



# THE IDIOT LECTURE

'Five stars'  
The Sun

'I went from a worrier  
to a warrior'  
Ghengis Cal

'What a very stable genius, he makes  
me look like an MC Square'

Alberto Einstein

'I now realise the error of my ways'  
Satan

'What a waste of space'  
The Milky Way

'Doctors hate him for this  
one simple trick!'  
Buzzfeed

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## What is this and why?

Hello, I hope you're doing ok.

First off, I know it can seem annoying, boring, and sometimes scary working on yourself, but taking care of your mental health is actually pretty fun once you start. I hope I can be your introduction into some really interesting ways to think about how you are living, traps that we all fall into, paths back to the '*old, happy me*', and what the future could hold once you've acquired this knowledge and decided to give it a real go.

Personally, this is the only thing in my life I've ever felt truly drawn to and driven to make a difference, I've been at my rock bottom and been suicidal for what felt like a lifetime, desperate for the suffering to stop.

The truth is, I was so weak I couldn't even muster the courage to kill myself when I had the chance.

I would probably have refused any help if I was given any and spent time taking offense and blaming others for my situation. I'm not here to give my life story, not only because it's just starting, but because you're not here for that. I did want you to know that all of this work is honest work and I truly have a passion to help you.

I have been crippled with depression and anxiety, masking it for years, and finally, after my suicide failure, I had no other option than to try to help myself. *Help wasn't finding me.*

**After a while of trying and sucking at everything, you get better at stuff.** It could take seconds or years, many failures or few. Depending on how much you really want it. **Do you even know what you want?** Most people who ask for help are usually still unsure of what they want to do in life and are currently just working for money, pushing those thoughts aside.

Shortcuts always seem like a good idea, but only by making that mistake repeatedly for years will you learn the only lesson is in doing *hard work*. We all know this but we just try not to think about it, but it lingers.

The truth hurts sometimes. Life is short, let's not waste it being angry all the time, even if it is 100% someone else's fault, you have a duty to yourself to be happy and not let someone else control your mood.

I have included stupid jokes, memes, and tweets to distract you from the scary words and I've tried to take out as many fancy and complicated words as possible in the hope that the common idiot can actually understand their own mind, without having to do a 3-year course. I am really happy with how this turned out and just how much information I've managed to cram in here. I hope it inspires you to learn more, as it did with me.

A book by an idiot, for fellow idiots, no cost other than time and effort, *be prepared to make sacrifices though*. You will want to quit many times. You will feel alone. You will feel like looking at an impossible mountain you cannot climb. You will fall victim to your own mind. You may give up, many times.

**Butt, you got this.**

I don't know you but I believe in you. If you're reading this right now, you've already taken the first step forward.

# Disclaimer

This book is for those who suffer badly from Anxiety and Depression mainly, these are by no means extreme and scary exercises but they do require effort. If you are just looking to find alternative ways to relax then everything here will help you ease stress, find contentment, and set you on the path to being at ease with yourself and the world as well as the fire to enjoy life, *probably*.

I was diagnosed with severe depression in 2015 and nearly took my own life after everything fell apart and I lost everything I cared about in a very short space of time. I suffered from severe anxiety most of my life and with the exercises, I am talking about, have healed the majority of my issues but continue to work on myself and build on this person I am becoming. I genuinely feel like a different person from who I was just a few years ago and I have superhuman abilities it seems.

I want that to sound as ridiculous as it does because that's how it feels at times!

The way I look at this book and these exercises I use to keep me happy and motivated, are all different ingredients in my recipe for success. *But that's my recipe*. You gotta go taste some new flavours, decide what you like, and are currently brave enough to try. Cold showers might be too spicy right now, so you try something easier like a 30-second meditation. Combine the exercises and do a few in one day, see how you feel. My story is different from yours so you will have to really ask yourself questions about how you feel before and after, it would be foolish to assume you will react the same way as I do to them, we're all pretty little snowflakes, slightly different from each other. Put lots of us together and we can create something beautiful.

The side effect of deep diving into your mind and asking difficult questions is that it can get kind of addictive and eventually you will learn plenty about yourself and in turn, others too and at ease. You may, like myself, develop an initially unwanted desire to shout about these ideas from the rooftops and mention them to every person you meet, because it seems like you have just discovered the meaning of life and the holy grail only to be met with a quick conversation change or on some rare occasions them disappearing in a flash puff of smoke. Come to think of it, I may have encountered an energy vampire that sucked the positivity from my bones, moving off to its next victim. *Slut*.

Or, maybe just a really committed goth...

No promises. But I'm feeling a lot better these days, directly from everything in this book and I literally cannot shut up about it.

So, you should already be aware... But in case somehow this comes across like someone who knows what they are talking about. I am not a professional in psychology, nor do I have any qualifications further than my A levels (Uni dropout crewww). All of my writing comes from painful life lessons and information I picked up from books, videos, and online material over the last 5-6 years. I have sought out the most digestible material and made it as simple as I can and cut out as many fancy science words as I can get away with.

I hope to one day dedicate time to getting official qualifications, but I feel that's a few years off just yet.

Again, I am not a doctor. If you have any health risks or are pregnant, I'd probably check with a doctor on some of the physical exercises. And no, food babies do not count.

My whole philosophy on Mental Health is that it should be as straightforward as talking about physical health and finding ways to recover and treat yourself. It is also my belief that we are all capable of falling into bad states of MH no matter what background. We should all know how to recognise dangers in ourselves and others before matters escalate. Unfortunately, I know people who have taken their own life and many who have tried and are still here today with the scars that remind them. I'm sure I'm not alone in this and I fear that as time goes on that this will become much more of a regular occurrence.

I will repeat this but, if this book is not for you, it could be useful for a friend who is scared to ask for help and if you bring it up or share something online it might spark something. That's literally how I started this entire journey, I saw someone share something on Facebook about anxiety, I identified with it, and my eyes opened.

Please skip to 'Breathing' if you want to go straight to the exercises, or the last page where the Caveman Challenge is for those brave enough to commit to about an hour's worth of work. I'm first just going to outline why I feel this is important to me and important to share the information for a minute so bear with me....

# Introduction



You can't win.  
It's pointless to keep fighting.



Why, Mr. Anderson, why?  
Why do you persist?



Because I choose to.

The main reason for writing this book was to collect all of the simplest, most common-sense ideas and exercises that I have learned that kept me alive, inspired me to fight on and have a purpose in life, in the hope that I can ease suffering, or even save a life. When I was going through the worst of my depression, I could only find snippets of good advice here and there, but always few and far between. There were so many books out there that only focused on one or two ideas at a time but surrounded with filler material or ideas that are meant for someone having a 'slight worry', not intense body locking anxiety that causes great physical and mental pain or 'feeling sad' enough to cut your skin just to relieve tension or feel something. For the record, I will not be in-depth covering self-harm in that *deliberate* sense as I have no direct experience, but I will talk of some experiences of friends who have been brave enough to share with me.

Websites had credit card sign-ups and limited information available unless you signed up to mailing lists and eventually ended up paying for a service. Many online self Helpers who made videos seem to focus more on their perfect lighting and editing as well as selling merch, rather than diving into the actual advice and showing you the best way to recover, it's all very self-indulgent and could be seen as capitalising on MH in my eyes. FYI MH is going to mean 'Mental Health'. FYI, FYI means 'For your information'. Any other combination of letters that don't make sense is probably down to my poor spellchecking abilities.

You don't have to be a certain type of person to take the advice, let alone read it.

You don't have to hit rock bottom (or see someone else do the same) before we can learn to help.

We are all humans. These ideas and exercises are built around how the human body and mind work.

If you are a little like me, then this book can help you. This is my collection of ideas and exercises I searched for, tried out, and used to my advantage. **I needed this list when I was in desperate need, it wasn't there.** So I made it for myself and I'm still here and doing a lot better, trying to do my bit and pay it forward. At the time of starting this book (2017), there was much less content and information out there and fewer people jumping on the MH bandwagon. I couldn't find any simple and concrete help anywhere and there's not too much more available today in 2021. I see lots of people 'raising awareness' but that's pretty much it. I still see that we are 'raising awareness' of racism in 2021 also, so that makes me feel things...

I would also find websites with how-to guides that never delved further than, 'Find someone to talk to'. Great, cheers Linda... Ideal for people who know others who are capable of listening correctly.

Most do not realise how valuable a **skill** that is and how little people can care about those suffering beyond just feeling sorry for them. *When it comes to action, we say tomorrow.*

Also, quick shout out to the people online who copy, paste, and share the suicide hotline number but also spend their days in comment sections voicing their opinions on others all day. *Be Kind*, they say. Unless there's an easy joke to be made. Right? I may sound immature, but I'm sure are plenty of others sick of people attention-seeking and virtue signalling when they have actual friends and family suffering they ignore or make fun of.

I found websites that would charge mailing list fees for the full information, courses that would unlock the power of your mind for ££££ and various people online who seemed much more focused on their lighting and how they looked, rather than giving out any solid advice or any hint of a real-life anecdote.

I personally can't take advice from someone who hasn't understood these feelings firsthand, so I hope I can be that guy for others, despite how immature or spiteful my writing may seem at times.

**"BUT NOBODY UNDERSTAND ME! I AM ANGERY!" GRRRR \*Punches Wall\* \*Slams Door\***

Is that your catchphrase or my old one? I still have that fire inside, I still feel misunderstood. But it's about how I deal with that. I can't expect anyone to understand, that's one of the toughest lessons to learn my friend. And also, daddy issues? Yeah, I'm with ya. I've only ever punched one person and that's my own dad. #PowRightInTheKisser - Trust me, I've been there and things don't get better until you learn to only focus on yourself and try real hard.

The idea that you have to pay to understand yourself or find help made me irritated, flailing around with helplessness and just generally putting me further into my own spiralling MH.

Talking through my problems with the 'Nicey Nicey' people at the doctors or helplines did not appeal to me at all. I am introverted and I like solving my problems alone, which is obviously part of the problem, but it means I have tremendous pride in myself that I have achieved this alone.

**For the record though, you should absolutely go to the doctors and call helplines if you need to.**

As I will explain later, going to the doctors is what alerted me to the extent of my problems and I'm forever grateful for that day.

You may notice that I have included memes and tweets that I have found relevant to the cause, I'm sure you're aware of the saying that a picture can say a thousand words. I agree, it's also very important to remember to not take MH so seriously. It doesn't have to dominate your thoughts all the time and be dealt with by super-serious people in lab coats. Sometimes a depressed teenager can create some seriously gourmet comedy that resonates globally just as much as a frustrated Twitter user can come up in a few characters, what some clever psychologists take a whole book to say. I will leave the source of the images if applicable.

I will pepper them throughout the book, loosely related to the topic at hand for relevance but also, for myself, looking at page after page of words makes me feel sick.

Colourful pictures and jokes, yay!

I never set out to do any writing at all, hated it at school. I have always wanted to be a musician, on stage and living out that recurring dream I have. The one where I'm on stage in a band, not the nightmare trapped in my house while Orcs are raiding and all I have is a coat hanger to defend myself and my elven lembas bread. Cheers, Peter Jackson. And my stupid brain. *Wait, am I the brain?* Nah, let's not get too deep, too early...

Sometimes, life just works out differently from what you assumed it would, I mean when you think about it... That makes sense, doesn't it?. We are not psychic, we live on a floating rock in space as the product of millions of years of evolution, formed from the same carbon that has always been here.

Straight up made out of star.

The fact is, we don't have as much control over life as we'd like to think. I won't touch on religion, there's literally no point. Believe what you want to believe, that's cool. If you live your life and help others along the way, then you have achieved whatever goals your god could set out for you.

I am toying with the concept that I am my own god. At least I answer back...

Sacrifice, lifelong quests, fate, all that stuff. Seems to give me purpose.

Not something I think about regularly, but helps me commit to doing hard work for my own sake in the end. Anyway, enough about religion, Jesus Christ...



 temmie  
@tuyoki

doing stuff is hard  
shoutout to anyone who does  
anything

 Ashley C. Ford   
@iSmashFizzle

"Just because you can take it doesn't mean you have to."

Suffering is not a superpower.

 Dr. Thema @drthema · 17 May 19

A history of trauma can give you a high tolerance for emotional pain. Just because you can take it doesn't mean you have to.

As the title of this book suggests, I am not qualified to give any advice as I am not intelligent enough or financially secure enough to take any courses that hand out degrees etc. I have taken the long way round, made stupid decisions, made things worse and let my pride get in the way of any development. Otherwise known by boomers as attending 'The University of Life'...

I've always seemed to have the worst luck in life, everything gets under my skin and it does seem like some people go out of their way to make me miserable. But at some point, things have to change somehow. I came incredibly close to taking my own life, the only reason I didn't is that I simply wasn't brave enough. I don't mean to scare or shock anyone, the whole point of this writing is to be honest, above all else. As honesty will set you free. You can learn more about me later on and my struggles, but you aren't here for that.

You are here because you want to be, you want to just....

**To be or not to be?** Ummmm I'll choose 'Be', thanks very much.

As far as any of us are aware, when we die, that's it. No redo. So maybe take a leaf out of my thought tree for a second if suicide has crossed your mind. At my lowest of lows after my suicide fantasy, I asked myself a question I had never asked before. **What if I kept suicide as an option, but really made an effort to live the life of my wildest dreams first.** For myself I've always wanted to be a pro skater and rock star, two incredibly difficult paths with such a small success rate, it seems unworthy of effort to get there.

**BUT WHAT IF.....** So that was at age 27, the age I had told myself that if I wasn't successful by then, I would kill myself if it didn't work out. Sadly I have to admit that this was a thought pattern from childhood and a lot of my heroes overdosing etc at 27. I'm now 31 and still unsuccessful but it's really hard to believe how immature I still was at 27 and that most people are too. Sometimes the grownups you look up to, really are just as lost as us, they just hide it better or we view them in rose-tinted glasses. One of my favourite books as a kid I used to read daily was the book of fables. The story of the house with the golden windows didn't make a lot of sense then, it does today. You might not know, but there's probably someone jealous of your terrible life. Mad innit? I cannot expect you to take any of these exercises, I can only hope If for any reason you feel inspired or see something in my writing that sounds like a family member, friend, colleague or whatever, please act on this feeling.

Whether it's a quick text message or something, make an effort and you may save somebodies life.

Statistically, that's possible. I have one or two people that check on me sporadically and even though I don't often admit it to them, I am incredibly grateful for that small token gesture. It eases so much pain and blows away the negative thoughts where I tell myself I am a loser, unliked or whatever it may be.

There are other feelings mixed in there too but I am not intelligent enough yet to understand what they are, it does feel very good though.

Ok, time for some questions.

Prepare yourself!



# Do you actually want change?

## Question Time

Are you... Anxious? Depressed? In need of a change? Ready to turn into an adult? At a crossroads?

How much effort have you already put in?

Are you willing to try things that are out of your comfort zone?

Note that even after you decide you will try something, the voice inside may make excuses.

Are you ready to deal with the internal conflict?

Are you ready to take multiple attempts at the first step?

Are you ready to try things out, only to then lose all motivation and relapse for long periods of time?

Are you ready to struggle with the relentless questions you pose to yourself?

Does everything seem like it's going wrong, no matter how hard you try?

Have you suffered because of a dysfunctional family?

Are your colleagues making life miserable?

Do you feel like life is passing you by?

Do you feel like you have missed the opportunities and others are much luckier than you?

Do you struggle to sleep deeply or have a form of insomnia or still feel tired when you wake up?

Do you find you are reaching for crutches - coffee, drugs, alcohol?

Is the loneliness getting hard to deal with?

Do you feel like everyone takes, but never gives you anything (time, attention, money etc)?

Do people try to take advantage of you, because you aren't aggressive enough or have the energy to stand up for yourself?

Do you carry that resentment on your shoulders, while they carry on with their life, unaffected and blissfully unaware?

Do you have hate inside that you haven't got a way to release?

Do you feel like you could do something stupid one day and get in a lot of trouble because you have all these emotions inside that are at boiling point?

Do you find that you can't help yourself when you're in the moment and say things you don't mean but never have a perfect moment to apologise, which increases the negativity inside?

Has it clicked yet that due to the greed of those who came before us, the world is getting worse with chemically modified food, propaganda, hate speech/attention-seeking (same thing)?

The idea of you being born in the wrong generation because the past looks rosy in comparison? (It ain't, you're just glamourising the bits you like)

How are you supposed to be happy when everything seems to be sucking part of your soul away? When doctors are encouraged to give you pills rather than listen to your issues, just because there are just so many patients who need help, then the pills make you worse or addicted and the cycle continues.

What will it take for you to seek change?

Are you waiting for the perfect moment because things aren't QUITE right just yet?

Are you brave enough to seek short term discomfort for long term happiness?

Or are you a quitter? Are you a quitter if it is a good decision to stop doing something bad for you?

Just how bad are you willing to let everything get before you simply HAVE to do something?

WELL SUCKS TO BE YOU LOL :P

If any of those questions were a yes for you, then congrats.

You have someone on this earth who feels the same as you.

My name is Callum and I'll be your tour guide through this overthought out and probably poorly executed self-help book.



Hi

Ok, ummmmm... SURPRISE!

We're going to jump in early and see how bad you want to help yourself and hopefully make you realise just how far you have to go on this journey if you are too lazy to commit. *Are you sitting comfortably?*

Take a deep breath until you can't inhale anymore and imagine you are forcing the oxygen to your head.

Keep it held for as long as you can! When you feel like you need to, LET IT GO, slowly. Calmly.

I want you to feel lightheaded and dizzy. Maybe even some goosebumps or tingling on the skin. Keep going until you feel like you're high, If you haven't had any experience with cannabis etc then this may be a new sensation for you! Fear not, it won't last long. *But it will be different.* Different is often scary or uncomfortable.

You wanted change right? Don't go crying to yo momma just yet. **Be brave.**

So that's the first step on this long-ass road in front of you. Learn to take a moment for yourself.

Like you are shedding skin and ridding yourself of all irritations. Like a really hot shower.

**Let go.** If this is difficult, remember that it is difficult for everyone when they first start.

You are not a freak. You are now further along on this road than 99% of other people!

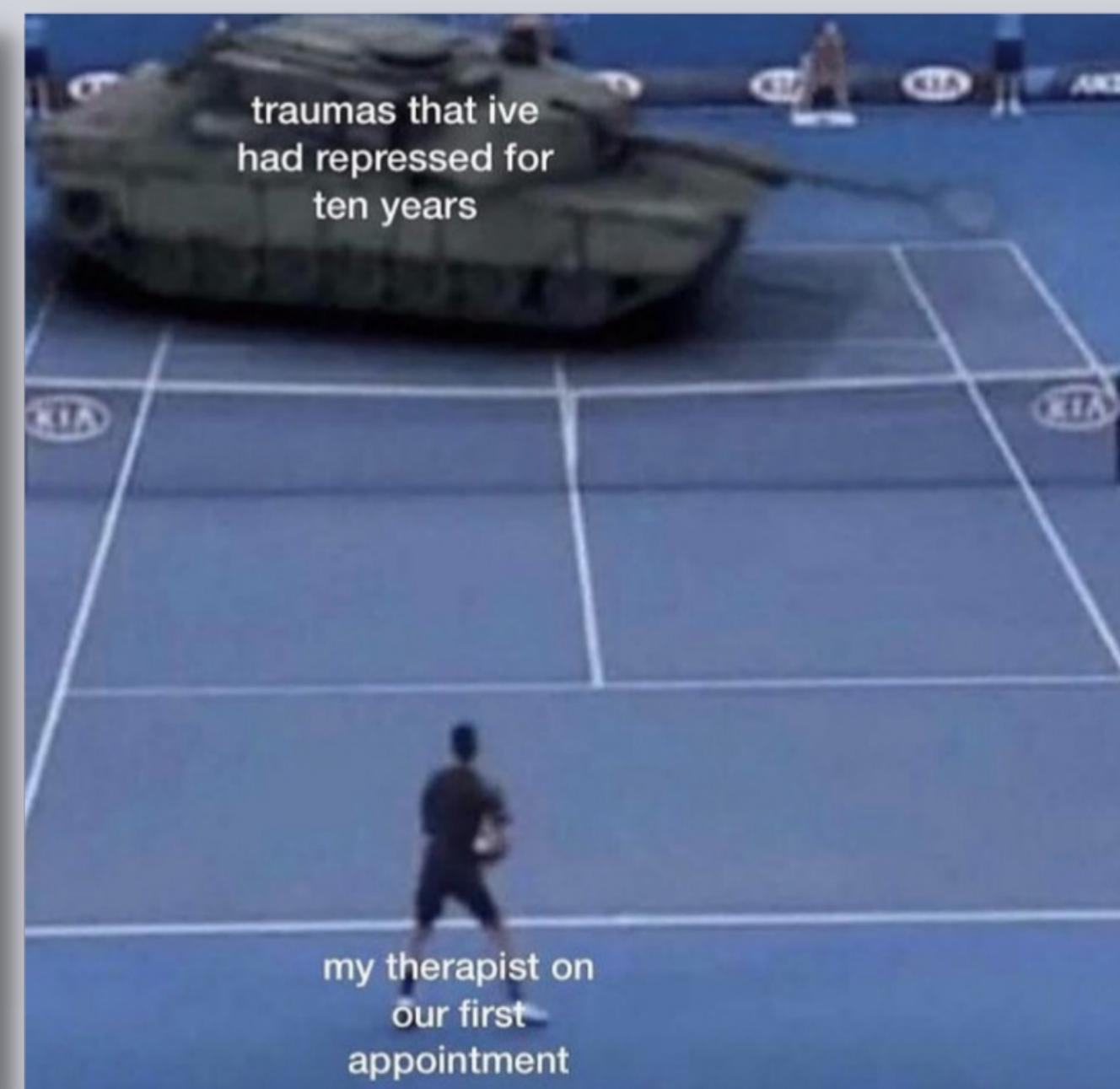
You're technically a winner already and all you did was take a breath, something you've done automatically since you first entered this world. Easy win! Mark it down mentally!

Maybe if you're feeling super crazy, get a pen and write down a few words about how you feel and what is bothering you. No need for an essay, nobody else will read this if you don't want them to.

*Why are you here, reading this right now? What is the reason you want to try to be happy?*

Is it that simple, do you just want to be happier? Write it down. If you're still motivated and not bored yet, write down the irritations that circle in your mind. The noisy neighbours, abusive partners, the fact you are poor, lack talent, how others don't listen to a word you say, whatever. No matter how wild it may seem, write it down.

Even if you are questioning if it's that real, or you are being dramatic. **Write. It. Down.**



I would encourage you to use a pen and paper. I would avoid a pencil as you could be tempted to change what you've written. *That's not the goal. We are writing the future, not rewriting the past.*

Get it out of your head. If you are typing, I would advise you to not look up from your keyboard to check for spelling or grammatical errors. Font size, colours etc are totally irrelevant but you can change them later when you spellcheck. This is the only way I have managed to write this book, just get into a flow state and correct stuff later on once the thoughts have flowed out from your subconscious, through yourself and into reality.

So at this point, we should have sat comfortably, taken a few deeeeep breaths and at the very least made an ATTEMPT to let go of all thoughts and maybe even written down a few of them onto paper.

*Go on mun, have a go.*

*What else are you going to do for 30 seconds, open Instagram again?*

*Huh? Punk?*

*Inhale.*

This is the first step remember, it will not come easily. The long road ahead may seem terrifying and impossible. Fear not dear reader, this is a good thing. The scarier it seems, ensures you will have a much more enjoyable journey. Seems wrong, but I need you to trust in me here and put trust in yourself. Humans are endurance animals, we can endure things beyond our wildest nightmares and still push forward.

If you are like me and look to 'celebrities' for guidance or to look for tips and tricks, most will tell you that the end goal of money is not what makes them happy. I hated that fact and always assumed they were lying. Some people may have found total happiness with money, but unlikely. At this point, it may help you to learn I am a very poor man financially, with no savings or a place to call home. But I feel I am rich in much deeper ways.

I have been healing myself for a few years since I turned 27 and despite not getting to where I wanted to be in my dreams, I am a much happier person and enjoy life so much more than I thought possible.

Anyway, back to you. *You lovable lil' shit.*

At this point, you may have questioned why you are taking advice from me. I mean, hey... it's free right? So, we've taken some breaths, shut up and attempted to let go of the stuff that annoys us, with some notes scribbled down scruffily. If not, circle back and actually do those things. The order does not matter.

**If you are reading this now and have not done those things, please immediately give up and put the book down. This book is not for you (Yet).** This is only helpful to those who are brave. Maybe your life is too good right now, I don't know. You don't have to wait until it all goes wrong and you hit rock bottom to help yourself or ask for help.

Right drama queen, aren't I. Why trust me? Literally no reason, you do you, hun x.

