

JUNE–OCTOBER 2026

ISSUE NO. 5 (19)

**EXPLORING
ENGLISH THROUGH
PSYCHOLOGY**

PSYCHLINGO



**Akademia
Pedagogiki
Specjalnej**
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Jan Wolicki

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
Alicja Capała

GRAPHIC AND LAYOUT DESIGN
Dorota Maroń, MA

TYPESETTING AND TEXT MAKEUP
Dorota Maroń

Photo on the cover by Dorota Maroń

AUTHORS:
Katarzyna Bralczyk
Alicja Capała
Gabriela Gawłowska
Julia Motel
Agata Stugient
Jan Wolicki
Maja Zakurzevska

LINGUISTIC SUPERVISION
Anna Treger, MA and the Maria Grzegorzewska
University Professor Bronislaw Treger, PhD

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

A tradition is starting to emerge. A tradition of easing back into things. It's the second issue that touches on self-care, and it comes out after the holidays. And that is not an accident. As is often the case, when we get back to work, we tend to fall into it as if it were a bottomless pit. And often, I think—too often, we forget about something as important as self-care, if not more so. There are always so many things around us that make us forget to take a break—to have a moment for ourselves.

And on top of it all, social media tends to make you think you should always do more. Wake up at 5, go for a run, have a 12-step morning routine, work 10 hours, go to the gym, party, have a meaningful relationship, start a business, learn to play the piano, and read at least 2 hours a day. It is simply impossible to do all those things at once.

So we'll dive a bit into this topic. What does social media do? Is it good to take a break from it from time to time? How to manage it in today's world to find a bit of time for ourselves, and even why mushroom picking can be a form of mindfulness. So, let's take a moment to slow down, explore these questions, and, hopefully, find a little more space for ourselves.

Take care of yourself!



Jan Golicki

Editor-in-Chief



Self-Care or Simply Consumerism?

BY AGATA STUGIENT



When was the last time you checked TikTok or Instagram (two of the most commonly used platforms on social media) for some information on self-care? If you are not a frequent user of these apps, maybe it hasn't even crossed your mind to look them up for a few tips. It is undeniable, though, that social media has become a readily accessible source of information, which is especially appealing for teenagers and young adults. It's important to teach them that they can only trust what they find there to a certain degree, so they don't fall victim to fake news. Most of us know we can't believe everything we see on the internet. However, what if I told you it doesn't only provide far-fetched myths, but also creates a false narrative that's easy to fall into? Online platforms like TikTok and Instagram build unique communities that, through us viewers, shape the reality we live in. At the same time, they present us with a new form of reality, making us question whether the way we live is the "normal" or "proper" way of living.

Social media as an "information bubble"

In order to fully understand how online platforms influence our view of self-care, it is important to talk about the way they create a new perspective on what is "normal" and "typical" in society.

Let us start with a question: who do we most frequently see on social media? In general, those are celebrities, popular influencers and anybody who manages to charm their way into our hearts. Surely, it doesn't mean we need to follow them; we can choose the creators we watch and support. However, the algorithms on these apps will offer us something new every now and then. Chances are we will stumble across content that is currently trending. We start to see more short videos about the same topic; more online personas share their opinions and join the trend. Suddenly, most of the creators on the internet are talking or doing

the same thing, which in turn might lead us to FOMO (fear of missing out). In a way, social media uses our need to belong, our natural tendency to compare ourselves, and our conformity to sell us a new, carefully curated narrative about what "we are" as a collective at that moment.

This is where we circle back to the beginning of this article, where I talked about the new reality that influencers on the internet are showing us. Without a doubt, humans are social creatures. As a result, we consciously or subconsciously observe others to learn how people live and, therefore, what the "standard" way of living is. Unfortunately, with new sources of information (social media), instead of turning to our friends, we look to celebrities. As I think we can all agree, their lives are very different from most of ours. From their finances and careers to their level of public recognition, they differ from most of us. This raises a question: how can we compare ourselves to them when our daily lives are so different from theirs?

On top of that, it's profitable for online creators to post content that is currently trending. The more views they get, the more profit they make. The main goal, then, is to create content that will get a lot of views. This brings us to a crucial question: how can we trust the reality that influencers create if we only see a snapshot of their lives (with no guarantee that it's honest)? More importantly, how can we use the lives of people so different from us as a point of comparison? Even if we ask ourselves these questions, we can still fall victim to this false narrative on social media.

The link between self-care and marketing

With that being said, let's move on to the topic at hand: self-care. How is it portrayed on social media? As a society, we are paying more attention to our physical and mental well-being than we used to. However, something that was supposed to make us feel better as a whole has been reduced to simply how many possessions we own. More and more influencers show us their extravagant lifestyles, excessive skincare routines, and high-priced products. Although everybody has the right to manage their finances however they feel appropriate, it becomes an issue when, instead of a "want", they display these items as a "need". They call them a necessity if we want to practice self-care. This is a well-known sales technique, in which companies convince their audience that a certain product is a must-have. One might therefore wonder how much of this is a genuine recommendation and how much is simply an advertisement.

A common practice among brands is to closely collaborate with content creators to promote their products. Why is it concerning? We have talked about the information bubble that social media has built. If somebody is a frequent TikTok or Instagram user, they are involuntarily exposed to whatever is trending at the moment. This creates a sense of normalcy for them and raises a question: "Am I even practising self-care if I don't own these things?"

Quick fixes vs long-term happiness

Social media may have shaped our idea of self-care through influencers and beauty brands. But what really goes into that? More and more people are opening their eyes, claiming online that we don't need to overconsume to stay in a good mental and physical state. Research also shows that focusing mainly on material possessions is linked to lower levels of life satisfaction (Tsang et al., 2014). The authors argue that gratitude plays an important role in perceived "happiness" (life satisfaction) and that materialists are generally less grateful for what they have. That can lead to unmet psychological and social needs, as well as dissatisfaction with their own standards of living. More than that, centring your life around consumerism may take up all your resources (e.g., finances, time, energy), leaving you with none to pour into other areas of your life, such as social life, emotional processing, and mental health (Sirgy et al., 2019). Without the required attention, they start to shrink.

Self-care also requires personalised choices. Although some healthy habits are generally recommended, everyone needs an individual approach. Ismail (2021) points this out clearly in his study. He says that instead of following our own needs, we might do the first thing social media tells us to do. That happens as a result of the false view of self-care we constantly see online. The author also argues that short-term solutions, such as shopping, don't actually improve our well-being in the long term, but are simply an easy, temporary fix. They certainly give us a quick dopamine hit, but don't help us solve a potential underlying problem.

How to actually practice self-care?

There are many different ways to enhance the quality of our lives. Small habits such as taking a walk, spending time in nature, or improving our sleep pattern can have a massive impact on our well-being. What matters is including every area of our life and making small changes to our everyday routines (Rome wasn't built in a day; it's okay to take it one step at a time). Butler et al. (2019) divided them into six domains, which are physical, professional, relational, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Even though this study was mainly intended for mental health professionals (it's especially vital for them to take care of their well-being), I believe it also applies to all of us. Everyone needs something a little bit different, but I think we can all benefit from exploring what each of these domains might need, in order to strengthen its functions.

