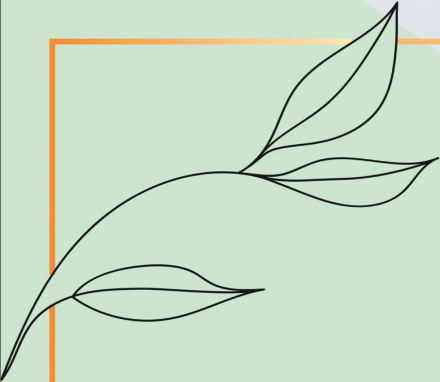




THE ILLUSTRATED **SELF-CARE** **BIBLE**

Maintaining positive
self-care, including physical
health, emotional wellness
and life balance

Various Various The Illustrated Self-Care Bible

Аннотация

The Illustrated Self-Care Bible guides you through every component of an essential self-care routine, with detailed descriptions and step-by-step exercises. Learn key breathing techniques through yoga, Pilates, and more, to ensure a sense of calm and focus to combat stress and anxiety, strengthening your emotional resilience and compassion toward yourself and others for a greater sense of well-being. Discover helpful tips on better sleep and a balanced diet. Find the physical wellness program that best suits your life and goals and learn how to make it a regular part of your routine. And finally, ensure your life balance is taken care of by maintaining your social wellness. As critical to a healthy balance as your body and mind, a focus on friendships and kindness, curiosity and creativity, will ensure that you feel supported, nurtured, and loved. This beautiful and comprehensive guide to maintaining self-care through everyday practice will leave you feeling focused, energized, and positive—ready to face the world as your best self.

THE ILLUSTRATED **SELF-CARE BIBLE**

Maintaining positive self-care, including physical health,
emotional wellness, and life balance

GENERAL EDITOR: RACHEL NEWCOMBE

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FOREWORD

When life is busy and you're juggling multiple demands, you may often be the last person you take care of. There's no doubt that other people's needs and demands matter, but it's important to look after your own health and well-being, too.

The *Self-Care Bible* helps put the emphasis back on you, so that self-care becomes an essential part of your everyday life. It outlines exactly why your health and well-being is crucial and the reasons why you should focus on it regularly, not occasionally or when you happen to remember.

The book explores three key areas of self-care—physical, emotional, and social/life-balance—and offers practical advice, tried-and-tested techniques, and ideas for incorporating self-care habits into your daily routine.

There's a wealth of information about wellness and how you can nurture yourself to a healthier, more balanced life. Emphasizing the power of natural health, this guide gives step-by-step exercises and advice on healing remedies, massage, meditation, yoga, Pilates, and nutrition.

The emotional wellness section offers insight into common struggles, including better ways of coping with stress, developing emotional resilience, learning to be kinder and more compassionate, and to practice forgiveness. Social wellness topics covered include developing support systems, setting boundaries, and workplace wellness, plus the all-important issue of knowing how and when to ask for help.

Use this book to help nourish, inspire, encourage, and motivate you to live a healthier, fuller life. Whether you read it from start to finish, or dip into it when you feel the need, enjoy the variety of ideas and inspiration it contains and take pride in giving yourself the self-care you deserve. The templates and checklists at the back of the book will help you plan out and put these new ideas into action.

Enjoy exploring the information at your fingertips and, most of all, enjoy developing your own regular self-care habits.

RACHEL NEWCOMBE, GENERAL EDITOR

[INTRODUCTION THERAPIES](#)



WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

Self-care isn't a new concept. However, it has become a lot more popular in the mainstream in recent years, and rightly so. It's a buzzword that you may have seen on social media and in magazines, but it's about more than just looking and feeling good. Put simply, self-care is the act of looking after and

nurturing yourself—physically, emotionally, and socially.



Discovering and focusing on self-care will allow you to live your best life.

In today's hectic and often stressful world, it's easy to forget to focus on yourself and to look after your needs. When life is busy, it's only natural to get caught up in work, taking care of children, rushing from one place to another, and enjoying an active social life. With so many commitments to juggle, it's no wonder that looking after yourself can get overlooked.

It's often only when things “catch up” with you, when physical or mental health problems occur, that you realize you matter, too,

and you need to stop putting yourself last.

That's why self-care is so important. When you learn to focus on self-care, you can integrate it into your daily life to form part of your regular routine. Self-care is about achieving a better balance in your life and knowing when to give in, stop, and look after you. It's learning about your needs, how you cope best in certain situations, and how you can manage difficult issues better. And it's about finding things that you enjoy doing and including them in your life as much as possible.

Ultimately, discovering self-care involves learning to look after and love yourself so that you can experience optimum wellness physically, mentally, and emotionally, allowing you to live your life as the best version of yourself.

SELF-CARE IS NOT

Self-care is not about being selfish. It is not a selfish act to focus on yourself and to take time to look after you; it's actually it's a self-respectful act. The more you take time to look after yourself and keep your physical, emotional, and social wellness in check, the more energy you'll have for focusing on your work, friends, loved ones, and the commitments and activities in your life. By developing regular self-care practices, you're taking control and empowering yourself.

ELEMENTS OF SELF-CARE

The art of developing self-care habits doesn't involve one

single act. Instead, there are multiple elements involved, from improving areas of your physical wellness routine and looking after your emotional health, to taking care of your life balance and achieving a better social wellness. It is incremental and holistic.

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

Physical self-care involves taking care of your body in order to improve your physical wellness. One of the key elements of keeping your body moving and maintaining the energy you need to get through the day is to ensure that you get a good night's sleep. It is also important to learn how to truly relax and develop healthy night-time routines, giving yourself the best chance for your body to unwind and find deep and restorative sleep.

What you choose to eat and drink plays a major role in your physical wellness. This involves making healthy choices about the foods and drinks that will make you feel good and give you the right balance of the energy and nutrition you need.



Keeping active and looking after your physical wellness is a key part of self-care.



Incorporating self-care into your life will help you toward a happier, healthier you.

Exercising is a vital element of physical self-care, too, and it helps if you can find forms of exercise that not only meet your body's exercise needs, but that you enjoy doing and can incorporate into your daily life.

EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE

Mental health plays an equally important role to physical health, yet it is often overlooked. Emotional self-care practices

involve finding ways to take care of your mind, from managing stress and developing emotional resilience, to learning to meditate and exploring new ideas for creative pursuits.

Emotional self-care also involves finding out more about your true self and developing skills such as kindness, compassion, and improved communication to help you cope better with challenging situations at home or work.

SOCIAL SELF-CARE

Social self-care involves taking care of your life balance and improving your social wellness. How you live, the support systems you have, and how you communicate with other people can all affect you. So too can your work and home life factors, such as how you deal with money and time management. Focusing on ways to improve your social habits and develop healthy social relationships can boost and re-balance your social self-care needs, allowing for deeper and more nurturing relationships.

Developing a self-care routine won't happen overnight. It's a gradual process of finding what works best for you and the areas you most need to focus on, then applying those to your own life. The more you practice self-care, the more it will become second-nature, and the happier and healthier you can be.

[THE SELF-CARE CONTINUUM](#)

Self-care plays an important role in all areas of your physical,

emotional, and social wellness. While it is good to focus on what you can do to help yourself, it's also important to acknowledge that there are times when you might not be able to manage your health entirely on your own. In fact, asking for and accepting help and advice when you need it is a key component of positive and successful self-care.

Health professionals view the concept of self-care as a continuum. This means that there are situations in which you are fully responsible as an individual for your health and can consciously help yourself and make your own choices. But there are also times when other people should play a part and be professionally responsible by providing you with pure medical care.

The self-care continuum is like a sliding scale. On one side there is you, the individual providing yourself with pure self-care, and on the other side there are health or medical professionals providing you with pure medical care. In between there's a gradual changing scale of scenarios on the continuum where the level of your own involvement and that of other people evolves as required. An example of this "in between" are the situations where you need advice or guidance from other people, but can apply their advice to your self-care, without requiring pure medical care.

PURE SELF-CARE

Pure self-care means that you are responsible as an individual

for looking after and managing your health and well-being. This affects the daily choices you make, your lifestyle decisions, and how you self-manage minor ailments and cope with long-term health conditions.

Daily choices are the actions over which you have complete control. This includes the choices you make about things on a daily basis, such as what you eat and drink, what time you get up in the morning, what time you go to bed, and how you manage your hygiene.

Lifestyle choices are the decisions you make about what you do in your free time, as well as in your work. Examples include whether or not you smoke, how often you exercise, what type of diet you follow, what type of job you choose to do, what hobbies and interests you have, etc.

If you experience minor ailments, such as a sore throat, cough, insect bite, cuts, or bruises, then in many cases you're able to use your existing knowledge to make decisions about how to manage these issues yourself. Or you may need to seek help and advice from a natural health practitioner or pharmacist and use their guidance to help you self-manage the ailment.



Pure medical self-care can be necessary in the cases of severe or sudden health concerns.

In many cases, if you have a long-term health condition you can often learn to self-manage it without the need to constantly see a health professional, unless a change occurs. For example, in the case of asthma you can manage your health by using inhalers as prescribed, or if you have anxiety, you can take care of yourself by taking prescription medicine or having treatments as advised.

PURE MEDICAL CARE

At the other end of the self-care continuum is pure medical care. These are the situations and circumstances where you require help beyond pure self-care. This is where you put yourself in the hands of health and medical professionals who become responsible for supporting your health.

Pure medical care becomes essential if you have a sudden, unexpected accident or illness, have major mental health problems, or suffer from major trauma.

Acute conditions are those that suddenly and unexpectedly happen, such as a stroke, heart attack, an accident at work, or being involved in a car crash. These are situations where you need to turn to medical professionals for help and care (and where it would be damaging to your health and well-being if you did not).

While long-term mental health issues, such as depression, can be successfully managed through self-care (often with guidance and intermittent support), if you experience sudden, acute major mental health problems, then in-hospital psychiatric care may

become necessary. In such cases, medical professionals become responsible for looking after you in the best way possible.

In situations where major trauma occurs, such as experiencing severe injuries or a serious car accident, pure medical care is essential. In these cases, the responsibility for looking after your health and well-being lies with healthcare professionals.

Pure medical care continues until you recover and you can then resume the process of self-care again.

THE BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE

There are numerous benefits to be gained from maintaining self-care. As you begin to regularly incorporate self-care practices into your daily life, you'll notice positive changes occurring—physically, emotionally, and socially—and you'll begin to feel happier and healthier.

Small changes can have a big impact, and that's certainly true for self-care. Self-care involves consciously choosing to do things that nourish or improve your wellness. The more you practice self-care and integrate the habits into your everyday routine, the more benefits you'll gain.

Looking after yourself will make you feel stronger, more positive, empowered, in control, and better equipped to face life's ups and downs head on. Self-care can help reduce stress and enable you to sleep better and deal with difficult emotions. The benefits aren't just personal—they can impact on all areas of your life, from your relationships and lifestyle, to your work and productivity.

From a practical point of view, self-care isn't hard to do, nor is it time-consuming to work on. It has the benefit of being accessible to anyone, and there are plenty of ways to incorporate elements of self-care into your life without spending money.

Here's an insight into just some of the many benefits you could unlock from taking time to focus on yourself and working on your self-care strategy.

MORE ENERGY

Regularly practicing self-care, such as eating healthier meals, knocking insomnia on its head, and engaging in exercise you enjoy can result in increased energy. In turn, having more energy helps put the zest back in your life and has many positive benefits, as outlined below.

IMPROVED SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Taking positive actions to nurture yourself through self-care boosts self-confidence and self-esteem. Self-care can make you feel happier and healthier, more confident in your own self-knowledge, and more mentally connected and in control—even when life throws you a curveball.

BETTER DIET AND NUTRITION

Physically, your body will benefit from having a healthier, more nutritionally balanced diet and from getting a better range of vitamins and minerals. Expanding your diet and exploring new

food options will mean you're eating a better variety of nutrients, boosting your energy and, in turn, helping your overall physical health.

GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF YOURSELF

Taking time to focus on yourself gives you the opportunity for introspection. Sometimes it might be hard to face reality and bring up old wounds and worries. But working through these issues can result in gaining a far better understanding of yourself and how to find reserves of strength and coping mechanisms for the next of take over knocks.

