

Finding peace in unusual places

Meditation is often associated with quiet rooms and serene settings, but you can practice mindfulness anywhere.

Here are several places and ways to meditate in different or unusual environments:

In the heart of nature: Forest bathing

Find a forest or park and engage in 'Shinrin-yoku,' also known as forest bathing. Sit or stand among the trees and absorb the sights, sounds, and smells of nature. Focus on the rustling leaves, the soft earth underfoot, and the fresh scent of pine to ground yourself in the present moment.

Urban oasis: City meditation

In the city, find a bench in a busy square or park. Close your eyes and turn your attention to the rhythm of the urban life around you. Let the symphony of footsteps, conversations, and distant traffic become a backdrop for your breath-focused meditation.

At work: Desk detox

Take a few minutes at your desk to meditate. With your feet flat on the ground and hands on your knees, close your eyes and focus on your breath. Allow the hum of office activity to fade into the background as you centre yourself amidst the chaos.



On the move: Walking meditation

Choose a quiet path or labyrinth for a walking meditation. With each step, mentally note the lifting, moving, and placing of your foot. This practice can be particularly grounding and is a great way to integrate meditation into your daily walk.

High-altitude mindfulness: Airplane meditation

Flying can be stressful, but it's also an opportunity to meditate. With your seatbelt fastened, close your eyes

and focus on the sensation of being lifted into the air. Use the drone of the engines as a focus point for your meditation.

Waterfront contemplation: Beach or lakeside

Sitting by the water, tune into the rhythmic sound of waves or the gentle lapping of the lake against the shore. Let these natural sounds anchor you in the now, as you breathe in the fresh air and exhale any tension.

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Eating seasonal, local vegetables a healthy choice

Eating fresh vegetables that are in season in your area is a healthy choice for several reasons. For example, vegetables harvested at their peak ripeness are more nutrient-dense, providing a richer source of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Seasonal vegetables tend to taste better because they are fresher and haven't lost flavour due to long transport times or storage, and eating seasonally introduces a diverse range of vegetables into your diet, which can contribute to a more varied and balanced nutrition.

To help you keep track of what's in season and manage your vegetable intake, there are several free apps you can try:

From Seed to Spoon: This app guides you through growing vegetables and helps you plan your garden based on the seasons.

Homegrown with Bonnie Plants: Offers tracking features for planting, watering,

feeding, and harvesting over 250 veggies and herbs.

Seek by iNaturalist: While not exclusively for vegetables, this app can identify plants and provide valuable information about them.

These apps can be a great addition to your healthy eating toolkit, making it easier to enjoy the full benefits of seasonal vegetables.

It's important to note that while fresh is the preferred choice, not everyone has access to fresh vegetables year-round. According to nutritionists, incorporating canned or frozen vegetables into your diet is a better option than foregoing veggies altogether, ensuring that you can still enjoy the health benefits they offer. These preserved forms can still provide essential nutrients and are often picked and packed at their nutritional best.

Household herbs offer health benefits

For centuries, people all over the world have used herbs as part of homeopathic medicines to treat every illness. Herbal medicine can be beneficial to health, but it is important to remember that for serious health concerns, you consult with a licensed health care practitioner who can give you professional advice and treatment options.

Here are a few household herbs that can be useful to help fight minor cold symptoms or boost your body's natural immune system if your immune system is healthy to begin with:

Sage

Sage can help with minor indigestion, nausea, and diarrhea. Consuming a cup of sage tea with lemon may help with minor stomach ailments. You can increase your sage intake by using it in poultry seasonings, salad dressings, or potato dishes.

Mint

Mint works wonders as a decongestant due to the menthol it contains, which acts as a natural expectorant. Drinking a cup of peppermint or spearmint tea can help clear your lungs from a cold helping you breathing clear again. Mint can be added to lemonade, added to salads, or eaten in a salad.

Lavender

Studies have given evidence that lavender can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety and can aid in combating insomnia. Lavender can also improve cognition and reduce the severity of acute pain. Lavender tea with rose petals and cardamom is a good way of ingesting lavender, as it has few common culinary uses.

