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CELEBRATING MINDFUL MOVEMENT, HERITAGE AND HOLISTIC LIVING

34MOVES

MINDFUL STRENGTH

THE POWER OF
PRECISION AND
BREATH

THE 34 MOVES

PILATES
ORIGINAL MAT
SEQUENCE

THE BODY REMEMBERS !!

How Stress Lives in
the Nervous System

THE ISLAND
THAT KEEPS
ITS SECRETS

THE HIDDEN COST OF CONNECTION

The Silent Burnout
of Staying Connected

A MANUAL FOR MODERN HUMANS...

Principles for Living Well

CELEBRATING MINDFUL MOVEMENT, HERITAGE AND HOLISTIC LIVING

34MOVES

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For all general enquiries, sponsorship opportunities, advertising, collaborations, editorial feedback, complaints, or corrections, please contact:

info@34moves.im

Editors: Ruby Griffiths & Stephan Baum
Designers: Andie James & Ruby Griffiths

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NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDERS

34Moves begins with a simple belief: wellbeing is not something to chase, but something to return to. In a culture shaped by speed, distraction and quick fixes, we wanted to create something slower, deeper and more useful: something to live with, not just read once and put away.

At its heart, 34Moves is rooted in Joseph Pilates' original 34 mat movements. These movements were never only about exercise. They were developed as a way of bringing the body back into balance, through breath, control and attention.

That is what draws us to Pilates, and it is what shapes our three Ms: Movement, Mind and Mental Health. Together, they reflect the connection between body, mind and spirit. Movement is the physical practice. Mind is the awareness behind it. Mental Health is the space where that connection begins to change how we live.

The 34Moves Manual is part magazine, part manifesto, part companion. It is made to be returned to, read slowly, carried often and kept close. Rooted in the Isle of Man yet reaching outward, it is our invitation to reconnect with what matters, and to live with more clarity, care and presence.

Ruby Griffiths and Stephan Baum
Founders, 34Moves

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The Body Remembers What The Mind Forgets

Long before language, the body is already speaking. Through breath, muscle tone, posture, sleep, digestion and attention, it keeps a running commentary on how safe it feels. The question underneath all of it is simple: am I safe enough right now?

Much of that questioning happens below conscious thought. Scientists often study this through heart rate variability, or HRV, a measure of how flexibly the autonomic nervous system can respond to stress and then return to steadiness. Higher flexibility is generally linked with better adaptability, while lower flexibility is often seen when the body has been under strain for too long. In other words, the body is not only reacting; it is constantly adjusting.

That flexibility is not fixed. Research has shown that practices combining breath, attention and mental training can improve the body's ability to regulate heart rate variability over time. In one study, several months of contemplative training helped participants increase voluntary HRV regulation, especially when breathing and attention were trained together. Regulation, then, is not a personality trait. It is something the system can learn.

The nervous system is a constant scanner for cues of safety and threat. Rushing, poor sleep, background noise, overwhelm and too little recovery can keep it slightly mobilised. By contrast, a longer exhale, steady rhythm, supportive touch, a line of horizon or a few minutes in natural light can help the body settle. When people talk about safety, they are not only talking about thought. They are talking about sensation.

This is where the work of Stephen Porges has been so influential. His Polyvagal Theory describes neuroception, the nervous system's automatic scan for cues of safety or threat before the thinking mind has time to weigh in. It helps explain why the body can react before we

have words for what is happening. Sometimes the breath changes first. Sometimes the shoulders lift. Sometimes the stomach tightens before we have even named the pressure.

