerative processes are found in what we eat. It is no wonder then that the quality of our food is mirrored in the quality of our life. Almost everyone experiences the influence of nutrition on their symptoms if they change their diet, for better or worse. And every body is unique, so a diet has to be catered to the person. It has to take into account allergies and intolerances or sensitivities, constitution or body type, metabolic rate, lifestyle and exercise regime, even the season you are in. However, here follow some general tips that would benefit all:

- ✓ Eat fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season.
- ✓ Stop eating when you feel satisfied.
- ✓ No intake of food for three hours before bed time.
- ✓ Eat 300grams of vegetables/greens and 2 pieces of fruit, daily.
- ✓ Do not eat any food that does not smell or taste appetising.





- ✓ Do not eat unripe or overripe fruit. Eat fruit separate from other foods (leave at least an hour in between, up to three hours after a heavy meal).
- ✓ Do not eat food that has been boiled, cooked or fried for too long (or too short).
- ✓ Do not eat when feeling strong emotions (anger, worry, fear, grief).
- ✓ When you feel like eating, does the urge come from the body or the mind? Eat when hungry.
- ✓ Do not drink cold drinks/with ice cubes or eat cold/frozen food (room temperature or warm is better).
- ✓ Do not watch TV, read or have intense conversations during a meal, eat in good company or pleasant silence and enjoy the food with all the senses.
- ✓ Do not eat refined sugar or artificial sweeteners.

#### 4: Breathe easy

Diaphragmatic breathing, belly breathing or abdominal breathing all refer to the same thing; breathing deeply, using the diaphragm, expanding the belly and filling your lungs to capacity with fresh air.

When you are feeling anxious, worried, emotional or stressed, the breathing pattern becomes faster and more superficial, automatically. Unfortunately, this has become the new normal for many people.

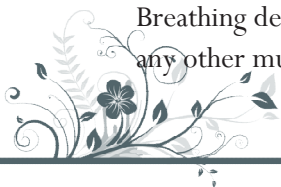
Breathing is the gateway into relaxing the autonomous nervous system (ANS). Why? Because breathing is completely regulated by the ANS and yet, we can influence it with our conscious mind too (unlike blood pressure, heart rate, body temperature, digestive speed etc).

Taking long deep breaths can help you voluntarily regulate your ANS, which can help achieve the following benefits:

- ✓ It helps the body and nervous system relax, reducing stress on many levels. It can even help you cope with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- ✓ It lowers resting heart rate and regulates blood pressure.
- ✓ It improves core muscle stability.
- ✓ It improves your body's ability to tolerate intense exercise and lowers the chance of injuring or wearing out your muscles.
- ✓ A slower breathing rate expends less energy.

The biggest benefit of deep breathing is definitely reducing stress. The stress hormone cortisol suppresses the immune system, keeping it from functioning at full capacity. This can make you more susceptible to numerous conditions. Long-term or chronic stress, even from seemingly minor inconveniences like traffic, can lead to anxiety or depression over time, because it fuels a sense of not being in control. So next time you are driving and start to feel agitated because you are running late, traffic is crazy, the light jumps to red or your fellow drivers aren't very considerate, take control... of your breath. In the car is a perfect place to practice deep slow belly-out breaths.

Breathing deeply can be difficult if the diaphragm (a muscle) has been underutilised for a long time. Like any other muscle it needs to be exercised to keep it 'tuned'. If this is the case, start easy: sit up straight,





drop the shoulders down and breathe in deeply through the nose, filling the lungs to capacity but without straining. Let your belly expand first and then the ribcage. Release the breath through mouth or nose and slightly contract the belly at the end of the out breath, to remove more of the 'stale air' from the lungs. Repeat this slowly for five to ten breaths.

Another easy technique is 4-4-4-4-breathing, also called square breathing; as you inhale, hold, exhale and hold for equal amounts of time. Start with 4 seconds each and build out to 7 or 8 seconds. There are lots of different breathing practices and many scientific studies on their benefits. If this interests you, go and explore and find the techniques that suit you best.

### 5: Exercise

The musculo-skeletal system of the body is made up of bones, joints, muscles, ligaments and fascia. All of these need to move to remain strong and supple. Likewise, our organs function optimally with good mobility. Digestion works best when the intestines can move freely, the liver is a large organ through which half a litre of fluid flows, it works like a sponge. The kidneys filter two hundred litres of blood and travel a total distance of 600m every day with the movement of the breath and in turn the breath can only flow when the diaphragm has enough range of motion. Movement happens everywhere and all the time in our body, even if we are not aware of it. We've already mentioned the body is 70% fluids. Fluids that flow stay healthy and clear, immobility causes stagnation. I cannot overstate the importance of exercise on a daily basis. A sedentary lifestyle does not promote health in any way. However, this does not mean you have to become a marathon runner, engage in competitive team sports or even get a gym membership. Do not start a particular sport because you think have to exercise. Instead, choose something that you love doing. Do set yourself some small goals to work towards, it's motivating and you can genuinely feel proud of the achievement. On top of that, create new habits like walking or cycling short distances instead of taking the car, get off a couple of bus stops early and walk the rest, use stairs instead of elevators, swim, go for bigger walks on the weekend or a short walk in the local park during your lunch breaks. Every little bit helps. If you are prone to injuries from exercising, then start slow and get an osteopathic consultation, things may be out of alignment.