Chamomile

Chamomile has a wide array of benefits that, like lavender, are both mental and physical. Chamomile has been shown to reduce anxiety symptoms and aid in falling and staying asleep. Physically, chamomile has been shown to aid in easing sore throats, nausea, and diarrhea, and it also has anti-inflammatory and cancer-preventing properties. Chamomile tea is delicious on its own but even better when paired with lemongrass, peppermint, and a squeeze of honey.



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How to beat the workout blues

Many people set out to get fit by following a fitness routine but lose interest after a short while. Life gets busy, or working out loses its appeal. Maybe you are not seeing the results you thought you would. There are many reasons why you could lose interest. Here are a few strategies to keep you on track:

Set fitness goals

Without clear goals, it is easy to lose interest. When setting goals, follow the (SMART) system. Make those targets specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. Don't just say you want to run a half-marathon. Pick a date for when you'd like to do this. Keep your goals realistic and attainable. Do not be overly ambitious and set aspirations beyond your current capabilities. That will be discouraging and counterproductive. Your goals should challenge you but be within reach. Gradually increase the difficulty as you advance for the best outcome.

Pick an exercise routine you enjoy

To continue it long-term, you must like what you are doing. You may have to explore your options to find a practice you enjoy. With so many activities out there you are bound to find something you will like and look forward to.

Most people who work out do so three to five days per week. Set up a workout

schedule that fits into your lifestyle. Change it up throughout the week. Don't let your regimen stagnate. And don't forget about your mental health. Incorporate yoga, meditation, or tai chi to help with that aspect. Flexibility is vital in avoiding burnout. Life happens, so if you must skip a day, don't fret; pick up where you ended up and continue.

Accountability partner

An accountability partner is someone who is vested in your health and well-being. You can report your progress to them regularly. They can be there for you when you become discouraged. If you know you have someone to report to, you will be less likely to skip out or do something counterproductive. It would especially be helpful if you could find someone with similar goals that you could work out with. You could be each other's cheerleaders.

Reward yourself

Do not be afraid to reward yourself for your hard work as you progress toward your goals. Do something nice for yourself whenever you reach a milestone or short-term goal. Whether that is a spa day or a little vacation, it will help you feel good about yourself. You will be able to look back on how much you achieved and look forward to the next time you reach a milestone.

Ways to stay motivated no matter what the task

Staying motivated can be challenging, especially when faced with tasks that seem never-ending or lacklustre. However, motivation is a renewable resource if you know where to look. Here are three strategies to help you stay driven and accomplish your goals, even during the most monotonous of times.

1. Break it down

Tasks can appear overwhelming when viewed as a whole, but breaking them down into smaller, manageable parts can make them feel less daunting. This approach not only makes the task more approachable but also provides frequent opportunities for small victories. Each time you complete a part of the task, celebrate the win. This positive reinforcement can boost your morale and keep you moving forward.

2. Find your rhythm

Establishing a routine can transform the mundane into the familiar. By setting specific times for work and breaks, you create a rhythm that can make time pass more quickly and increase productivity. During breaks, engage in activities that refresh you – whether it's a brisk walk outside or a quick chat with a friend. Returning to your task after a break can provide a fresh perspective and renewed energy.

3. Connect to the bigger picture

Sometimes, the key to motivation lies in understanding the impact of your work. Take a moment to reflect on how your task contributes to a larger goal. Whether it's personal growth, professional development, or a collective project, recognizing the value of your efforts can provide a powerful incentive to persevere. Tracking your progress can also be motivating, as it visually demonstrates how much closer you are to your goal.

Even the most seemingly endless tasks can be tackled with the right mindset and strategies. Remember, every task completed is a step forward, and with each step, you're building a path to your goals.



The essentials of fingernail care

Fingernails are more than just a canvas for colour; they are a mirror to your health. Proper fingernail care is essential for preventing infections, ensuring nail strength, and maintaining a well-groomed appearance.