With this in mind, my intention in this article is not to criticise anybody for spending money on themselves. There is nothing wrong with spoiling ourselves from time to time. It can even be considered self-care when done occasionally. My goal here is to focus our attention on an emerging problem in our society. Overconsumption is a serious issue that social media, in some cases, unfortunately promotes. What we have talked about isn't just self-care, but mostly how brands use our psychological needs to sell us products. At the end of the day, we are the ones making



choices, though. When we're considering a new purchase, it's important to ask ourselves: is that a "want" or a "need"? Will that truly benefit my well-being, or is it just another dopamine hit? It's something that I definitely need to incorporate into my life more as well.

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Glossary

- conformity** — behaving like others in order to fit in or follow social expectations
- curated** — carefully selected and organised for a particular purpose
- dopamine hit** — a quick feeling of pleasure or satisfaction
- enhance** — improve something or make it better or stronger
- fall victim to** — be harmed, tricked, or affected by something
- far-fetched** — difficult to believe because it seems unlikely to be true
- involuntarily** — without choosing or intending to do something
- shrink** — become smaller in size, amount, or value
- snapshot** — a brief or limited view of something that shows only part of the whole picture.
- stumble across** — find or discover something by chance
- underlying** — hidden but important; affecting something without being obvious



Boundaries and Making Time for Yourself

BY ALICJA CAPAŁA



To start with, it's helpful to briefly define what self-care means. Many activities fall into this category, but simply put, self-care includes not only pleasurable or relaxing activities, but also activities related to health, relationships, emotions, or everyday life. Contrary to what some people may believe, self-care doesn't necessarily mean doing whatever feels good at the moment. Sometimes, taking care of yourself requires doing something difficult or uncomfortable, such as setting a boundary or handling a responsibility.

Psychological boundaries, including the ability to say "no", can be a form of self-care. Boundaries can affect your well-being, relationships, and sense of control over your own life. They can concern time, emotional availability, personal space, or the way people communicate with us. In the context of self-care, time boundaries are particularly important as they let people decide

how much time and energy they want to put into work, relationships, responsibilities, and themselves. At the same time, setting a boundary does not necessarily mean rejecting another person. Saying that we are unavailable at a particular moment can simply mean acknowledging our own needs and limitations.

Why can small decisions about how you distribute your time improve your well-being? When considering a sense of control, it is worth mentioning autonomy. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines autonomy as an individual's capacity for self-determination or self-governance. This idea also relates to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. It proposes that well-being and motivation are connected to three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy refers to having a sense of choice, competence to the feeling of being

capable and effective, and relatedness to having meaningful connections with others.

These needs are relevant to self-care because focusing too strongly on one of them may come at the expense of another. Taking time for oneself can support autonomy, while maintaining relationships contributes to relatedness. Similarly, taking responsibility for important tasks can contribute to competence. From this perspective, self-care is not necessarily about maximising time spent alone or minimising obligations, but about finding a balance between personal needs, relationships, and responsibilities.

It's also important to work on your relationships without losing yourself in the process. People-pleasing can make it difficult to prioritise self-care. For example, someone afraid of disappointing others may find it difficult to refuse requests, cancel plans, or ask for time alone, even when they are exhausted. Setting boundaries can therefore help a person recognise that caring about others does not always require sacrificing their own needs. At the same time, caring for oneself does not mean that other people's needs should become irrelevant. Dedication to others can also be an important part of maintaining meaningful relationships.

However, other people may interpret boundaries differently from the person who sets them. Someone may use the need for "self-care" to repeatedly decline social invitations. While the individual may experience this as protecting their time and energy, people close to them may eventually interpret repeated refusals as a lack of interest in the relationship. This does not mean that every refusal is harmful or that people should feel obligated to accept social invitations. Rather, it shows the importance of communication and reciprocity. A boundary can be communicated without rejecting the person. For example, saying "I cannot meet today because I need some time to rest, but I would like to see you next week" communicates both a personal limitation and an intention to maintain the relationship.

Another issue related to how you allocate your time is the distinction between spending time alone and social isolation. Spending time alone can be an opportunity to recover from the overwhelming pace of everyday life, develop hobbies, exercise, watch a series, or simply relax. Solitude is a deliberate and potentially restorative choice. However, being alone may become problematic when it turns into avoiding social interaction or withdrawing from meaningful relationships. Therefore, the important question is not simply how much time a person spends alone, but whether that time helps them return to everyday life and relationships feeling more balanced.

A similar distinction can be made between self-care and procrastination. In the long term, self-care can become procrastination when taking care of oneself becomes a way of avoiding responsibilities. For example, watching a series after a stressful day may be a healthy way to relax. However, if watching another episode repeatedly becomes a way of avoiding an important task, the same activity may function more as procrastination than as self-care. The activity itself is therefore not necessarily the problem; what matters is its function and context. Self-care should protect our well-being, not become a justification

for avoiding everything uncomfortable. Sometimes doing something difficult can be part of taking care of oneself, especially when avoiding it would create greater stress later. Completing an important task or having a difficult conversation may feel uncomfortable in the short term but benefit you in the long term. For this reason, self-care can involve holding oneself accountable while still recognising the need for rest and recovery.

Self-care therefore requires more than simply making time for oneself. It also requires awareness of how our choices affect our responsibilities and relationships. Setting boundaries can protect our autonomy and well-being, but they must also coexist with meaningful connections. Similarly, spending time alone can be restorative when it allows us to recover, but it becomes problematic when it turns into isolation. Ultimately, self-care may be understood not as withdrawing from everything that is demanding, but as finding a sustainable balance between personal needs, relationships, and responsibilities.



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Glossary

- accountable** — responsible for your actions and their effects
- allocate** — give something for a particular purpose or person
- capacity** — the ability or power to do something
- reciprocity** — giving and receiving things in return
- relatedness** — a feeling of connection with other people
- restorative** — helping to repair, heal, or recover
- self-governance** — controlling your own actions and behaviour
- sustainable** — able to continue for a long time without causing harm or using too many resources

DIGITAL DETOX

BY JULIA MOTEL



Long-time users of the internet and digital devices often reflect on how attitudes towards them have shifted over time. Initially, the emergence of personal computers was met with excitement—a new world of possibilities opened, allowing users to seek knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable and connect with people they might never have had a chance to meet. But things were completely different back then; disconnecting was as easy as turning off the computer and leaving the room. Hardly anything could capture people's attention for long periods of time, even to such a degree that they would forgo actually living their lives.

Nowadays, technology is extremely prevalent and at times can seem impossible to escape. Things that once could be done without a smartphone now require a device with a specific app. Everywhere a person looks, others are looking down at their own devices. Social media also provides easy access, which should

make finding connections easy—but the opposite is true; research suggests people feel more isolated than ever.

With these growing issues in mind, the idea of a digital detox emerged: a deliberate break from digital devices (and social media) to improve mental and physical health and promote offline activities. Research shows that a detox has many benefits and—at its core—isn't hard to try.