Congratulations on taking that first step! You are now on the path to recovery and even if you don't try out any of the following techniques you have enough knowledge to be able to have a quiet moment to yourself and de-stress. **Little wins.** Again, if you have not physically tried these things yet, **I will fight you.**

(If you are unable to find a quiet spot in your home or work, don't lose hope, an opportunity will appear. I promise you. But you need to be looking for it.)

Ok soooooo...

Shall we begin?



 **Heinz Baked Jeans**  
@Merman\_Melville

kind of a bummer to have been born  
at the very end of the Fuck Around  
century just to live the rest of my life  
in the Find Out century

5:54 PM · 22 Feb 21 · Twitter Web App

31K Retweets 455 Quote Tweets 197K Likes

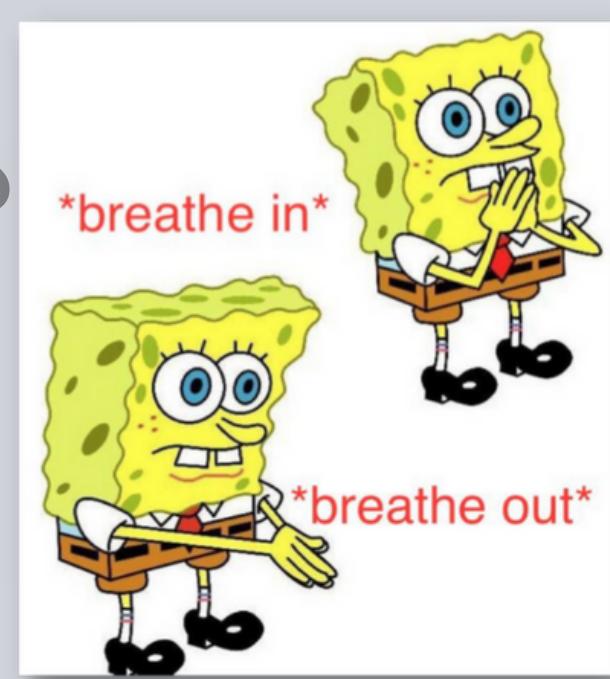
 **Heinz Baked Jeans** @Merman\_Mel... · 14h  
i'm not comforted at all by how many people  
with science jobs in their bio are retweeting  
this



# Breathing

Get high on your own supply

FULLY IN!  
And letting go...



Ok, let's begin this book as we mean to go on. Just do as I ask, I'll explain in a second. Take a deep breath in, as much as you can pack in. Hold it for 10-15 seconds if you can, slowly exhale out. How do you feel? *I can't hear you, duhhh.* Tell yourself. Do you feel a little calmer? More peaceful? Dizzy, light-headed? A bit high? Do you care as much about whatever might have annoyed you earlier?

If you are like an earlier version of myself and not bothered to take a breath, go back and actually do it. If you are giving a second of your time to read this book, then **you might as well do it properly.** Commit.

You'll get better at taking risks and committing over time, you have to start somewhere.

Now for those of you determined to help yourself and who actually took the breath. Wouldn't it be good if that calm feeling would last?

Breathing is something you have always done from the first second you were born. Probably, I don't know all the facts about that... scenario. But you are always breathing! You forget about it 99.99% of the time, then you have that weird moment where you remember you have to breathe and go into accidental manual mode. Right?

Then you panic and think you'll spend the rest of your life worrying about taking in each breath? No? Just me?

**In, out, in, out, in, out. Feed the machine.**

My point is, this can be the start of you dramatically altering your stress levels for the rest of your life. How you react to things, the degree of how situations will affect you and what you can achieve with a calm mind. Breathing exercises and just generally trying to 'catch myself' taking short shallow breaths are the biggest factors in my recovery. Hands down.

To have control of my body and to feel at ease in it, to not let my frustrations with myself or how others are treating me get in the way of my goals. Ok enough bragging.

Hopefully, at this point, you've just realised you've gone back to those short shallow breaths without thinking and so our journey begins!



Breathing properly can really help with something as simple as an awkward customer at work or a colleague that seems intent on ruining your day, family matters or any number of irritations from mild to severe. Breathing can help you cope and increase your logical thinking so that you can find a way to solve these issues or ignore them enough to focus on yourself. **The hardest part is doing it when you're stressed or angry.** If you find yourself struggling, overworked, tired and stressed then I would highly recommend taking a few minutes of essential 'Me Time' and changing your whole day, week, month or even your year...  
(Clapclapclapclap)

Again, take initiative and look it up online. There's crazy science behind the way you breathe, the different chemicals that get released and how it affects you day to day! Simple breathing exercises in the middle of a normal day can completely turn your day around and turn every stressful situation into an opportunity to learn! The simplest one that I swear by is this, by one of my heroes, **Wim Hof**.

Learning to breathe saved my life. Not to sound dramatic but the first time I tried this, I burst into tears as a tonne of emotion came flooding through my body. I wasn't upset, it was like a lifetime of tension and stress turned into self-love. I'll never forget that moment and how it changed my entire life. My soul felt like it was reactivated and I've been updated with new software and I felt feelings that shook me up, in a good way!

Now obviously, we are all different and there is no guarantee you will have the same experience. It's safe to say I was repressing a lifetime of pain and suffering, a recent heartbreak and also suicidal then. I'm sure you will have a unique experience yourself, but there is no way of knowing until you TRY. Don't be afraid, it's not scary. Well, the idea of trying something new is, but I was at such a low point I was willing to give anything a go. As I previously mentioned, you do not need to have hit rock bottom to try these exercises and ideas out for yourself. But you really must try.

You are welcome to read this and come back to it at a more convenient time, but when you do decide that the stars have aligned enough and you can commit. Just commit. *It's just breathing.*

The voices telling you not to, or finding 32 reasons why right now is not a good time, or you're not in a comfy place.

Make it work.

**Dedicate some time for your actual self for once.**

The excuses will always be there.

*There is no such thing as a perfect moment.*

## BONUS TIP

*Try sleeping on your left side.*

*I've always had issues with morning nausea and wanted to learn about why that is, so I found that sleeping on your left side, or at least leaning that way until you are asleep, really helps your body out. By doing so, you are not leaning on your stomach which kinda makes a lot of sense when you think about where your organs are. It also makes it easier for the heart to pump blood downhill which supports a healthy spleen function, encourages proper digestion and circulation back to the heart*

*A pretty nifty little tip that is easy to start doing and has great effects!*



The Untastic Mr. Fitz  
@UnFitz

Buddha: Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

Me taking notes: *Buddha says make sure you give the poison to the OTHER guy*



Take a deep breath and think about, do you want to help yourself or do you want to appear to? I write this as a man who has sat through many days and years of overthinking, curled up in the fetal position, sobbing and getting angry at myself for not just doing what I want. It's taken me years to get up from my rock bottom, but this is how I took the first step.

So this breathing exercise is the **Wim Hof Method**. It was a documentary on him I watched where I did the breathing for the first time after seeing the insane results that I was seeing on screen. (Vice YouTube Channel.) Holder of 26 world records, creating breakthroughs in science and spreading the word about how his technique can heal the body and mind and the insane science behind it, it seems too good to be true. But it isn't! I'll talk more about him and his teachings in the next section, cold showers. But for now, here is the famous breathing technique, which is simple but **does require effort**. 4 Years on and with over 400 sessions completed, I still reeeeally can't be bothered to do it. The curse of overthinking and a good excuse machine! **I never feel ready to do it, until that first breath in.** Don't worry if you give up for a bit, *you got this!*

- 1)** Get comfortable Sit in a meditation posture, whatever is most comfortable for you. Make sure you can expand your lungs freely without feeling any constriction. It is recommended to do this practice right after waking up since your stomach is still empty or before a meal.
- 2)** 30 Power Breaths Imagine you're blowing up a balloon. Inhale through the nose or mouth and exhale through the mouth in short but powerful bursts. Keep a steady pace and use your midriff fully. Close your eyes and do this around 30 times. Symptoms could be light-headedness, tingling sensations in the body.
- 3)** The Hold, retention after exhalation After the 30 rapid successions of breath cycles, draw the breath in once more and fill the lungs to maximum capacity without using any force. Then let the air out and hold for as long as you can without force. Hold your breath until you experience the gasp reflex.
- 4)** Recovery Breath Inhale to full capacity. Feel your chest expanding. When you are at full capacity, hold your breath for around 10 seconds and this will be round one. The breathing exercise can be repeated 3 rounds after each other.
- 5)** After having completed the breathing exercise take your time to enjoy the feeling afterwards. This feeling will be more and more like a meditation

Above text sourced from -  
[www.icemanwimhof.com/wim-hof-exercises](http://www.icemanwimhof.com/wim-hof-exercises) -

Definitely worth a visit if you want to enjoy your life more and become superhuman!

*The picture on the right was sourced from an official internet doctor... honest.*

(Breathing 2 Fast and 2 Furiously will make you lightheaded and a bit confused, like what the plot of this film does to me)



**Ridiculous comparison from the author.**

Breathing is like sex.  
Short shallow, little and often -  
Does nothing, and is a token gesture.

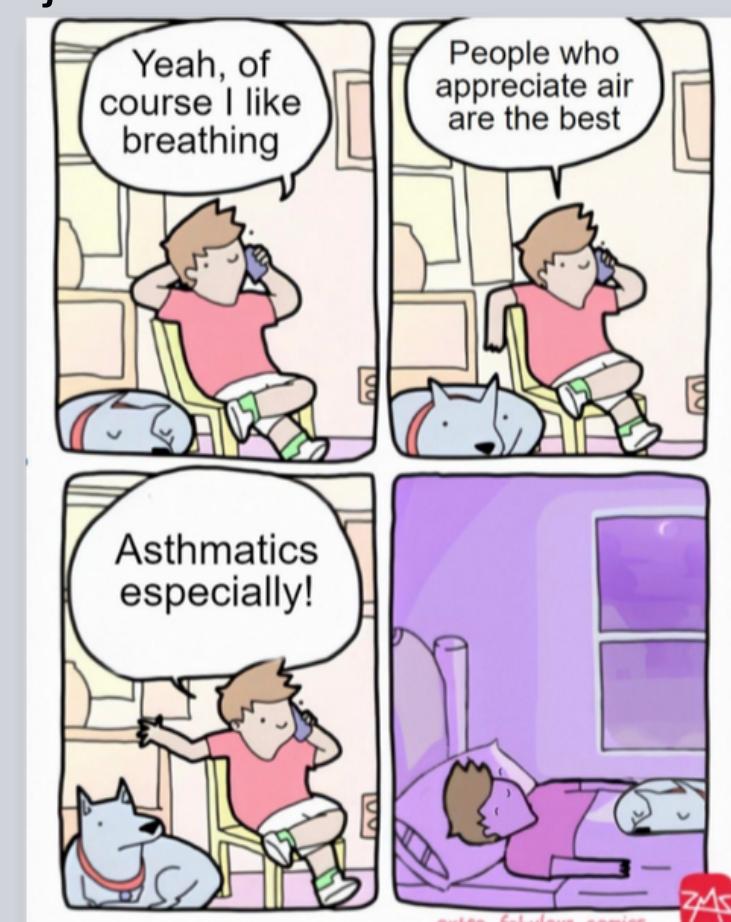
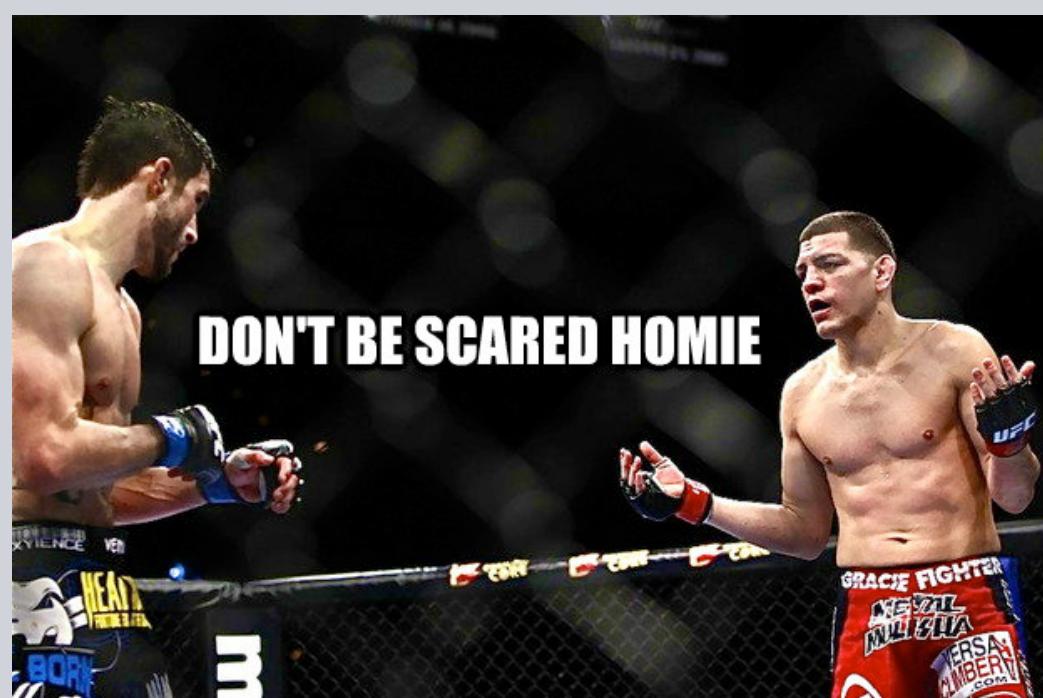
Long, big, deep -causes lightheadedness, physical and mental euphoria, leading to inner peace

With that in mind, I have now decided that I am a hoe.  
(Happy Oxygen Enthusiast)

Now if that is too much effort right now or you aren't comfortable doing it where someone may see or hear you, some other techniques are more subtle and can be pretty effective! I'll mention two of my favourites, the alternative nostril breathing, which is usually found in the world of yoga and the 4-7-8 technique. I'm sure already you feel a bit uneasy and are planning to skip this, right? Scaredy cat. Come on, you got this. Small effort now, big rewards forever. *Maths.*

**Nadi Shodhana** or 'Alternate Nostril Breathing' - "Uh Ohhhh, this sounds like hippy stuff, run awayyyyyy"  
This one is not my fav but it's still good to get you going and helps re-energise yourself. Probably because I am a Wim Hof fanboi and I practice the WHM daily. I digress.

Sit in a comfortable meditative pose. Hold out your dominant hand and press the tips of your pointer and middle fingers into your palm, leaving your ring finger, pinky finger, and thumb extended. (See pic)  
Bring your hand up in front of your face and press your thumb on the outside of one nostril.  
Inhale deeply through your open nostril. At the peak of your inhalation, release your thumb, press your ring finger on the outside of your other nostril, and exhale. Keep going and switch sides after a few rounds. Some say to do this 9 times, or for a few minutes. There's no real definitive answer, so I just do it until I feel I've achieved what I need out of it.



The **4-7-8 technique** is one I've heard that they use in the military to help you get to sleep and as an insomniac, I was all over this! Soldiers have cases of PTSD to deal with among others so if it can help them, then I'm sure it can chill most of us civilians out! I think anxiety gets in the way when I'm trying to time it so I stress out that I'm doing it properly, but as ever, the more you practice, the better you get. I'm not claiming to be a pro at any of this, I'm still learning too.

Press the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth, slightly open your mouth, and exhale until you reach the bottom of your breath. Close your mouth and quietly inhale through your nose for 4 counts. Then hold your breath for 7 counts.

Finally, exhale very slowly so that it takes a total of 8 counts to return to the bottom of your breath. I used my stopwatch on my phone, so breathe in for 4 seconds, hold until 12 and then exhale until 20.

It made sense for me to do it this way, but you can count in your mind or tap, I just do that because when I'm lightheaded I lose count easily! There are loads more exercises to try, again all for free just by doing something you already do naturally, just learn how to do it better!

**Sama Vritti** or "equal breathing" and abdominal breathing techniques are good ones to check out too! If the instructions weren't clear, watch an online video on how to do it. I tend to choose videos that are only 1-3 minutes long, as the longer videos tend to be filled with preachy people talking too much and when I'm stressed I just want to get to the good stuff!

**Progressive muscle relaxation** sounds fancy, but it's something I was taught as a kid to help me sleep and it sometimes worked, but would always chill me out a bit at the very least.

Close your eyes and focus on tensing and relaxing each muscle group for 2 to 3 seconds.

Start with your feet and toes, and then move up to your knees, thighs, glutes, chest, arms, hands, neck, jaw, and eyes. Maintain deep, slow breaths the entire time.

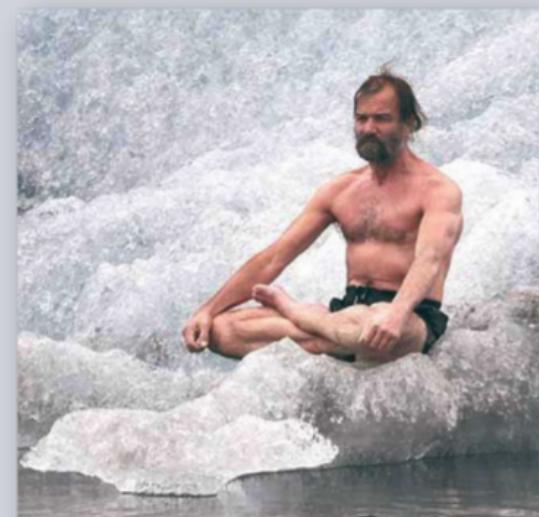
Psychologist and anxiety and panic specialist Patricia Farrell, suggests inhaling through your nose, holding for 5 counts while tensing your muscles, and then exhaling through your mouth as you release those muscles.

I'd strongly recommend you do the Wim Hof Method mainly as when you put in a lot of effort, the reward is always better, but find what works for you. Always remember that we are all slightly different and what works perfectly for some may not for others, but I feel if you're reading this then you are already determined to try something new anyway!

Even just taking 3 deep breaths can get you out of a funk, there are no rules here. Play around and see how they affect you differently, but just know why there's such a huge emphasis on breathing controls in the world of mental health. Give them a go!

# Wim Hof

Who he? Why he?



So as I mentioned earlier, I am a Wim Hof fanboi so I'll give a brief outline of who he is, what he does and why his work resonates with me so much.

At first, like many I'm sure, I thought he was one of those 'crazy' attention seekers with a money-making scheme. As it turned out he's a living legend and has become a constant source of inspiration to me!

In years to come, we will look back on his life and what he contributed to society if we don't burn the world before then.

Wim comes across as consistently energetic and passionate in every interview I've watched or assorted clips on the internet. He's fascinating. With a difficult backstory and tales of mental courage and human endeavour, he's been on a mission to bring his finding to the world for the good of mankind.

He's been shouting about his method for years and slowly he's been making his way into the mainstream these days. By breaking over 26 world records (At the time of writing), he has amassed interest globally, then getting the interest of real, actual scientists who did tests on Wim. They proved that he could control his immune system with his mind. That's as mad as it sounds.

*What "The Iceman" Wim Hof is capable of was long viewed as scientifically impossible. It wasn't until the first Radboud University study in 2011 that things really kicked off.*

*The study showed that by using his method, Wim was able to voluntarily influence his autonomic nervous system - something which until then was thought impossible. This groundbreaking finding, published in PNAS and Nature, established credibility, quite literally rewrote biology textbooks and piqued scientists' curiosity. ([www.wimhofmethod.com/science](http://www.wimhofmethod.com/science))*

Wim's message is simple but powerful and he is the living proof that it works. I want to be happier, I want to feel stronger and be healthier. I can say today, that it has categorically helped with these goals.

It seemed that by utilising the cold, he has attained 'superhuman' abilities, but as he's shown by getting others to try the method out and with the same results in a scientific test, that we are all capable of much more than we ever realised. He's on a lifelong mission to show we are all capable of his incredible feats through the 3 pillars of his method in cold therapy, breathing and commitment.

Wim has made incredible scientific breakthroughs, climbed Everest in nothing but a pair of shorts, running a Sahara desert marathon without a drop of water, he can maintain body temperature frozen in a block of ice and can activate his immune system at will.

Here are some pictures of him leading by example below, I hope to tag along one day!

He makes the point that when man was first evolved and there were no clothes, houses with central heating or even fires for that matter. We have over the years become adapted to living in very warm conditions, fighting off the cold at every turn. Failing to see what the cold has to offer, means our immune systems aren't as good as they could be, especially when it comes to fighting the common cold.



# Cold Showers

*I have a friend who tried to take selfies in a hot shower, but they always came out blurry.  
Turned out he had selfie steam issues*

Wim suggests starting your day with a deep breath and then once you're awake, the cold shower! When you are accustomed to it after a few attempts, you will start feeling really awake and energised after around 30 seconds. You are waking up your vascular system, which is also called the circulatory system. It's made up of vessels that carry blood through the body. The arteries and veins carry blood throughout the body, delivering oxygen and nutrients to the body tissues and taking away tissue waste matter. By effectively exercising these muscles, you can increase how well they work over time.

Makes sense when you think about it. So tolerance to the cold will increase, you are much better and staying warm in the shower and now in real life too. Go walk around in just a shirt if it's not hot outside and see how different you feel. Don't be boring. Actually do try this.

And no, clever clogs... Not just a t-shirt... Unless you have balls of steel... and want to show them off.

Again, by waking up your system and making it work more efficiently, your heartbeat could decrease by 20-30pm. This means that you're a lot calmer and healthier and from my personal experience, events that would have normally been stressful are far easier to get through and find solutions for.

Could be interesting for any of you out there who are monitoring heart rates for health reasons or general fitness on an app. I'm sure there are studies out there... be quicker just to try it though.

Increased willpower

Well, that sounds pretty good, doesn't it? What's the catch?

A cold shower and loud breathing?

"Nah, actually I'll just put the tv on and carry on complaining about everything." - You

I like to think of this benefit as adding armour on.

Picture one of those medieval knights with the shiny breastplate, spiky helmet with the flap and definitely not practical armoured shin splint things.

Step into the strange way I picture good sentences to remember them. **Each time you step into the cold shower, you develop armour.**

Physically, you feel less pain each time. Mentally, you are familiar with the experience which softens the shock and the knowledge you can see this through. So each time you step out with a new piece of armour earned. So each time you step back in with a new piece of armour to protect you even more.

By going to battle for 10 minutes in the morning, there is nothing that you won't be able to overcome later on in the day. You've just been at war with yourself and lived to tell the tale. And you feel really good. I believe the saying is, don't kill my vibe

You wanna keep that vibe.



So it's all well and good reading about this. But to endure, you must... endure.

You can't think your way around this one, you have to face your fear. If I haven't already mentioned, I am a massive scaredy-cat. Official term. Everything is scary to me and this was something I never saw myself doing, so trust me. If you're thinking that you'll never be able to do this. Just realise whose voice that is talking. Is that you? Or is that anxiety, which will keep you trapped forever?

Don't you want to take a chance one day? I would apologise for how I am getting this point across, but I've done enough cold showers and breathwork that I am really not that bothered. I'll be dramatic, like a drama kid on TikTok. I needed someone to encourage me when I was a wreck, I probably would have gotten better a few years sooner.

*I only hope I can inspire you to try, just for a little bit.*

I actually went to the doctors multiple times through my childhood and early adult life to find out why I was constantly ill, I would be sneezing and having a runny nose almost daily and would never leave the house without a pack of tissues on me which was very embarrassing throughout school and work. In the winter I blamed the cold, in the summer I blamed hayfever and everyone in Swansea loves cutting the grass it seems I never really did find out the cause of it, I must have just had a weak immune system. Since taking on the cold showers a few years back, I am very very rarely ill, like once or twice a year, when I get lazy usually and stop my commitments. It's no coincidence that since taking up the cold exposure, my immune system has strengthened massively. It's one of my proudest achievements, seriously.

**A cold shower a day keeps the doctor away** because your blood flow runs better. Minerals, nutrients, vitamins and Oxygen flow through to your cells better. Which produces more energy. Which makes you feel good. Cold showers in the morning always set you up for a really good and productive day!

Ok, so I've read up about it. Sounds good but scary.

How do I take the first step?

I always have a hot shower first to wash and then ease into the cold shower. Some people skip the warm part entirely, but I like to get the pores open with hot water to wash and close them up with the cold. As time progresses, I do see myself having just the cold showers in the morning to wake up and hot showers to relax in the evenings.

Also, it's worth noting there are lots of benefits to warm showers too, especially relaxing and when you're feeling low, there's something very comforting about it, like a warm and genuine hug.

After a tough day mentally or physically, I usually have a 20 minute hot shower at the end of the day and let go of all my issues (maybe think up things I wished I said in conversations, you know the drill).