According to health experts, keeping fingernails clean is vital to prevent the accumulation of bacteria and fungi under the nail bed, which can lead to infections. Regular cleaning and trimming are key practices in maintaining nail hygiene and preventing the spread of diseases.

Dietary studies show the food we consume significantly impacts the health of our nails. Foods rich in biotin such as eggs and salmon, are known to help prevent nails from becoming brittle. Moreover, a diet that includes protein and iron supports nail strength and growth. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water is also essential for keeping nails and cuticles moisturized.

Here are a few tips for achieving optimal nail health:

- **Trimming and filing:** According to dermatologists, use sharp manicure scissors or clippers and file gently to avoid splitting the nails.
- **Moisturizing:** Apply hand lotion to your nails and cuticles regularly to prevent dryness.
- **Protection:** It's advised to wear gloves when handling harsh chemicals and to refrain from nail-biting to protect the nails.

Nail health can be affected by various conditions, and being aware of common nail problems is essential for early detection and treatment.

According to the Mayo Clinic, some of the issues to watch out for include:

- **Nail pitting:** Small depressions in the nails often associated with skin disorders like psoriasis.
- **Nail clubbing:** Enlargement of the fingertips with nails that curve around them, which could signal underlying health issues.
- **Spoon nails:** Soft nails that turn up at the edges, possibly indicating iron deficiency anemia.
- **Terry's nails:** Mostly white nails with a narrow red band at the tip, sometimes related to liver problems or heart failure.
- **Beau's lines:** Horizontal grooves across the nails, which can occur after illness or injury.
- **Nail separation:** A condition called onycholysis where the nail separates from the nail bed, which can be caused by injury, infection, or reaction to products.
- **Yellow nail syndrome:** Nails thicken and grow slowly, turning yellow, which could be a symptom of lung disease.

It's important to consult a healthcare professional if you notice any unusual changes in your nails. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent complications and maintain nail health.

Foods to keep your hair healthy

Maintaining healthy and vibrant hair is a desire shared by many. While external care routines play a significant role, proper nutrition is equally essential in promoting hair health. Just as the body thrives on a balanced diet, your hair also requires certain nutrients to remain strong and shiny.

Here are some options to consider if you are not allergic to them:

Fatty fish

Omega-3 fatty acids in fish like salmon, mackerel, and sardines are healthy fats that nourish the scalp, reduce inflammation, and encourage hair growth. Omega-3s also help to keep your hair hydrated, reducing the likelihood of dry and brittle strands. Including fatty fish in your diet can provide essential nutrients like vitamin D, protein, and B vitamins, all of which contribute to healthier and stronger hair.

Eggs

Eggs are a powerhouse of hair-healthy nutrients. Rich in protein, eggs serve as a good source of the fundamental building blocks for hair. Additionally, eggs contain biotin, a B vitamin that promotes hair growth and scalp health. Other nutrients found in eggs, such as zinc and selenium, play a role in maintaining healthy hair follicles.

Spinach

Leafy green vegetables like spinach are not only great for your overall health but also for your hair. Spinach is packed with iron, folate, vitamins A and C, and other antioxidants. These nutrients aid in producing sebum, the natural oil that

moisturizes the scalp and prevents hair from becoming dry and brittle.

Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds, such as almonds, walnuts, flaxseeds, and chia seeds, are excellent sources of hair-friendly nutrients. They are rich in vitamin E, zinc, selenium, and omega-3 fatty acids. Vitamin E promotes circulation to the scalp, aiding in delivering oxygen and nutrients to hair follicles. Meanwhile, zinc and selenium help maintain a healthy scalp and prevent hair loss.

Greek yogurt

Greek yogurt is not only a delicious snack but also a great addition to your hair care regimen. It is rich in protein, vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid), and vitamin D. Protein strengthens hair strands, while vitamin B5 supports hair growth by nourishing the hair follicles. Vitamin D helps stimulate hair follicles, resulting in healthier and more lustrous hair.

Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are a nutritious root vegetable loaded with beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A. Vitamin A promotes the growth and maintenance of healthy cells, including hair cells. It also helps produce sebum, keeping your scalp moisturized and your hair shiny.

While external hair care practices are important, nourishing your hair from within plays a vital role in achieving and maintaining healthy hair. Remember, consistency is key, so make these hair-healthy foods a regular part of your balanced diet for the best results.



What you should know about orthopedic shoes

Whether you have arch pain or discomfort from a bunion, orthopedic shoes can provide a solution. Designed with comfort and versatility in mind, these shoes support a range of foot shapes and sizes and can provide joint relief through your entire leg. Wearing orthopedic shoes allows you to go about your day without any nagging pain, ensuring that you can remain active and spend your time engaging in your favourite pastimes.

Orthopedic shoes are designed to support the structure and mechanics of the foot and ankle. Both the inner and outer won't slip and move while you are walking. Most orthopedic shoes also have a heel counter to ensure that they stay firmly on your feet as you move.

Typically, these shoes are also wider to allow more room for the toes and heel while still supporting the arches. In addition to this, orthopedic footwear comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, meaning that people with different injuries and abnormalities can find comfortable shoes that will support their joints. Orthopedic shoes, unlike regular shoes, are designed to cohesively support the whole foot, regardless of how it is shaped, and to promote mobility.

Recent years have seen massive improvements in the designs of orthopedic shoes as companies have partnered with known brands to provide consumers with shoes that are both stylish and hugely beneficial to their health.

Here are a few more reasons to consider them:

Improved blood flow

Without proper circulation, your feet can begin to suffer from numbness, cramps, and tingling. This can eventually lead to the foot muscles becoming weaker, thereby hindering your mobility. Wearing orthopedic shoes provides your feet with the room

and support necessary to promote healthy circulation to all areas of the foot.

Full foot support

Walking in shoes that do not properly support your feet can lead to alignment issues that spread the pain across your foot and up into your ankle. Over time, this can significantly decrease your mobility. Orthopedic shoes allow you to avoid these issues by actively supporting your whole foot and allowing your weight to be distributed evenly with each step.

Pain relief

On average, most people take between 5,000 and 10,000 steps a day. In the wrong shoes, this can lead to severe pain that will only get worse with time. Orthopedic shoes guarantee that as you move about your day, your feet are fully supported. They are designed to prevent your foot from rubbing against the sidewalls of the shoe and to keep your heel in a comfortable, neutral position.

Correct or aid existing problems

Wearing orthopedic shoes is not dissimilar to brushing your teeth twice a day. It is a crucial form of maintenance that ensures your feet remain healthy and functional for years to come. While some foot issues require surgery, wearing orthopedic shoes can help realign the bones of the foot and relieve tension from overstressed arches.

Improved mobility

When you suffer from foot pain, whether it is in the form of bunions, plantar fasciitis, or hammer toes, it can seriously affect your ability to get out and enjoy your favourite activities. The comfort and support provided by orthopedic footwear allow you to regain control over your mobility and to move through the world without experiencing discomfort.

The pros and cons of coffee consumption

Coffee, a staple in many households, is cherished for its energizing effect. However, it's important to weigh both the benefits and drawbacks of this popular beverage. Here's an overview:

Pros

1. Energy and cognitive function:

According to Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, coffee can boost energy levels and improve cognitive function, thanks to its caffeine content.

2. Antioxidant-rich: Coffee is high in antioxidants, which play a role in cell protection and overall health.

3. Disease risk reduction: Moderate coffee intake—about 2–5 cups a day—is linked to a lower likelihood of several conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, liver and endometrial cancers, Parkinson's disease, and depression.

4. Physical performance: Caffeine can enhance physical performance by increasing adrenaline levels and releasing fatty acids from fat tissues.

Cons

1. Sleep disruption: Coffee can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to reduced sleep quality or difficulty falling asleep.

2. Dependency: Regular caffeine intake can lead to dependency, with withdrawal symptoms like headache, fatigue, and irritability.

3. Pregnancy risks: High caffeine intake during pregnancy may be associated with risks such as low birth weight and an increased risk of miscarriage.