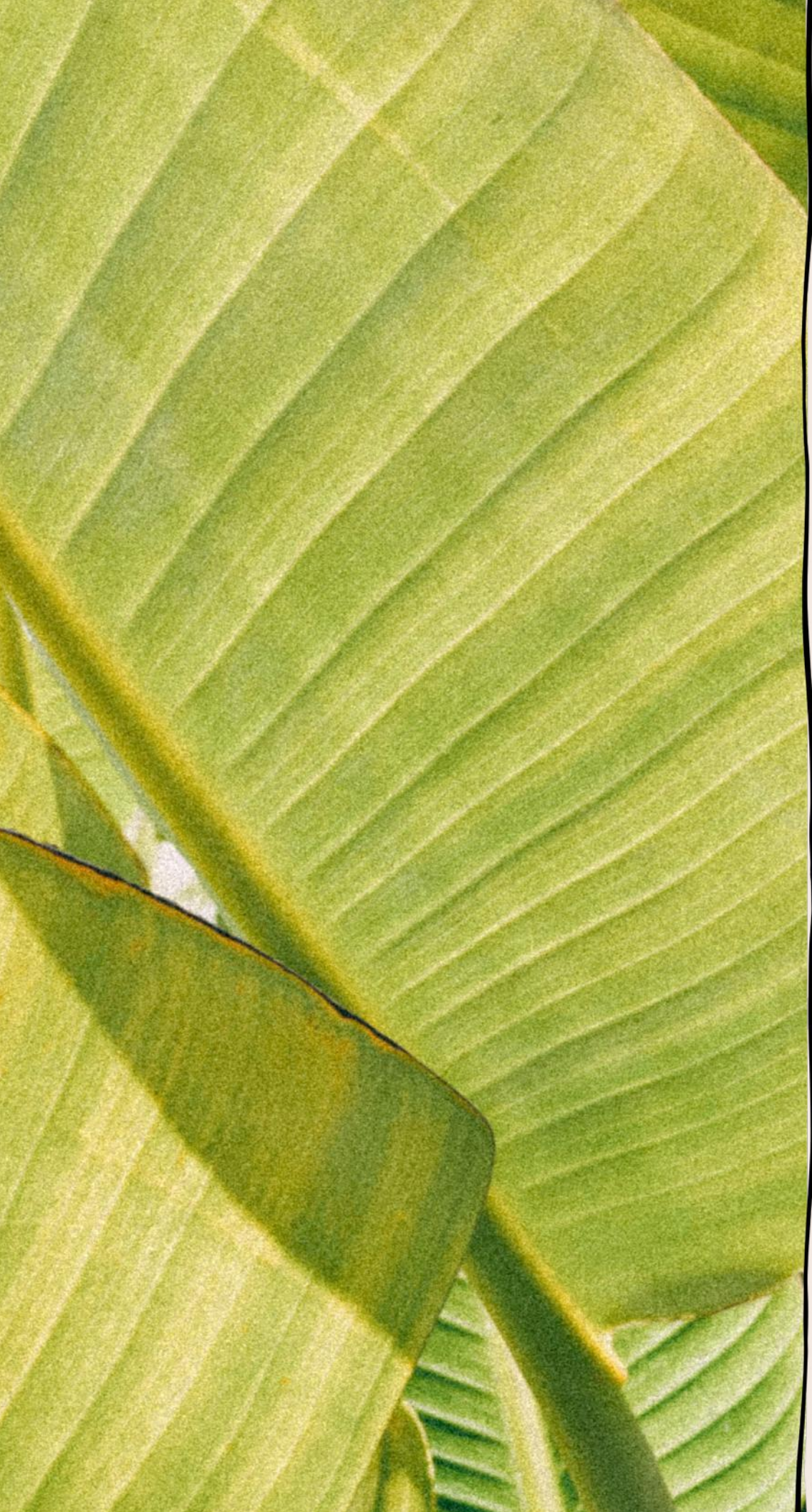
Regulation is not perfection. It is flexibility. It is the ability to rise and settle, to mobilise and recover, to respond and then come back. When that flexibility is reduced, the body stays braced, sleep becomes shallow, and even small things can feel louder than they should. Bessel van der Kolk's work has been important here too. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he shows how stress and trauma are carried not only in memory but in posture, breathing and physiological response. The body keeps its own record long after the mind has tried to move on.