Those who decide to begin a digital detox often say that the first thing they notice is the sudden influx of free time. Instead of spending hours scrolling or sitting at their desk, they now have to actively search for something to fill their time with. This is a perfect opportunity to engage with what you've neglected up to this point—whether it's reading a book, journaling, or taking up more active hobbies. Those neglected things can also include tasks that have

been procrastinated on for a long time and still need to be completed (how about finally cleaning out the drawers or taking a look inside the wardrobe and seeing what works and what doesn't anymore?). The choices are endless; one only needs a moment to think of where to start.

Before anything else, let's first think of the most common posture that people hold when engaging with their digital devices—a hunched back, a head hanging low, and eyes captured by whatever is on screen at the moment. This undoubtedly causes a myriad of physical issues (including but not limited to) eye strain, blurry vision, forward head posture (often referred to as "tech neck"), and even headaches and back pain. All of these issues can be (if not completely, then partially) relieved during a digital detox. The newly acquired free time can be spent doing gentle stretches and exercises that might help with "tech neck". Instead of exposing your eyes to the glow of blue light, it's the perfect moment to let them rest. Overall, a digital detox gives you more time for activities that don't strain your eyes. Another physical benefit is improved sleep quality. It's not uncommon to hear that people reach for their phones right before going to sleep to "relax" with a dose of mindless scrolling. However, research shows that doing so leads to poor sleep. Blue light, a type of light emitted by electronic devices, disrupts the sleep cycle by (among other things) increasing alertness. It tricks the brain into thinking it's still daytime, which hinders the ability to fall asleep and keeps a person awake much longer. Using digital devices less before bed (putting them away even an hour or two before can be enough) will undoubtedly make it easier to fall asleep and improve overall sleep quality.

Last, but certainly not least, are the mental benefits of a digital detox, which are arguably the most important ones. A detox, in essence, forces the mind to rest from constant stimulation, allowing an individual to be more present in the moment—to appreciate their surroundings and to take a step back and just relax. It is an actual break that can calm the mind by lessening anxiety and stress (caused, for example, by the constant delivery of bad news from all around the world). It encourages boredom (because even planned activities can feel a little boring at times), which in turn encourages creativity—a way to express thoughts and feelings without having to put them into words. This time away from screens is when a new idea is most likely to be born. Everyone gains something from being creative, and there is something for everyone to choose from.

Additionally, the time spent on digital devices is rife with distractions. It is really easy to switch from one thing to the next without spending more than a few seconds on it—a detox gets rid of distractions, allowing an individual to focus on one task for an extended period of time. The ability to focus for a long time can be helpful not only in private endeavours, but also in professional ones.

If not all, then at least some of the aforementioned benefits might catch your attention. But even the mere prospect of beginning a digital detox probably sounds daunting, and as such, it's essential to have a plan in mind before attempting it. The first step is to identify your goals and exactly what you wish to achieve—perhaps you need more time for different activities or need to detach from

the stress that social media causes. Secondly, decide on a time frame. Some might enjoy a challenge (like 30 days), but as a general rule, it is a much better idea to start small—for example, 3 days. The third step is choosing what to avoid. Do you want to refrain from using your devices completely, or just limit a few specific apps or websites? Next, choose your tools—use your device's settings against it (silence all notifications, set simple app limits, turn on greyscale) or use third-party apps that let you block apps on a schedule or all the time. Not everything will work for you, so do not be afraid of experimenting! Lastly, remember to plan alternative activities. Having something else to do will take your mind off the fact that you're currently on a detox and make the transition from constant usage to a distinct lack of it that much simpler.

Also, if possible, let others know that you want to start a detox and that you might take a while to respond to their messages. In many cases, you will also receive support in your endeavour, which makes everything much easier. Who knows, maybe someone will even join in?

I believe that in this day and age it's imperative that we all take occasional breaks from our digital devices. This constant connection has an undeniable influence on our mental and physical well-being, and excessive usage has a negative impact. A digital detox is a practice with many benefits, and it is not difficult to adjust to the life we're leading. As such, I think trying it is a good idea for everyone, because the time will pass anyway, so we might as well spend it on something helpful.

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Glossary

- capture** — catch or record
- endeavour** — try hard to do something
- forgo** — to refuse sth enjoyable, do without
- hunched** — bent forward
- influx** — a large amount arriving
- prevalent** — common or widespread
- refrain** — stop yourself from doing something
- rife** — full of something, usually something negative
- shift** — change or move

Friendship as Self-Care: How Friends Can Help Us Be More Us

BY MAJA ZAKURZEWSKA



Does having friends really count as self-care?

To explore this idea, we first need to consider what self-care actually means and what role social relationships play in our psychological well-being. Most often, self-care is associated with doing something for yourself, usually in solitude. What if that's not always the case? Sure, it's great to have a relaxing bath or read your favourite book for the twentieth time—but sometimes, one of the best things we can do for ourselves is spend time with a close friend.

Evidence suggests friendship is more than just a source of entertainment or companionship. A 2023 systematic review published in *Frontiers in Psychology* examined 38 studies on adult friendship and well-being. The researchers found that friendship was generally positively associated with well-being, with friendship

quality and socialising being particularly relevant. The review also identified factors such as feeling that we matter to our friends and having our sense of individuality recognised as being connected to well-being.

Being your true self around other people

Pretending to be a different version of yourself or censoring your own words because you're afraid of being judged or received negatively isn't a healthy way of living. Instead of trying to fit in with a crowd you're not comfortable showing your true self to, it's more valuable to find people who share your interests and will accept you as you are—no changes needed.

Building friendships with people who have similar interests or experiences can make it easier to break the ice and move on to

deeper conversations. Once you no longer have to constantly think about whether what you want to say or do might stir the pot, you can relax, feel safer around the other person, and spend less energy worrying about how you are being perceived.

How spending time with people close to us affects our mental well-being

Maintaining close friendships can meaningfully affect our mental well-being. Research has found that adult friendships, particularly those providing social support and companionship, are strongly associated with well-being and may help protect against mental health difficulties such as depression and anxiety (Pezirkianidis et al., 2023). This shows that friendship can be more than simply something that makes our lives more enjoyable—it can also play an important role in our psychological well-being.

Having someone we trust enough to talk to about our emotions can provide a healthy way of letting them out instead of keeping everything bottled up. Talking things through with a close friend can be especially valuable during difficult periods of life, such as grief, heartbreak, or other stressful experiences. Sometimes we don't need someone to fix our problems—we simply need someone who will listen, understand, and remind us that we don't have to deal with everything alone.

Even outside of particularly difficult moments, knowing that there is someone we can call, meet up with, or talk to can be reassuring. Having that sense of support in our everyday lives can make stressful situations and difficult emotions feel more manageable. Close friendships can also boost our self-esteem by giving us people who appreciate us, value our presence, and remind us of our strengths when we struggle to see them ourselves.

Perhaps one of the most important things friendship provides is a sense of belonging. Feeling accepted and knowing that we have a place where we matter is an important human need. A close friendship can give us exactly that: knowing someone wants us around, not because we have to prove ourselves, but simply because we are ourselves.

Quality over quantity in friendship

It seems obvious, but somehow some people forget that when it comes to making friends, what matters is the quality of the connections and how close those relationships are, rather than how many people we know. Some people think the more people they have around them, the more "friends" they have, but that isn't always the case.

Not everyone is naturally a social butterfly, and trying to fit in or constantly being surrounded by people just to avoid feeling left out can become exhausting. When we focus too much on being accepted by others, we may start changing how we behave, what we say, or even which parts of our personality we show.