It's important not to fight the cold. If you tense up and get ready for the pain, that's what you will receive. But if you approach it with the knowledge it's going to be good for you in the long term and after the first 30 seconds of panic. Breathe deeply and tell yourself internally or out loud that you are enjoying it. This is what I do if I've taken a little bit of time off from the cold and my tolerance has decreased, talking to myself out loud manages to calm me down and see sense a lot clearer at times. You will be surprised at just how pleasant it can be. (The power of suggestion is real. Try it.)

*When the cold hits your skin, you're going to feel some feelings.* Probably a few of them, and quickly too!

Your first and primal thought will be to get out and turn it off immediately. **Expect that.**

That's totally ok to do. Nobody is pressuring you to do this, except you.

In fact, the only thing that should have pressure is a good showerhead ;)

It will feel almost sharp on your skin if you go to the coldest setting straight away, remember there are no prizes or bragging rights available here. *Take it slow*

**There is, without doubt, a small element of danger here if you don't take this seriously.**

There are some rare cases of people trying to jump straight into ice baths and getting in a lot of trouble, that is a very foolish thing to do. So please do take care and think about what you are doing.

### Test. The. Water.

That's not a grand philosophical statement. Just make sure you're not jumping straight into hypothermia. Don't just turn the shower to the coldest setting; use your hand to gauge just how cold the water is first. This should reduce the shock when you step in, preventing any damage.

I doubt you would force yourself into a bath of boiling water.

But hey, no judgements, *Satan*.

Ok so you're in, you've turned the dial and your panic mode is setting in. (probably)

Take a step back out of the spray or turn it off for a second if you like.

Let the shock wash over you a bit and allow yourself to smile and realise just how intense that was.

Now you may be in two minds at this point.

You've come so far and tried it, you want to do it again.

But you now know how difficult it can be.

Remember at this time about how each time you step in, you strengthen your body and mind so that the next time you try will be easier. What's the point in giving up?

You don't have to push or go for any particular time. The first week of trying, I think I managed around 10-15 seconds and then by the end of the week I was approaching 30 seconds. This is a long term exercise. You wouldn't walk into a gym with chicken legs and squat the heaviest thing you could find. Although don't get me wrong, I would love to watch someone try!

Remember just what exactly is happening here. **This is step one.**

But a massive well done if you've taken it. Even if you never try it again. It takes real courage to intentionally put yourself in that situation and most of your friends and family probably wouldn't have the mental courage to do it. For those who really want to commit, aim for a second or two longer each time you try and I would suggest taking notes on your phone or a notepad on how you feel before and afterwards, how long you were in and the temp if you can check. This will start to become a hobby of sorts, almost a healthy addiction. It led me to get really excited about the things I could achieve with my mind and body and finally have the courage to grow into the person I've always wanted.

For those that stick the first few showers out and want to keep going, aim for around 3 minutes for the effects to take effect, 10 minutes for when you are fully accustomed and really going for it! - I average 3 mins per day. Make sure to let your body temperature warm up naturally, not with a hot shower or you will lose the benefits. I usually dance a bit like an idiot and shake like a dog. (Not in the slippery shower though)

I'm aware that sounds mad, you should see how mad it looks!

*Actually, no. Don't picture that!*

But by shaking, you are moving so lil' endorphin rush, warming up naturally and means your towel doesn't get as wet as normal. There's a study done on why dogs and other animals shake and there is a stress release.

You ever shaken your head back and forth when feeling caught up in thoughts?

You probably have at some point but it's hard to imagine doing, maybe.

Shaking activates the parasympathetic nervous system and signals the brain to calm, relax and let go.

It also activates the lymphatic system of our body, which helps our body get rid of the toxins

But anyway, give it a go. See what happens. Worth remembering that shower/baths can be slippy!

I would recommend getting a shower speaker and getting something upbeat or a song you know the words to, so you can try to sing along and not think about the cold so much. I find closing my eyes and smiling helps too. Pick a 3 min (ish) song so that I know when the time is up and I can focus on the experience rather than watching the clock. It's the same as the expression, 'A watched kettle never boils', except you now. Bit colder though.

Expect a tingly almost itchy feeling as your body warms back up (This is called 'The Drop').

This will stop after a few times so don't be put off.

**Take it slow, if it hurts, get out.**

Try again the next day. It's about building your tolerance to the cold, each day try for one second longer, or a minute, but don't try to do it all at once or you will do yourself damage. You won't do yourself any good with pneumonia. Also coupled with the fact you are trying something difficult and succeeding, it really does feel amazing! The first few times after I started staying in for longer than 30 seconds, I was buzzing with happiness coming out, I felt like a kid who had just scored a goal playing football with my mates, literally fist-pumping to my music in my towel!

It was so weird to feel so happy for the first time in a long time, even though I had been happy before in the last decade or so. It was that childhood level of energy and excitement that has kept me coming back to cold showers, more than the health benefits.

If the moment should strike you... Go and take your first shower right now!

Go on, *I dare you.*

What's your reason for not trying it, if you are already at home?

Did you notice that you can keep coming up with reasons until the end of time?

*There is no perfect moment.*

For some people, finding the cold has been a happy accident or just as a newly prescribed treatment from the doctors. I've read a few studies where doctors are suggesting that people with MH issues, low self-esteem etc should go and swim in cold lakes etc. There are lots of communities that are growing if you want to seek some companionship while trying this out.

Active encouragement might help. It should be noted that you cannot control the temperature of nature, well aside from all the boomers causing the Climate Crisis... AMIRIGHT?

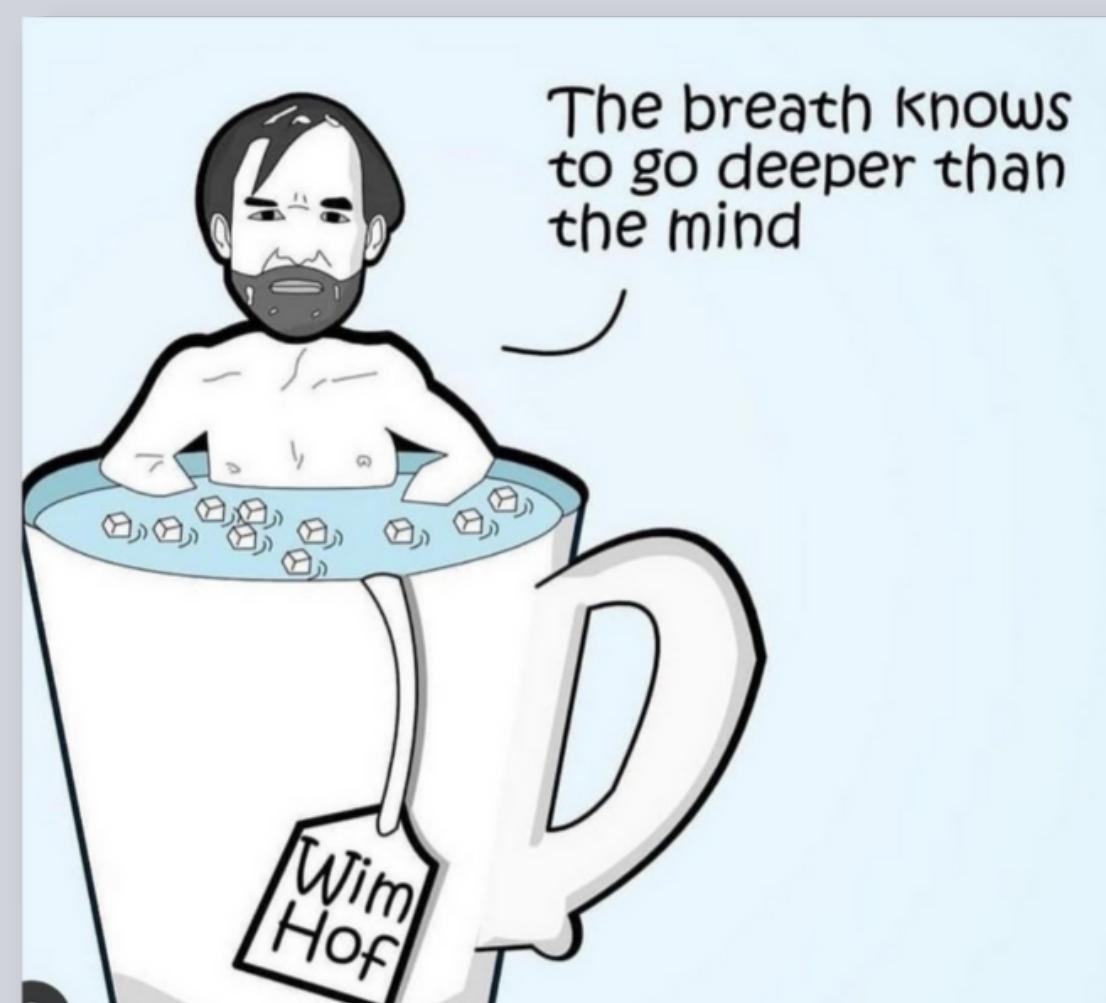
My point is that some lakes can be frozen over outside and much colder than your shower, with no way to quickly heat up if it's too much, too quick.

Also, panic can cause issues in a body of water and that could be fatal. Let's not risk that, please.

But pain-wise, the benefit is that your body will acclimate to the temperature much more quickly as you're in the body of water, not having streams running over your body.

Does that make sense?

Like an ice bath, once you're set and calm it will be easier to stay that way and switch off from the cold. In a shower, you are much more aware of it.



In 2014 a study in Medical Hypotheses predicted that 2-3 minutes of exposure to 20°C water over several months would "send an overwhelming amount of electrical impulses from peripheral nerve endings to the brain, which could result in an antidepressant effect."

So this means that the brain assumed we are in a dangerous situation, even though we weren't.

Mad that, isn't it?

Not fully in control, are we?

But by being in a dangerous situation and in danger of freezing, the brain will redirect blood from the extremities to the vital areas: the head and heart. By doing that, we increase levels of noradrenaline and beta-endorphin in the blood, which help boost good moods.

*Yeah, I had to google those words too.*

*Learning is cool, spread the word.*

Adrenaline increases strength, awareness, breathing rate, energy and body temperature. If you can control your adrenaline, you can control your body.

Both components are as vital as each other.

Our buddy, Wim, reckons life has become far too comfortable, the body is no longer being stimulated and as a result, the full potential of our breath has been cut short, as we have become disconnected from the forces within.

By always wrapping up and doing our best to avoid the cold we are actually weakening ourselves. I think that ties in really nicely with the idea of training your mind as well as the body.

By avoiding problems, we don't force our brains to learn how to deal with them, meaning if we face a real problem, it could cause a huge issue and things could spiral downwards quickly.

It's all about leaving our comfort zone, on purpose, to better ourselves. Seeking discomfort is initially seen as foolish but eventually, you may realise it's what will help you find TRUE comfort, in yourself and your surroundings with the knowledge you can face any problem.

As I banged on about earlier, the mind and body are one. As easy as that is to ignore and forget.

The cold, then, is crucial in strengthening the forgotten connection between mind and body.

Fun fact! - Evidence shows that, in men at least, cold showers can **boost your sex drive**. This study dates back to 1993 and the UK's Thrombosis Research Institute, where researchers found that cold water exposure increases testosterone production in men, presumably as part of our "flight or fight" response to perceived danger.

Just going to finish up this section with a bit on what I'm calling, '*Accidental Hofers*'

Over the last few years, I've been seeing more and more athletes on social media 'forced' to go into ice baths as a treatment for recovery after matches or to help with an injury. You've seen them too.

You know that there is science behind it. Now as more and more people are taking fitness as a personality, joining gyms and buying home workout equipment, there is a lifetime of information out there for maximising performance, cutting out tiny percentages of fat and enough diet plans to fill Uranus. Plus if you're like a lot of people in the UK now, trying to get 'Swole'. It's worth noting that cold showers boost testosterone and not only is your testosterone level responsible for your swollen ego, it's also a vital component of muscle synthesis.

So a cold shower after a heavy gym session should help you grow big and strong.

My mam said if I ate all my food I would grow big and strong.

I've opened legal proceedings as I am now 31 and not yet big and strong.

Please keep up to date with all major news channels for developments.

If you need some extra inspiration to feel inspired by the cold, here's Arnold Schwarzenegger in Batman as 'Mr Freeze'. Possibly my favourite film when I was a kid. Also an info post from the real-life Mr Freeze.



Funnily enough, he was a villain in the film, alongside Poison Ivy, (My first crush)

But they were just climate change activists though right?

The world needs these guys right now!

Ok COOL, you've made it to a save point. You can CHILL here for a moment...

*A little moment of rest for the reader*

*A small sorbet of scripture.*

*Stay here a moment, wearily eye traveller.*

*Take in this point of view*



Here's our boy, Wim Hof staking his claim to The Iceman title alongside a picture of the unofficial Iceman, Chuck Liddel.  
He literally already has a title though, greedy tbh...



The picture to the left is a thumbnail from the documentary that changed everything and gave me a reason to live.  
**The Superhuman World of Wim Hof: The Iceman**  
*Go search for it!*

And just for a laugh, here's the Night King who just bloody loved hanging around in the snow.



Speaking of Snow, here's Jonny! x2  
  
Any Game Of Thrones fans still annoyed about that final season?  
Years later and I'm still annoyed!

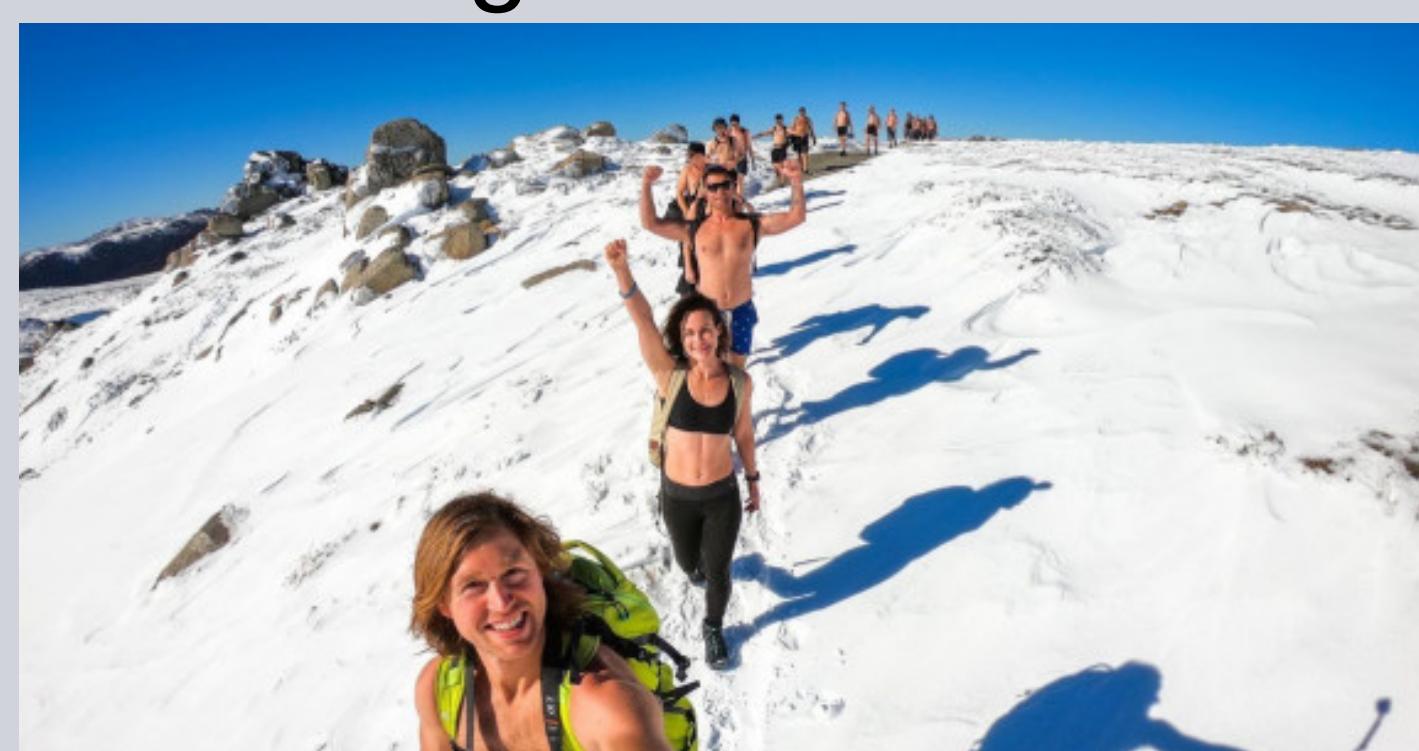


Couple of absolute QUEENS over here too!  
To the right is another fav character from a film I watched as a kid.  
I remember Tilda Swinton's performance made me legit scared and the whole icy vibe fit so well into the character.

And who could forget Elsa from the Frozen movies with the best catchphrase for anyone on this journey - **'LET IT GO'**



**The cold does not care for gender.  
Too many old talks, not enough cold walks**



# Having A(n)Ice break?



I wanted to really convince you to take those first few sections seriously and really have a think about giving them a proper go. They are my favourite and believe to be the most important and effective in a short space of time. **If you're looking for a shortcut. This is as good as it gets.**

The combination of both breathing exercises and cold therapy can totally change your life. You can overcome depression, anxiety, long term stress. Finally, realise what you've wanted to do with your life. Be comfortable with the fact you aren't where you thought you would be in life.

Let go of regret. For 30 minutes a day.

You don't have to kill yourself with stress if you take some time off from them. I don't stick to them every single day. I wish I was that disciplined. I'm working on it too.

There are no rules to life, only guidance

## SAD - A Medical Diagnosis?

It's worth having a good read on what Seasonal Affective Disorder is, commonly known as SAD. If you didn't know you were suffering from it, it can be like a light being turned on in your mind! Tying it to Game Of Thrones, think of the idea of the long winter. The sun, a distant memory... Think of the science on what your body needs. You are a plant, in need of sunlight.

## What if it's going to be like this forever, you going to complain the whole time?

I have myself a SAD lamp that uses light therapy to help improve my mood. They produce very bright lights to recreate the morning sunlight that you miss during the winter months. The light produced is measured in lux and a good SAD lamp will offer a brightness of around 10,000 lux.

*"There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing,"*

This positive mindset – Polina's fondness for Aurora Borealis and Mari's commitment to sport and friendship – is linked to the low occurrence of SAD in Norway. "The symptoms of SAD are similar to depression, including low mood, low self-esteem, lethargy, sleep problems and feelings of anxiety. If you have SAD, your symptoms will usually begin in the autumn each year – possibly triggered by low levels of daylight – such as shorter, darker days and spending less time outside," says Caroline Harper, a mental health specialist at Bupa UK.

Caroline reiterates that reframing the meaning of specific events or seasons can help to change your outlook. "You may find that, after time, you no longer have such a negative association with winter. Reframing events can break a cycle of thoughts and help to improve your outcomes, which you may benefit from long into future winters."

## Final Thoughts (Thaw-ts)

Cold water helps your skin, as an ex eczema sufferer, I can say with confidence that I have not had any flare-ups since I started doing cold showers over the last five years. That's just my story there.



Warm water dries out the skin and won't do any favours to people with high blood pressure Go deep within yourself. **Confront yourself.** Question your fears. Break them down into bite-size chunks like you were taught as a kid. Remember how you were supposed to revise for exams? *Bit by bit.* I like to imagine I'm chipping away at an iceberg, sometimes small actions can break off massive chunks. The cold gives you the ability to think clearly, so use this advantage and know that everyone else gets scared of it too. You don't know how long it took others to start, you can do it!

# Drinking

Hydration, habits and poisons of choice



So before we get into it, I want to ask you two questions...

Have you hydrated properly today? (6-8 glasses (2L) of WATER a day)

*Is this section already boring you?*

I know you know. Everyone knows they should drink more water. I'm about to explain something you already know about, but it's one of the smallest changes you can make without any effort at all, that can greatly improve your day. The downside is visiting the bathroom a bit more than usual, but hey. Extra exercise on the way there!

It's hard to start taking it seriously because it's boring and some of you will use the excuse of not liking the taste. Water does taste different in different places, but most of the time it tastes of... liquid?

I don't think I can describe the taste of water if I'm being honest. Although I did see a good meme that explained soft warm water as round and cold water as pointy. I'd say in that case that sparkling water is Spicy Water.

Disgusting. DASGASTANG

Please say that out loud, in the correct Scottish accent. If you don't understand, spend more time online. I don't chill my water or put ice in it. I don't see the point. Do that for cocktails or nice drinks that you rarely have. But you need to be getting pints down you on the regular, I think I can get a pint down in 5-8 seconds usually with a lifetime of 'downing' water. A skill that very occasionally helped me keep up with the boys on a night out, you know when you have to drink up before you move on to the next place? So we're learning multi-skills here.

badjokesbyjeff

Justice is best served cold.

Because if it were served warm, it would be justwater.

celelorien

this one was bad enough to make me slow blink at the computer as i grinned. so therefore i have to inflict it on everyone else, too. them's the Rules.



when ur water is too spicy



If you are being a fussy drinker and finding something to complain about, I would recommend mixing in a little squash which completely changes the flavour, at the cost of a lot of sugar. But generally, I would just drink pints of straight water throughout the day, especially after a meal - it's very satisfying!

One of the best decisions I ever made was getting a portable water filter/purifier, not necessarily because of the purified taste but the fact it's a reminder to drink more. Fill it up in the morning and keep it in sight.

Mine lives on my coffee table and sometimes I'll make notes of how much I've drank/drunk? throughout the day just in case, I forget. I'm sure there are apps out there but seems a bit overkill.

**I got a job at a soft drinks recycling factory, had to leave because it was soda pressing**

Over the last 2 years, I have cut down on sugar, sodas and caffeine as well as stopping drinking cows milk (Especially after learning what's in it).

So I have to go on the assumption that you already know that those fizzy drinks are bad for you, right?

"But they so tasty!" I mean, yeah. Outrageous amounts of sugar will do that.

It's easy to forget when sugary drinks are part of your daily routine. A part of that is mental, your brain getting hooked on this drug. A steady supply of Dopamine getting released, so your brain doesn't need to produce as much. So when you go without one for a while, you feel really awful until you give in to the craving. Or stick it out until your body starts recovering and healing.

So, that makes sense, yeah? I'm not in control of your life and have no say in the matter, but I would only ask that you think about not giving in to impulse purchases and you'll probably be taken back by your sugar withdrawal symptoms and that you seem to have more energy day to day. Not to mention, less worrying trips to the toilet. I've been working in pubs for 15 years and all chefs drink is energy drinks. They also have terrible stomach pains, always seem to be tired when they don't have a stash of 4-5 cans a day. Also, I've found that after one or two that anger spikes very quickly, everything is an issue and more frustrating than usual. That may just be chefs, but I've done a year in the kitchen overall and that lifestyle broke me physically and mentally. You'd be surprised how many crutches a lot of line cooks are on across the globe, it's an incredibly stressful job with incredible demands and expectations.

As I'll touch on in the next chapter, I have looked at going veggie and learned a bit about milk. That was an eye-opener, I'm not here to change your mind, but I would look into how it's made. Coconut milk and Almond are great, Soy and Oat are decent too. I did notice a small change in the lack of nausea I felt in the morning now, not feeling so sluggish after my cereal and a cup of tea.

Now, if you're one of the many people who tell others you cannot function without your morning coffee, ask yourself why (If you're feeling brave). Coffee is a funny one as there are definite benefits to drinking the occasional cup but please beware of making it a habit that you can't drop. Caffeine is a drug and if you're showing signs of an addiction problem and passing it off as just being a part of you.

*Wake up and smell the coffee...*

At the risk of sounding hypocritical, I do start days off with a fresh brew after my cold shower and breathing. But I'm no longer making multiple cups through the day out of habit. It serves its purpose and stimulates me enough to start whatever task I want to get on with. I work in hospitality so being around a fancy coffee machine all day, I used to make hazelnut lattes all day just to practise my latte art initially, but I fell into a trap of making them out of routine and started getting mad stomach pains.

I'm aiming this section on people who will drink it all day, wondering why it's harder and harder to relax and let things go these days... If you can gather the mental strength to just try giving it up for a week or so, you'll be astounded by the benefits.



Research it online, try it and then go and brag to your pals. If you are not taking these changes or ideas seriously and are still miserable and wondering why things aren't great, take a good hard look in the mirror.

**Wake up, you're sabotaging your own life. Your body doesn't care for your lame excuses.**

You're only going to get one shot at this life, don't waste your prime years *defending your bad choices*.

## Alcohol Consumption

One of the best choices I have made is giving up drinking for an extended period of time. I would never really drink unless on nights out and they have become very rare as I grow older.

I feel in your twenties it's fine to go a bit crazy, it's the best time of your life to make some memories with your friends before you grow up and grow apart. Again. Not a doctor. But it's definitely unhealthy to binge, both for physical and mental health. And it ain't affecting you, it'll affect those around you.