### 6: Me-time

If your diary tends to fill up, you are constantly busy, helping and nurturing others more than tending yourself, you need to take time that is purely for you! Time to recharge, to nurture and care for you. You are your number 1! If you forget about you and keep giving, your cup will empty. Instead, you want to gift others from your overflow, from the saucer instead of the cup. Block out your diary for a regular yoga night, or choir, drumming or dancing, whatever fills you up. Go for a massage or a walk or a swim in the ocean. Meet a good friend. Spend quality time with family. If you don't put yourself in first place; your primary responsibility before anyone else, life will do it for you. This tends to show up in the unpleasant form of a burn-out or health breakdown - much harder to come back from, so best to focus on prevention.





## 7: Meditate

For some reason people think they have to be able to meditate the first time they try it and if not, then they conclude they just can't do it, or it's not for them. Apparently, they think meditation is completely different than learning to read or write or surf, but it is not. Just like reading, writing and surfing, skill comes with practice. You have to understand that from a very young age you have been trained to use the mind as your primary tool for learning, survival and safety. Showing emotions was often not appreciated, the mind had to become stronger to control them. Feeling pain in your body is unpleasant, it's easier to find a distraction for the mind. When a traumatic event takes place it feels safer to leave the body and retreat to the mind, causing a disconnect. The ego has started viewing the mind as the one and only tool to rely on for survival. This belief has been strengthened further by the educational system and the duality and separation of mind and feelings in the current societal model of mind over matter. And yet, this is a false belief. We actually have three valuable information processing systems, one no better than the other. Instead they complement each other perfectly. These are the mind, the heart and the gut (or womb). Meditation is the number one tool to quieten the mind and bring more balance and harmony to these three systems. To listen to the information from the other two centres which are more intuitive and soul guided. And yes, at first the ego and the mind will think you are putting yourself in unnecessary danger when you try to mediate. The mind can become overactive, throwing random thoughts at you as you try to become still and turn inward. Let it, notice it and return to stillness. Give your mind 'the job' of tracking the breath. All you need now is (non-judgemental) acknowledgement and awareness to start your meditation journey. Find the best time of day for you, when it's quiet in the house or you are alone, inside or outside, and start with 5 minutes, every day. If you prefer, you can use an app, a guided meditation or listen to free meditations on YouTube. Find one that resonates with you, do it every day. This teaches your mind that there is no danger in letting go, that you will survive.

## 8: Not Auto, OTO (One Time Only)

How often does this happen? When you wake up you automatically check your phone for messages. When you get to work you automatically check your emails first, even if you won't have the time to deal with them immediately. When you find a tricky message, difficult email or annoying job on your to-do list, you tend to look at it and leave it... till later, till I can handle it, till I feel like it, till I have the energy for it. This creates a pile of often small annoying jobs that become a large hassle and an energy drain, because in the back of your mind you know you still have to do those things you are avoiding for now. Try this instead: when you read an email that needs a response, you reply to it; when you have to book an appointment, write a letter, finish an assignment, do it straight away. This means you do it One Time Only, and it's done. It saves a lot of time and energy to work this way, but it does need a bit of training and change of mindset to make this a new habit.

## 9: Get an annual check up

We take our cars for oil changes, break checks, tyre checks. We go to the dentist for a regular check up but we tend to leave our bodies to struggle through small (or large) discomforts before we drag



ourselves to a professional. We wait for dis-ease to become disease, before we take action, change our diet, our habits or lifestyle. By then the disease has often become chronic and the road to recovery of health that much longer. Or we have gone to a doctor with our complaints and received some medication that suppresses the unwanted symptoms, making us feel better in the short term but ultimately fails in the long run as the cause of dis-ease has not been dealt with at all. Think along the lines of headaches, indigestion, irritable bowel, period cramps, lower back pain, fuzzy head or forgetfulness, skin eruptions, asthma, joint pain etc. We often think of these issues as normal or a normal part of ageing and learn to live with them. It is often many small signs the body is giving us, before a bigger diagnosis 'pops up'. Just like going to the dentist once a year, you can also schedule in an annual check up with an osteopath for anatomical alignment and an appointment with a naturopath, herbalist, homeopath, acupuncturist, whomever you feel drawn to, to discuss the physiological state of your being. How important is health, wellbeing and happiness to you? We often don't know the answer to that until it is taken away from us! It may be the last drop that overflows the bucket, but it is the countless drops that filled the bucket without emptying it that caused the problem.

### 10: Simplify by prioritising

Life has become pretty complicated over the last century. We are expected to behave a certain way, follow an education, graduate or get a diploma, build a career, create a family, be social, eat right, exercise etc... Societal standards are high and our own expectations even higher. On top of all that we are bombarded with advertisements of all the material things or exciting experiences we should be having as well. We are lured into buying things we do not need, spending money we may not have, looking for a feeling of fulfilment we cannot find. Why? Because we are looking in the wrong places. If you are not satisfied with the life you are leading it is time to lead yourself in a new direction. If you find yourself unhappy with your outer reality, the most important area to explore is your inner world. Who are you truly, what do you really want? Start by prioritising: which area are you most unsatisfied with? Health? Relationships? Personal growth? Career? Whatever you have as a number one priority, will be your starting point. Make the necessary changes to adjust that area first, don't worry about the other areas yet. Don't look into the future too far ahead of yourself, start with the small steps you need to take now, today, to start the change in direction toward your desired reality. Too hard to do on your own? It is for most people. It was for me. I had help and now I am here to help. The best way to do this is with a life coach or a mentor. Someone who sees you, guides you, holds space for your process and holds you accountable for your actions. Find someone you resonate with and go on a journey of discovery together. If you want to try me, then book a free call today!

*Arohanui | Big love, Anna Read*♥