Movement can help because it gives the nervous system useful information. Rhythm, repetition, orientation and a sense of completion all help the body feel its own edges again. Peter Levine, founder of Somatic Experiencing, has long explored how the body can discharge activation and return to balance when it is given the right conditions. That is part of why embodied practices can feel so powerful. They do not force the body into calm. They invite it back toward it. Pilates, yoga, walking and breath-led movement can all support that return. They combine attention, pacing and sensation in a way that helps the body organise itself. Pilates in particular can feel clarifying because sequence, breath and precision ask the body to connect effort with awareness rather than force. The point is not to override the signal. It is to listen to it, work with it and let it complete.

When the body feels scattered, a simple sequence can help. When it feels braced, slower movement may be more effective. When it feels exhausted, rest may be the most intelligent response. The aim is not to perform regulation. It is to create the conditions in which the body can remember how.



NERVOUS SYSTEM 101



the



*mat
matters*

A good mat does more than sit beneath you; it changes the way movement feels from the ground up. It can soften pressure, steady balance, improve grip, and make the whole practice feel a little more organised, and a lot more inviting.

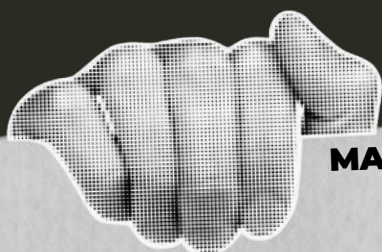
For Pilates, yoga, and floor work, the mat is not just the backdrop. It is part of the experience. The right one gives enough cushion without swallowing you, enough grip without sticking, and enough structure to help your body feel clear, confident, and ready to move.

What to Look for

Cushion. For joints, spine, and slower floor work.

Grip. For steadiness, control, and sweaty confidence.

Ground. For a surface that feels stable, present, and responsive.



MATERIALS WITH PERSONALITY

Not all mats feel the same, and that is what makes shopping for one oddly satisfying. Some are dry and earthy, some are springy and supportive, and some are the dependable workhorse you keep rolling out year after year.

Natural rubber is the grippy, no-nonsense choice. For example, JadeYoga or Manduka's eKO range. It feels responsive, and especially good when you want steady traction under control-based movement.

Cork is the tactile one. Yoloha and Cork Space make cork mats that feel earthy and warm, with the lovely bonus that grip often improves as the practice gets a little sweatier.

TPE and foam blends are the easygoing travelers. Gaiam is a familiar name here, especially if you want something light, practical, and simple to pack.

PVC is the old-school reliable. It remains popular because it is durable, familiar, and often budgetfriendly, which makes it a common entry point for new practitioners.

THE BEST MAT IS THE ONE YOU RETURN TO

Your mat should work with your body, not against it. It should feel supportive enough to trust, simple enough to use, and practical enough to live with. If it makes you want to step on it again tomorrow, it is probably a good match.

For Pilates, a slightly thicker mat often helps because the work happens close to the floor. For yoga, grip and steadiness matter most. For everyday movement, portability and comfort can be just as important as texture.

In the end, the best mat is not just the one with the right material. It is the one that makes practice feel a little more like a place you want to be.

OPEN SKIES OPEN MIND

There is something about looking up that quietly changes the pace of a day. Open sky is vast, borderless and always in motion. It gives the mind somewhere to rest that is not a screen, a feed or a task. Under that dome of blue, cloud and light, thought can loosen its grip a little. The world feels larger, and with it, so do we. In a culture that asks us to look down, focus in, and move quickly from one demand to the next, the simple act of lifting our gaze can feel almost radical.

Science is beginning to catch up with what people have always known. Human bodies evolved in a world shaped by weather, daylight, trees, water and distance. These were not luxuries but part of the ordinary environment that helped orient us to time, mood and attention. Modern life has blurred many of those signals. We spend most of our time indoors, our eyes close to bright screens, a habit associated with eye strain and, in some people, the gradual progression of myopia. Days are sliced into artificial hours, and the outdoors becomes something we have to make time for rather than something we naturally move through. That shift is not just cultural. It changes how we meet the day.