Nights out aren't the same after the glory years though. Plus I learned some valuable lessons, the hard way. The best way to learn, other than this book of course.

**Alcohol is a depressant**, which is very important to know. If you are in a bad place and are turning to drink to help, then you will just continue to hurt yourself and possibly others too. I know, I've been there on both sides. Please read up on the benefits of cutting out or down on drinking, even for a short while whilst you get your head in order. Don't feel pressured to fit in with everybody else, because you are the most important person in your life!

Dry January and Sober October are becoming more and more popular now and people are starting to notice the benefits, physically and mentally. My friends especially are discovering a new lease of life, with the weight coming off easily, clearer skin and the money saved is a bonus too!

Benefits of water include; hydrated and generally better looking and feeling skin, better digestion (Takes more nutrition from the food you eat) energy, staying alive etc. Losing as little as 2% of your body's water content can significantly impair physical performance and as we are made up of about 60% water it's pretty important! Lack of getting enough water in your system can ruin your mood and concentration, as well as increase the frequency of headaches. It can also affect your working memory and increase feelings of anxiety and fatigue.

It makes sense when you break it down to the simple fact of what our bodies are made out of and need to function properly, think about how many people you know that are always complaining about any of the above issues, do you ever see them drink water? You can be better than them, outperform them and have a better life, just by drinking something free (ish). \*Shakes fist at Government\*

I would avoid buying into branded water, it's all just a marketing game in my opinion. If there are extra benefits they are minuscule and also as we move to reduce plastic worldwide, there's no need to create extra waste. I'm kind of lucky that I have an ongoing addiction to drinking lots of water throughout the day. As a kid, we didn't have a lot of money in the family and as I was always hungry, a good way of shutting up my really loud stomach groaning all night was to drink a couple of pints of water. I'd always have a pint of water with every meal too, as I'd always be hungry afterwards too. As the years have gone by, I've accidentally trained myself to drink plenty throughout the day and always at mealtimes.

I know this seems like a brag, but I've always been complimented on how young I look and my skin looking good and I put it all down to my water intake. The friends I have that pretty much only drink coffee and soft drinks are pretty unhealthy and well, not so dermatologically blessed...

Drinking water alone will not get you to optimal hydration as water will pass through you, you need to get some '**Cellular water**'. No that's not some new brand of plastic water bottle a celeb is trying to flog on Instagram, it's actually the water you get from your food that helps the water get into your cells.

Providing you with better lasting hydration and more beneficial hydration (Because you're getting the added food nutrients and all that).

There is water in meat, think about it. We as humans are filled up with water, we know it but don't see it. Same with animals. But plants and fruits are packed with more water so that's where you'll get the most, you also get the antioxidants, anti-inflammatory agents and fibre.

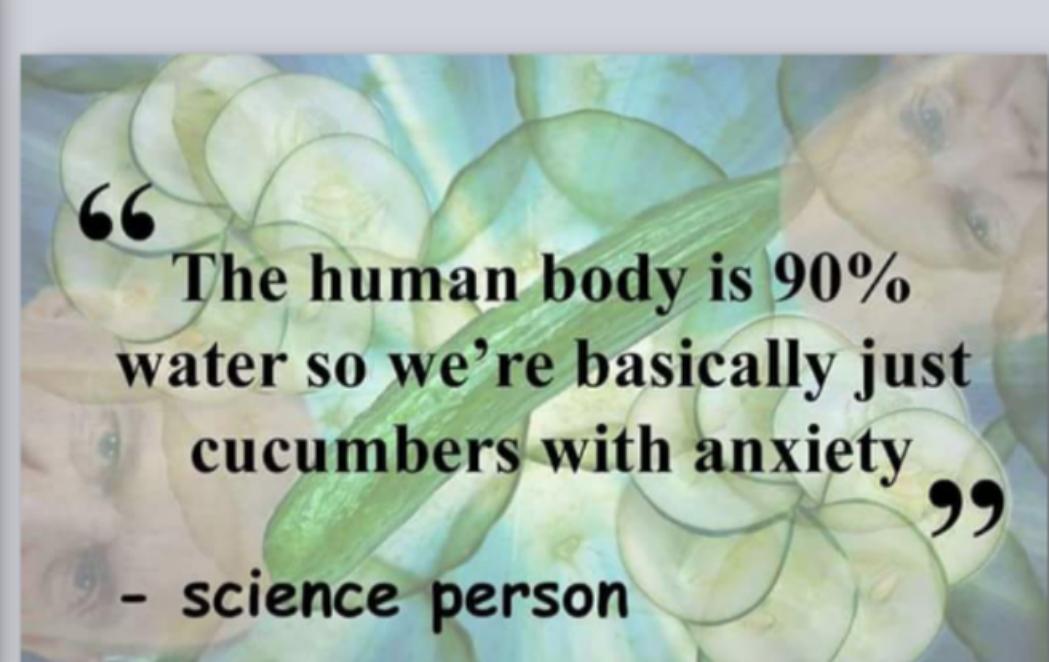
## EAT YOUR WATER.

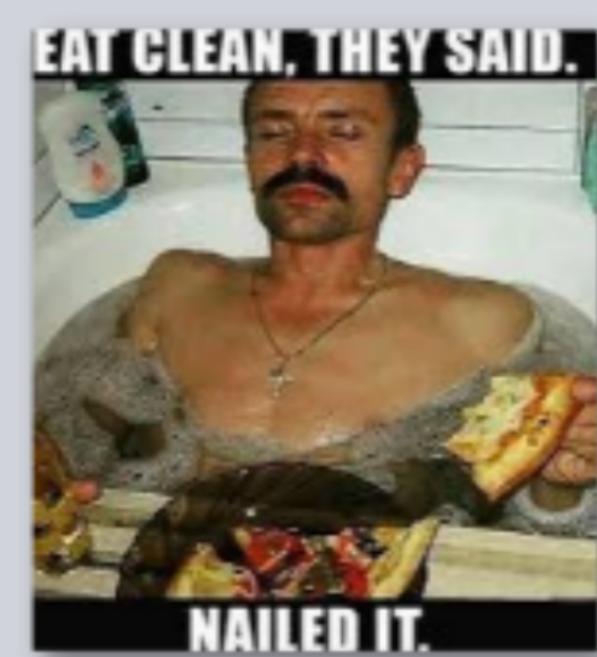
Watermelons are delish and full of a secret ingredient hidden somewhere in the name...

Cucumbers, strawberries, spinach, celery and grapefruit all have a water content of 90% and above. Which is mad to think about really!

Hydrating is probably one of the easiest and quickest ways to relieve any mental tension, for me, I find that when I'm stressed out, anxious or even venting some anger in the form of complaining of whatever that I'm probably thirsty. I know because I caught myself a few years ago being a right annoying dick and realised I hadn't had anything to drink all day. 1 pint of H2O down and I was feeling more like myself again.

That's not to say it's a quick fix, but it really does help when you need to get out of a bad space and cooking/eating is time-consuming.





# Eating

## Diet, Vegan Propaganda and Body Image



I myself, am guilty of never taking my diet seriously, for I am a stubborn fool.

It's been on my to-do list for many years. I'm sure many of you are the same.

I think while eating is important to your health, *there is also way too much discussion about it.*

There are so many more important things to be worrying about than calorie counting and what dietary preferences other people have...I have always wanted to give veganism a go, but it seemed like way too much headwork. However, as the month's speed by, more and more meat and dairy-free options are being created and becoming readily available at affordable prices.

With the whole world about to explode from the Climate Crisis, I'm happy to try and do the bare minimum in helping reverse that. I am, at the time of writing 6 months into my vegetarian efforts and can honestly feel the difference physically and mentally.

I won't speak at length on the whole vegan issue, as it's mostly just an excuse for people to argue without actually learning anything... I know valid points are being made about almonds, honey, avocados and some others that aren't technically vegan, but the fact that we as a human race have been mass-producing meat in horrendous conditions and filling the 'food' products with just about every chemical conceivable has always made me uncomfortable.

I mean, I managed 30 years of being able to stop thinking about the issue very easily, especially as the vigilante vegans appearing online, on television and creating public protests, were well.... Very annoying. Everything you've learned in life or even at school has been accepted by yourself in many ways, but someone shouting in our face and getting angry won't change anyone's mind, but further make you believe this is all just a phase or form of attention-seeking (For many people, it clearly is)

BUUUTTTT, there is an obvious fact that eating a lot of plant-based food is very good for you, we all knew that anyway. It's just always been presented as a niche way of living, I have always looked at the veggie life as mad, growing up and in the last few years I've known about veganism... well the activists really put me off trying it.

There are a group of local activists that like to eat at the restaurant I worked at before protests and bring with them the most disgusting images of animal abuse, but they take massive pride in upsetting people and causing a reaction.

I understand the motive, but I do honestly feel subconsciously they are mainly loving the attention they get, *negative or otherwise*. Especially winding up school kids outside fast food places and laughing the whole time. It spoils it for the more serious activists and puts people off the issue even further.

**Below is how I see it - A bunch of attention/camera seekers, seeking attention on both sides. Idiots.**



I had been getting my food ingredients delivered to me for almost a year now from an online delivery company that focuses on fresh food and quality ingredients and was opening up my world, and taste buds to some new foods I had never tried before. My palate was not extensive growing up, salt was banned in our house among red meat and many other things, so I just assumed all food was bland, and as we couldn't afford to go to restaurants. McDonald's was a birthday treat!

Eating out wasn't a habit I picked up after I left for uni either, despite working in them for the best part of a decade. I would just cook big portions of meat, chips and maybe some frozen mixed veg on the side if I was feeling adventurous, even pasta was just underneath a big slab of meat. I had very little imagination when it came to eating, I just wanted to get it done and get back to what I was doing.

But with the meal kits I was now getting, I was learning that I have wasted so many years eating absolute garbage meat from farms with no quality of life and chemical-filled crap.

**It was a weird feeling knowing that I was wrong**, it wasn't easy to get over at first until I realised that nobody really cares and I can eat what I want.

I now just wanted to eat healthier after getting a taste for real food.

After a few weeks, I was getting more and more tempted to fully commit to dropping meat from my meals, but the anxiety of losing the main ingredient to the meal.

After thinking about it for a few more days, I decided there and then that I was going to commit.

Some of the changes I've noticed since I cut meat out are that I have more energy, less nausea and the need to brag about it. Not even joking, it's made such a positive impact that I am fighting the urge to post about it all over my social media constantly alongside these great meals I'm cooking up at home.

It's kind of obvious why people do that in a way, the attention-seeking side of it.

I'm sure you can remember when you found something cool as a kid and would immediately run to your friends or family to show them something. There's a feeling of discovery, pride that it was YOU who gets to show off or educate someone. And that you'd tell people about your discovery for days, weeks, months and so on according to whom it had impacted you. Could be a small rock that looked cool, a new song on the radio or a life hack (Everything was life hackable growing up!). Also, hellooooo. I just wrote a whole book full of stuff I found that I felt passionate and excited about. We don't grow up, we grow older.

You get the point though, don't hate on people just because they are excited to show you something new to them and they feel that you can be as happy as they are with it. There are a lot of annoying people in the world, but let's just bite our tongues for a bit, maybe bite down on some veggies instead...(The vegetables, not vegetarians. I mean there's liking eating meat, and there's just being a dick!) Last point on the veggie/vegan issue. PLANT-BASED doesn't mean you have to follow ridiculous rules, suffer and not enjoy it just because you feel pressured to.

I have no problems with meat-eating, I took up the veggie life after learning a whole tonne of good facts (Some disputed, but honestly I don't care that much). I had a meat-based meal after 80 days of straight vegginess, thinking I had been craving it. OH BOYYYYY, what a disappointment.

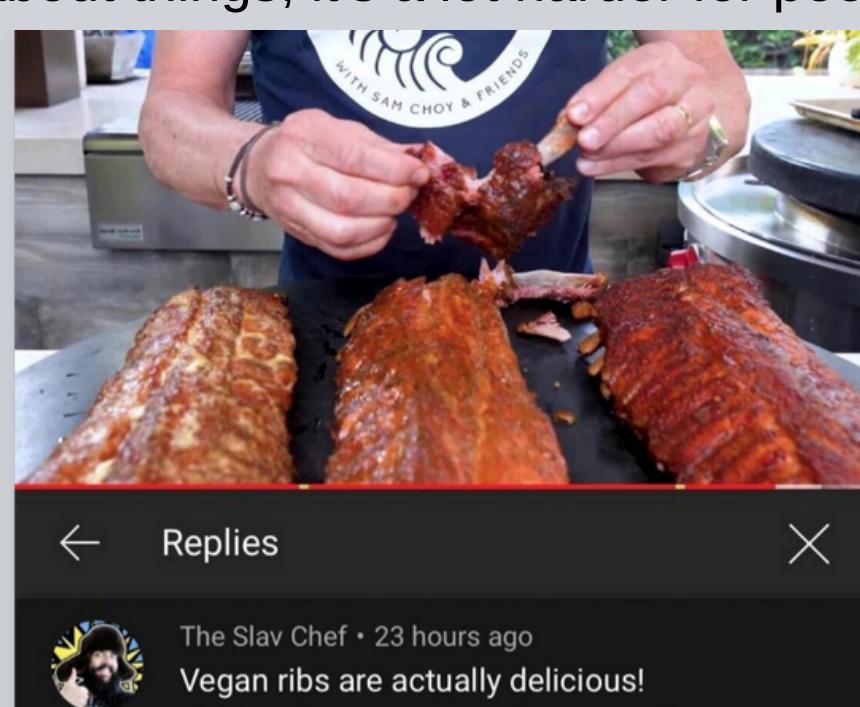
One big chunk of meat with just one flavour got boring real quick and started to feel sleepy and almost disappointed in myself, that I'd built it up in my head to be better than it was. I probably will have the occasional meat product, but I'm going to have a loose rule that I'll only eat meat in nice restaurants where I know that they'll have a quality piece of meat, that (probably) wasn't kept in terrible conditions and stuffed full of preservatives and other chemicals.

Don't assume I'm perfect in any way though, I still have rare treat days where I order way too much fried chicken and pizzas and live like a slob for a bit. Just very rarely, that's what works for me anyway.

Important to know, the next day is usually a write off for getting hard work done, physically and mentally!

Here are some tasty vegan memes ;)

If you don't have a sense of humour about things, it's a lot harder for people to listen to you I find.



I think that's a really good way to go around it for me personally, takes away a lot of the guilt and since I have never been one to splash out. I very, very rarely eat at restaurants!

I challenge you to come up with something that works for you, give it a go. You never know, you might end up loving it like I and many of my friends are. (Side note - Vegan/Veggieness is the bandwagon everyone jumping on now too, don't leave it too late to join the cool kids ;)) I also really like a quote from a vegan documentary, "People say they want to be as strong as an Ox, but an Ox eats plants" or along those lines. It was one of those moments, my brain stopped for 5 seconds to process the information and have a realisation.

If you ever get a chance to watch **Simon Amstel's - Carnage**, I would very much recommend it. It's absolutely hilarious and actually makes you think too, I'm a massive fan of it.

*Amstell paints a picture of a world, 50 years into the future (2067), where the atrocities of animal slaughter are impossible to even comprehend for the younger generation who have never known such awful things to take place. The older generation is faced with the guilt of the actions of their past (why did they ever think forcibly impregnating a cow & subsequently slaughtering her baby so they could steal the mother's milk was okay?!). The "mockumentary" seeks to alleviate the shame of the former "carnists", by teaching the younger generation that it wasn't their grandparent's fault – the slaughter of innocent beings was seen as "normal" and even encouraged by mainstream media campaigns; they simply didn't know any better."*

<https://obviouslyvegan.com/2017/03/20/review-simon-amstells-carnage>

### Internal Question Time - "Booooooo"

Ask yourself, 'Have I eaten properly today?'

Nope. There are so few people out there that actually do, there's a lot to consider when you take in your bodies specific dietary needs, cost of fresh food is expensive in comparison with ready to go meals etc. There's also the amount of headwork and time that has to be put into planning your meals, with the right nutrients and flavours, having to do your shopping or even picking out food from an app before it's delivered to you.

There was always a temptation to just hit the 'Favourites' button and get the same old stuff I usually buy just because I couldn't be bothered to even think about taking it really seriously (My poor diet wouldn't have helped my concentration levels here!) Athletes have nutritionists looking after their diet but the rest of us have to do it the hard way or keep buying lottery tickets until we can afford someone to feed us avocado and quinoa.

Eating healthily can totally change your mood and general health, there's a reason there is such a massive focus on it these days. **If you compromise, then you've only got yourself to blame.** Your body when malnourished is basically screaming out to you and you'll find that you are irritable, fidgety, nauseous and emotionally unstable. I for one, really struggle with concentration when I have an empty stomach and my rage flares up scarily quickly.

I have made some regrettable choices in a 'hangry' strop and been filled with remorse after I finally ate, realising that hunger was the catalyst to my bad mood the whole time. This happened until I was in my late twenties, how embarrassing.

'This is your only life; treat your body with respect' - Ya boy, C-Diggidy Dawg (Me)

ravenslunas

i hate how reward systems never work for me like i can't just say "if i finish this assignment i can have a cookie" bc my brain is like ".....or u could just have one right now" and i can't argue with that logic

truestoriesaboutme

Self-imposed deadlines don't work either because I know the guy who set them and he's full of shit

Source: ravenslunas

You must eat so healthy since you're vegan

Me:



Friend: where are you?

Me: at the gym

Friend: send pic

Me:



I'm not going to give you a meal plan, you can find them online everywhere. Obviously, there are a lot of people out there trying to sell you their plan as a means to profit from it, so their advice might not be the best suited to your body type and end goal. Try guessing and eating different foods, mark your results and how you feel mentally and physically afterwards.

Your best nutritionist is your own body. - Also me. I'm on a roll!



Please remember this is a meal plan and not a way of starving yourself. Please, DO NOT DIET.

First and foremost, you can't spell diet without die... So jot that down.

65% of dieters actually end up the same weight again, with most even gaining more weight. You need to change your entire lifestyle and eating habit for good if you want to change weight, temporarily starving yourself won't help. I have a male friend that suffered from Bulimia and I know lots of my female friends that have suffered from eating disorders.

I am not fully blaming social media and comparing ourselves to others, that would be naive. There are control issues in there too, which my friend told me about. But if you do find yourself wishing you were slimmer, more shredded or different in some way, then ask yourself why.

Don't forget about how well publicised the whole airbrushing pictures issue has been, credit to Jameela Jamil and others for calling out the media for making her look slimmer. (see picture bottom right)

It's a disgusting trait by people in the media who want to display their idea of 'perfection'.

It is so damaging, especially to younger women. As my sister has now entered her teens, it's clear to see the effect it has on her and her friends. It's sad but also very worrying. My mother has constantly been trying to find the new diet pill and tried various fad diets, smoothies and detoxes over the years as after 4 children, she was self-conscious about her body. The only real change was when she signed up to the gym and started exercising properly and hydrating. Not only did she look slimmer, but she also looked happier and acted it too! There's a big movement for women to start lifting weights to tone muscle, which was thought to make you hench and muscular before, but now most girls I know are squatting bigger weights than I could and it's great to see (Not like that....okay, maybe like that a bit too)

Again, to change your look, you must change your lifestyle.

A temporary change will give you a temporary body. - Me, completing a hat-trick of quotes on one page

Doctor: most of your medical issues could be solved with a healthy diet and exercise

Me:



when you're depressed and someone says  
"you should go outside"



# Exercise

'Why do I need to, if I only want  
to work on my mental state?'

- You (Probably)



So as I am trying to ram home, the mind and body are connected, they affect each other.

"Alexa, play 'Don't Stop Moving' by S Club 7"

So in what way are you going to move to the funky, funky beat? It's literally up to you, get creative!

It is important to know that we are all slightly different, 7 billion snowflakes. What works for me, may not be ideal for you for a million physical reasons, but the fact is you just gotta do something. You just gotta. I sometimes do need to exercise to pull myself out of a bad depression or anxiety spell so have to take action. It's an internal conflict/conversation I have with myself where the lazy part of me is screaming "I don't wanna".

Say it with me, "*I just gotta*".

My biggest stumbling block is my own brain distorting my memories of how the workouts go, making me think I don't actually enjoy them, but every time after 30 seconds or a few minutes, my mood has massively improved and the workout of choice is either pretty fun or a lot easier than I thought it would be. It always seems like a mammoth effort to start, but you can hack how you workout. You don't have to break yourself every day which will only create a harder issue to manage when you do find yourself in a miserable state of mind. David Goggins (look him up), says that when the mind wants to quit, you're only 40% done! Keep moving forward!

Firas Zahabi, an MMA coach and brilliant mind made a great point about doing it little but often. Rather than going mental for one session and being sore for 2 or 3 days, just do 75% effort every day and overall you'll achieve the same results without the pain. I like the way that sounded, tried it and I think I may well keep this up for a long time!

It's also worth noting that exercise for me is a lot easier with the vegetarian lifestyle and eating healthy as well as the Wim Hof breathing and cold showers which both do wonders for physical performance and recovery. You don't have to follow a certain social media fitness influencer, or *Gymfluencers* as I call them, but I find that with social media, the people I know who do take their workouts seriously always want to be as buff or as slim as the next online influencer. Unfortunately, from my point of view, it seems that people create an image of perfection (*A Lie*), in their heads and even if they achieve what they initially wanted, there is always something they could change about themselves. Much like people who suffer from anorexia or bulimia, it's sad and also very scary. This can seem like a never-ending journey, leading some to move into taking supplements, untested pills and products that are designed to raise money rather than improve physical health. It's a minefield that I am not qualified to comment on, but there are plenty of articles and especially documentaries about the wonders and also the dangers of gym life. Stay safe friends.

*Muscle definition fades over time, the work you put into your mind and life choices stay forever* - Me again

You will, however, find that these *Gymfluencers* are genuinely happy, partly down to the simple fact that human bodies are designed to move and you get a nice mental reward when you do and start to feel pretty crappy when you don't.

Also, by going outside and exercising, you're getting some of that sweet, sweet vitamin D. Depending on where you live, if it's in Swansea like me, then there are 4 days of sun a year. Always worth thinking about quick multipliers you can put together.

Exercise + Vit D from the sun + H2O to hydrate = Endorphin rush + Cold Shower to recover = God mode.

It takes a lot of mental strength to start exercising, and there are a million reasons why you can't at that present moment or obviously if you have a physical issue, but if you do have a window of opportunity, even just 30 seconds a day is better than nothing. Even 30 seconds a week is a great start! The first day will always be the hardest, so prepare yourself for that and know it will get better from there. **You got this!**

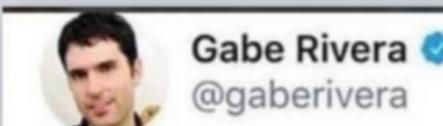
The easiest way to get in some exercise that isn't 'boring' is probably, to join a sports team but most grown-ups won't have as many opportunities so I'll talk to you about my favourites below. In this modern world with most people relying on cars or public transport to get around, it's easy to forget the simple pleasure of walking and the many benefits it comes with. Walking, I find, is the easiest form of exercise because it comes with so many benefits. Just allow yourself to find time to do it or extra time when travelling. The world is a beautiful place and whilst you are doing some low cardio work just ambling about, the happy chemicals in your brain get going and you can start feeling better.

Smell the air, look up at the sky and realise just how crazy it is that you live on this planet, this floating rock in space. Take in some nature or even just people-watch. I do this pretty much daily and I love it!

## Rainy Walks - Get Wet

I personally love to walk in the rain with my headphones on and my favourite music playing. Most people are too scared of the rain so the streets can be empty. Due to my cold exposure my immune system does a really good job of stopping me from getting ill this way.