Research on authenticity has linked expressing ourselves in ways consistent with who we are to greater well-being. Instead of focusing on having as many people around us as possible, it can

be more valuable to build genuine, long-lasting friendships with people we actually feel comfortable being ourselves with.

Taking care of friendships means taking care of yourself

Friendships, like anything else we value, require effort to maintain. As life gets busier, it's easy to let days turn into weeks and weeks into months without checking in with someone we care about. Making the effort to send a message, arrange a meeting, ask how a friend is doing, or let them know that we are thinking about them might seem insignificant, but these small actions help keep a friendship alive.

Putting effort into a friendship is not only something we do for the other person. By maintaining relationships that make us feel supported, understood, and accepted, we are also investing in our own well-being. We shouldn't have to wait until we are going through a difficult time to reach out to someone. Having people we can rely on is something worth nurturing even when everything is going well.

Self-care doesn't always have to be something we do alone. Sometimes, taking care of ourselves means taking care of the relationships that make us feel like ourselves. Sometimes, a change in company can spark a change in ourselves for the better.

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Glossary

bottle up — to suppress or conceal emotions, keep your feelings inside

boost — to increase, improve, or make someone feel more confident

censor — to remove anything that is considered objectionable or unacceptable

grief — deep distress caused by or as if by significant loss

nurture — to care for and protect (someone or something) while they are growing

reach out to sb — to contact someone for help, support, or communication

reassuring — restoring confidence; making someone feel less worried or afraid

social butterfly — a person who enjoys meeting and talking to people

solitude — the state of being alone

spark — to cause something to start

stir the pot — to cause trouble or start an argument

Everyday Habits for a Healthier Mind

BY AGATA STUGIENT



Taking care of our mental health doesn't always require big changes to our lives. In fact, small habits we practise daily can meaningfully affect how we feel, manage stress, and cope with daily challenges. If you're not sure where to start, here are a few healthy habits you can put into practice.

First of all, one of the most important things to take care of is our physical health. Scientists have talked about daily activity for years, but it's still difficult to find the time or energy to fit that into our lives. However, even a 20-minute walk can be extremely beneficial to our mental health. There are plenty of ways to build this into our lives (e.g., getting off the bus a stop early so you can walk home; going to a store that's farther away). Spending time outside has also been shown to "quiet the noise" in our heads and help with overstimulation. Surrounding ourselves with nature (such as walks in the forest) helps us to connect to our bodies and process any stuck emotions. Going out in the evening can also improve sleep quality, which matters if we want to maintain good mental health and productivity.

When it comes to sleep, it's important to get enough hours to feel rested in the morning (let's not forget the "no-screen rule" in bed). After we wake up, we shouldn't leave the house without some nutritious breakfast and a glass of water. Since I started doing that regularly, I can't imagine going out without first sitting down to eat.

Our emotions and spirit

When it comes to our emotional and spiritual well-being, it's essential to make sure we're not bottling up feelings or resentment. What I find very helpful in those moments is to journal about my day, letting go of all my anxiety and stuck emotions. It might sound like a cliché, but it's also worth taking a few breaths in whenever we're feeling overwhelmed. That allows us to clear our heads and feel more in control of a difficult situation. The world can be pretty overstimulating nowadays, so it's also significant to find a moment of quiet during our day. More and more people are trying to fill every second with conversation, a podcast, or music in the background. Meanwhile, it's very regulating for our nervous system to sit in a quiet room sometimes. It helps us decompress and organise our thoughts after a long day.

Even though life can be pretty difficult at times, it is also beneficial for our health to be grateful for the things we have in our lives (and I don't mean toxic positivity!). Appreciating the small things that bring us joy (e.g., good coffee in the morning, a compliment from a colleague) can boost our perceived happiness in the long run. More than that, it serves as a cure for the comparisons that are so easy to make in the age of social media. That doesn't mean overlooking our difficulties; we can feel disappointed about the things that don't work in our lives, and grateful for the things that do.

Healthy relationships are key

Some more tips include taking care of our relationships. As social animals, people need interaction with others. Moreover, being emotionally and physically close to someone can regulate our nervous system more than anything else. Even a short but engaging

conversation with someone we love can lift our mood for a whole day (don't forget to get the hugs in!).

Let's not forget our relationship with ourselves! There are a few questions each of us should ask if we want to take better care of that. First of all, how do I speak to myself? Do I speak with kindness, respect, and understanding? Do I forgive myself for the mistakes I make? Do I take breaks and rest when I feel like I need to (before it leads to burnout and overwhelm)? Do I nourish my body and my soul (make sure I feel good physically and mentally)? If you have doubts in any of these areas, I encourage you to take a minute to reflect on them and ask yourself: "Why is it difficult for me to treat myself better?" Think of a plan that could help you improve your self-care.

A few more tips

Another thing is always to find a little time in our day or week to do something for ourselves. It can be practising a hobby, taking a relaxing bath, or watching a favourite show. That way, we can give ourselves a moment that is just for us to enjoy. With that, I want to encourage all of us to cut back on the time we spend on social media. Instead, we could do something else that's just for us.

It may sound obvious, but drinking enough water each day is truly life-changing. Remember those headaches you seemingly get out of nowhere? Some of the most common reasons are lack of sleep, overworking, and dehydration. It's extremely important to drink 1.5–2 litres of water a day.

I also wanted to mention having a clean space at home or at the office. Organising our surroundings can help organise our thoughts and make things feel less overwhelming. A mess in our houses, more often than not, equals a mess in our minds.

In this article, I pointed out ways to help us keep our mental health in good shape. Remember, though, these are just small habits that may help prevent bigger problems. If you recognise any signs of more serious mental health conditions in yourself or someone close to you, don't hesitate to reach out to mental health professionals

Glossary

decompress — to relax and relieve stress or tension after a long or tiring activity

dehydration — a condition that occurs when your body doesn't have enough fluid

nourish — to give a person or other living thing the food and other substances necessary for life and good health

nutritious — containing substances which help your body to be healthy

resentment — a feeling of anger and bitterness at having been treated unfairly

toxic positivity — the act of avoiding or rejecting negative emotions or experiences

All I Feel is Green! How Contact with Nature Affects our Mental Health

BY GABRIELA GAWŁOWSKA



Mother Nature and us

Mother Nature and homo sapiens have coexisted in a delicate balance since the beginning of time. Although throughout history, the quality and form of this relationship have changed due to ongoing evolution, humans can thrive physically and psychologically thanks to the natural resources offered to us by nature (Yang et al., 2022). Perhaps that's why we have become so attached to nature, because deep inside we feel its restorative effects?

In the 21st century, when living in harmony with nature and its seasonal cycles has been replaced by tight schedules, the constant pursuit of material goods, and ignorance of humans' right to live and breathe, it's hard for most people to find even a little time to reconnect with nature. It's easier to postpone—"I don't have

time...", "I'll do it later...", "I can't wait for the right weather to..." instead of doing it today. Taking time for a walk in the park, or even looking at a picture of the forest for a moment, may seem like a waste of time and energy. However, is it really?