Nature brings back a different kind of information. In Japan, researcher Qing Li and others have shown that time in forest environments can influence immune activity, including the behaviour of natural killer cells, which play a role in the body's defence system. Trees also release airborne compounds called phytoncides, part of the reason forest air can feel so alive and restorative, though the science is still developing and should not be oversold. The more interesting point is not that the forest is magic. It is that it changes the conditions around us. Different light, different scent, different depth, different sound. All of it gives the body a wider field of input, and the mind a chance to stop compressing everything into one narrow plane.





A large study led by Mathew White found that people who spent at least 120 minutes a week in nature were more likely to report good health and higher wellbeing, with benefits peaking around the 200 to 300 minute mark. It did not matter whether that time came in one stretch or many smaller visits. Nature works best when it is not a rare event, but a recurring part of life. That threshold is useful because it shifts the idea of nature from special occasion to ordinary habit. It is less about escaping into the wilderness and more about building a relationship with the world outside the window.

Light matters too. Morning daylight helps set the circadian rhythm, the internal timing system that influences sleep, alertness, hormone timing and mood. When daylight reaches the eye, it sends a signal that helps the brain understand what time it is. Evening darkness matters just as much, because it allows that rhythm to settle. Bright indoor light and late screens can muddy the message, leaving us tired but wired, awake when we want to rest and dulled when we want to begin. Even a few minutes outside in the morning can feel like a reset, not because it is dramatic, but because it is consistent with what the body recognises.

Open air feels different because it asks less of us. There is distance for the eyes, movement in the light, texture in the air, sound that is not mechanical. Even a short walk can widen attention. The horizon gives the mind a little more room. A park bench, a coastline, a garden path or a hilltop can all do something similar. They interrupt the narrowing of attention that often comes with enclosed spaces and close-focus living. In that sense, open space does not just feel calming. It changes scale. It reminds us that life is not only happening at arm's length.

This matters because close focus living has become so normal that we barely notice it. We read, work,

scroll, reply, shop and plan with our gaze fixed close in. The world becomes a series of small rectangles, and the eyes spend their days making constant adjustments to near objects and artificial light. Open space reverses that pattern. It lets the gaze travel. It lets the mind drift a little without losing itself. It lets attention widen rather than tighten, which is a different kind of intelligence altogether.

There is also something restorative about the simple fact that nature does not demand performance. A tree does not ask to be productive. A cloud does not need to be efficient. Water does not care whether you have answered your messages. That absence of demand may be one of the reasons open landscapes feel so relieving. They return us, briefly, to a world that is not evaluating us. The effect can be subtle, but it is real. We soften when nothing is asking to be solved.

This is not an argument for escape. It is a reminder that wellbeing is shaped by environment as much as intention. We are responsive creatures, and we respond to light, weather, trees, water and sky whether we notice it or not. The simplest interventions are often the oldest. Step outside. Look up. Let the world be broad for a moment. Let your attention meet something that is not asking to be consumed.

And perhaps that is the real lesson of open skies. Wellness is not always something to buy, track or optimise. Sometimes it is a shift in distance, a wider horizon, a patch of daylight, a room with no ceiling. When the world feels too small, the mind often becomes small with it. Open the view, and something inside opens too. The sky reminds us that there is still space, in the world, and in us.

Nature works best when it is not a rare event, but a recurring part of life.

THE FIRST BIOSPHERE NATION



There are places that ask very little of you except that you notice them. The Isle of Man is one of them. Sea on all sides, weather that changes its mind, light moving quickly across fields, cliffs, glens, and roads that open suddenly onto space. It is not a loud landscape. It does not overwhelm so much as recalibrate.

In 2016, the Isle of Man became the first whole jurisdiction to be designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. That status matters, but perhaps not for the reasons people first assume. A biosphere is not a museum label, and it does not mean the island has been frozen in time. It is a recognition of relationship: between people and nature, culture and economy, protection and daily life.

That distinction is important. The biosphere idea is not about separating nature from human life, but about asking whether the two can coexist intelligently. On the Isle of Man, that means the designation extends across the whole island and its territorial seas, acknowledging not only biodiversity and landscape, but heritage, community, work, and the ways people shape place over time. It is as much a cultural proposition as an environmental one.