I imagine all my problems being washed away as I immerse myself in the music (Good music taste helps here, not just songs from the charts or repetitive Drum and Bass, although just listen to whatever you like, there are no rules!). Also it feels good, the rain can wake you up and make you grateful you're alive, especially if you have a deep inner thought process where you think about rain, that it's part of this earthly cycle we're all a part of, how it gives life to the plants and trees we rely on and so on

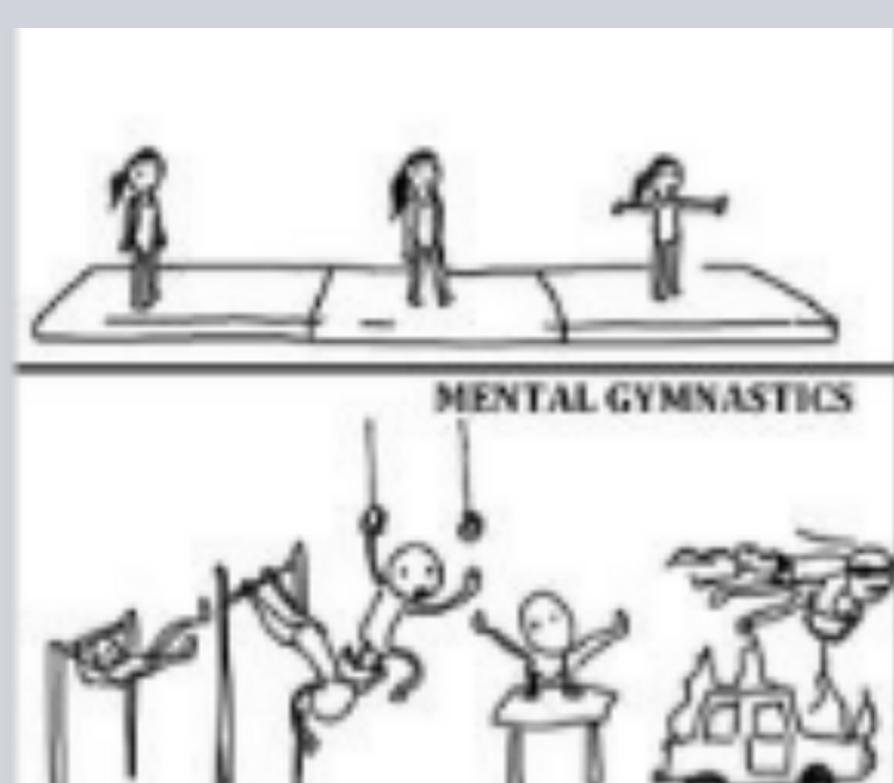


You know how when you're a fast walker and the guy ahead of you is fast too but only 90% as fast as you, so you MUST pass him, but to pass him you have to walk comically faster than your normal speed, or else you'll be in his personal space too long as you pass? That's annoying.

A great mental exercise to help with anxiety I found was to force yourself to walk with your head held high. It might seem normal to some but it was a massive struggle for myself after years of looking at the pavement in front, only looking up occasionally to check that I wasn't about to walk into something. (As I have done many times, there's a few lampposts that have an indent of my face on them!)

By keeping your head up, the world seems a totally different place, you exude confidence and people will move out of your way.

Trust me on this and make sure to try it..



As I've always lived in very working-class areas, I've often been intimidated walking past some unsavoury characters and would shuffle away as fast as I could. But I learned a fun game I like to play whilst walking (Other than racing people that didn't know we were racing). **It's a game of chicken!**

You know the game you see people do in cars in the movies? Try that with someone who is walking towards you and make it so that you two are going to collide unless one of you moves out of the way or changes course. Walk with your head held high, don't try and make eye contact, as that's just unnecessary and weird. 9/10 times the other person will move out of your way but if you have a renegade, you can use my signature move to ensure you get the win. When it's getting pretty close, just turn your gaze completely to the side, pretending to look at something so the other person has to act or walk into someone who isn't looking where they are going.

Chances are you're going to win this little mind duel and you're going to have a little wave of endorphins from it. Have a little smile to yourself to drive home that dopamine and good feeling.

Congratulations, you now appear to have self-confidence! (But if you happen to see me walking towards you, I would avoid playing, as you will lose and we will headbutt each other ;))

Strangers don't know how much you overthink stuff so just fake it 'til you make it! Another great form of exercise that changed my life is *skateboarding*.

You may immediately feel the need to say it's not for you, which is fine. But I've made some parallels with mental health that I think are definitely worth thinking about

Also rollerblading is making a comeback and there are many similarities in that but please just hear me out...

# Skateboarding -A Dangerous Foot Massage

First off, it's a great cardio workout. Burns that fat right off your abdomen and strengthens your core muscles, also the fact it's incredibly fun does seem to help.

It has a great effect on your mental health due to a few reasons;

It's a risk, you may fall off. There's an exciting element to it!

When you do *inevitably* fall off, you have to get back up. You

remember that classic song, "*I get knocked down, but I get up again, you're never going to keep me down*"? - *Tubthumping*

It's a great physical representation of picking yourself back up

after something puts you down and it builds your mental

strength each time you can do it.

Always make sure you get back up with a smile on your face because what's the point in getting upset or angry? It's a solo sport, it comes down to you and how much practice you put in. The same as life.

You can skate the way you want to skate, everybody's style is different to the next person. There are no rules, you can skate on your knees if you like, as long as you're having fun.

I struggle to learn tricks but thoroughly enjoy just skating around real fast, with the wind in my hair and appreciating the surroundings.

**Bonus point, skaters look damn cool.** (In my opinion anyway)

People will always look at you enviously... once you get out of the awkward balance stance. I always thought skaters looked cool and I thought people who made fun of them were the most miserable people I've ever met. (Cheer up, Noel Gallagher)

I find that skateboarding resembles a lot of life within itself, bear with me while I try to make this point...

Life is a test with no rules, you have to try your best to achieve what you want out of it. There is plenty of pain that will come your way, but you define yourself by how you deal with it and keep moving forward. People might say that you look stupid but you can just cruise past them and leave them in the past behind you. If you don't pay attention to the small things you can fall pretty hard and there will be launch ramps at certain points, you can fly... but only if you commit to the risk!

Finally, on the exercise front, many people who get involved with working on themselves end up taking martial arts, specifically JiuJitsu. Personally, it's not for me but they say that the level of dedication, focus and conditioning as well as learning new respect takes them into a new realm of being content.

Maybe check it out!

If all else fails, stick to what you know and feel comfortable with, maybe try out this simple exercise in this picture.



## Adult Men Shouldn't Skateboard

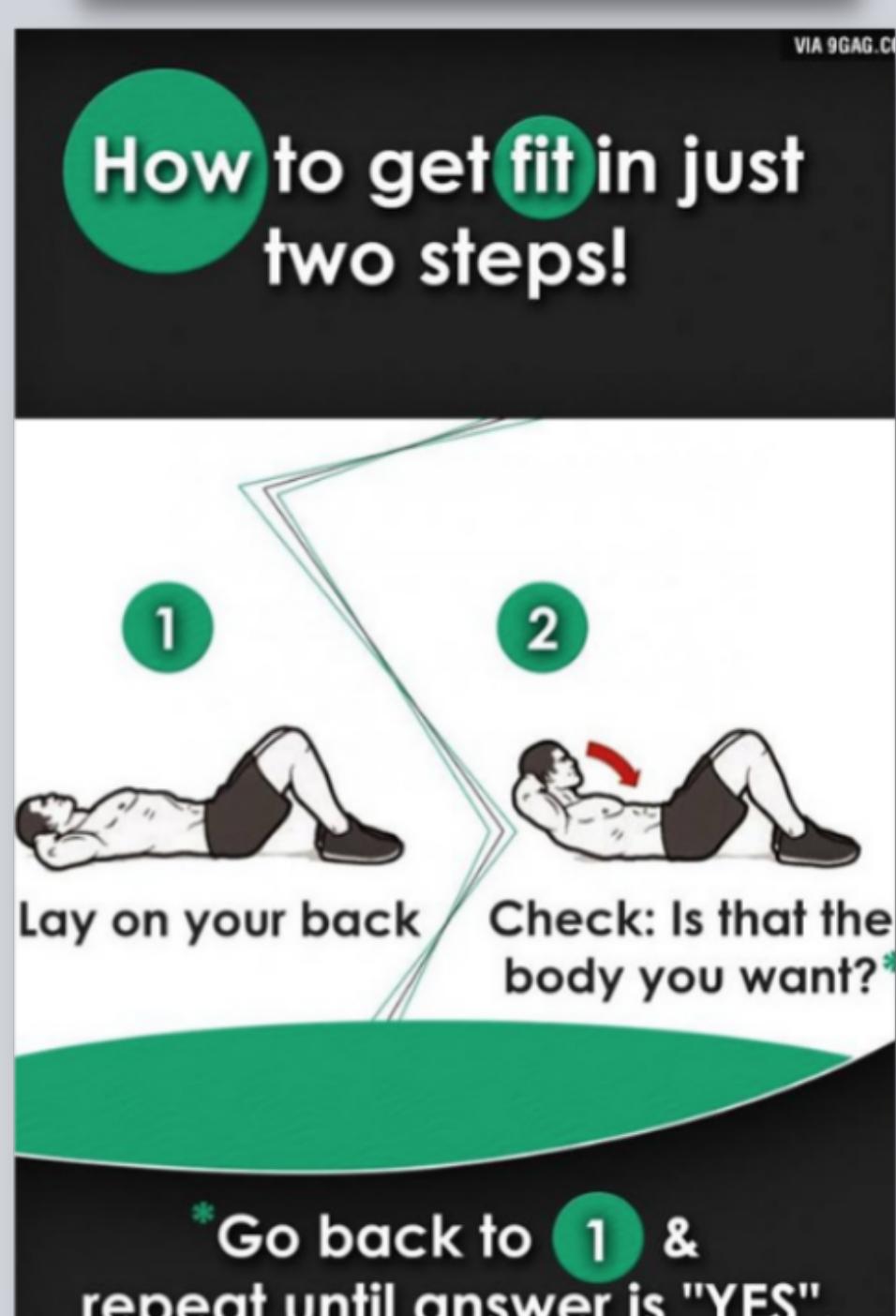


Maria Sherman  
Yesterday 4:15pm  
Filed to: SK8R BOI



Image: Getty

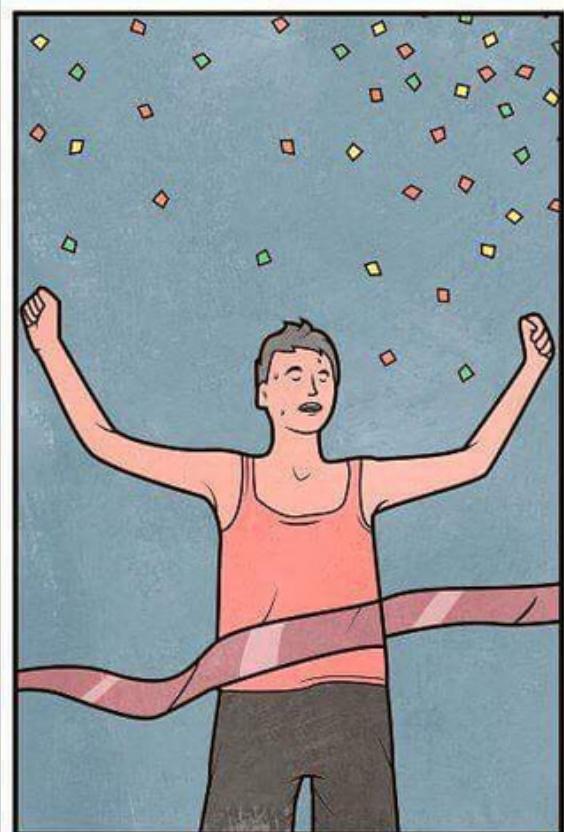
Adult men shouldn't skateboard. Let's try that again with a caveat: adult men *who are amateurs* shouldn't skateboard. It is an extreme sporting activity that should be reserved for teenage stoners, Tony Hawk,



# Savepoint 2

Alright kiddo, good job. Have a little rest.

The physical part is over, now we are getting more into the ideas and thought pattern side of sanity. Here are some memes and jokes while you take a breather. Sorry, it's a bit messy, but it's a vibe.



When you want to die, but not in a rush

Me giving mental health advice

People to depressed women

People to depressed men



Kyle  
@KylePlantEmoji

Oh your "brain" is acting "illogically"? It's meat with electricity inside what the [redacted] you expect

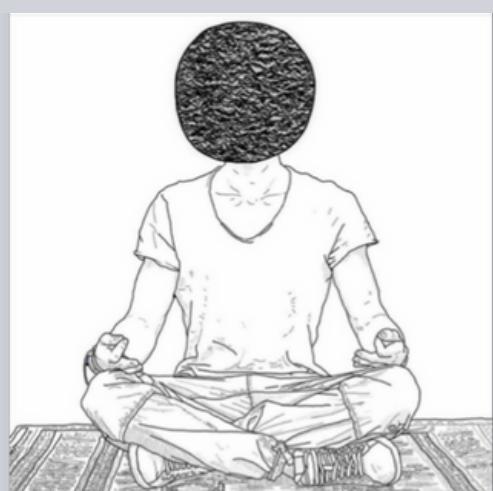


obsessed with this picture of a juvenile snowy owl sleeping face down looking like a little man



When you suffer from depression and somebody tells you to just cheer up..





# Meditation

Sit down, Shut up



Meditating is the exercise I refused to do for years and can only regret not starting sooner. The effects are quite literally amazing! It's as simple as dedicating an appropriate amount of time (20 minutes on average for seasoned pros but less is totally fine. 5 min a day is a tremendous commitment), to sitting cross-legged, back straight and eyes closed. I force myself to do the WHM first thing in the morning and then straight into a 7 min meditation session as I find that incredibly helpful to shush all the noise in my head and let go of all thoughts that surface and tangents my brain tries to take me down.

There are many versions of mediation but I'll describe the two that have helped me.

**One-minute meditation** - Spend 30 seconds, concentrating on 5 things you want to achieve in your life.

Spend the next 30 thinking of how those achievements will help 5 people you know.

Repeat this as often as you can, once a day is fine. I like doing this when the depressive thoughts are circling in my head, as you can forget what a great person you are at times and this reminder makes you value yourself again! If you only bring up stuff about yourself you hate, that's cool. **This is the start.**

Proper meditation involves the same, but this time. The aim is to think of nothing. Which, trust me, is realllllllly difficult. In fact, it's the most challenging thing I've ever attempted in my entire life.

As a classic over-thinker, I viewed this as impossible. Again, *things come with time and practice*.

You aim to be an *empty vessel*, aware and alert to your surroundings, just focusing on your breathing and nothing else. This will be difficult for most people right off the bat, it certainly was with me anyway and still is pretty hard if I don't stick to a routine of trying it.

It's interesting how your brain will come up with this constant stream of imagery, seemingly random dream-like sequences, arguments you want to have, issues you're struggling with.

It can be overwhelming to be drowning in thought. But that's the point of why you're doing it

It's training, easy to forget. Once you commit to letting go of these thoughts, then you are taking a step in the direction of being able to let go of stress in day to day life where you're directly facing a problem.

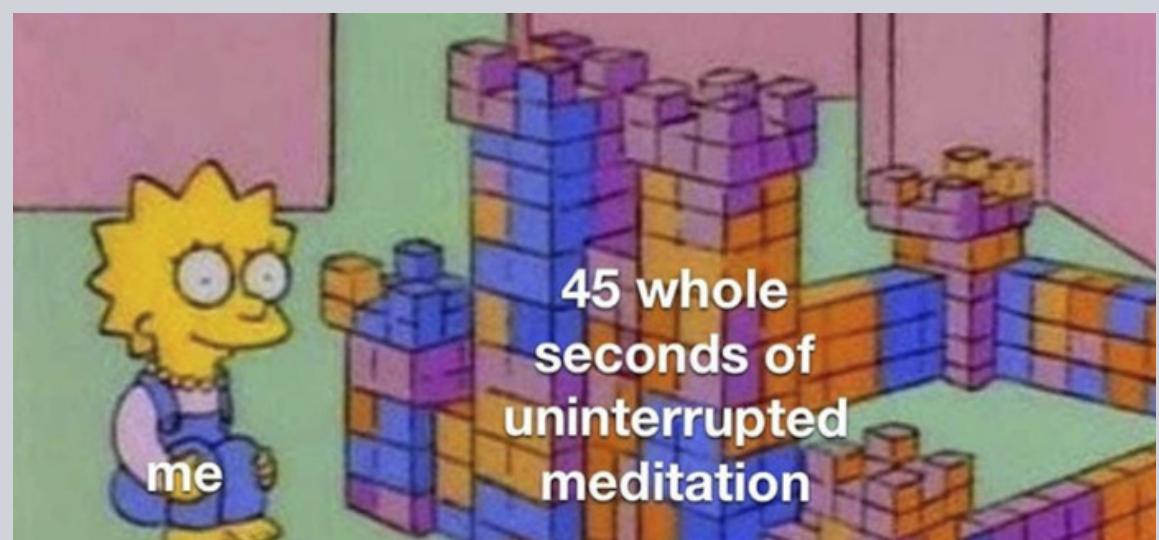
I have friends who can never be home alone, they will drive for miles just to hang out with someone to avoid the thoughts in their head. You can't run away forever. At some point, you have to confront yourself, let alone your demons. After a little while, it becomes almost fun. To challenge your own views and entertain the idea of new paths is a superpower. Don't be afraid to think and question your views, there will be some difficult stuff bubble to the surface that can make you feel like you are not in control. I think that's a big issue a lot of people struggle with, but never directly address.

For me it's usually songs on a loop and people who have annoyed me, getting wound up and realising that I'm letting these people get in the way of my happiness and not letting me relax. But that's normal.

The important thing you must do is to realise you are not focused, let it go and return to your breathing. It is not a bad thing you have become distracted, only natural. The fact you have recognised this is a massive positive! You are working out your mind like you would work out a bicep. Conditioning over time, each time it becomes easier. **But it will take time.**

The after-effects vary from finding out who you really are, being able to stop caring so much about issues that bother you, working through anger problems and letting go of any negative energy to name but a few. As an insomniac, this has been the most useful tool in being able to get to sleep, as I use my training in focusing on my breathing and feel safe in the knowledge I have practised this before. It really does help.

You won't know until you fully commit, it's definitely worth trying at the very least.





# Yoga



For me, Yoga was a necessity when I had injured myself skating (pictured below) and was rebuilding strength back up in my muscles. I hit a pebble while skating downhill really fast and smashed my face into the concrete road, smashing my eyebrow open and getting my first stitches aged 26!

I realised just how powerful it could be both in helping clear your mind as well as the many physical health benefits. Research the basic steps and get practising, before bed or when you wake up, even just to try it out. There are lots of videos on many varieties of yoga online to help you. Try using the image on the bottom right of this page, I found it super helpful.

I've always been a sceptic as the people preaching yoga always seemed slightly false to me and still kinda do. I think when you make a single idea your entire personality, it's very off-putting. But that's just me. The mental health guy...

Keep in mind that the claims that yogis make, as there could be many things they do in their day to life, that are way different to your routine including diet, medications, and exercise.

Maybe you could find a new hobby, but don't think you have to do hours a day if you don't want to. Saying that, even though I really didn't want to do it, found it boring and difficult... I actually learned that the discipline of routinely doing something I didn't want to do, brought me a great deal of mental clarity and fueled my self-belief. Basic brain training, it's annoying how simple it can be at times.

Take it slow to start while you are figuring it out, it's much harder than it looks but with effort and focus, it gets easier and more beneficial, same as cold showers and exercises. Things take time and effort Even Vladimir Putin, a devotee of "macho sports," added downward dog to his repertoire and has spoken of the benefits, the picture at the top may not be genuine though...

Yoga seems to help alleviate lower back pain, improve strength and flexibility, and reduce inflammation in the body which, in turn, can help stave off chronic disease and death. New research suggests yoga can increase body awareness or attention to the sensations and things going on inside you.

They think heightened body awareness can improve how well people take care of themselves.

*Yoga is the science of the self!*

I just typed in 'Beginner 5 Minute Yoga' online and found a great video that helped, I don't like all the preachy ones so just found one that kicked straight into the exercise. I'm still in beginner mode but trying my best! Once I learned that dogs do their own yoga when they wake up it changed my perspective on it. I'm not saying my dog was slipping his headband and yoga pants on after every nap, but if you have a dog you'll see them do the downward dog (I wonder why it's called that...), and then, of course, **Updog**.

*What's Updog you ask?*

*Not much, what's up with you?*

*Hello?*

*You still there?*

For real though, think about it.

Dogs are constantly on the move and always do those stretches when waking up, naturally.

Again, remember that nothing comes easy. and with practice you will get better, *enjoy the ride.*



# Pain Management



## Mind over matter?

So as I keep banging on about, the body and mind are one. Just as you can turn off negative thoughts through work with meditation, you can suppress feelings of physical pain too.

This is a subject you may either laugh or roll your eyes at, but I've dedicated time and effort to thinking away my pain, as I am a very clumsy man.

I am constantly walking into walls, stubbing my toe, burning my hands and have many cuts and bruises from skating or just working in bars. My dad is a classic over-reacter and I am grateful that I got to see just how annoying that is... all the time.

I challenged myself to be more like another one of my heroes, Derren Brown. I would encourage you to watch everything he's ever done and listen to interviews, the guy is a certified genius who will help you look at the world differently. One of his 'tricks' is to hold his hand over the top of a burning flame, a candle for example for long periods, usually challenging someone else to do the same. He'd win every time. He explains the simplest form of pain management is to think of something else, which you may have heard of before.

But it really does work. Mind over matter.

When you break it down, pain is the nerve endings in our body telling our brain that we are in danger, it's all in our head. We can tell our brain, "Ok I got it, now shush". Well, at least that's the conversation I have with myself! Derren is a pro at explaining this so please research it and listen to what he has to say. I've been practising every time I'd injure myself in any way, to either laugh because I'm such a klutz or just take a deep breath and focus on how good I am at ignoring the pain. It's mad, but it really does work! The story of The Burning Monk, which has been immortalised in a photo and totally blew my mind before I understood any of this pain management.



*'In June of 1963, in a busy street in Saigon, Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc burned himself to death as a protest to the South Vietnamese Diem regime's discriminatory Buddhist laws.'*

*'He hoped to show that to fight all forms of oppression, a sacrifice must be made. Hence his self-immolation'*

This image of the burning monk is incredibly powerful. To me, it helps me have the faith to let go. Once you see how someone else has mastered that skill, it seems more achievable. And also to fight for what you believe in. I also think that it's a beautiful photo, I rarely connect with any art or photography, but this makes me quite emotional.

I often look at it to remind myself to let go of everything and focus on the discipline, he had trained for many years in meditation and knew what he was doing beforehand, mentally preparing. He uttered no noise as he died. The amount of focus and dedication that must have taken is literally incredible and that's why he will always be remembered. So next time you stub your toe on the coffee table or spill a hot drink on yourself, take a breath and think, "Do I really need to make a scene here?" Especially if you are alone because shouting by yourself is a bit strange tbh.

## Grounding - Not just for your annoying children

Earthing (or grounding) refers to the discovery of benefits including better sleep and reduced pain from walking barefoot outside or sitting, working, or sleeping indoors connected to conductive systems that transfer the Earth's electrons from the ground into the body.

The idea is that by being barefoot on the natural earth then the magnetism of the earth can help heal our body. It's pretty cool when you think about it.

Maybe the hippies are on to something?

Think about running along the beach and feeling the sand between your toes, something feels good about it. I started meditating on the hill I used to take Ozzy (The Dog) on walks up, I used to make sure nobody was around because I was self-conscious, but hey hippies do the barefoot thing all the time!

**It did feel different, I can't lie.** It may have been a placebo effect, but I did feel connected when I meditated and walked barefoot on the grass. It helped me more with feeling spiritually connected to the earth and I started thinking about how we are all made from carbon, the earth. That we will eventually turn to dust and give nutrients to the ground to form a new life, the circle of life.

Grounding is currently an under-researched topic and there are very few scientific studies on the benefits. However, the most recent scientific research has explored grounding for inflammation, cardiovascular disease, muscle damage, chronic pain, and mood.

Have a look at picking up a grounding mat and see if you notice any difference or go outside if you're feeling extra brave. You don't have to hug a tree, but some people enjoy it...

But this book is not the place for that discussion, I do aim to follow this one up with a much deeper look at the world and some of my philosophies so keep an eye out

There have been studies with people that suffer from arthritis, that had hooked their bed up with wires to the earth via simple conducting materials and were feeling huge benefits in pain relief.