IMPROVED SELF-COMPASSION

The more you learn to take care of yourself, the better you feel. As you practice self-care, you'll find that your levels of self-compassion will increase, you'll be less critical about yourself, and you'll feel more positive and understanding.

IMPROVED ABILITY TO RELAX

You might think you know how to relax, but not all forms of relaxation are equal. If your previous relaxation attempts simply involved slumping in front of the TV at the end of the day, self-care techniques could be a revelation. You'll gain an improved ability to relax, both for short periods during the day and at the day's end, and be able to put them into practice to help you feel healthier and more energized. Plus, self-care activities that help

you relax can help reduce stress and anxiety, too.



The benefits of self-care can impact your relationships and your way of living at any stage of your life.



Taking time to relax can help reduce stress and anxiety in a busy life.

FEELING MORE SOCIALLY CONNECTED

As you focus more on your social self-care needs, you'll feel more socially connected. You'll nurture the social connections that are most important to you, identify ones that aren't, and

develop a stronger support system.

IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

When you slow down and focus on the things that matter, rather than trying to juggle anything and everything, your productivity improves. Self-care can involve learning to say “no” to non-essentials—whether that be extra work or additional social commitments—and focusing more on the things you want to do. When you’re no longer exhausted by trying to do everything, you’ll find that you’re more productive with what you choose to do.

DOING MORE OF THE THINGS YOU ENJOY

Self-care is all about focusing on the things that help you feel good, whether that’s a particular exercise you enjoy or finding new ways to express yourself or get creative. There are so many benefits to be gained for doing more of the things you enjoy, whether it’s on a daily or weekly basis.

KNOWING HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

By regularly practicing self-care, you’ll get to know yourself so much more and feel re-connected to the true you. There are bound to be times when you feel out of alignment, but once you’ve learned positive and achievable self-care techniques and are confident about what works for you, you’ll be well equipped to look after yourself and handle situations with care.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book offers a comprehensive guide to the physical, emotional, and social elements of self-care and acts as a bible for everything you need in order to nurture yourself and gain a healthier balance in your home, work, and social life.

The book is designed so that it can be read cover-to-cover or dipped into, allowing you to focus on the areas that are most relevant to you at any one time.

There are helpful resources, practical tips, inspiring techniques, and ideas to try, as well as foods to eat, skills to learn, and exercise routines to adopt. You can take it at your own pace and try things gradually, or dive right in and devour it all. But above all, be open to new ideas, have fun exploring the variety of options available, and enjoy developing a happier, healthier you!

PART ONE: TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

Part One focuses on maintaining your body and looking after your physical wellness.

The Sleep and Rest chapter guides you through learning to relax more effectively and developing a healthier night-time routine. There are ideas for beating insomnia and meditation techniques to help you find a greater sense of calm and connection.

The Food and Drink chapter offers a comprehensive guide to improving physical wellness through diet and nutrition. There are extensive guides to different types of foods, the benefits these

nutrients have, and how they can build a stronger you. Use these to be inspired to broaden your diet and experiment with new ingredients.

Finding a type of exercise that you enjoy is key to creating a regular routine, so in the Exercise chapter you'll discover lots of ideas for beneficial exercises. Use these to try out new ways to improve your aerobic exercise, posture, balance, and toning.

You can also take care of your physical wellness through therapeutic massage, and in the Massage chapter you'll discover lots of ways to self-massage your body and limbs. Use these ideas to treat your body, relax your muscles, and unwind.

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PART TWO: TAKING CARE OF YOUR MIND

Part Two looks at taking care of your mind and your emotional wellness needs.

In the Healing the Mind chapter, you'll find lots of information about mental health issues, such as the effects of stress, learning forgiveness, and why emotional resilience is important. There are ideas and tips to use and apply to your life, including learning meditation and mindful breathing.

In the Self and Selflessness chapter, you can discover more about your own unique identity and how to awaken your true self. There are techniques to use to enhance and develop kindness and compassion, as well as practical ways to connect with nature. Use these ideas to boost and re-balance your emotional self-care.



Stress is a problem when it becomes overwhelming and disabling.

STRESS

Stress describes the feelings you have when the demands made on you, or that you face, are being made, are more than you are able to fully cope with. Stress can affect all ages and is a normal reaction to pressure. It can be caused by external stressors, such as pressure from work, life experiences, family, or financial or internal stressors, such as thoughts and feelings of inadequacy, uncertainty or low self-esteem.

Sometimes the effect of stress can be positive. For example, if it acts as encouragement or motivation to get on with the task at hand. This is because stress is a physical response, causing your body to rise into the fight or flight mode. As it does so, the body releases a mix of hormones and chemicals, such as adrenaline, cortisol, and norepinephrine, that prepare your body for action. That is what causes physical symptoms such as a pounding heart, rush of energy, and fast breathing, which can prove to be exhilarating and motivational for some.

However, stress is healthy and positive only when it is short-lived. When becomes a problem when you experience too much of it, leading to become overreacting and resulting in both physical and mental exhaustion. Too much cortisol can also affect your immune system, making it less efficient.

Stress can cause emotional and behavioral changes. This may be triggered by feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, depression, and frustration, and lack concentration, sleep, and the ability to make decisions. In turn, a build-up of all these feelings can produce physical symptoms, such as heart palpitations, headaches, and aches and pains.

Stress can be a highly unpleasant experience, and an important part of tackling stress is to accept you have a problem. As well as identifying the root causes and making lifestyle changes, exploring ways to release your stress, relax your mind, and relaxing your body are some of the key ways of combating it.

COMBATING STRESS THROUGH NUTRITION

Eating a good, balanced diet will make your body stronger and able to cope more efficiently with stress. It starts as often triggered by stress, so ensure that you are getting enough in your diet, or take a good supplement. There is some evidence that beta and flavonoid polyphenols can boost immunity and energize the body. However, do not just take it if you are allergic to honey or stings.

An amino acid called L-lysine appears to energize, and studies show that people taking this supplement react better to stressful situations, staying more alert and less anxious, and have fewer complaints about physical conditions. Vitamin C, found in oranges, lemons, and bell peppers, is a great stress-reducer and boosts immunity, making you fitter and healthier.