Scientists began to investigate that question. It's not hard to notice how most people seem to have lost their connection to nature. It can depend on a few factors, for example: where they live, their profession, whether they are active or not, diet, sleep schedule, and many more. The constant fast-paced lifestyle, characterised by constant stimulation from all around us, certainly doesn't help either. As a result, it has been noted that more and more people are experiencing burnout, anxiety, and depression, as well as an increase in somatic symptoms, an increase in rumination, a weakened immune system and all sorts of other health problems. It was worth asking if the lack of exposure to nature in a

daily lifestyle can add to the worsening state of people's mental health.

This whole psychological concept is captured by a theory called Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Ohly et al., 2016). It was developed by Stephen and Rachel Kaplan and explains why spending time in nature can help restore mental attention and reduce mental fatigue. It postulates that our attention span is limited, like a battery. We use it to study, work, make decisions and control distractions. However, like a battery, at one point it will run out of energy. The same is true of our attention span: it's limited. Constant use of our attention can cause mental fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and reduced self-control.

Thankfully, there is a way to recharge our "batteries". According to the ART theory, the natural environment can restore this capacity (Ohly et al., 2016). Why nature? The theory focuses on four qualities that make it restorative: being away, fascination, extent and compatibility. Thus, regular contact with nature can be highly beneficial because it may help reduce mental fatigue, improve concentration and cognitive function, lower perceived stress, promote relaxation, support emotional well-being, and create space for reflection and recovery.

Studies

Perhaps surprisingly, scientists have found evidence that connection with nature is restorative and good for our mental health. These effects occur on different levels, from neuronal changes to social ones. Research by Ulrich (1984) showed that simply viewing natural landscapes can enhance recovery after surgery, suggesting a profound connection between nature and mental health (Tushe, 2025).

When it comes to neuronal and chemical dimensions, studies indicate that time spent in nature can lower blood pressure, reduce cortisol levels, and improve immune function, all of which contribute to reducing the physiological markers of stress (Tushe, 2025).

One study showed that nature benefits human psychological well-being. It was proposed by the researchers that nature may enhance mental health through self-determination, or fulfilment of three basic human needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness, as suggested by Self-Determination Theory (Yang et al., 2022).

Why is that? The first need—autonomy—is fulfilled because wilderness lacks customs and social constraints. It gives a person room to breathe, a place to freely express themselves without judgement, and a break from a monotonous and usually stressful daily routine. Paradoxically, despite what nature is often associated with—danger, controlled chaos, and laws that govern the cycle of life—wilderness can be a way for humans to fulfil their need to feel competent. The lack of expectations, social conventions, and anxiety about falling behind on daily tasks is replaced by a nourishing, pleasant natural environment. People who engage with nature show higher levels of self-worth and a stronger sense of competence. The last need is less obvious, since many know relatedness is fulfilled through contact with other people.

Beyond what we know about being social creatures, we can also feel a sense of belonging in nature. It's a way we can connect with other living creatures and regain the feeling of belonging in the special social entity that nature is (Yang et al., 2022).

In terms of emotional dimensions, contact with nature was found to heighten positive emotions and lower negative ones. Moreover, experiencing nature can help reduce rumination, negative affect, and perceived stress, and preserve positive affect. Overall, nature has been shown to improve emotional well-being (Jimenez et al., 2021).

On a cognitive dimension, the review found convincing evidence that exposure to nature improves cognitive functions. In an experimental study, the group that performed a 50-minute walk in nature showed improvements in working memory alongside improvements in mood and reduction of rumination compared to walking in the urban environment (Jimenez et al., 2021); (Tushe, 2025). The review discussed the possibility that this reduction is caused by reduced cognitive load due to the natural environment and its restorative ability (Jimenez et al., 2021).

Another important aspect of nature's positive effect on mental health is the social aspect. Outdoor settings help bring communities together and build stronger ties between people. Additionally, more institutions promote outdoor activities that help to reduce social anxiety, reduce loneliness and help people feel a sense of belonging. Spending time in nature promotes prosocial behaviour by increasing empathy and kindness.

But one might ask, what is this "connection with nature", "exposure to nature" or "experiencing nature"? Overall, studies show that contact with nature can include walking in green spaces, sitting in nature, gardening, being near trees, spending time in parks, and engaging in outdoor physical activity, "forest bathing", viewing natural environments, accessing green space, and sometimes even interacting with animals. Connection to nature encompasses how people relate to and identify themselves with the natural world and how they perceive their connection with it (Kazemi et al., 2026).

Ecotherapy

The concept of experiencing nature with the intention of improving your mental health has been given a name: ecotherapy. This form of therapy is different from traditional indoor forms of therapy.

Because of the scientifically proven impact of nature as a tool to improve mental health, many therapists have incorporated elements of outdoor therapy into indoor practice. Although this therapy alone isn't an answer to problems, it's a great supplementary tool to improve the results of already applied main forms of therapy. It helps provide a calming space for clients (Ontario Psychological Association, 2024).

There are three named types of ecotherapy—wilderness therapy, horticulture therapy, and animal-assisted therapy. The first one focuses on taking part in outdoor activities from going for walks to hiking and swimming. Horticulture therapy is for green thumbs and plant lovers who can pursue their hobby while it can help

alleviate low moods and anxiety symptoms over time. The last type, as the name suggests, focuses on interacting with animals. Animals can range from cats and dogs to horses, which offer companionship during a person's emotional recovery (Ontario Psychological Association, 2024).

What can you do?

While talking about all of the benefits of bringing nature back into our lives is good, it may be even better to incorporate some of it into your daily life! You don't have to wait for better weather or the right time to start and support your mental well-being. Here are my suggestions on what YOU can do as a form of self-care to nurture your mind with the help of nature.

Take a walk. You can take a 10-30 minute walk in a green area near your home. Whether you live in an urban or rural area, there are always green spaces you can visit and enjoy nature. You don't have to rush or run. Instead, take a slow stroll and pay attention to your surroundings (Coventry et al., 2021).

Sit in nature. If the day isn't great or you can't go for a walk, simply sitting in a natural environment can be beneficial too. However, it's not sitting and scrolling on your phone or listening to music. It's what you could call active sitting, because the goal is to immerse yourself in nature. Notice the movement of leaves, birds, clouds, sunlight and shadows, sounds, smells, and temperature. It lets your attention span rest because it's non-demanding to engage with.

Choose to do your favourite activity outdoors. Whether it's cycling, gardening, running, or reading, it can be more beneficial to do it outside. Studies have shown that doing your chosen activity outside produces better psychological outcomes, including reduced anxiety and fatigue.

If the weather isn't suitable for going outside, you can adapt. For example, if it rains, you can sit near the window and watch the droplets run down the glass, focus on the sound of the rain, and pay attention to the weather and its effects while sitting in the safety of your home. However, when it's cold or hot, it's worth timing your walks or activities to avoid harm. You can go earlier or later, shorten your activity, and avoid discomfort.

Conclusion

Although nature's restorative benefits are still being investigated by scientists, it's established that nature helps improve our mental health. While the form of interacting with it can vary from going for a walk to performing outdoor activities, regular exposure over time can be beneficial. In times ruled by pixels and constant information bombardment, reconnecting with our roots and taking a break from stressful, constraining routines is highly recommended. Remember that even a short time spent outdoors can help clear your mind and reset mentally, and see things from a different perspective.