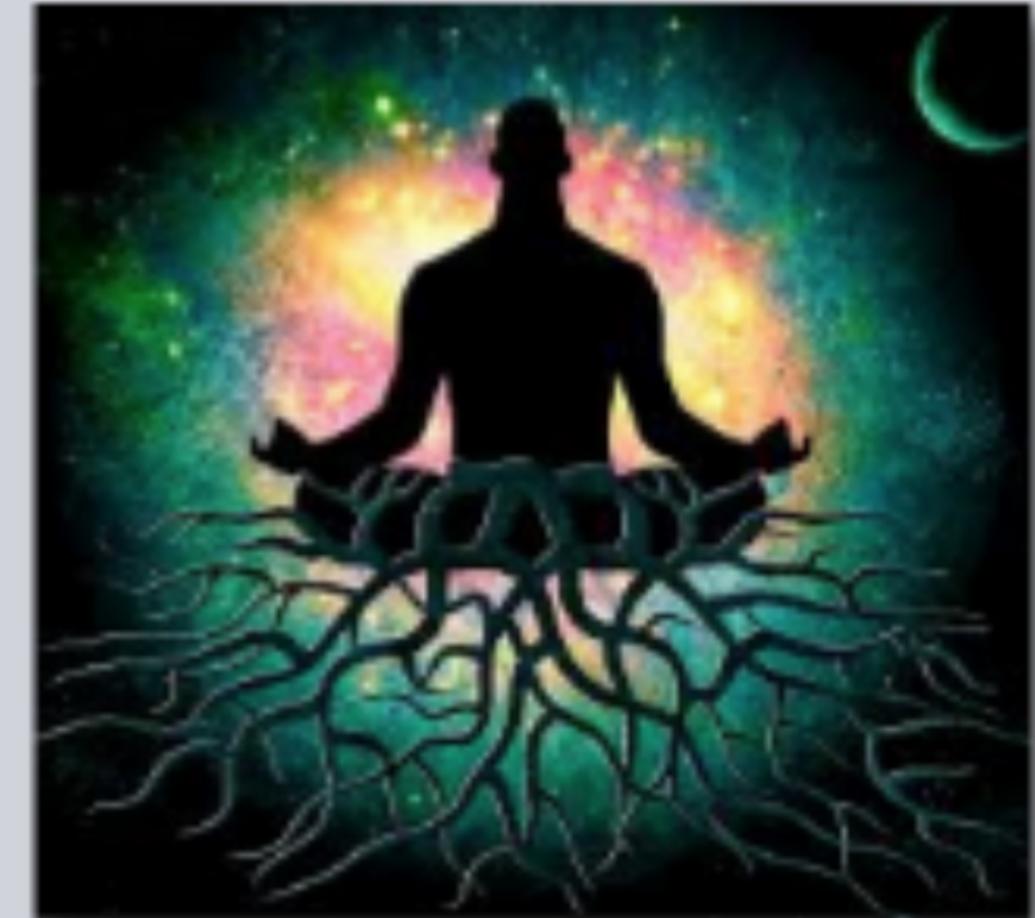
Again, I am not an expert on any of this and grounding is fairly new but I would definitely check it out!

The image below is what they look like if you have money in your pocket and a dislike for being barefoot outside.



Grounding mat

Grounding mats are meant to bring a connection to earth indoors. The mats usually connect via a wire to the ground port of an electrical outlet. The mats may be placed on the floor, on a desk, or on a bed so the user can put their bare feet, hands, or body on the mat and conduct the earth's energy.



Doctor: This is your spine

Me: wtf put it back



"My back hurts all the time for no reason."

How I sit every day:



 justhurtingalot

Isn't it weird how you can actually feel the pain in your chest and stomach when something really hurts your feelings

 christichris

This is actually because it activates your vagus nerve! Basically your body goes "we are so upset! We must be injured! Where???? On the inside guts! Those are confusing and hard to differentiate!!! Confusing guts are hurt!"

 sapphicalienn

Great! How do I uninstall it?



Seneca  
@CryptoSeneca

Easy to spot a yellow car when you are always thinking of a yellow car.  
Easy to spot opportunity when you are always thinking of opportunity.  
Easy to spot reasons to be mad when you are always thinking of being mad.  
You become what you constantly think about. Watch yourself.

# Ambition

*If people are not laughing at your goals,  
your goals are too small'*

– Azim Premji



Many people whom I've spoken with that have some form of mental health issue (Whether they know it or not) usually don't know where their life is headed as there is no real direction.

*Relax, that's totally normal*, especially in this current time with social media.

Kids growing up these days are almost superglued to their phones and are bombarded with celebrity culture with everybody sharing pictures, videos and updates on their life.

But the life that is shown is how the user **wants it to be presented, not how it actually is in reality**.

I have been down this road, subconsciously craving attention and checking my phone relentlessly to see if my selfie had got any likes, or if there were any new matches on dating sites just to feel valued or wanted in some way. It's desperately sad when you think about it. What I mean by subconsciously, is that we are not deliberately trying to fill the hole with attention, we are just so used to immediately grabbing our phone if we are left with a spare 30 seconds, as soon as we wake up before we go to bed and in awkward social situations where we don't know what to do with our hands.

This is more the case for introverts I feel, but I can only think of a handful of friends who have successfully removed themselves from posting constantly over a long period of time.

This is not to say that having an online presence is a bad thing, far from it. But we have created these habits over time, from trying to keep up with our friends, the latest news or in my case, memes. From group chats that keep your phone in your hand, then venturing to other apps to see what others are up to. Over time it became a habit for me where I'd almost 'wake up' and just realise I had been scrolling down the rabbit hole of total strangers pages for 2 hours with no real sense of enjoyment, just mentally tuned out and my thumb on autopilot.

A lot of times I'd be on the sofa and looked up to realise the sun had gone down and I was in total darkness. It's a weird feeling.

That brought me a lot of shame in myself as I have massive ambitions, but was wasting the best years of my life, looking at other peoples' and placing other people's opinions over my perception of myself, hoping to go viral somehow to achieve the attention I so desperately needed.

This can lead to becoming depressed that your life is not as good by comparison, leading to a lack of self-worth and as is often the case, doing the same and editing your life/photos to appeal to others for some recognition to make you feel good. I used to tidy up the room I was in and redo my hair sometimes, getting everything juuuuust right and still hating the way my face looked.

There is a small amount of dopamine released in your brain when somebody 'likes' something you have done online and this can become an addiction without you even realising. I have been addicted to this and since temporarily deleting all my social media apps on my phone, my life is much more stress-free. You then realise just how often you pick up your phone and swipe without thinking, it's embarrassing.

You may catch yourself posting about any exercises from here you try, or your new water bottle to encourage your water intake etc. Don't worry when it doesn't get much attention, you're doing this for yourself. Don't worry about other peoples opinions or attention right now. YOU are the priority, not your engagement activity.

There are ways to help like app time limits you can set on your phone, or deleting apps when not using them, even cases that you can lock devices away in are available. For me, I had to do it the hard way for me to learn and isolate myself from the online world so I wouldn't have the notification distractions and give in to temptation.

One thing I have learned about myself this year is that I am a very impulsive person. I'm not mad about it, but it explains so many decisions I have made over the years that have made things worse. So I'm learning patience and discipline and strangely enough, my MH has improved. Crazy.

There is a big focus on putting down your phone and living in the real world for a reason, you don't need to constantly seek approval, just live the life you want to lead and you will find that your troubles will soon lessen. I am a firm believer in following your dreams.

I have had the childhood dream of being a world-famous musician, even a comedian, actor, model and public speaker. They all seem unreachable but I still chase those dreams and I will continue to do so until I die. Make your dreams as big as you can imagine, because why the hell not?

If you tell yourself it can't be done, then you have resigned to failure and are destined to seek out the negative aspects of what comes your way in life.

'Dare to dream'. 'Anything is possible'. 'Nothing is Impossible'. 'Impossible is nothing'.

There is a multitude of reasons why those slogans are so popular, the main one being they are all true.

The main contribution to my severe depression was rooted in the fact my band broke up at the same time as my only real relationship. I was left doubting that I would ever 'make it' and was resigned to working dead-end jobs forever for no reason. Realising that actually, a lifetime is a very long time and many successful people have gone through rejection, failure and mental health problems too made me realise that it all comes down to drive and ambition.

**If you want something, go and get it. But always remember, nothing worth doing or having is easy.**



If we want to take a more mainstream approach to look at how others have overcome battles to get rich in life, financially or otherwise. We can look at 'celebrities'. As much as modern time gives fame to the loudest and biggest seekers of attention, there are some rare gems of overcoming adversity.

Here's a small list of some stories that I find inspiring and which make my unreachable goals seem attainable.

**Thomas Edison**'s teachers told him he was "too stupid to learn anything." Edison went on to hold more than 1,000 patents and invented some world-changing devices, like the phonograph, practical electrical lamp, and the movie camera.

**Oprah Winfrey** was fired from her first television job as an anchor in Baltimore, where she said she faced sexism and harassment. But Winfrey rebounded and became the undisputed queen of television talk shows before amassing a media empire. Today she is worth an estimated \$2.9 billion, according to Forbes.

**Walt Disney** was fired by a newspaper editor because he "lacked imagination and had no good ideas." Several more of his businesses failed before the premiere of his movie "Snow White."

**Steven Spielberg** was twice rejected by the University of California School of Cinema Arts. He went on to create the first summer blockbuster with "Jaws" in 1975 and has won three Academy Awards.

**Colonel Harland David Sanders** was fired from dozens of jobs before founding a successful restaurant. He travelled across the U.S. looking for someone to sell his fried chicken, and after finally getting a business deal in Utah, Kentucky Fried Chicken was born.

**Sir Isaac Newton**'s mother pulled him out of school as a boy so that he could run the family farm. He failed miserably. Newton went on to become one of the greatest scientists of all time, revolutionizing physics and mathematics.

**Vera Wang** failed to make the U.S. Olympic figure-skating team. Then she became an editor at Vogue and was passed over for the editor-in-chief position. She began designing wedding gowns at age 40 and today is one of the premier designers in the fashion industry, with a business worth over \$1 billion.

**J.K. Rowling** was a single mom living off welfare when she began writing the first "Harry Potter" novel. Rowling is now internationally renowned for her seven-book Harry Potter series and, in U.S. currency, became the first billionaire author in 2004. The novel was rejected by 12 different publishing houses before Bloomsbury accepted it.

**Tom Hardy** was addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine during his mid-20s, after which he checked himself into rehab following a particular low point. He has said that he was "out of control" on drink and drugs before he turned his life around

Sometimes when I've felt utterly helpless, I've remembered these stories, closed my eyes and taken in a deep breath. Sometimes you have to remember how capable the bad side of your mind can be and the limits it can place on your aspirations.

I love Jim Carrey's story too, he used to use a visualisation technique which I have now started.

Check out his interview with Oprah about Visualisation - A great story and very inspirational.



Me thinking that I've fixed my life just because I cleaned my room



Before he was famous, he wrote himself a \$10 million check and visualised his success. He would go on to land a role for \$10 million around the date he had written on the check. Carrey spoke with Oprah Winfrey about manifesting his goal by writing himself a check for \$10 million, which he dated Thanksgiving 1995. At the time he wrote the check, he wasn't earning that level of income but he knew if he wrote the check to himself and took the steps to reach that goal, he could certainly achieve the success he dreamed about. He visualized earning the amount he wrote on the check and, incredibly he made \$10 million for Dumb and Dumber just before Thanksgiving 1995.

He says, "I would visualize having directors interested in me and people that I respected saying, 'I like your work', and I would visualise things coming to me that I wanted ... and I had nothing at that time, but it just made me feel better. At that time, all it was for me was kind of making me feel better. I would drive home and think 'Well, I do have these things; they're out there, I just don't have a hold of them yet, but they're out there.' Oprah pointed out how "visualisation works if you work hard" to which Jim agreed, saying, "Well, yeah. That's the thing, you can't just visualize and then, you know, go eat a sandwich."

So I hope those stories can inspire you as they have done with me. I may not be a success, yet. But with this book, I'm making an effort, to do.... something.

**Create the opportunity.**

Sometimes all it takes is the ability to look for it.

If at this current moment in time you are not sure what you want to do, **that's totally fine**.

There are millions of people just like you. It will come in time, just keep a positive outlook and you will find what you are looking for eventually or it will find you. Look forward and try new things, push yourself out of your comfort pit.

When it was coming to the end of school, so about 15/16 years old, some careers advisors would hound us into choosing serious careers and would give us handouts and make us take tests to figure out what we were going to be. I'm sure for some, this was beneficial, or even kinda funny. But to me it was awful.

I was told to join the military band (Bearing in mind I was a guitarist who loved to play heavy metal riffs), to work in IT or become a teacher (Pretty sure that was a default one on everyone's career printouts!)

I never felt my parents believed I could achieve my dreams (And still don't), we joked about me buying them both a house one day but they heavily insisted I pursue a real job so I could afford to live and as a 'fantasy career', be a session musician. I felt so insulted that there was no real push or encouragement and no doubt it played a part in my anxiety and lack of self-belief that even my parents didn't think I had it in me. A session musician is a stand-in that plays with already established musicians or bands, in the background. I wanted to be like my heroes in Metallica, Iron Maiden, Steve Vai or Joe Satriani, in the limelight and blowing minds, as they had done with me. (Never a singer, although here I am learning and trying to sing at 31).

I feel lucky to have this almost arrogance that I am better than everyone and I deserve to be famous, a Messiah complex almost. In the meantime, as we live in a reality where holding down a job is paramount for the most part, unless you're from a very privileged background.

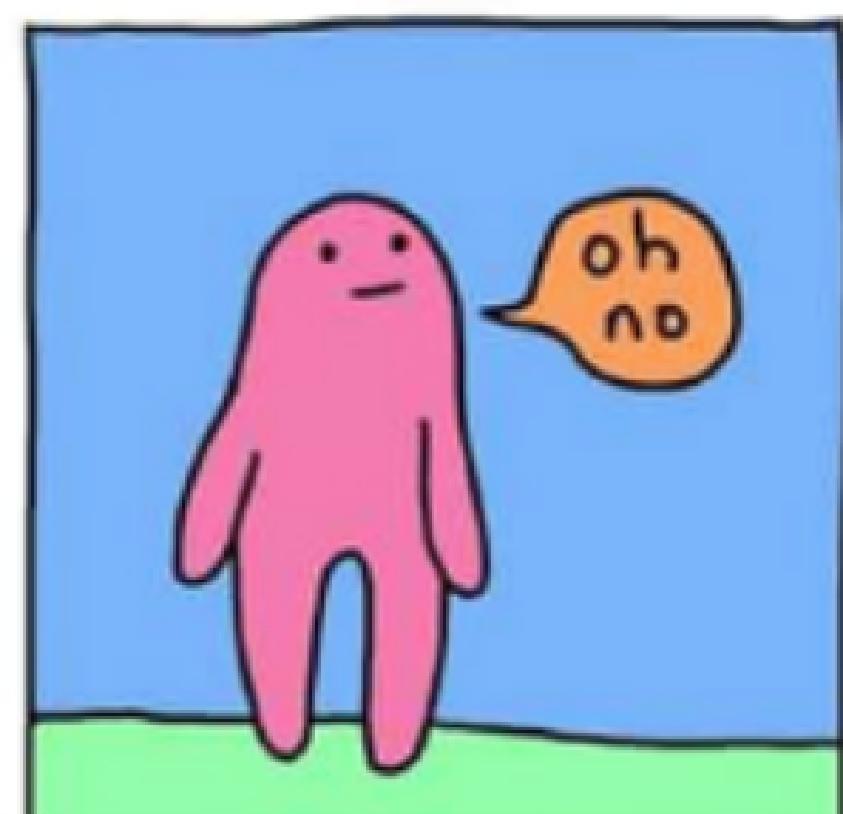
Try to be the best employee you can be, make every day special, look out for other people and help others in need. You don't have to believe in karma to understand that good things happen to good people, not necessarily straight away but you can be assured that over time it will work out that way.

#### Karma has no deadline.

If you spend your time complaining about your current situation or about minor things that happen in your work environment, then you will miss out on any positives that may occur. If you don't like your job, then ask yourself is it because it's not right for you or are you doing enough to make it as good as it could be? Obviously, some elements are out of your control, but you will find your day to day life will become a lot easier knowing that you have worked hard and are striving to make the world and yourself better each day.

There's nothing wrong with looking for another job whilst still employed too, there's not much point in working a job you are unhappy with because you're hurting yourself and will not be delivering the service to the company that pays you for it.

IMPOSSIBLE



webcomicname.com

## **the creative process:**

- 1. This is awesome!**
- 2. This is tricky.**
- 3. This is terrible.**
- 4. I am terrible.**
- 5. This might be ok.**
- 6. This is awesome!**
- 7. I am awesome!**

# **Being creative**



My saving grace has always been music, when life gets too much I can strum out some minor (sad) chords and sing some sad songs or create something uplifting and emphatic that makes me feel something. Being in and running a band for 6 years was very hard work with many member changes and setbacks, playing to 10 people each show (including the other bands). But it was the happiest I had ever been and I miss it more than anything in the world.

Being able to express your own thoughts, play your own music to people who appreciate it is almost like a drug! Pick up an instrument or a microphone, give it a go. What's the worst that could happen?

The release you get from putting your emotion on paper, as either lyrics, poetry or art, even just ranting about how annoying everything is can be beneficial.

I once wrote 5 A4 pages of why I thought my life was so bad and I've never read what I wrote back. I don't know the science but somehow I managed to instantly stop obsessing about the negatives once I'd written them down. Sometimes you need to just get it out of your system so you can focus on the real, calm you, underneath all those negative thoughts.

A good friend of mine who is big into spirituality and tarot cards says this is a practice of hers, that once you have written down your list of frustrations, you burn the paper and let go of the stress.

I like this a lot because I'd pretty much done this and it had worked massively, I just didn't burn the paper, I ended up losing it but I did feel hugely unburdened from all the negative thoughts swirling around in my head, getting them off my chest and onto paper was very therapeutic. As I have said in the beginning, I never set out to write this book, nor did I actually care about helping anyone. I just started writing, then kinda kept going and here we are. It's weird how life works sometimes, I uncovered what I believe is my future by starting to write down everything I hated about myself and the world. Still pretty funny to me every time I think about that.

### ***"But I'm not creative at all!"***

Well actually, you are!

You just don't realise in which way yet. We all have to find different ways of dealing with situations or thinking outside the box. Whether it's finding an alternative route home, dealing with an awkward conversation, creating an outfit out of your clothes or reorganising your desk. This is you using your creativity, without you even knowing. By telling yourself and others that you are not something, it drives that negative statement home in your subconscious and that's where you start to believe your own words. Which is problematic...

Again, like lots of this book, it's all about baby steps. Nothing comes to you all at once, like you think it does with others. They hide the painstaking, boring process and tell you about the good bits.

### ***Everything takes time.***

Most of the time, it's hard to get started, but you can get into a flow once you get your rhythm.

Being in flow boosts our mental state and even slows the heart rate down, making it particularly significant for people who suffer from depression or anxiety. The nature of being creative can help you to focus your mind and control your thoughts, like when you practice meditation. Mood creativity research shows that people are most creative when they are in a positive mood and those mental illnesses such as depression or schizophrenia actually decrease creativity.

So what to do? Fake smile or something and take a few steps forward.

Listen to old music you binged as a kid or mull over some ideas you've had over the years!

Try an adult colouring book, they are becoming more and more popular for 'stress coping' and actually kinda fun to do something you haven't done since you were a child, for most of you anyway!  
Try just doodling on paper, keep your pen on the page and see what you come up with

There will be a moment of pure frustration, where you think/shout "*This is shit! I'm shit at everything, f\*\*\*ing hell!*" or something along those lines.... (That's just my go-to line)

Please know this is what I personally, have been shouting every time I'd try to write a new chapter in this book, for example, a new song on guitar or even singing.

Learning to sing was something I never wanted to do, it never appealed to me... I thought.

Perhaps jealousy was in there, but now I can't stop. I even sing along to the music in my headphones while walking (and skating) through the streets!

The first time I actually tried to commit to a single bit of singing was in my mid-twenties doing some backing vocals on the band's last record, just ooh's and aahs but it was pretty rewarding.

Then when I actually tried singing songs, after the band break up and nobody wanted to be my singer, I learned just how difficult it was, and how terrible I was at it. I have videos of my first attempts at singing, maybe I'll release them one day because they are genuinely hilariously bad!

Some of those noises man... I feel so sorry for my housemate at the time and my neighbours. They must have been laughing, in fact, they definitely did. But now I'm getting paid to sing, because I battled through, learned from my mistakes, asked for help, researched better ways of doing it online and sang along to YouTube videos that were specifically aimed at helping newbies train their voice.

My voice isn't amazing now, but I'm proud of how far I've come and that I never gave up. It's been 5 years too, lets not forget that, don't assume it came naturally, because nothing does! I'm not saying you're going to get paid for your colouring-in skills, but it's the first baby step into uncovering your creative side that has been hidden from your own view for so long.

Trust me, you've got this.

*"Arts and creativity are an important part of the programmes we run at the Mental Health Foundation, art can be a different and fun way to express and talk about emotion"* Jolie Goodman, Programmes Manager for Empowerment and Later life.

Think of any artist, album or song that you have related to, that seems to be about your exact situation, which makes you feel like singing it at the top of your lungs! Or art that you get lost in, or at home.

They are reactions to a strangers creation. It may not seem like it, but the same is possible if you ever get round to finishing that first bit of work. Someone could find solace or inspiration in something you create in a five-minute burst, creations you could throw away could change someone else's whole perspective. So maybe meditate on the idea that **ACTUALLY**, people might enjoy your work.

Whatever it is.



Arts can create a feeling of community too, think of happy people are when a Banksy artwork appears, it lifts the whole city! Usually.

Also a great way of making new friends and finding a new community, sign up for a beginner art class and create something a 2-year-old would be disappointed in. But do it together!

Through getting involved in arts programmes, people in later life can rebuild their social connections and extend existing support in their communities. But why wait until then?

If you have kids, boom! An easy audience for your terrible creations! I'm talking about your future artwork, not your kids ;)

#### super-sootica

Pros and Cons of making things

Pro: *Thing*

Con: *Make*

#### alphagodith

you summed up the struggle of all creators ever so nicely

Source: super-sootica

# Finding yourself /purpose



The biggest change in my life happened in the winter of 2016/2017 where I decided to take my life and future into my own hands and start assessing what I could do to be 'happy'. Wrestling with severe depression, suicidal thoughts, relentless anxiety and insomnia was incredibly difficult but I knew that my journey was far from over. The biggest question I had to ask of myself was, "Am I doing enough?".

I found it to be the hardest question, mainly because nobody likes to be criticised. It's a natural reaction to pretty much dismiss any criticism, as it feels like an attack on you. I assessed myself as though I was assessing another. I took note of all the positives (Important to do first), in my life from decisions I had made, which made me feel great. Then with that confidence, analysed what decisions I had made that were having a negative effect on me.

Once it's in black and white on paper, it becomes plainly obvious that you are kidding yourself by wondering why nothing is going your way. Take pride in the fact you are comfortable enough to be able to find your flaws. It's also important to remember, to only criticise things that you can change by choice, so no physical things that you were born with for example. I started to read a lot and watch documentaries on inspirational people such as one of my current heroes, Wim Hof and others like Russell Brand and how they had overcome tragedy to find inner peace and make a difference in the world. Even the notorious, Conor McGregor is an inspiration to me as his drive is insane, he just kept insisting he was the best, worked relentlessly and achieved his dream.

Similarly, in the UFC the English fighter Darren Till has one of the best mentalities out there for becoming a champion. There are interviews where he explains very simply how he manifested his own belief and how his coach had instilled that winning mentality in him. I found it incredibly inspirational and even started learning Portuguese because of it. He left Liverpool behind at a young age to train in Brazil for 4 years without knowing the language or any support network and came back as a fluent speaking enigma who seems destined to be the champion!

There are lots of parallels to draw with fighting here, but you can draw your own.

Here, go on.



It comes down to getting the basics right, the points I have listed and gone into detail with are the main points of focus to help you achieve a solid-state of mind where clarity of your mind comes to fruition.

Stop caring what other people think, my favourite saying which helped me really understand that is;

**'Those who mind, don't matter and those who don't mind, matter.'**

Toxic people will always try to bring you down, down to their level of negativity and criticism.

Think of the classic Star Wars analogy. For real!

The Jedi's Force, using clarity of mind, channelling peace and harmony vs the evil destructive nature of The Sith's Dark Side, where anger, bitterness and fear reign supreme but ultimately leads to the demise of those who are consumed by it.

Let's not forget how easy it is to let go of everything you have worked for, to let out the anger and sabotage yourself, it's the shortcut to feeling like you are releasing your energy.

I'm not one of those crazed Star Wars fans, but I do feel like this is such a good analogy for looking at doing the hard work instead of whining and taking your aggression out on others.

Well, that's my take on it anyway.

Goodies vs Baddies/Love vs Hate/Taking Action vs Complaining

A great saying I've picked up and use all the time now is '***Hurt people, hurt people***'.

The quickest way to dump your stress and anger is to take it out on somebody else. You will see this in all of your relationships, friends, family and colleagues. Everyone does it, not on purpose but it happens all the damn time. When you learn this and decide to rise above, bite your tongue and take a breath then you suddenly understand the world a lot better.

Bad people are dealing with issues you don't even know about most of the time. You look at most aggressive men, with absent fathers, childhood traumas and how they have suppressed their emotions all their lives, lashing out at others. It's starting to make sense right?

A lot of my anger came from never being listened to and by seeing how my own father dealt with his issues, by insulting everyone around him either by aggressive shouting or by saying things he said were 'jokes' at the end, but were very clearly just how he felt, but was ashamed at his own thoughts, so tried to cover it with a, 'I was only joking, chill out!'.