Bell pepper

Pumpkin seeds, which contain high quantities of zinc, iron, and calcium, as well as B-vitamins and potassium, which are necessary for brain function, will help you to deal with the effects of stress. One can eat for a healthy nervous system. In periods of stress, start the day with oatmeal, which will help to boost your cells, and prevent depression and general lethargy.



Pumpkin seeds

HERBAL REMEDIES FOR STRESS

Herbs that encourage relaxation and act as a tonic to the nervous system include lemon balm, chamomile, passionflower, lavender, and yarrow. These herbs have been used for centuries to relieve stress. Stress is a complex condition, and it is not always clear what the best remedy is for each person.



Lemon balm

Chamomile

Yarrow

Passionflower

Lavender

PART THREE: TAKING CARE OF YOUR LIFE BALANCE

Part Three focuses on your social wellness and how you can take steps to improve the balance in your life.

The Friends and Home chapter contains practical advice about developing healthy support systems, learning to set boundaries, improving different forms of communication, and learning when and how to ask for help. Having a safe, secure, clean, and organized home environment is crucial to your health and wellness, so there are some ideas you can put to practical use on how to improve your spatial wellness for greater calm and

COMMUNICATION

Communication allows you to express yourself and listen to other people. In order to build social relationships, share your experiences, and enhance your support systems, clear communication is critical.

Good communication is a skill that can be built on and developed. Being able to communicate more effectively can boost your self-confidence, improve your relationships, and help you feel better about yourself. It's a form of self-care, so sharing your feelings can help reduce bottled-up feelings and emotions.

As well as just spoken words, good communication includes body language, facial expressions, and posture, from all parties involved.

HOW TO EXPRESS YOURSELF

It's not always easy or straightforward to express yourself, especially if you've not been used to sharing about yourself. But when you're getting someone on your team or in your support system, your team will take time to listen to you, it's well worth trying. It can really help find solutions and boost your emotional wellness.

Good communication is a skill that can be learned and improved.



Here are some tips to help you learn to express yourself effectively.

- Be assertive—be calm and relaxed and try to have positive body posture.
- Explain things in clearly as you can.
- Think before you speak—consider how someone else might take what you say.
- Express your emotions appropriately—don't get angry or combative.
- Don't get defensive if the other person expresses a view or opinion that's different to yours.

LISTENING TO OTHER PEOPLE

Communication is a two-way process—it involves giving and listening. In the same way that you'll like people to listen to you, other people in your support network will appreciate you listening to their too. Listening will help build and strengthen your relationships.

You can improve your listening skills by:

- Being patient—let someone else take their time speaking and don't interrupt them.
- Giving them 100 percent attention—turn off your cell phone and focus on the other person.
- Being neutral and open to listening—don't be judgmental about someone else's views or experiences, even if they differ from yours.

The strongest relationships are those where communication is the key.

- Being prepared to put listen—sometimes a person might simply need someone else to listen to them, without having your advice or input.
- Showing empathy—share their positive feelings, and you can, by using verbal and non-verbal acknowledgment.
- Acknowledging their feelings—if someone has strong feelings, acknowledge them so they know you're listening and taking them seriously.
- Being encouraging—if someone else is feeling low or down, be encouraging towards them; it's not always easy to cheer up and back.

ONLINE COMMUNICATION

These days, a lot of communication is conducted online. Although some people find it easier to type words or messages rather than talk to someone, this form of communication comes with its ups and downs.

When you're communicating online, you lose the ability to see each other's facial reactions, posture, and body language. This can sometimes make it risky to convey a true picture of how you're feeling and the real meaning behind some words and sentences can be misread, misjudged, or lost completely.



In a world of online communication, make time to talk face to face.

It's hard to connect with someone in the face of conflict, but it's a very useful skill to learn. If necessary, you can save and offload your own emotions later, either to someone else that you trust or to yourself through self-reflection or journaling.

Don't allow conflict to damage a relationship; rather, learn from it.

Sometimes conflict can also be used by asking a degree of humor into the situation. It's important that you judge the situation first, though, as when used inappropriately it's could make things worse.

Being able to resolve conflict provides an opportunity for growth. You can learn from your experiences, feel confident in your actions, and build a stronger relationship with the person concerned.

COPING WITH CONFLICT

Even communication breaks down and conflict occurs, it can trigger strong emotions, disappointment, and hurt feelings. If handled inappropriately, the conflict can rage on and cause ongoing resentment and fractured relationships. However, by learning to cope with conflict more effectively, you can help to reduce it.

Communication is key when you're dealing with conflict. As much as you may feel hurt, annoyed, or upset, try to remain as calm as possible. Being calm will help you to understand someone else's words and non-verbal communication more effectively. Being in control of your emotions also helps you communicate with the other person without retreating or challenging them.



In the Finances and Work chapter, you'll find ideas and advice for working on skills such as money management, setting goals, time management, and workplace wellness. Use this information to help you become better informed and to address what's important for your social self-care.

PART FOUR: REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

In Part Four you'll find some practical advice and useful tools to use to put everything you've learned about self-care into real and tangible action.

The checklist here highlights all the key points and goals

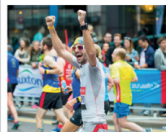
involved in self-care so that you can remind yourself at a glance.

There are templates to use to help you set yourself goals, develop exercise routines, adopt healthy eating patterns, and learn to budget more successfully. Use these, and you'll be well on your way to achieving all-around self-care success.

There is also a glossary of terms, a list of useful resources—such as websites and organizations you might like to contact—further reading ideas.

SELF-CARE CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL WELLNESS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Go to bed at the same time each night.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drink eight glasses of water throughout the day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Practice mindful eating.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Every day, do 10 minutes of an exercise you enjoy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cook a healthy meal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EMOTIONAL WELLNESS							
Spend 10 minutes meditating each day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Write down five things that make you happy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Turn negative thoughts into positive ones.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spend 30 minutes reading or being creative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focus on your breathing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SOCIAL WELLNESS							
Take a five-minute break at work and go for a walk or have a stretch.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Phone, email, or text a friend with whom you've not connected recently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spend 10 minutes tidying and organizing your home.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ENJOY SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS.							
Set yourself a goal and a plan to save money.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



IMPROVE YOUR SELF-CARE HABITS

Each week try to add a new self-care habit to your routine. I will provide you with more content and help you develop new healthy habits.