You feel that quickly here. The island is compact, but it does not feel small. There is room in

it: cliff paths, agricultural land, beaches, peatlands, glens, wetlands, marine reserves, old railways, villages, weather systems, silence. More than 40% of the island is unpopulated and uncultivated, which is another way of saying there is still space to breathe.

That space changes the tempo. Slowness arrives here less as an instruction than as a consequence. The horizon lengthens your attention. Walking becomes enough for a while. Meals take on the pleasure of being properly noticed. The body, so often managed around clocks

A Biosphere is not a museum label. It is a recognition of the relationship between people, nature, culture and daily life.

and screens, starts to work to older cues: light, weather, distance, appetite, tiredness.

This is one reason the Isle of Man makes sense as a setting for 34Moves. The philosophy is not only in the story of Pilates at Knockaloe, but in the island itself. A place where land, sea, sky, and human life are still visibly in conversation lends itself to a more embodied way of paying attention. It reminds you that wellbeing

is not built in abstraction. It is shaped by environment, rhythm, access to nature, and whether a place allows the nervous system to soften rather than brace.

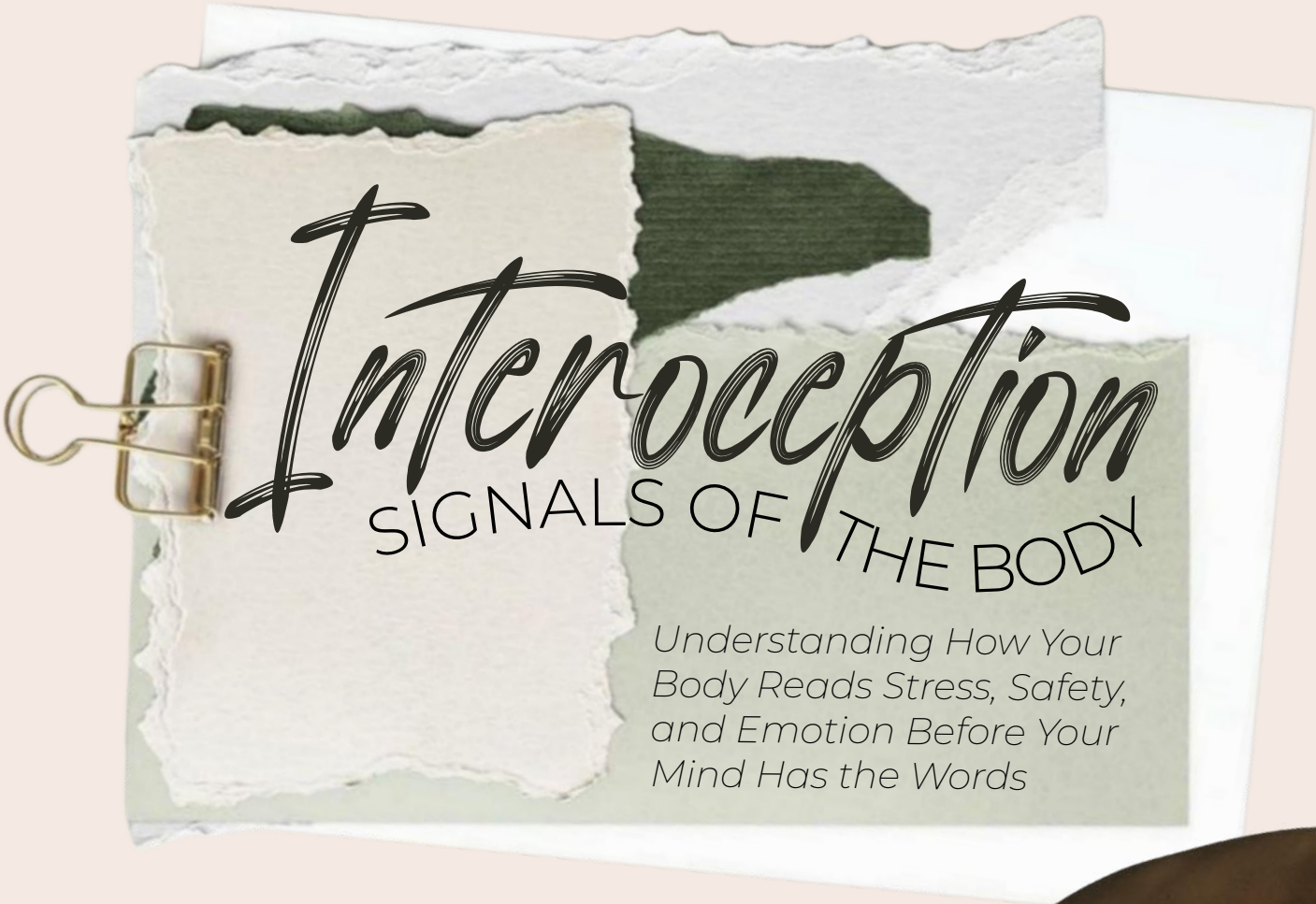
There is also responsibility in that beauty. UNESCO Biosphere status is not simply a compliment; it is a commitment to keeping the island a special place to live, work, and visit. It asks for balance. Growth, but not at any cost. Tourism, but with care. Heritage, but as something lived rather than merely displayed.