Finally, it's worth noting that nature isn't meant to replace therapy or psychological help, but rather to serve as an additional source of support.

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- ### Glossary
- affect** — a person's observable emotional state
alleviate — make (suffering or a problem) less severe
compatibility — the ability to work or exist well together
constraint — a limit or restriction
heighten — to increase or make stronger
immerse — to become deeply involved in something
nourishing — helping someone feel healthy, supported, or fulfilled
relatedness — a feeling of connection with others
rumination — repeatedly thinking about something, especially something negative
somatic — related to the body
supplementary — additional or extra
thrive — to grow, develop, or do very well



The Art of Savouring the Moment

BY JAN WOLICKI



Many sources that you will encounter will tell you that mindfulness is enormously beneficial; even this issue of "Psychlingo" says so. So why would I start by writing something that implies it isn't? Well, experience. But don't get me wrong, it's beneficial for most people. Most.

There was a time when I was working in a psychiatric hospital as an assistant as part of my studies. I was given the opportunity to create therapeutic activities for the people there. It was a funny group. I got to know them a bit; everybody had a history that was fascinating. I learned about some of those people's disorders or illnesses, but not all of them.

As it was a day care unit, I knew they were stable (relatively stable), so there wasn't as much risk of triggering anything; nevertheless, you still have to be careful. Most patients there had

schizophrenia. So one of the problems lay in their apathy, or maybe more precisely, anhedonia and the inability caused by illness or by habit of thinking. Mindfulness seemed like a way to go.

As I remembered, there was a specific programme for such activities. It contains 13 sessions that are concentrated around positive psychology: introduction, positive experiences, savouring, good things (what one accomplished and what one can be proud of), strengths of a person, strengths in action (introducing those strengths into one's life), testing those, then redefining the experiences, forgiveness, thankfulness, looking back and the celebration. Those 13 sessions (as forgiveness is divided into two) have different levels of difficulty for the patient. The first four are "the easiest" ones. The second cluster requires more therapeutic carefulness and attentiveness, which, to my best knowledge, I did

not (and still do not) have. Since I couldn't prepare a long-term plan (I only had a few sessions available), I had to choose carefully.

The one that always fascinated me was "savouring." And why is that? You prepare a room with chairs (preferably arranged in a circle), and at the centre is a table with different kinds of food. In my case, I tried to make it as diverse as possible, from carrots to chips and gummies. You welcome the patients, and they (and also you) have only one task. To eat, but as you may have guessed, they won't eat in the usual way. They have to savour. At first one might think that it is not normal; well, food is food.

I think every one of us has had the experience of placing, let's say, cheesecake in our mouth and slowly trying to prolong the magnificent moment of eating it. That was our job. To eat with attentiveness to the texture, to the smell, to the taste of every little thing.

So we sat in the room. Everything was prepared. I introduced the exercise, and the testing began. At first, patients were sceptical; they looked at themselves (I would too if a young student told me to eat slowly), but within a minute or two of it starting, they got up, took the food from the table, and really savoured it.

From the very first moment, I felt something was off. The man on my left had his hands crossed on his chest; he looked tense. He was chewing gum, and his left foot was moving up and down (as you often see in people with ADHD). He tried the first thing on the table, then sat down (the room was quiet; you could only hear the subtle sounds of eating).

Then he abruptly ate the potato chips, got up, and rushed out of the room. The rest of the patients didn't care, which made me think it wasn't the first time something like that happened.

I wasn't really concerned about going after him because, right by the doors, there were a psychotherapist who had been with us at the beginning, a psychiatrist, a nurse and others. But it got me thinking. Other patients got into it. Afterwards, they wanted to talk about their experiences. Some of them said that it never occurred to them that one can take so much pleasure in such a simple thing as eating. One of them said that he does care for that kind of thing, food (this one also fell asleep during the activity). But they all wanted me to do it again next week. I thanked them and went to the psychologist's room as soon as I could with my unanswered question. What happened to that guy?

"Well", the psychologist said, "this man has PTSD. He can leave the room whenever he wishes, especially during mindfulness training and other similar activities. You see, patients with PTSD are often in a constant state of alertness. And it is their way of coping. When they're forced into an environment such as peaceful music, a quiet room, and a calming voice telling them to relax, their minds can sometimes involuntarily bring back the memories of the trauma."

I started thinking. At first, I walked up to him and asked if he was all right. He said he was fine and was sorry he couldn't take part in that activity. I told him it was okay.

This experience taught me something that helps me at work: not everything is for everybody, and you have to be careful when trying to help. Mindfulness can be helpful, but only when a person is ready to take in the moment, when they are in the right state to live in the here and now, even for a moment.

That is one lesson, but the other, less transparent one, is the one of the other patients. We often forget how little things can fill our lives with joy.

Such things as eating or looking at the sky. Maybe you also want to try to savour something little in your life?



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Glossary

anhedonia — the inability to experience pleasure
cluster — a group of similar things that occur together
mindfulness — the ability to be fully present and aware of what is happening right now, both within you and around you
savour — to enjoy food or an experience slowly
the here and now — the present time



Summer Hobbies

BY KATARZYNA BRALCZYK

Summer is a great time to try something you haven't tried before and take up a hobby. Warm weather and lots of sun create a great setting that can give you energy and a renewed sense of motivation.

You can try water sports, climbing, or cycling. You can go hiking or play beach volleyball. You can even try scuba diving if you are brave enough. But today we won't talk about any of those, because as fun as they may seem, I have something completely different in mind.

My favourite ways to spend time when it's warm outside are fishing and mushroom picking, and today I will tell you about those.

Fishing is quite a popular hobby for many dads and uncles, but have you tried it for yourself? It is not as boring as it may seem; it is a satisfying and fulfilling hobby. You can go early in the morning or late at night. You can go by yourself or go with your significant other, friends, or family. You don't even have to catch something to make it count; the experience itself is enjoyable. It can be a pricey hobby, but it doesn't have to be. You can catch nice fish with an inexpensive fishing rod, or you can buy professional equipment. The best thing about fishing is that it doesn't matter how good your fishing rod is or how many baits you get; if you have no luck, you will not catch anything.

Nothing can come close to the feeling of catching your first fish of the day. Big or small, herbivore, omnivore, or carnivore, it does not matter. But remember to take care of the caught fish: use an unhooking mat, and if you want to take a picture, do it quickly and gently. Don't forget that fish are still animals; don't hurt them for your own entertainment.

Mushroom picking is another calm activity. You can't really do it throughout the summer, since more mushrooms start to grow late in the season, but it still counts as a summer hobby.

First, remember to be safe. Don't go too deep into the forest if you are not 100% sure you can get back safely. If you get lost, it can get dangerous quickly, so make sure you know where you are at all times. A lot of mushrooms are poisonous; do not pick any of them if you are not completely sure about them. Only take ones you know about, and even then, be extra cautious. If you are not comfortable eating any because you don't trust yourself, you can always take them to your local Sanitary and Epidemiological Station to have them checked. Just call in advance, and they will tell you whether your mushrooms are edible.