- Walk or cycle to work instead of driving.
- Look at your monthly expenses and see what savings you can make.
- Get to know an acquaintance better—ask to visit and listen to what they have to say.
- Get a gratitude journal and record the things that you're grateful for.
- Try cooking a meal with ingredients you wouldn't normally use.
- Give yourself a foot massage.
- Create an area of unused space where you can be still and unwind.
- Try a new hobby or creative activity.
- Focus on being kinder and more compassionate to yourself and others.
- Choose new opportunities for learning.
- Purchase yourself with a new deodorant product or accessories.
- Make a cheering playlist of your favorite songs so you can play it when you're doing the housework.
- Learn to say "no" to unreasonable requests.
- Make a list of happy and uplifting music to play if you're feeling down.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

PHYSICAL WELLNESS

PART ONE

SLEEP AND REST

CHAPTER ONE



WHAT IS SLEEP?



A good, undisturbed night's sleep is one of the most enjoyable and totally natural pleasures available to us, yet for many people sleep is hard to come by. This in turn affects the quality of their waking life.

Sleep and dreams are as much a part of life as being busy and active; they unwind the body and mind, restoring our energies to face the next day. Yet how many people regularly wake feeling really refreshed? It has been estimated that at some time half the population will be affected by insomnia. And many people, while not long-term insomniacs, experience times when the quality of their sleep is not all it could be.

Whether you suffer from long-term insomnia, full-blown

insomnia, or poor sleeping patterns, this chapter is for you. It will help you to break out of poor sleep habits and bring your whole life into balance. Find out how natural medicine such as herbalism and aromatherapy can help, as well as self-help methods such as exercise, relaxation, and adopting a change of lifestyle. Use this positive, easy-to-follow guide and your sleep problems will be a thing of the past.

THE MYSTERY OF SLEEP

It is an extraordinary fact that something that occupies up to a third of our lives is still a mystery. Of course, we all know that sleep gives us rest: without it we feel tired and irritable and don't function as well as we'd like. Since 1952, sleep research laboratories attached to universities have been studying sleep patterns, with the help of human guinea pigs. They have made numerous investigations not just into how we sleep but why, and no one has yet come up with a complete answer.

If you are beset by insomnia, you might wonder what use such investigations are. Whatever sleep is for, you know you need it and feel rotten without it. But the results of many of these investigations can offer some reassurance to the non-sleeper. They have, for instance, blown away the myth that everyone needs eight hours a night. Some of them suggest that most of us could get by on less sleep than we have without coming to harm. And some have come up with ideas for improving sleep.

SLEEP STATES

In sleep the brain goes through four main stages, each characterized by different types of brainwave—the electrical impulses emitted by the brain.

STAGE 1

This first stage, the lightest, is the transition from wakefulness to drowsiness; as we enter it our muscles relax, the blood pressure drops, and the heart rate and digestion slow down. The brain begins to produce hormones such as serotonin and melatonin, which are associated with sleep and sleepiness (whether they actually *cause* sleep is under debate). At the same time, there is an increase in alpha waves—brainwaves of 7–14 cycles per second—which are typical of relaxed wakefulness; alpha waves also appear in people who are meditating, or under hypnosis. This stage lasts between 1–10 minutes in the normal sleeper; although we return to it at intervals during the night, it usually occupies only about 5 percent of our sleep.

STAGE 2

This stage starts quite soon after falling asleep and occupies about 45 percent of human sleep. It contains a mixture of deeper, slower brainwaves: theta brainwaves (3.5–7.5 cycles per second) typical of drowsiness and light sleep, and slow delta waves (under 3.5 cycles per second), during which we are really unconscious.

STAGE 3

Stage 3, which occupies only about 7 percent of sleep in young adults, is another transition phase to deeper sleep; as delta wave activity increases, we are taken fairly rapidly to Stage 4.

STAGE 4

Stage 4 is the deepest form of sleep, with delta brainwaves predominating; it makes up about 13 percent of sleep in young adults. We stay in Stage 4 for quite long periods before surfacing again to REM and Stage 1 several times during the night.

REM SLEEP

Rapid Eye Movement sleep is so called because the sleeper's eyes move, indicating that they are dreaming. It occurs during Stage 1 sleep, and increases in quantity later on in the night. It has now been found that we also dream during deeper stages of sleep. It used to be thought that REM sleep was the part of sleep essential to us; it was believed that these periods were needed for brain rest, and that people deprived of them would develop psychosis. This last theory has been disproved, though deprivation of REM sleep does produce irritability and difficulties in concentration, and affects the ability to retain information learned the day before. People totally deprived of REM for more than three days have started having waking dreams, in the form of hallucinations. Others have been found to become less inhibited and conscientious.

CORE SLEEP

In his book, *Why We Sleep* (OUP, 1988), sleep research expert Dr. Jim Horne proposes that the really essential part of sleep consists of Stages 3 and 4, which he calls collectively Slow Wave Sleep (SWS). During these stages the brain is in what he calls an “off-line” state: it is the only time during which this hard-working organ is totally at rest. SWS occurs largely during the first three cycles, that is, during the first half of a night’s sleep.

When people are deprived of sleep by staying up all night, it has been found that they don’t need to catch up with all the sleep they’ve lost. They recover no extra light sleep, and only a fraction of REM sleep. But they do recover all the lost deep sleep, which suggests that it is the sleep that is really essential.

In people who naturally need less sleep than the average, the same pattern is followed during the first few hours as in average sleepers. Although these people sleep for fewer hours, says Dr. Horne, they are getting the essential Slow Wave Sleep: “It is as though these short sleepers have somehow done away with what seems to be the flexible non-restorative sleep—the latter hours of sleep.”

He defines Core Sleep as consisting of Slow Wave Sleep and some REM sleep. His conclusion is that so long as we get our ration of Core Sleep, the brain will recover from its waking wear and tear. The rest he calls “optional sleep,” which has no essential purpose but “fills the tedious hours of darkness until sunrise, maintaining sleep beyond the point where core sleep declines,”

and it may in fact not be really necessary.

HOW MUCH SLEEP?