4. Side Effects: In some individuals, excessive caffeine can cause anxiety, jitteriness, and palpitations.

While coffee has several health benefits, it's crucial to consume it in moderation and be aware of its potential downsides. Understanding how coffee affects you personally can help you enjoy it as part of a balanced lifestyle.

Take good care of your skin

Taking care of your skin is important, particularly as you age, because your skin is your body's largest organ, and it plays a vital role in protecting you from external elements. As you get older, your skin naturally becomes thinner, less elastic, and more susceptible to damage.

Here are some tips to help maintain healthy skin:

- 1. Hydrate:** Drink plenty of water to keep your skin hydrated from the inside out.
- 2. Sun protection:** Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 to protect against UVA and UVB rays.
- 3. Moisturize:** Apply a moisturizer daily to reduce skin dryness and flakiness.
- 4. Gentle cleansing:** Use a gentle, non-drying cleanser to avoid stripping the skin of its natural oils.

5. Healthy diet: Eat a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals to nourish your skin.

6. Avoid smoking: Smoking can accelerate the aging process of your skin, leading to wrinkles and a dull complexion.

7. Regular check-ups: Visit a dermatologist regularly for skin exams to check for any signs of skin cancer or other conditions.

8. Sleep well: Ensure you get enough sleep, as it helps the skin repair and rejuvenate itself.

Remember, your skin care routine should evolve as you age to address changing skin concerns. It's never too late to start taking better care of your skin.

Maximizing your commute

For many of us, commuting is an integral part of daily life. Whether it's by train, bus, plane, or behind the wheel, there are numerous ways to make your journey more enjoyable and productive. Here's how to pass the time effectively, no matter your mode of transportation.

On the train: The mobile office

Taking the train offers the perfect opportunity to transform your seat into a mobile office. With Wi-Fi often available, you can catch up on emails, prepare for meetings, or delve into a good book. Consider downloading podcasts or audiobooks that can both entertain and educate during your ride.

On the bus: Learning on the go

Bus rides provide a stable environment for reading or learning a new skill. Language learning apps can be particularly useful, allowing you to immerse yourself in a new language without leaving your seat.

On the plane: Entertainment at altitude

Long flights can be the ideal time to indulge in movies or series you've been meaning to watch. Many airlines offer in-flight entertainment, but downloading content beforehand ensures you have access to your favourites. Noise-cancelling headphones are a great investment for creating a personal oasis amidst the cabin noise.

Behind the wheel: Staying alert

When driving, staying alert is paramount for your safety and that of others. Audiobooks and podcasts are excellent companions that keep your mind engaged without distracting from the road. If you're feeling drowsy, pulling over for a short walk or a coffee break can help rejuvenate your focus.

Regardless of how you commute, it's crucial to stay vigilant, especially when driving. Fatigue can impair reaction time and judgment, so ensure you're well-rested before hitting the road. If you're a passenger, being aware of your surroundings and keeping your belongings secure is also important.

Commuting doesn't have to be lost time. With a bit of planning, it can become an extension of your personal or professional life. By staying engaged and alert, you can turn your commute into a productive and enjoyable part of your day.

energyzone

These smoothies get their name from being loaded with nutrient-rich superfoods that can have a positive effect on your health.

For example, a combination of spinach, pineapple, ginger, and turmeric provides a powerful mix of vitamins, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory benefits. Adding yogurt or kefir introduces probiotics for gut health.

Give this super smoothie a try:

Ingredients:

- 1 cup baby spinach (lightly packed)
- 1 cup frozen pineapple chunks
- 2 cups yogurt or plain kefir
- 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, cut into smaller chunks
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- Optional: 1 tablespoon chia seeds for added omega-3s and fibre

Superfood Smoothies!



Place the spinach, pineapple, yogurt (or kefir), ginger, and turmeric in a blender. If using, add the chia seeds. Blend on high speed until smooth and creamy. Pour into glasses and enjoy immediately for the freshest taste and most nutritional benefits.