Once you're sure you are safe, it's a wonderful way to spend time. Finding each mushroom gives you a sense of satisfaction and happiness. You also get free, tasty food out of it, and if this doesn't encourage you to try it yourself, I don't know what will. Last but not least, you get to breathe fresh air and spend time in nature, which is really important.

Glossary

bait — food or a lure used to attract and catch fish

carnivore — an animal that mainly eats other animals, such as smaller fish or insects

edible — suitable to eat

herbivore — an animal that mainly eats plants, algae, or seaweed

omnivore — an animal that eats both plants and other animals

unhooking mat — a soft mat used to safely place a fish while removing the hook



REVIEWS

BY JAN WOLICKI

The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar

It is not often that, when you watch a movie, everything around you seems so normal. Not exciting or boring. Just normal. And slow. This uncommon feeling perfectly describes this movie. So weird that it's even normal. There is only one man I know who can make you feel that way while watching a movie and afterwards. It's Wes Anderson. The magician.

The protagonist of this short film lacks depth. It is not a joke; he really is shallow. Interestingly, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. The protagonist, played by the phenomenal Benedict Cumberbatch, is a rich aristocrat with an addiction and, as it turns out, no purpose in life. Then he finds one and sets out on a journey to fulfil it. But not with the emotional roller-coaster you may remember from movies like "The Hobbit" and "Die Hard." He just does it, and one might think that he does it simply because of his lack of imagination. Then, when you analyse his story, you realise how much work he has put into it, almost like a Buddhist monk devoted to his practice.

And all of these thoughts just come to you. It is such a weird experience that you have to watch it. For a few hours after watching it, everything seemed easy and peaceful. Over time, the movie grew on me more and more. A few months later, I saw its meaning completely differently. What was its meaning? Well, see for yourself.

Stillness Speaks

Once again, we return to Eckhart Tolle's work. This time, it is not a book to read in one sitting (I did, and I don't recommend it). It is more of a collection of aphorisms and reflections that make you think every time you read them. Each one stands on its own, so reading them as a whole makes no sense. I came across it right after the first book of his that I read, "The Power of Now". That one made me question the values of today's world. This one is a bit different in that respect. Not as strong.

At first, it reminded me a bit of Marcus Aurelius's "Meditations" because of the form, but Aurelius's book is heavier and gives you the feeling that you should be a certain way. That's what differentiates it: it's light, despite the thoughts it inspires. It draws from Buddhism and Zen, so it makes you more peaceful. In some way, it teaches you mindfulness, attentiveness, and observation without judgment.

Every time you pick up this book and read a short aphorism: "When you lose touch with inner stillness, you lose touch with yourself. When you lose touch with yourself, you lose yourself in the world." Your life becomes calmer and a bit happier (I would say so). So I recommend it to you as a reminder on your shelf: when things seem dull or heavy, pick it up and read one of his insights. Or maybe do it every morning and start the day with these thoughts in mind.

WISE & WITTY

Proverbs

- *An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*
It is easier and cheaper to prevent a problem than to fix it later.
- *A stitch in time saves nine.*
It is better to deal with a problem early before it gets worse.
- *Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.*
Good sleep habits can help you stay physically and mentally healthy.
- *A sound mind in a sound body.*
Mental and physical well-being are connected.
- *Don't spread yourself too thin.*
Avoid spending your energy on too many things.
- *An apple a day keeps the doctor away.*
Eating healthy food can help you avoid illness.
- *Charity begins at home.*
Take care of yourself and those close to you first.

Idioms

- *Put your feet up.*
Take some time to relax.
- *Take a breather.*
Stop what you are doing for a short time and have a rest.
- *Get your head together.*
Get your thoughts and emotions under control.
- *Cut yourself some slack.*
Be less demanding or critical of yourself.
- *Get some shut-eye.*
Get some sleep.
- *Pick your battles.*
Save your energy for what matters most.

Just to make you smile a little

A woman goes to an expensive spa for a full-body mud pack. After the treatment, she looks in the mirror and tells the aesthetician that she looks twenty years younger. The aesthetician replies, "Thank you, but the mud is going to wash off in ten minutes."

My daily self-care routine at work is just closing my eyes for five seconds after every email.

- *What did the patient say when the therapist recommended mindfulness and daily meditation?*
- *"I'll think about it!"*



EXERCISES

Exercise 1.

Complete each sentence with the correct idiom or proverb.

1.
A: "Where has the day gone? I haven't done half of the chores I planned to do today."
B: "_____". If I had a job like yours, I would hire a cleaner to help me keep the house in order."
2.
A: "I keep staring at it and don't get a single thing."
B: "_____ and have some coffee."
A: "Good idea. I will feel better after a break."
3.
A: "My husband left his dirty socks under the bed again."
B: "Just ignore it. It's not worth arguing about."
A: "You're right. I will."
B: "Exactly. It's better to _____."
4.
A: "I can't manage all the workload."
B: "You're taking on too many things. _____."
5.
A: "Really? Are you going to bed at this hour?"
B: "Yes. I must be rested in the morning. I have a presentation to give early tomorrow."
A: "Good idea. _____."
6.
A: "I'm so stressed about tomorrow's exam. I can't think straight."
B: "Take a break and _____."
A: "You're right. A short walk will do me good."
7.
A: "Are you OK? You look so tired."
B: "I've just got back from work. I just need to _____ for a while."
A: "Of course. I'll make you a cup of tea."

Exercise 2.

Choose the correct word from the three options in each sentence. Only one answer is correct in each case.