Have you ever seen a miserable monk? I hope these monk memes *enlighten* your day!



I love to watch cringe videos on YouTube when chilling out and this video clip gets me every time!

Maybe because I have a history of telling jokes and getting a similar reaction...

I do try to watch videos of 'enlightened' speakers, but I do get easily bored and distracted. So I, like millions of others have turned to the podcasts of Joe Rogan and Jordan Peterson. Both painted with the brush of being right-wing, but politics has no place here. I like them because of their 'superhuman' ability to have a conversation without shouting and getting emotional in an attempt to gain attention or 'win' an argument. They have incredibly intelligent guests and ask questions that may seem incredibly obvious but they have the self-confidence to ask and the intelligence to shut up and listen when the answer comes. I think those qualities in a person are sadly far too rare, probably the reason these two men, in particular, have gathered such massive audiences over the many years of grafting. Props.

If there was no medicine, would people try harder? I can't stand people who expect pills to fix anything.

No need for a big section here, I think it's really obvious. **Happiness comes from hard work.**

Survival of the fittest in every form

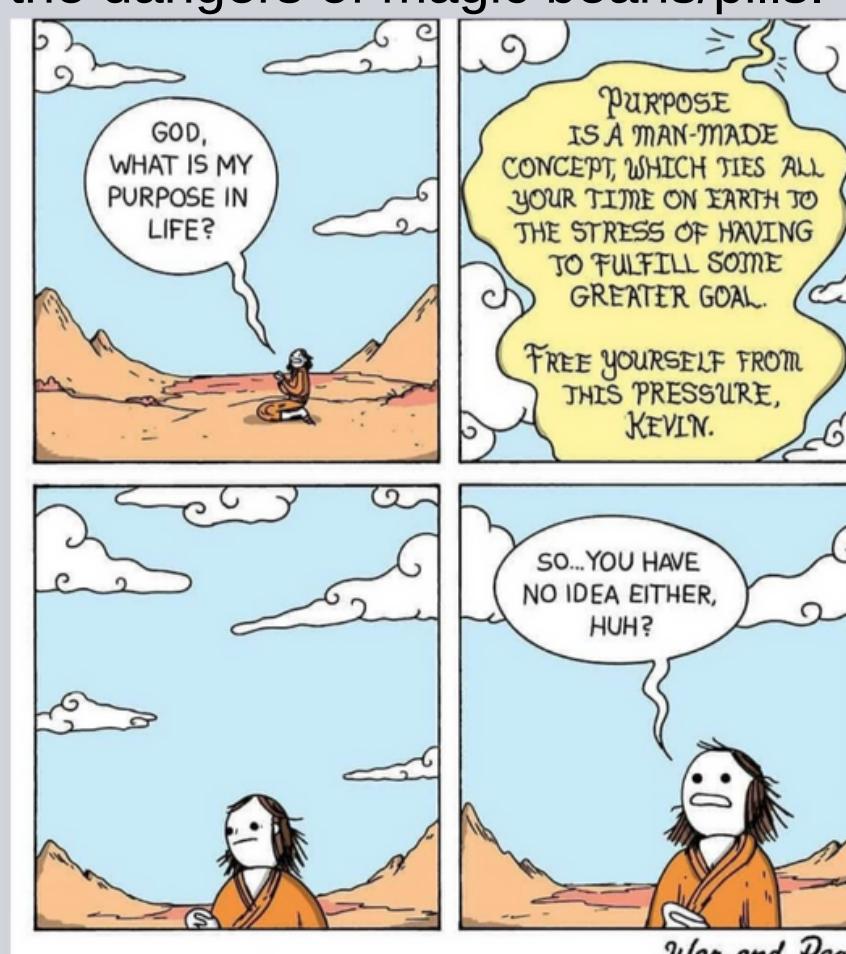
Read Jack and the Beanstalk if you want to learn about the dangers of magic beans/pills.

*Fi fo fi fum, make an effort or I'll kick your bum*



Hey, go tidy your room. Make your bed

If you haven't heard of any of Jordan Peterson's teaching, I would really recommend it. He may come across as angry or impatient at first until you understand his personality, so don't get put off straight away. The guy has a great way of making philosophies and psychology understandable for idiots like me! He claims making your bed is a way to start the day, to be disciplined, to look out for the future you and to see the benefits. That was a horrible job of explaining it, just go have a look. You may learn some really cool ideas that change your perspective and open new doors for you!



#### GET A DOG - Or a lesser calibre pet IDC

I'm lucky in the fact I get to see my family dog so much, Ozzy. He's a black Labrador who has been a major factor in my recovery for obvious reasons. A massive ball of non-stop energy is a lot to handle when you're committed to doing nothing with your day, but having to get out into the outdoors for an hour every day, to feed and take care of another, to go explore and be around trees and grass I would not be around otherwise.

To go walking in the rain for an hour, with the only purpose of making someone else happy. A selfless act. See where I'm going with this?

No? Well, I'm making a hash of showing you that you feel better when you do something nice for someone else, even when you don't want to. He relies on me feeding him and exercising him. Very basic needs but he rewards me with almost overbearing love and affection. When I wake up and he's sleeping next to me, there is a feeling of love and warmth that rises through me and some brain chemicals are getting released for sure. There are many scientific reasons for why dogs have been called man's best friend forever, it's actually really worth looking up.

Also, for a loner like me, it's really good to have company so I can tell all my problems to, that listens intently and tries to make me feel better. Dogs 100% sense vibes btw.



When you pet a dog, your brain releases oxytocin, opioids, adrenaline, and serotonin. So, all of these great reward chemicals and anti-stress chemicals can be released in both you and the pet. Every time you gaze lovingly into your dogs' eyes, their levels of oxytocin (the "attachment hormone") go up. And so do yours. Oxytocin has long been referred to as "the love hormone" and the "cuddle hormone," because we (and our pets) release it when we hug, touch, or look lovingly into someone's eyes

Now before you start skipping sections and making excuses why you can't have a pet for any reason, chill. With our brain training, we come up with new ideas. *Why not borrow your friend's pet?* I'm sure you'd be surprised how many people would let you walk their dog or come hang out with their cat or whatever. - Just ask!

ME: \*Stands up\*

My dog:



# Angry Young Men

While this section may seem like it probably won't apply to some of you, I would still recommend you give it a read to see if there are ways you could help someone you know. For you angry birds out there, stop letting people play you and you can catapult into the right future... I needed to get that joke out of my system, sorry. Gender doesn't matter here, biology causes certain traits, but it doesn't mean that you fall into stereotypes just because of how others perceive you or how you present yourself. You have a choice to question where your life is going, what you can do to help get where you need to be and how you interact with other people to get what you want.

One of the hardest lessons I've had to learn is to force myself to change the way I talk and listen to people, to learn how to read body language, voice tone and volume and correct my own, as well as posture etc.

Anyone else have a bad back in their early 20's? Never really doing anything about it either? Other than just complaining to anyone who would listen or using it as an excuse to get out of something?

The most important factor in this process is learning how to **bite your tongue** and not immediately make that joke or say that insult just because it sounds good or cool. It really is that simple sometimes. We can all be instinctively nasty without meaning it and once the words come out of your mouth, there's no going back.

That comes with taking offence, probably the most popular topic for comedians in the last decade is to talk about outrage and cancel culture. We are swarmed with social media comments, posts from friends looking for attention and media companies desperate for your attention which they can turn into money. They all rely on you reacting to whatever is in front of you, to join in with the cool gang, even if they are making somebody's life miserable.

I would really recommend reading up on 'The Milgram Shock Experiment', or watching Derren Brown's video on it. Very scary how easily normal people are coerced and manipulated to this day. You'll learn a lot from it.

It is absolutely a test of your own morality, something you may have never even questioned before or been aware that it's a thing people do and is expected of you.

Essentially, do you think you are a good person? No, really.

Now most of us would say 'Yes, but'. Not only is that how a Welshman confirms something in response to a question, but it is a common trait to want to improve our own life and change aspects of it.

I would strongly suggest if anyone can relate to the title or just seemingly being frustrated often because of the actions of others and even though it may have happened a while ago, you still get annoyed when it comes up and often seem to end up in arguments because others refuse to listen or understand.

*Mate, I know that one*

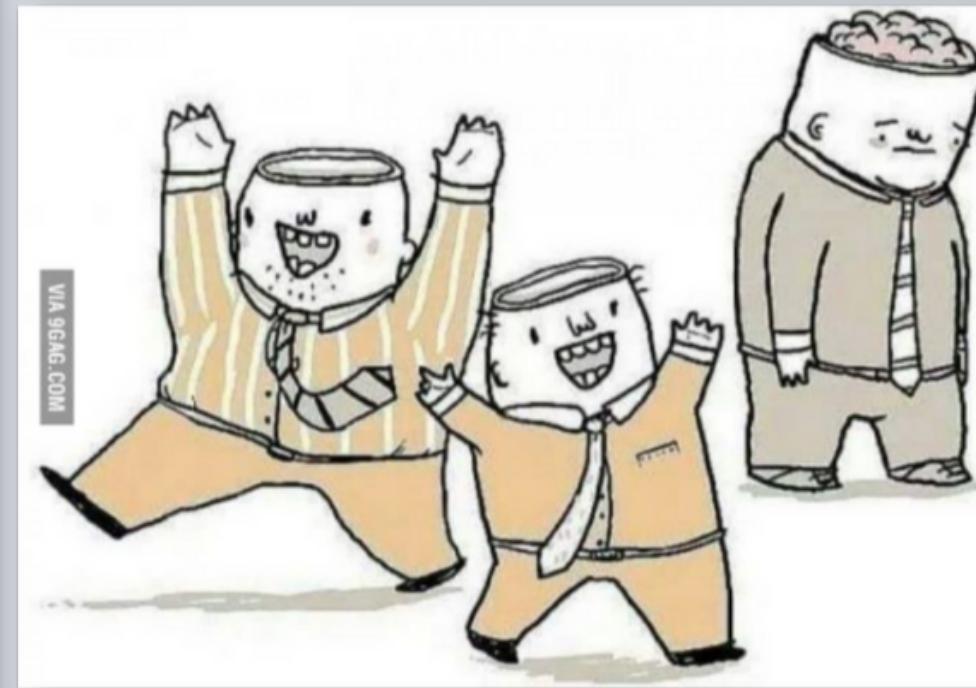
I'm not an expert in this field but Jordan Peterson is, as disliked as he is by people who consistently bite on clickbait, is a very clever man who has the qualifications and long drawn out teachings to back up his ideas. As I mentioned, this book was intended as a list of stuff that works for me and is now a highlight reel of the most effective strategies. JP is capable of anecdotes my monkey brain can understand and put into use in my own life, noticing results pretty quickly most of the time. He speaks with authority and can probably be a little off-putting at first but it struck a chord with me, probably due to my personal issues with my own father not being a role model for me, so finally having someone speak to me in that tone about things that I can do to help myself resonated with me and I felt love rather than fear or hatred toward him, leading me to try the ideas out relatively quickly. I would really recommend chucking on his podcast episodes on while you work out, cook, take the dog for a walk or even just sit there and take it if you're brave enough. His words on tidying your room are so annoyingly simple but very effective. Even if you don't like him, please give it a go. *Find the truth.*



# Honesty/Openness

*"It is a disgrace to grow old through sheer carelessness before seeing what manner of man you may become by developing your bodily strength and beauty to their highest limit"*

- Socrates



Me when I think about how much I've overshared in a conversation



For this penultimate section, I will share with you the major turning point in how I developed my personality and I discovered how letting out my inner weirdo was paramount to my own happiness and contentment. Mental health issues and paranoia put me in the mindset where I believed that everyone thought that I was weird and not 'one of them'. It used to make me feel so low, I was desperate to become like all my friends and would stop doing what I liked to fit in more... until I decided to embrace my uniqueness.

By that I mean, I decided that if everyone already thought that about me, why didn't I just accept that I was a bit different and make that into something I was proud of? (Who really wants to be like everybody else anyway?). Another classic catchphrase that I constantly now repeat is that "You could get run over by a bus tomorrow". It always puts everything in perspective; enjoy the life you have because it could end at any time. Be the person you wish you could be, there's nobody else in the world like you so let's see what you've got!

I am not an alpha male by the popular definition but I am decisive and direct and look after those I care about but I don't sacrifice anything for my ego. I believe many people have misidentified what an alpha male is and it manifested into meaning a loud and brash person whom people fear (Or actively avoid, because they are a pain in the arse!).

They need to prove themselves as true men by overcompensating in every aspect, leaving what I can only describe as a 'Dickhead Mentality'. I tend to speak in short and sweet doses, avoiding long-winded anecdotes and listening for the most part. (I swear I'm not just pining to be called an alpha, that's not the point here!) I've always been a quiet person. If I have nothing to say on the matter, I won't speak up just to have an opinion for the sake of it. Also, I found that people who often talk about themselves at great length are generally worse people to have around in my opinion... (Yes I'm aware of the irony of using myself as an example)

## **'An empty vessel makes the most noise'**

Look at your social media timeline and see if you can understand this more. (Centre pic above)

When I was going through really dark times and I had nobody to talk to, it was the most infuriating and sad feeling ever. I craved for somebody to ask me how I was, that really meant it but it never came.

So I constructed the idea in my head that it never would happen, but what was I going to do with that information? I find this feeling reminds me of a time when I was a kid I think most of us went through, where I was upset in bed, pulled the covers over my head and would hope for someone to come in and make me feel better, but when my mother would come in I would say I'm fine or shout at her.

She would leave and I would be instantly filled with such regret because I wanted her to just hug me. I feel like this still, in my adult life, but I'm learning now to be more open, because we are not surrounded by mind readers, as much as we'd like that.

I just started telling people in a very casual way about how I had been suicidal the night before or was just feeling numb etc. Without anyone actually asking me directly.

**I decided to take charge**, which as an anxiety sufferer was alien to me.

When people would ask me to do stuff or why I bailed on a plan I'd say I was having a 'depression day' and be as totally honest as I could just for my own sake of mind. Also, I've never been a good liar so I've never bothered, and making excuses filled me with such mental and physical pain I could no longer go on pretending everything was fine. Does anyone else have intense fear at even attempting a white lie? Crazy.

Don't assume you're just dumping all your problems on your friend, most people are happy to help and hear what you have to say. Think of how many people talk about their issues to you, how much time you've spent listening to them, it's just your turn now.

It was when I started doing this I realized by the reactions I got back, that **nobody knows how to react to this kind of thing**, I got a lot of wide eyes, stuttering bosses and swift conversation changes. **I was in charge**.

I scared people by talking about something real, that I wasn't 'fine' or as 'happy as Larry' (Who is Larry?!). It might be considered a 'Dick move' to deliberately try and freak people out with these conversations, but it was helping me get that weight off my chest and that was far more important to me. I started to realise that nobody is trained to deal with these awkward conversations so whoever has the real conversation has the power. I did it more often and learned that by talking as openly as possible about my mental state, I was relieving the pressure and starting to heal. Also, it enabled others to say, "You know what? I have been feeling the same", or "I have a friend/family member who talks like that". If you can muster the courage to just start rambling about your mental state, it will help you and could just help somebody else, which feels even better, Bonus!

I fully believe that honesty is the only policy and lying/withholding information about anything will make a situation worse. If it is the case that you are suicidal or have even taken action or tried self-harm, it is paramount that you tell somebody. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**.

As much as I dislike people mindlessly repeating that phrase over social media and then proceeding to get into an argument and start hating on someone. Obviously, doctors, The Samaritans and so on are all fantastic at helping with these problems.

The thought of telling a doctor can be daunting and it will be naturally hard to tell the truth which can you look crazy, but they have heard it many times before and can almost certainly help you in some way. If this is a stressful scenario for you, use the internet to your advantage.

Many Facebook pages pop up with keywords like 'suicide, anxiety, depression' that are communities or fellow sufferers that are banding together to share advice and their own stories, where you can receive support from someone you might never physically meet who could save your life, or even vice versa. I'm a member of many.

Create a fake profile to spill your guts if you are too scared or paranoid that it could negatively affect you, just please reach out in some way. So, the weirder I got, the better I felt. This was my world and I can be whomever I want to be. Nobody really cares that much about me, so I can be that person I dreamed I could be. I started smiling more, I started making more jokes, joining in banter, expressing opinions in conversations I wouldn't have dreamed of, I started pulling faces at people on the bus when it would drive by and I still do. I've actually now gotten so comfortable with myself and almost trying to be weird, that when I go skating through town, I'll sing along with the music in my headphones and have a little dance on the board while speeding along! (Ok that might be a bit too much for some, but man does I feel good for just being weird and spontaneous).

I then started to realise that by helping others through their problems, I gained more knowledge in this field and saw my life wasn't so bad. I chose to start eating healthier, reading more, learning, cutting out toxic things and toxic people from my life and dreaming even bigger.

Everything I always thought was a pipe dream was now a feasible reality, I just had to work for it. Impossible is nothing, go and make this your world.

Be the change you wish others would see you as.

Don't emulate your heroes. Be better than them.

Believe in yourself because sometimes, nobody else will.

Be honest.

Love each other and yourselves.

# Final Save Point

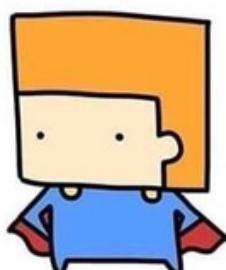
It's ok to make fun of yourself, just not all the time



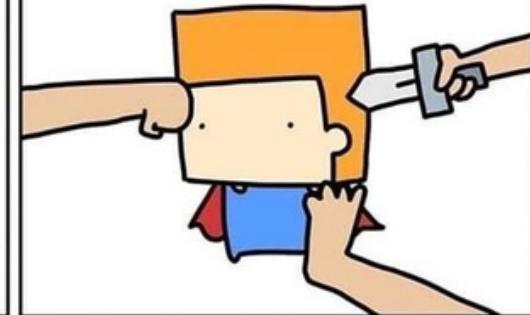
jaboukie young-white  
@jaboukie

me to my anxiety: people are focused on themselves. they're not thinking about you  
depression: ever  
me: that's not what i meant

THIS IS BEN,  
THE UNFAZED MAN



HE CAN BE KICKED,  
PUNCHED, STABBED...



...AND FEELS NOTHING.



WHAT IS HIS SUPERPOWER?



f @ THE SQUARE COMICS

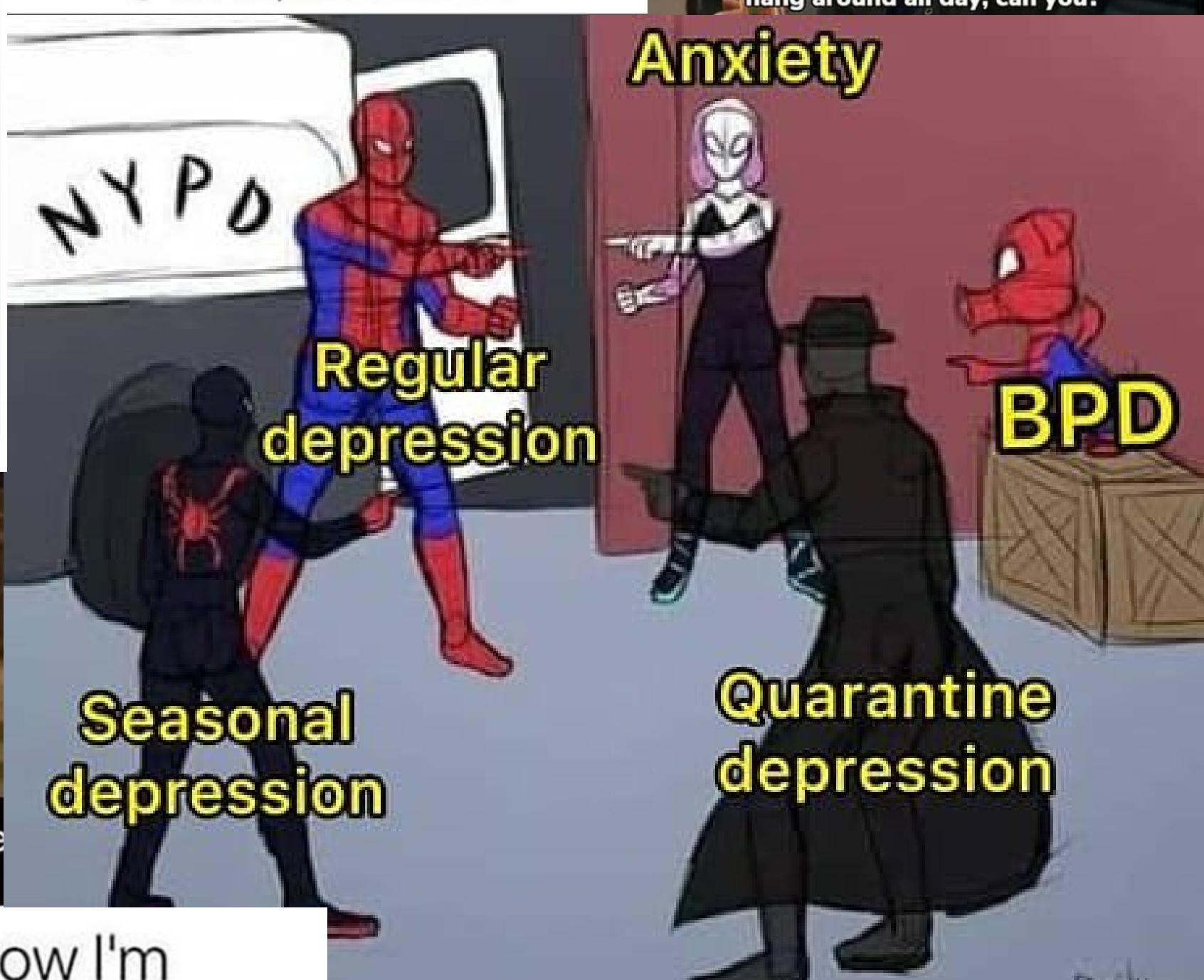
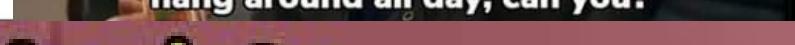


Today is one of those days where I feel like  
PS1 Hagrid



What's going on?

- It's annoying or not interesting
- I'm in this photo and I don't like it



When somebody asks me how I'm doing, but I also don't want them to feel sorry for me



# Warning Signs

So over time I have learned to pick up on warning signs I see in my staff at work when it comes to their body language, little things they say when they are stressed and habits they fall into. It's a lot easier for me to notice it in my staff than friends and family as we work in a fast-paced, difficult and physically demanding job, which often does have very stressful moments as well as the occasional bad customer who will try to ruin a staff member's day by lashing out. I also think it's easy for sad people to spot sad people.

When you get caught up in the moment, you drop your guard and your most natural responses come to the surface a lot more easily. So I'll list a few signs that are visible that you can pick up on, but don't immediately call out the person for having this or that, this is an opportunity for you to think about past behaviours they have had and see if they might be suffering and maybe have been for a while.

Obviously, some people can go from happy and bubbly for many years and then turn into a shell of their former selves like you see in the movies, but a lot of the time it's way more complex and people have developed, subconsciously or not, way of hiding their true emotions or can distract themselves with work and enjoy their time until it's time to go home, where they may sink into a bad space.

The sad fact is, you may never really know someone as well as you would like.

*But that's ok.*

I myself can spend two days in bed not eating or sleeping, suicidal and crying, only to go to work as the manager on duty and deliver a really upbeat shift and cracking jokes with a smile on my face for 12-15 hours. You get better at diving into the current situation and pushing the sad reality aside to just focus on your work.

So physical signs you can look out for...

**1. Track marks** (*Scars or self-inflicted open wounds, ie razor blade marks on forearm*).

Now I detest the notion of people doing this for attention-seeking, that's so ignorant it makes me nauseous. I hear people in management positions say it all the time and it's potentially damaging to have those views and not act when you see them.

I've had staff come in with blood seeping through shirts, which makes it far easier for me to sit them down and open up that dialogue immediately. There is an obvious danger here that needs addressing immediately If you aren't comfortable, find someone that is and get in touch with the right people, whether it's a hospital or mental health worker like Samaritans on the phone.

**Do not disregard it.** If you hear people commenting negatively, you must talk to them privately too.

These opinions need changing if people are willing to hurt themselves and put their lives in danger just to feel something, or even if it is a cry for help. Then go and help them, customers can wait a few minutes or service can run a little slower. Potentially saving someone's life outweighs everything else by a country mile and they will never forget it. If you see scars that have healed, often still being covered by long sleeve shirts, trousers or long skirts (Remember it's not just arms people cut, it's legs, hips and anywhere really), you can still use intelligence and compassion to open that conversation up

I like doing it in a roundabout way, it seems to work pretty much every time.