The amount of sleep needed, or taken, by individual people varies enormously. There's a standard belief that eight hours is the norm, but we all know of people who need much less. Former British Prime Minister Lady Thatcher was said to thrive on four or five, and there have been a number of other famous short sleepers, including Winston Churchill and Napoleon (both of whom catnapped during the day), Voltaire, who only needed three hours, and Dostoyevsky, who wrote his books between 3 P.M. and 5 or 6 the next morning.

It's important for couples to realize that these variations are real; a short sleeper married to a long sleeper can make their partner's life quite difficult if they insist on banging around at six in the morning, or interpret the other's genuine needs as laziness.

Short and long sleepers have been found by and large to have different personalities. Short sleepers tend to be hard-working, ambitious, and rather obsessive, as well as extrovert and efficient. Long sleepers worry more, are less self-assured, and value their sleep, which they may use as an escape. They are also often creative people—and creative people are said to dream more and to have more vivid and adventurous dreams than other people. Einstein was a long sleeper.

THE AGES OF SLEEP

The amount of sleep we need also varies with age. The

“average” 7.5 hours applies to adults between 16 and 50. Most small babies sleep about 16–18 hours a day, and toddlers still need a lot more sleep than adults. However, some older children may actually need less than adults, something which parents don’t always recognize. With adolescence, the picture changes: some teenagers will sleep up to 15 hours a night. They are not necessarily being lazy, and will grow out of it. However, parents should note that longer sleeping hours are also a symptom of depression, which can hit teenagers quite badly. At about the age of 16 we reach the “normal” adult pattern—that is, whatever is normal for us.

From the age of 40 in men and 50 in women, the pattern alters again. In some women the menopause temporarily disrupts sleeping patterns. But in everyone, as they grow older, night-time sleep becomes lighter and more broken, with fewer dreams. In addition, many older people take naps during the day, so needing less sleep at night. Including catnaps, the average sleep for 70-year-olds is about 6 hours in 24. It’s important to realize this, since many old people ask their doctors for help with their “insomnia” when in fact they are sleeping quite normally for their age.

YOUR BODY CLOCK CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS

The functioning of our bodies is governed by a biological inner clock, known as the circadian rhythm (from the Latin *circa diem*, meaning “about a day”). This regulates the times when various

organs become more or less active and when the production of various hormones peaks and tails off. The length of the circadian day is normally between 24 and 25 hours; some people have sleep problems because their body clocks are out of timing with the norm, or disturbed by things like shift work and jet lag.

The siesta, traditional in hot southern European countries such as Spain, is in decline as Mediterranean businesses come into line with the rest of Europe. Yet it could be much more natural than the worldwide norm. The circadian rhythm is set to bring on sleep twice a day, mainly at night, but also in the early afternoon, which is why many people feel sleepy after lunch.

The circadian rhythm also varies with age. Babies sleep regularly during the day, at first at around 3 hourly intervals, tailing off to a morning and an afternoon sleep; by the age of about two and a half they are sleeping in the afternoon only. In the elderly, the need for an afternoon sleep usually returns.

It appears to be the circadian rhythm which is responsible for some people being “owls,” finding it hard to wake in the morning but lively at night, while others are “larks,” leaping out of bed first thing and drooping by ten in the evening. Interestingly, these differences seem to lessen as people age.

INSOMNIA

Insomnia is defined by sleep experts as difficulty in initiating and maintaining sleep, which has continued for at least three weeks. Chronic insomnia can last for years, while intermittent insomnia can be triggered by particular anxieties or crises.

People experience insomnia in different ways: for some it's the tossing and turning for what feels like hours before they drop off; others wake up at intervals and feel they never get a good night; and others wake early in the morning, and can't get off to sleep again.

Insomnia can't be measured by the number of hours you sleep, since people's needs vary so much. It's been found in sleep laboratories that some insomniacs actually sleep longer than "normal" sleepers: if you need 10 hours and only sleep for 8, then you won't feel as refreshed as the good sleeper who needs 7.

Different types of insomnia have traditionally been related to different states of mind; it's often said that not being able to get off to sleep at night is a symptom of anxiety, while waking early is a sign of depression. In fact, it's not as simple as that. Some anxious and depressed people can actually sleep more, sometimes in an effort to escape from their feelings. Some depressed people can't get off to sleep, and some anxious people fall asleep normally, but wake in the small hours.

A number of sleep experts believe that anger and resentment are more frequent causes of insomnia than anxiety and depression. Others suggest that the overactive, churning mind may not be a cause of insomnia, but a result. In addition, there is often more than one factor involved; an overactive mind may be related to an underactive body, for example. And as you can see from the checklist opposite, the causes are not always emotional.

QUALITY VERSUS QUANTITY

Insomnia is unpleasant. It is boring and uncomfortable in itself, and it can affect your daily activities, work, and relationships. However, it may not be quite as damaging as some insomniacs fear. Sleep research laboratories have shown that people who normally sleep for 7 to 8 hours can adapt over time to as much as 2 hours less sleep daily without impairing their mental or physical ability. And when people have been totally deprived of sleep for between eight and eleven days (the longest times so far studied) most of the body's organs, except for the brain, continue to function remarkably well. While the brain does need rest, Dr. Horne stresses that "everything else from the neck down seems to cope very well, without sleep, provided you get regular rest and regular food."

Nevertheless, too little sleep can and does affect us, both because of genuine fatigue, but also because we believe that shortened sleep will cause us suffering. Our beliefs about how things should be have a major effect on how we react to them.

So, how much sleep do we really need? Dr. Horne believes that around 6 hours is more than adequate for mental health; any sleep after that comes into his category of "optional sleep." If his theory is correct, what the brain needs is Core Sleep. This should provide some reassurance to insomniacs: Core Sleep predominates during the first sleep cycles, so even if you only sleep for a few hours, you will be getting a period of this important mixture of deep and REM sleep.

Conditions in sleep laboratories, of course, where the human guinea pigs are fed and rested, and have chosen to lose sleep, are quite different from those of the person tossing and turning in the lonely small hours—even if they end up getting the same amount of sleep. EEG readings which record brain activity show that most insomniacs actually sleep much more than they claim to: quite often people who feel they have only slept an hour or two have actually slept for several. It appears that people's perception of their insomnia can cause as much stress as the insomnia itself, and it may well be that worrying about insomnia can make you just as stressed, tetchy, and tired as not sleeping. It will also contribute to keeping you awake.