Perhaps that is what makes the designation feel so relevant now. At a time when many places are being flattened by speed, sameness, and extractive attention, the Isle of Man offers another model: distinct, inhabited, working, historical, and still ecologically vivid. Not untouched, but in relationship. Not perfect, but paying attention.

To call it a biosphere is, in part, to name that attention. To say that land, sea, sky, culture, memory, and responsibility belong in the same sentence. And to suggest that a slower, more reciprocal way of living is not nostalgic fantasy, but practical intelligence.

That may be the island's quietest lesson. Slowness is not always about doing less. Sometimes it is simply about noticing more.

→ The Isle Of Man



Interoception

SIGNALS OF THE BODY

*Understanding How Your
Body Reads Stress, Safety,
and Emotion Before Your
Mind Has the Words*



That flutter in your chest before a difficult conversation or the tightness in your stomach when a room feels tense is not random. Your brain is constantly reading signals from inside your body and using them to judge what is needed next.

Known as interoception, this hidden sense tracks heartbeat, breath, hunger, temperature, pain, and the subtle shifts that become emotion. Understanding interoception helps explain why stress sometimes arrives as sensation before thought. It is one reason a racing heart, shallow breath, or clenched jaw can feel meaningful, even when you cannot immediately name what is wrong inside you.



Why Feelings Often Start as Body Signals

When you feel anxious, excited, tired, or overwhelmed, your brain is not only reading the outside world. It is also receiving messages from organs, muscles, blood vessels, and breath. Research links this inner sensing to emotion regulation, mental health, and the way people notice safety, effort, hunger, pain, and threat in daily life.

That may explain why emotions often feel physical before

they make sense as a story. Instead of thinking, I am stressed, you might first notice heat in your face, pressure in your chest, nausea, restlessness, or a sudden need to move. Interoception is not imagination.

It is the brain making meaning from the body's condition. When stress is repeated, those signals can become louder, faster, or harder to interpret. The goal is not to silence the body, but to learn how to read its cues with care and more patience.

Examples of Interoception Shaping Your Everyday Living

Interoception appears in ordinary moments, not only during crisis. The knot before a meeting, the sigh after a hard day, or the sudden fatigue that follows tension are all body signals asking for attention. Maybe your shoulders lift when you feel rushed. Maybe your stomach drops when a message feels sharp. These sensations are not proof of danger, but they are information about your state in that particular moment too.

Your nervous system is doing what it was designed to do: tracking change, preparing action, and adjusting energy. However, repeated stress can make neutral sensations feel urgent or difficult to trust again.

You might begin with breathwork, gentle movement, stretching, or a body scan that notices sensation without judgement. This can help your brain receive updated information: this moment is safe enough to soften and return to yourself slowly. Al

though interoception research is still developing, evidence suggests that mindful body awareness and movement practices may support emotional regulation when practised carefully and consistently over time.