I find a moment where it's natural to slip in that one of my friends has been self-harming or has done in the past. Sadly, I don't have to make that up and I do know lots of people who have done it and a few that relapse into fresh cuts to this day. For example, then someone asks how I am, which is one of the most common things to ask. I'll be honest and say that I'm worried about my friend for this reason, that I'm reaching out to help and so on. I don't have to lie because I am in constant conversation with these friends, but maybe you could say that you read an article if you have no experience to speak of. I mean this book is a perfect conversation starter. But I would mention it casually, leave it pretty open and see if they would take 'the bait' as it were.

Literally, every time I have opened up the discussion that way, the person I'm speaking to will openly talk about the fact they used to self-harm. Again, like this book repeats, **don't take it so seriously**. You can joke about it, say it looks like a cool tattoo or something, there are limitations obviously, but being able to talk openly about it will relieve so much pressure you wouldn't believe.

If you are scared, then it's probably not the ideal route, but you can still find a way to show you care!

The more you learn about mental health, the better position you are in to be involved in that conversation and create an impact and a memorable, meaningful moment in that person's life.

I often talk about my own struggles, in a lighthearted and matter of fact way. When they see how open you are, there is no awkwardness in them letting go of their secret.

Bring up some celebrity stories if you like, make it relatable!

**2. Appetite or weight changes.** Significant weight loss or weight gain, maybe you notice a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month or less. They may bring this up in conversation too as another reason they are feeling bad

**3 Loss of energy.** Feeling fatigued, sluggish, and physically drained. They may say that their whole body feels heavy, and even small tasks are exhausting or take longer to complete.

**4. Unexplained aches and pains.** An increase in physical complaints such as headaches, back pain, aching muscles, and stomach pain.

**5. Reckless behaviour.** Maybe they engage in escapist behaviour such as substance abuse, compulsive gambling, reckless driving or just seem to care less about hurting themselves. A lot of this may go on outside work or your time hanging out but if you are aware, then maybe see if the dots connect. The more you take time to converse and listen to whomever you think may be struggling, you may hear them talk of the more subtle signs that are hard to pick up.

**6. Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.** A bleak outlook—nothing will ever get better and there's nothing you can do to improve your situation. Lots of people do talk this way as a way of relieving stress and trying to be funny, but it is also a big warning sign when they are constantly being self-deprecating, putting themselves down and making themselves the butt of a joke.

It may come under the bracket of self-loathing. Strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt. Harshly criticizing themselves for perceived faults and mistakes.

**7. Loss of interest in daily activities.** They don't care anymore about former hobbies, pastimes, social activities, or even sex. It will seem like they have lost their ability to feel any joy or pleasure.

**8. Sleep changes.** Either insomnia, especially waking in the early hours of the morning or oversleeping. Do they bail on plans because they are having another duvet day, did they miss that early meeting or late to work every day this week? I've had a terrible sleeping pattern all my life and it has such a big impact on my mood and I have cancelled so many plans just to stay in bed, chasing that illustrious perfect rest.

**9. Anger or irritability.** Feeling agitated, restless, or even violent. the tolerance level will be low, with a short temper and everything and everyone gets on their nerves.

**10. Concentration problems.** Trouble focusing, making decisions or remembering things.

Norepinephrine has been shown to play a role in a person's mood and ability to concentrate. Low levels of norepinephrine may lead to conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, and hypotension (very low blood pressure) - Really worth having a glance at the science of this chemical. Especially for those with ADHD!

Now obviously I've worded those 10 examples as being noticeable in other people, but please have the strength to check them against your own current situation too. I didn't know I was severely depressed until I went to the doctor thinking I just had anxiety. It took me until I was 25 to see a random anxiety checklist on someone's Facebook wall, that I ticked every box for. I went in to 'announce'?! That I had anxiety and to try to get some pills, so after a while of stuttering through what was going on in my head, with huge embarrassment, sweaty palms and struggling to remember how to breathe like a normal human, they gave me a depression test at the same time and that's when I realised I wasn't just having a rough few weeks, I was really suffering and that wasn't how everyone else was feeling all the time too.

It took another 5 years later for me to see a documentary about a band (Lamb Of God), where they described their guitarist's strengths and weaknesses, mentioning a lot of it was to do with his ADHD for me to have that "OHHHH MYYYY GOOOODDDDD" moments, where I realised that they were describing my life on camera and that I had been living with ADHD for 30 years without a diagnosis.

I'm not negatively saying this, this has been the best news ever and I have never been happier now that I know why I struggle so much in many areas.

My point being, that nobody saw the warning signs in me, despite them being what I see now as really bloody obvious!

I literally cannot imagine how easy my life would have been if somebody who knew all this information, took me to one side and asked me about these things. I would not have had to suffer such extreme pain and sadness for so long, alone.

So please, this may seem like a lot of work to ask for you to do for 'no reward', but the more you learn, you might just be the right person to save someone's life. And that is worth living for.

When someone tries to hurt your feelings but you're dead inside and haven't been able to feel for years



myriadsubtletiess

The worst part about having mental health issues is that you're seemingly required to have a breakdown in order for people to understand how hard you were trying to hold yourself together.



LANDO  
@LandoSoReal

Heal before having children so your children don't have to heal from having you as a parent

9:36 PM · 4/25/20 · Twitter for iPhone

19.5K Retweets 49K Likes



R. Demille @RoaDemille · 16h

Replies to @LandoSoReal and @\_trillerina

...and for glory's sake, don't have a baby to heal your marriage or relationship. Kids shouldn't have a job before they're born.



1/5

nytra-fallen-angel:

boys-and-suicide:

| Who can relate with this?  
everyone

# How to help others

Step 1 - Shut Up  
Step 2 - Stay Shut Up

This section is for those of you who have friends/family/colleagues who are suffering and you don't know the right way to help, I'll outline the most important steps you can take, but please remember that there is no easy quick-fix solution and there are no guarantees. But so long as you are actively trying then you are doing the right thing.

**LISTENING.** I cannot emphasize that enough. Ok, I could make the font bigger, but you get the idea...

But it's not as easy as you might immediately think. Your friend in need will probably not know how to initiate talking about their feelings, as is often the case, they will probably even reject the idea of talking about anything, denying there is an issue etc.

You must not push them to spill their guts as this can make them bottle things up even more and even assert those negative emotions onto their opinion of you. This is often what I did when people would ask me what my problem was and made me want to speak even less and just leave the situation.

Every person is different, their problems even more so. So long as that person knows you are readily available to listen to them talk then that's a massive weight lifted. There is a balance you must find where you do remind them that they can rant (This word I like, everyone likes a good rant because they are often uninterrupted) to you whenever, even by text message (A preference to some), but to not be overbearing and constantly try to pull it out of them.

So your friend is now ready to talk, amazing! This is a moment they will have likely recited in the shower 1000 times already (Talking from experience), so make sure that YOU are ready. Pay attention to how you look from their point of view. Is your body language open or do you look like you are rejecting their opinions, are you listening intently? Standing face to face and discussing something is not the best ideal, as it feels confrontational subconsciously. When you are side by side, you are looking in the same direction together rather than being in the way. These minor things will make a difference and you can bet they won't go unnoticed. If you are tempted to jump in with a remark or opinion, I have one piece of advice... DON'T!

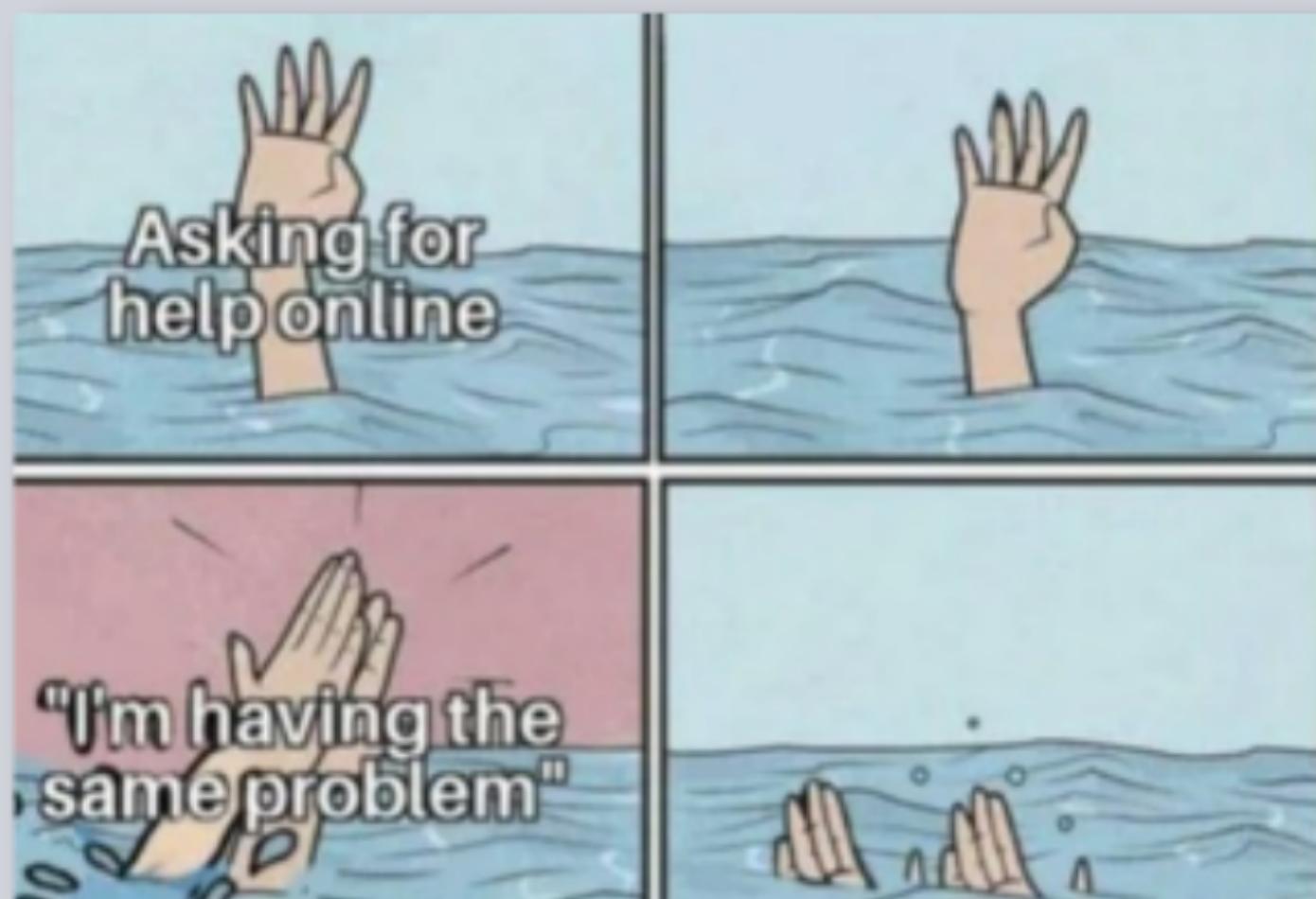
Your opinion can wait until the end if you really must put it across, but be wary because you could ruin everything just by justifying someone else's behaviour or whatever it is you have to get off your chest.

**THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU - SHUT UP AND LISTEN.**

Make a mental note if you can, or even write it down if you have a notebook with you. I would avoid writing it on your phone as this will look like you've tuned out of the conversation and they might get angry or disheartened, ending the conversation. Try to just listen and remember you are doing this as a selfless act. It gets easier over time and the more people you listen to, you learn from their reactions.

Don't forget, *you are not expected to do this*. If you aren't confident that this will help, you can ask for guidance from a professional or try and get your friend to open up to one.

I have found though, **making the effort** will go a long way and forge a bond between you.



## Banter - Knowing when it's ok to take the piss (Hint: It's not constantly)

This is a divisive subject when it comes to talking about what can be such dark conversations, but it can also release tension if done in the right way. The most important sentence or statements to avoid are anything that sounds like, "Cheer up, you'll be fine".

Trust me on this.

I have stopped talking to people who have had that blase approach to listening to my issues. It shows you have no idea or care what the issues your friend/family member/colleague is going through feel like, or you would definitely not say that. Banter is great for tearing down the fragile walls of awkwardness but it is important to be wary of using it with people who can take things to heart like myself.

## Avoid criticising anything about a person that cannot be changed.

Small comments that may seem innocuous at the time can manifest into self-hatred or stigmas. I still hate the way I look when I sing because my mother told me my mouth looks funny or I don't open it enough when I was singing for her the first time. Literally, that's all she said, not well done that was great, just made fun of the way I looked while being vulnerable in front of her. She meant well, but I can't stop thinking about it every time I see myself in the mirror now or watch videos of my performances. So just be careful and **THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK.**



A cool sentence I like is that your first response is what society trains you to say, your second is how you really feel. Once said person has relieved themselves of their burden, there might be a little awkward silence. That's ok. You don't feel the need to fill it with remarks or opinions, try this instead.

Ask them open questions, the bigger the better I find helps. "Ok, so what's the next step for you now? What can I/we do to help? Once this is resolved, where do you want to be?"

This is important as it will be something they might not be prepared for, as a lot of people look to blame others and situations for the way they feel. Whilst both being valid excuses, there is often a lack of direction afterwards as the dark cloud can consume all thought.

By asking the big open questions after the long 'rant', the person is allowed the freedom to try and piece together their future. Which, is a whole new headache but fun to manipulate your thoughts into understanding the complexities of space and existence.

I wholeheartedly believe that once you have your head above the clouds of your depression, you can see clearly, see new goals and have something to work towards in life.

Giving you purpose, which eases your mental troubles. *Mental health mat-hers*

Quite happy with that pun, so it stays in!

The 42 Biggest Questions About Life, the Universe, and Everything

- What Are the Ultimate Limits of Chemistry, Applied Physics, and Technology? ...
- What is Life? ...
- How Did Life on Earth Begin? ...
- How Abundant is Life in the Universe? ...
- How Does Life Solve Problems of Seemingly Impossible Complexity? ...
- Can We Understand and Cure the Diseases That Afflict Life? ...
- What is Consciousness?

Something a lot of people rarely do, which can lead to mental health problems and a vicious cycle. I'll leave it at that as there are no certainties when talking about this kind of thing and too many variables to tell you outright what you have to say, but so long as you are listening without interrupting, your body language is good and when the time is right, you ask big open questions about the future then everyone will be in a better place.

Also, hugs are scientifically proven to boost dopamine and serotonin levels, so try and get one in. A real one with squeezing, not one of those light hugs, where you're tapping each other's backs.

My advice to anyone who is in a position of power such as a supervisor/manager would be to make these talks a regular occurrence in small doses whenever possible, just to check in with your staff. The staff will feel cared for and that they can tell you if something is bothering them. This means they will be able to work better and most likely will work harder for you. It's an element of trust, by all means, talk about your own issues too, you're not an alien. The more open you can be then the better it will be for your relationships.

Too many managers try to create distance and a feeling of superiority over their staff, it might seem like a good business move and feeds their ego. But if you have unhappy staff, your business will suffer.  
Lead by example. (My experience has shown me that people who have bad managers in the past that make them feel small, want to do the same to lesser staff as they feel it's fair. Playground mentality)

Also, I've found that little energizer activities work wonders pre-shift if you can squeeze them in, get that blood pumping and sense of camaraderie up! I personally swear a bit when I talk to someone about their problems, not in an aggressive way but to alleviate any tension and not to sound like those nicey-nicey therapists you see, with soothing tones. I personally do not like to be talked to like that as it's impersonal and feels false. A swift swear word can cut through and improve the mood if done right, the same with jokes.

Jokes are a dangerous one though because there is a temptation to joke about the victim's problems to cut through the tension, but it could go so disastrously wrong and cause offence and inner turmoil, it's best not to unless you are very very close to that person and they trust you.

Maybe ease into it by showing them some memes.  
Not even joking.  
Get with the time's, Grandma.

I have included some of my favourites throughout the book for that exact reason. So you can relate, also pictures worth 1000 words innit.

But yeah, if you just approach someone with a meme, it rarely goes wrong. If you're a bit more friendly, tag them in some or send some to their account online.

Don't worry if you send 'normie' memes, I'm sure they would really appreciate the fact you took time out of your day to make them feel a bit better. I would.



disneylandguru:

Quote from a retired Disney princess, who was one of the first Snow Whites.



Over-explaining can be a trauma response to having your truth ignored or being gaslit in childhood. After years of being silenced you are trying your hardest to be heard.

# Shortcuts

## Medications to use alongside hard work, not instead of

**Turmeric latte with cracked black pepper** - Turmeric and black pepper each have health benefits, due to the compounds curcumin and piperine. As piperine enhances curcumin absorption in the body by up to 2,000%, combining the spices magnifies their effects. They may reduce inflammation and improve digestion, particularly in supplement form. - I usually have one just before bed to get me proper sleepy.

**Matcha lattes** - A healthy alternative to coffee and has so many benefits for your body: it works as a boost for memory and concentration, enhances calm, contains lots of antioxidants, and detoxifies the body, among others. Besides, you can customize it with your favourite ingredient. Add a bit of honey and try to not smile!

**Cannabis (CBD)** - Again, not a doctor. But this has been the go-to drug to ease mental problems forever, for a reason. Not so much the psychoactive THC which makes you stoned, but Cannabidiol (CBD) is an active ingredient in cannabis-derived from the hemp plant. CBD is booming in recent times and will only become more effective and readily available over time. The research is everywhere, really worth looking into it, beyond the stigma of scary drugs

**Peppercorn** - Chewing peppercorns can help with feelings of paranoia. Maybe after too much THC

**Chewing gum** - Can improve memory, fight drowsiness, reduce heartburn, lessen depression and eliminate nausea. Really helps me concentrate, I've gone through many packs writing this book!

**Fish oil** - Omega-3s have been studied in various mood disorders, such as postpartum depression, with some promising results. In bipolar disorder (manic depression), omega-3s may be most effective for the depressed phase rather than the manic phase of the illness.

**Vitamin D** - Especially helpful in the battle against Covid19 and Vitamin D is crucial not only for bone health but for proper brain development and functioning. Low levels of vitamin D are associated with depression, seasonal affective disorder, and schizophrenia in adults, but little is known about vitamin D and mental health in the pediatric population

**Pillow fort** - Not so much science-based, more like vibe based. You don't have to be a certain age or only do it for views online, do it because it's fun and your own chillout space. Maybe get an oil burner/diffuser or incense and set the mood, dim the lights. Whatever feels the cosiest and it's your space to chill.

**Look your best for no reason** - Spend a bit of extra time preening yourself, just for you! Chuck on a bit of makeup if you wear it, put on your comfiest or coolest threads and just be happy being you :)

## Further Research

**[www.HighExistence.com](http://www.HighExistence.com)** - My friend Jon has been helping create some of the most interesting and relatable content about literally everything. They are some of the most intelligent people, growing their community online and with retreats abroad with courses designed to reach new places inside. Can't praise them enough for what I've learned just from their site and podcasts. Plus Jon's a great artist and I've used his meditation picture in this book. Definitely worth checking out the site and putting the podcast when walking or cooking etc.

Jordan Peterson, Joe Rogan and Russell brand. 3 Straight white men telling us how to live our lives!?!?!

For real though, these guys have taught me so much about the power of questioning within and really pushed the conversation of philosophy and psychology into the mainstream.

**Don't judge them from what others say, it's important to make your own mind up.**

The internet in general - we all have phones in our pocket that can look up anything in a matter of seconds, any random thought we can get an answer. Any time you feel useless and that you don't know what you're doing, search for the answer. *Sometimes it's a lot more simple than you would think.*

# Closing Thoughts

Well, this has been fun, hasn't it?

Sometimes it was, a lot of times I've broken down crying at the keyboard, helpless and wondering why I was trying so hard to write this. It's not like anyone is even going to see it, let alone read it, let alone actually try out the exercises or ideas.

Well, I feel like I have to. I'm still not quite finished, *but I see the finishing line.*

It's a weird feeling putting so much experience from the last 5 years into a book that I've been writing, editing and rewriting for 3 years. Maybe if I was looking to make money from it, it would feel different.

But I think the most valuable piece of advice I can offer is the fact I have done written this at all.

On the surface, it could look like a waste of time to spend so much time and energy on something that is a giveaway and not even well-executed. But that is the point, you see?

When I started this journey, I was lost. Beyond saving and waiting to find the courage to kill myself.

Everything I had ever strived for in life seemed so close and I lost it all and so much more, all at once.

I lost the only love I've ever known, my friends and any self-confidence I had scraped together.

Gone.

I was so caught up in misery, I pushed everyone away and cut all ties, without even realising.

I was the wrong kind of selfish. Pity only gets you so far, then shame takes over for not taking action.

My point is that as hopeless as I was, I still felt the need to get all this off my chest. It took a few weeks of thinking, playing around with the idea of finally writing a diary or something. Then one sober day after leaving another job after 4 days, I sat down and let my fingers do the rest.

The memory is hazy, but I remember writing at least 1 A4 page in one go. It just flowed.

Why?

**Because I was enjoying it.** I was feeling the toxic thoughts leave my body and having 'other' thoughts, that were optimistic about the future and what I could do. That maybe writing was an option for me. That maybe I could turn these ideas into songs, videos, talk, anything.

My brain just levelled up, in the moment.

By trying something that I found difficult, I gained confidence. By realising I enjoyed it I opened up a whole world of possibilities just because I had the confidence to think them possible. And once you start thinking broadly about all things that are possible, life seems to be a lot shorter because you want to cram more into it! And so, I briefly forgot about how miserable my life was and my suicide fantasies were replaced with images of me on stage, with a crowd, listening on to my every word. *Successful.*

It may never happen, but I'll do my best to try.

With each day comes a whole new wave of opportunities and coincidences to uncover that you simply would not pay any attention to, selfishly obsessed with your own failures.

We now know how to level up our brains and 'hack' our behaviour, so come join me, in the future.

## ONE EXERCISE WON'T FIX EVERYTHING

Think of this entire book as a recipe book, pick and choose the most appealing bits, put them together and see what you get! Then over time, you will be brave enough to try new flavours that you wouldn't normally try!

**Just make an effort.**

I took the long way round, I am showing you the only available shortcut OR you could try it the hard way and put this book down.

This is not for everyone but if you follow horoscopes, then know that you already have experience in convincing yourself of things that you just read about and live your life.

For those who are misunderstood, who can feel lonely in a crowded room, those who are regarded as confident and happy, but wish someone would ask you how you really are.

For those that could do with a hug.

That life's getting too much, who knows hard times lie ahead and you need to prepare, just in case.

Few final thoughts and dramatic statements and I'm done, I swear!

You are thought of at random times, by people you barely remember.

Your story is not over, you have the pen.

You are unique, normality is a boring idea.

The most normal person in the world is not normal, by definition.

You are loved. You are not alone.

Look at you, reading a self-help book by some idiot you've never met!

You are brave. You are a good person.

No matter what you or others say.

We are all capable of love, however hard we stray from that path.

Change is hard. Films are not real.

No shortcuts. No pills. No easy way out.

Grit your teeth and get on with it.

Bigger the suffering, the bigger the peace.

No reward without risk.

Without the bitter, the sweet isn't so sweet.

*"You are a caterpillar looking at a butterfly, wondering how. Turn yourself to goop and find out"* - Jesus?

I used to go to church as a kid, pretty sure he said that. That's my interpretation of the bible anyway.

Your brain may look like tangled headphones, this is going to take some time, but it will untangle.

The good part of actually making an effort is that you might actually find out something has been 'wrong' with the whole time. I've learned more about myself in 5 years than ever before and set myself up for life now with the shortcuts to relaxing and making better and more exciting decisions.

Things changed for me when I read the regrets of the elderly on their deathbeds, so much regret despite a long life. That hurt to watch and made me certain I did not want to end up the same.

So this is the end, my dear old friend. *But it is also the beginning if you choose it to be.*

I can't say how many emotions have surfaced over the course of writing this, rewriting, changing my opinions, trying out all of the exercises for years, overcoming rejection and still dragging my sorry body to the keyboard. I have outrageous ambitions and I honestly feel like I can make a real difference with this, especially giving it away for free. It's taken me a total of 5 years to conceptualise the idea, try the ideas out, learn the hard way, relapse into addiction and suicidal thoughts and still keep coming back.

I expect nothing in return. I can only hope that it does good for you or someone you know.

If I fail to achieve my dreams, then so be it. But I am comfortable that when my time comes, that I have left behind a body of work that truly encapsulates my views.

I'm no good at goodbyes, but *maybe that's why I'm still here.*

I hope you are doing well or that you make an effort to get there, helping others along the way.

Cal  
@TwpZen  
[TwpZen.com](http://TwpZen.com)