Insomnia can be debilitating, but sometimes worrying about poor sleep can make the situation worse.

TYPE OF PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSES OR CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS
Taking a long time to get to sleep (most common in people under 30 and women)	Habit Emotional stress: anxiety, depression, unhappiness, anger, guilt, etc Unsolved problems Obsessive thinking Psychiatric disturbances Dietary factors: too many junk foods, stimulating foods and drinks, and eating heavy meals late at night Digestive problems Smoking, especially in the evenings Lack of regular exercise Stress (at home or work) Major life changes: moving house, divorce, changing jobs, etc Certain medical conditions Neurological problems Needing less

	sleep than you think you do Napping during the day Jet lag, working night shifts and other body clock disturbances External disturbances such as noise
Waking during the night (more common in older people and men)	High degrees of anger and irritability Heavy alcohol consumption Withdrawal from alcohol or drugs (medical or otherwise) Nightmares Fear of nightmares (waking just before you are about to dream) Not being fully extended during the day
Waking early and not going back to sleep	Severe depression Sleeping pill dependency Alcoholism
Getting “enough” sleep but still feeling tired	Sleep apnea (a respiratory disorder) Depression Narcolepsy

So, if you are insomniac, there are three important things to remember. Firstly, you may be getting more sleep than you think. Secondly, so long as you get some sleep and can relax your body, you will not come to long-term harm. Thirdly, your

attitude towards your sleep has a lot to do with the quality of the sleep you get. The first step towards beating insomnia is not to worry about it.



Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

Kahlil Gibran

BREAKING THE INSOMNIA HABIT

Human beings are odd creatures: most of us like to think we are independent, free-thinking spirits. Yet a surprising amount of our behaviour is totally conditioned, starting when we are very young. Much of our conditioning is helpful and life-supporting: it would be very inconvenient if every time you crossed a road you had to relearn the desirability of looking both ways, or what red, yellow, and green lights mean. Unfortunately, the mechanical part of our brain absorbs other, less helpful lessons, such as associating bed with lying awake.

It's common these days for the brain to be likened to a computer—a computer more vast and complex than any yet built, and of course with a capacity for original thought, but nonetheless a machine which obediently reproduces whatever programming is fed into it.

SELF-TALK

The best way to break unhelpful habits is to start exchanging them for helpful ones. The first thing is to recognize in what particular ways your habitual thinking or behaviour is keeping you in that sleepless groove. How do you talk to yourself and others about sleep? If you label yourself “insomniac” and tell yourself every time you head for bed that it'll take you ages to

get to sleep, you are simply reinforcing the programming that keeps you awake. You can change some of that thinking now, by telling yourself that you are now on the way to improving your sleep, and by no longer telling other people that you suffer from insomnia.

Be honest with yourself about this. Lots of people “enjoy” their ailments. In some cases this can be an excuse for avoiding things they don’t want to do, or even living a more fulfilled life. I would stress that this kind of pattern is very rarely deliberate: it’s often another conditioned response, perhaps going back to a time when being ill got a child more of its mother’s love and attention than when they were well. Never sleeping well may prevent people like this from facing up to other problems, or taking on new ventures which would mean change. That doesn’t mean they are purposefully choosing not to sleep, but it’s possible that lack of sleep has secondary advantages, such as making their families feel sorry for them.

Could this apply to you? And if it does, do you really want to be someone others feel sorry for? Close your eyes and imagine for a moment telling your spouse or workmates, “I slept wonderfully last night!” How does it feel? Probably uncomfortable at this moment, because it isn’t true. How comfortable would it feel if it were true?

Start noticing your habitual thoughts about insomnia. In particular, look out for sentences beginning “I always ...” or “I never ...” or “I know ...” For example: “I always take hours to

get to sleep” or “I always wake up for hours in the middle of the night.” These statements may not actually be true, although they feel true to you. As we’ve seen, most insomniacs overestimate how long they take to get to sleep or lie awake during the night. You could make a start by recognizing that your perception of the amount of sleep you get may be inaccurate.

“I’m never going to get to sleep tonight” is another habitual statement which is an excellent way of programming your brain to stay awake.

“I know I’ll feel dreadful if I can’t get to sleep.” Of course, lack of sleep makes you tired, but you can also talk yourself into feeling worse. There are alternatives, such as telling yourself that even though you’d like more sleep, your body is still getting all the rest it needs.

Make a game of catching these kinds of thoughts. It may help you to write them down. Then try replacing your negative statements with positive ones; a good start might be: “I’m now learning how to sleep better.” Make your positive statements ones you can believe. Telling yourself “I am going to sleep perfectly tonight” may not work, because at this point you probably won’t believe it, and trying to convince yourself will set up further tension. But you could try: “I will take tonight as it comes.” You may be surprised by the results.

Starting to change your self-talk can be a way of opening up other possibilities. Once you realize that you don’t have to be a victim of your own thinking and reactions, all kinds of barriers

can begin to crumble.

CHANGING THE PATTERN

A popular way of treating insomnia today is a behavioral psychology method called stimulus-control, which consists of retraining yourself to sleep by learning to associate bed and bedtime with sleep, and sleep alone. This is the routine:

1. Use your bed and bedroom for sleep only. Don't watch television, listen to the radio, read, work, smoke, scroll social media, surf the internet or eat in bed. Making love is permitted, and can actually help you sleep.

2. Always get up at the same time, including weekends and vacations. Lie-ins may be tempting, but if you take more sleep than you need on Sunday morning it'll be harder to get to sleep on Sunday night. If you find waking up really difficult, place your alarm clock at the other side of the room so that you have to get up to turn it off. Put the light on straight away, as light can stimulate wakefulness.

3. Don't take naps during the day. You can overcome post-lunch sleepiness with some deep breathing, or a quick walk round the block.

4. Don't go to bed until you are really sleepy.

5. If you don't fall asleep within 10 minutes, get up and do something else in another room. Don't go back to bed until you are ready to fall asleep.



A crucial part of tackling insomnia is mind over matter—tell yourself that you are in control of your sleep.