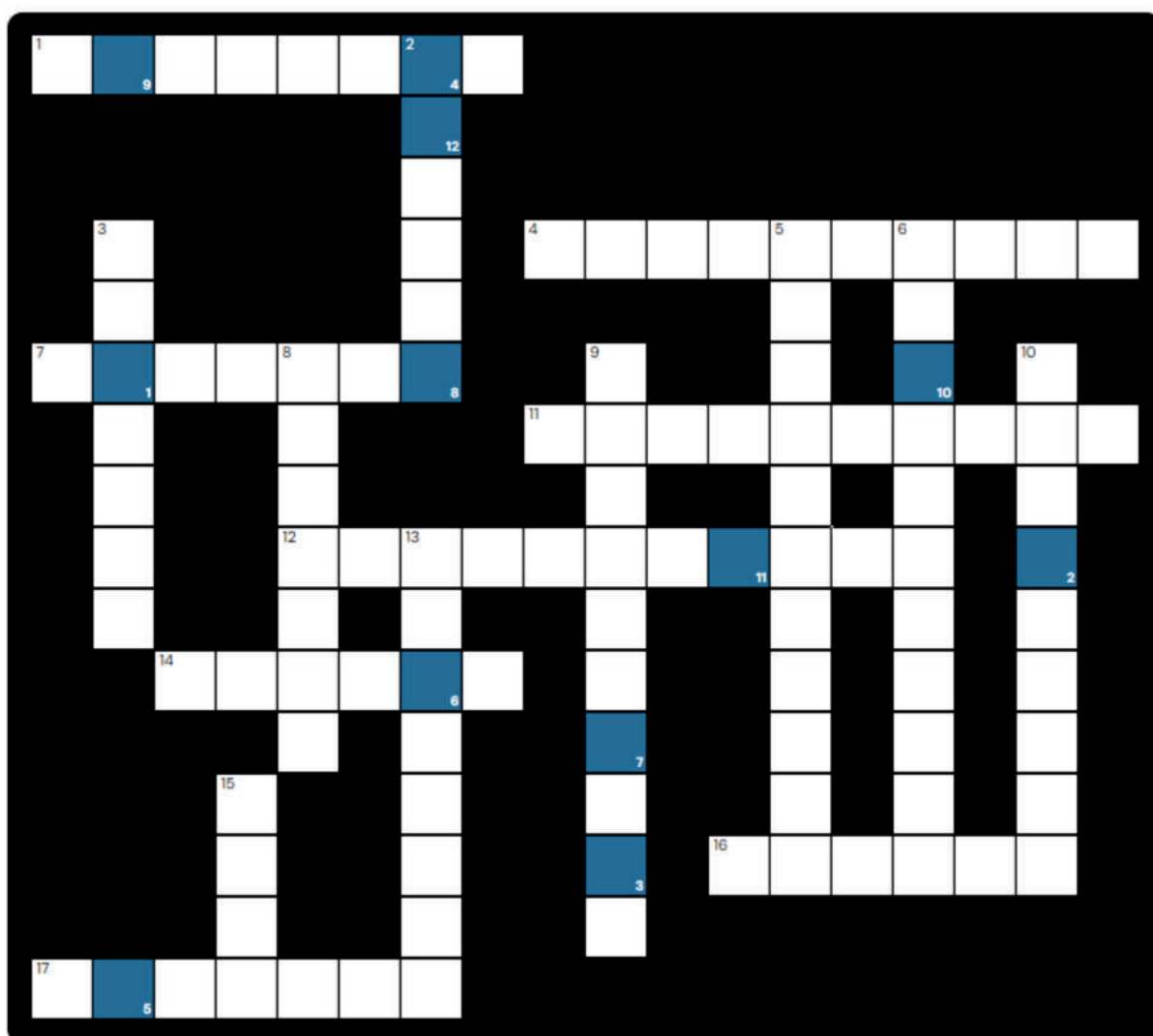
1. If you stop making time for friends, your social life may gradually *shrink* / *boost* / *thrive*.
2. Lack of sleep can *alleviate* / *heighten* / *thrive* feelings of stress and anxiety.
3. Taking care of yourself means being *reassuring* / *accountable* / *curated* for the choices you make about your health and well-being.
4. Healthy relationships involve *reciprocity* / *conformity* / *rumination*, where both parties give and receive care and support.
5. Instead of gulping down your food, just *savour* / *nurture* / *alleviate* it and pay attention to the experience.
6. Spending meaningful time with others can satisfy our need for *compatibility* / *relatedness* / *mindfulness* and connection.
7. Ignoring your need for rest for too long may eventually lead to *solitude* / *anhedonia* / *burnout*.
8. Taking a short break from work at hand can give you *sustainable* / *underlying* / *restorative* relief from stress.
9. While practising yoga, try to *enhance* / *immerse* / *nurture* yourself in the present moment.
10. Everyone needs some time to themselves in *solitude* / *capacity* / *self-governance* to mentally reset after a busy day.
11. Some people keep a stiff upper lip when faced with difficulties, but negative emotions should be expressed rather than *bottled up* / *sustained* / *censored*.
12. People usually *thrive* / *nurture* / *boost* when they have a good balance between work, rest, and social life.

- Exercise 1
1. Cut yourself some slack
 2. Take a breather
 3. pick your battles
 4. Don't spread yourself too thin
 5. Get some shut-eye / Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise
 6. get your head together
 7. put my feet up
- Exercise 2
1. shrink; 2. heighten; 3. accountability; 4. reciprocity; 5. savour; 6. relatedness; 7. burnout; 8. restorative; 9. immerse; 10. solitude; 11. bottled up; 12. thrive

Key



Crossword Puzzle



HIDDEN SOLUTION



DOWN

2. to grow, develop, or do very well
3. related to the body
5. able to continue for a long time without causing harm or using too many resources
6. a feeling of connection with other people
8. stop yourself from doing something
9. helping someone feel healthy, supported, or fulfilled
10. try hard to do something
13. the state of being alone
15. food or a lure used to attract and catch fish

ACROSS

1. the ability or power to do something
4. making someone feel less worried or afraid
7. to become deeply involved in something
11. a limit or restriction
12. helping to repair, heal, or recover
14. suitable to eat
16. to remove anything that is considered objectionable or unacceptable
17. catch or record

SOLUTION: Mental health

PODCAST



Here's how mindfulness can help make or break a family vacation

You will listen to a recording about a simple mindfulness practice, which can help people stay calm.

Exercise 1.

Decide if each statement is *True* or *False* based only on the information in the recording.

- 1. Vacations can sometimes create stress when people spend a lot of time together in close spaces.
- 2. Michael Irwin says mindfulness helps people respond less reactively in difficult situations.
- 3. The article claims that meditation removes all negative thoughts permanently.
- 4. Focusing on breathing is described as one of the simplest meditation techniques.
- 5. The text states that meditation requires at least one hour of practice every day to be effective.
- 6. Loving kindness meditation involves repeating positive phrases towards oneself and others.
- 7. Amanda Lathan's research found that participants became more likely to recall positive memories after daily practice.



Exercise 2.

Fill in the gaps using the words below.

roadblock, jangly, time off, dust-up, strife, firsthand

- 1. A small _____ over dinner plans quickly turned into a bigger argument.
- 2. Constant disagreements about plans led to _____ during the family trip.
- 3. After the chaotic holidays, I felt mentally _____ and unable to relax properly.
- 4. She experienced the effects of stress _____ after spending a week dealing with family conflicts.
- 5. A sudden illness became a major _____ to finishing our holiday plans on time.
- 6. I'm taking some _____ next week to relax and spend time with my family.

Self-Reflection

Think carefully about the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers.

- 1. What are your expectations for your summer holidays, and are they realistic?
- 2. What kinds of moments during holidays make you happiest? Why?
- 3. How do I usually react when things don't go as planned?



LAST BUT NOT LEAST

WHY WE ALL NEED TO BECOME VACATION SUPERHEROES
JOSH LEIBOWITZ | TEDXCOCONUTGROVE



LINGUISTIC TIDBIT

Did you know that ...

giving ourselves time to slow down and do nothing can be surprisingly beneficial?

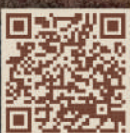
When we take a break from work or everyday tasks our brains enter a state known as *the default mode network* (DMN), which is linked to creativity, self-reflection, and imagination.

So the next time you stare out of a window or daydream, don't feel bad. They may be more productive than you think.

Holiday vs Vacation

The words "holiday" and "vacation" mean the same thing, but they are used differently in British and American English. In the UK, people usually say "I'm going on holiday," while in the US, they say "I'm going on vacation." Interestingly enough, both words refer to the idea of having some time away from everyday work: "holiday" originally comes from Old English *hāligdæg*, meaning "holy day," while "vacation" originates from the Latin word *vacare*, meaning "to be free from", "to be idle".

WHEN YOU LOSE TOUCH WITH YOURSELF, YOU LOSE YOURSELF IN THE WORLD



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