There are further sleep-assisting habits you can develop:

1. Deal with specific anxieties during the day or early evening.
2. Avoid stimulating foods and drinks in the evening. These include coffee, tea, and alcohol. Smoking is also a stimulant; if you can't give it up immediately, at least cut down, especially in the evening.
3. Avoid stimulating activities late at night, including strenuous exercise, work and arguments.
4. Establish a winding-down routine before you go to bed.

Spend the last hour before bedtime preparing for sleep, including some relaxation and a warm bath.

5. Make sure your bedroom is both well-aired and of a comfortable temperature.

SELF-HYPNOSIS AND VISUALIZATION

The imagination can have a direct effect on the body, for good or ill. When you imagine or remember a disaster, your pulse can start racing and your breathing can become more shallow, as the body's stress system starts revving up. It doesn't matter that the disaster isn't real: your body and nervous system react as though it is. Similarly, when you imagine yourself healthy and happy, your body starts to feel healthier and stronger.

In a relaxed, day-dreaming state, you can mentally picture the outcome that you want, whether it's better sleep, or confidently taking and passing your driving test. It's important to believe and expect that what you visualize will come about. In so doing, you are using an in-depth way of reprogramming your mental computer.

Visualization techniques may not be right for everyone: if you are an anxious striver, you may put too much effort into what should be effortless, or make yourself worse by focusing on symptoms rather than health. But even if you don't use specific techniques, you are using the power of thought and imagination throughout the day, both mentally and verbally. All the more reason to exchange depressing thoughts about your life and your

sleep for positive ideas about what you really want.

For successful self-hypnosis, the first, essential step is to be able to relax deeply. If you are normally tense, you may need some help in learning to relax sufficiently. (See “Healing the Mind,” pages 210–251.) Some people have successfully taught themselves to visualize from books; there are also some good downloads on the market which can start you off, though it’s not a good idea to rely on them for the rest of your life. For most people it’s easier initially to be taught by someone else.

THE CHURNING MIND

Probably the most common complaint among poor sleepers is difficulty in getting off to sleep. It’s almost always related to a mind that won’t switch itself off. Your thoughts go round and round, you toss and turn, and an hour later you’re tired, twitchy, and wide awake.

The churning mind may be caused by anxiety about something specific—an exam, a job interview, a work project, a partner’s illness, or the state of your finances.

Possibly even more often it is caused by resentment or anger, brooding over unpleasant events, sometimes from the recent past, sometimes from way back. You relive the scenes, inventing scenarios in which you find just the right words to put down that person who insulted you yesterday, or even years ago. Or you may be feeling depressed and lonely, wishing your life were different, blaming yourself or others because it isn’t, and replaying past

regrets, missed opportunities, or lost happiness.

A great deal of night-time churning is connected with unfinished business, something that computer in your head can't stand. It chugs away looking for solutions, and won't shut up. Or it allows you to get to sleep, and then wakes you up with a bad dream to remind you of a problem, or to tell you, "Hey, we really must do some worrying about this!"



One of the most common causes of disrupted sleep is a busy and churning mind.

Regularly waking with nightmares or bad dreams can make you anxious about going to bed in the first place: usually

these, too, concern unfinished business. Night terrors—suddenly waking from non-dreaming sleep with a sense of fear and doom—are often the result of past traumas. Recurring dreams, too, may stem from traumatic past events—car crashes, an abusive partner, or an assault—which the conscious mind has tried to forget.

But the unconscious mind is still trying to cope with these traumas in the only way it knows how. In such cases it is important to seek professional help from a counselor, psychotherapist, or hypnotherapist who can help you to heal your fears, so that they no longer fester and cause you misery. Some people aren't particularly worried about anything, but just have very active minds. Many of them accept this, often creative people who come up with creative ideas as they lie awake. But if your thoughts are unpleasant, sad, or anxious, they are crying out to be dealt with. Bed is not the place to deal with them.

WHO'S IN THE DRIVING SEAT?

Rushing round all day and going to bed with a mind that's exhausted but awake is all too common these days. Modern life doesn't encourage natural rhythms. We start work at the same time all year round, whether it's dark or light; commuter travel is uncomfortable and frustrating. Office atmospheres are often unhealthy as well as fraught: lunch may be a snatched sandwich or hamburger. For many people "relaxation" takes place in the artificial atmosphere and noise of bars and clubs.

Small wonder that rushers-round can't sleep. The whole physical and nervous system becomes jangled and out of gear. There is no breathing space to look at problems—or just to breathe! Body and mind are poorly nourished. And underlying this frantic rush, an anxious little voice is often sending anxious little messages that we don't want to hear—"Am I good enough?"—"Is this all there is to life?"—"Why aren't I happy?"

If your life is anything like this, and it has resulted in insomnia, ask yourself what you are truly getting out of it. OK, so modern life is like that. But does that mean yours has to be? What or who is driving you to overwork, eat badly, maybe drink too much, or work until all hours so that by bedtime your brain is buzzing?



Listen to your thoughts and worries and be kind to yourself to alleviate sleep-robbing stress.

Much of our busy-busy behaviour is due to conditioning by other people, and our beliefs about how life should be lived may be nothing to do with what we really need. The work ethic says we mustn't waste a moment; societal standards say we must have a "good time" and be successful. We must also be seen to be successful by buying and owning more and more goodies for ourselves and our families; to keep the merry-go-round turning we have to work even harder. Yet when you were a child, was this

what you wanted from life? Who programmed your computer?

Our beliefs come from a number of different sources, which is why they often conflict. Some psychotherapists point out that we all have multiple personalities, often referred to as sub-personalities or “voices.” For example, most people have an inner critic sitting in judgement on their every action; at the same time there’s an inner child, made to feel small by the critic’s remarks. Many of us have an inner saboteur, doing its best to make us make a mess of things. But there are other parts of us which often don’t get addressed—for example, a wise self, a peaceful self, and a creative child who wants to play.

So, try listening to the thoughts and voices underlying your daily rush. Who’s driving you on? Are you responding to other people’s programming—perhaps a critical father demanding that you prove your worth, or a perfectionist mother setting you impossibly high standards? Do you have to believe those voices from the past? What does the real you need and want from life, and are you getting it?



We are all influenced by the people around us; but take stock and consider, is this what I want from life?

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