The Brain-and-Body View on Stress

Interoception is a reminder that the mind and body are not separate conversations. Emotions are biological events that involve breath, heartbeat, muscles, digestion, hormones, attention, memory, and meaning all at once in one changing system.

When stress or trauma happens, the body may learn to predict danger quickly. Those predictions can be protective in the moment, but they may linger after safety returns. Gentle awareness can support you in noticing old alarms without immediately obeying every signal again.

Your nervous system can learn new patterns, and by understanding interoception, you can work with sensation instead of fearing it, helping your body find steadier ground when there is no real need to brace or protect yourself right now.

FOCUS FOCUS



By Vivien Speers

FOCUS FOCUS

It feels like the world is coming at us fast. We are **overwhelmed by distractions**, multi-tasking our way through each day, while our brains seem only too happy to join the chaos. Apart from the dopamine hits we've come to expect from social media feeds, **we are still ancestrally wired to stay alert — always on the lookout for possible threats.**

So while we understand that distraction is the enemy of focus, the real question is: how do we fine-tune our attention amid the ever-increasing white noise of modern life, especially now we are no longer running through the jungle?

Unfortunately, your brain doesn't know the difference. It will still seek distraction, even when you're doing something as simple as watching telly, because part of its job is to keep you alert. The good news is that you can learn to navigate these diversions by using simple tools to strengthen your focus.

But it has to start with self-awareness.

This may sound obvious, but you are less likely to give in to distraction when you are engaged by what you're doing. And that, by the way, is key to success. You have to want to do something enough. You have to commit to it. For sustained focus, there needs to be enough interest in whatever you choose as the centre of your attention.

And don't be too hard on yourself. The average healthy adult can only sustain focus on one thing for around 35 to 55 minutes at a time, according to research. Whether it's meditation, trying a new recipe, preparing for an exam, or consciously listening to a friend, the mind gets bored quickly. It knows when you've tuned out and will happily go looking for something else to fill the gap.

Notice what happens when something doesn't interest you. Your brain starts seeking out those pesky distractions, and before you know it, you are in the grip of procrastination. But as long as you are aware of the pattern, you have some agency over it. It just takes practice — and repetition.

FOCUS VS THOUGHT

Focus and thought are bedfellows. When you are focusing, you are holding excess thoughts at bay, but they are always there in the wings, ready to take over the moment you drop the ball. Focus is the tuning fork of the mind. It can train attention for the better.

But focusing is tiring. Before we know it, we've drifted into rumination or daydreaming. Then, after a brief spell of being elsewhere, we notice we've gone AWOL and return to the task at hand. This is not failure. It is awareness. Each time you catch yourself and come back, you are strengthening the muscles of the mind. Over time, your focus becomes more trained, more resilient, able to hold steady for longer.

Think about reading a book. How often have you drifted off and had to reread the same paragraph? Your focus slips, you lose the thread, then come back and begin again. This is normal.

Be an observer of your thoughts. When you take a mental step back, it becomes easier not to get tangled up in them, as though you were watching them pass by through a window.

It takes more energy to fight thoughts than to notice them and let them move on. Shift your awareness to the space between thoughts. Let your breath slow. Stay with what is happening in the present. Each time you gently return to your chosen point of focus, you are practising focus.

There are also practical ways to engage the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for decision-making, impulse control, and attention.

HELPFUL WAYS TO STRENGTHEN FOCUS

- Mindfulness meditation: focus on your breath moving in and out of the body.
- Cardiovascular exercise: running, cycling, tennis.
- Quadrupedal movement: crawling, bear walks, animal flow.
- Dancing: even in your kitchen.
- Puzzles.

And honestly, my biggest tip? When you wake in the morning, delay, delay, delay picking up your phone for as long as you can. Start small. Wait until you're out of the shower. Then a little longer — until after breakfast, or even after you've taken the dog out. Honour your mind. Give it the space it needs to grow. In other words, don't immediately fill it with more stimuli, because that puts any hope of focus straight back on the shelf.

And if you are really struggling, stop trying to force it. Go for a walk, then come back to it. Change the scene and begin again with a fresh approach. Staring at a screen waiting for inspiration is like watching a kettle boil.

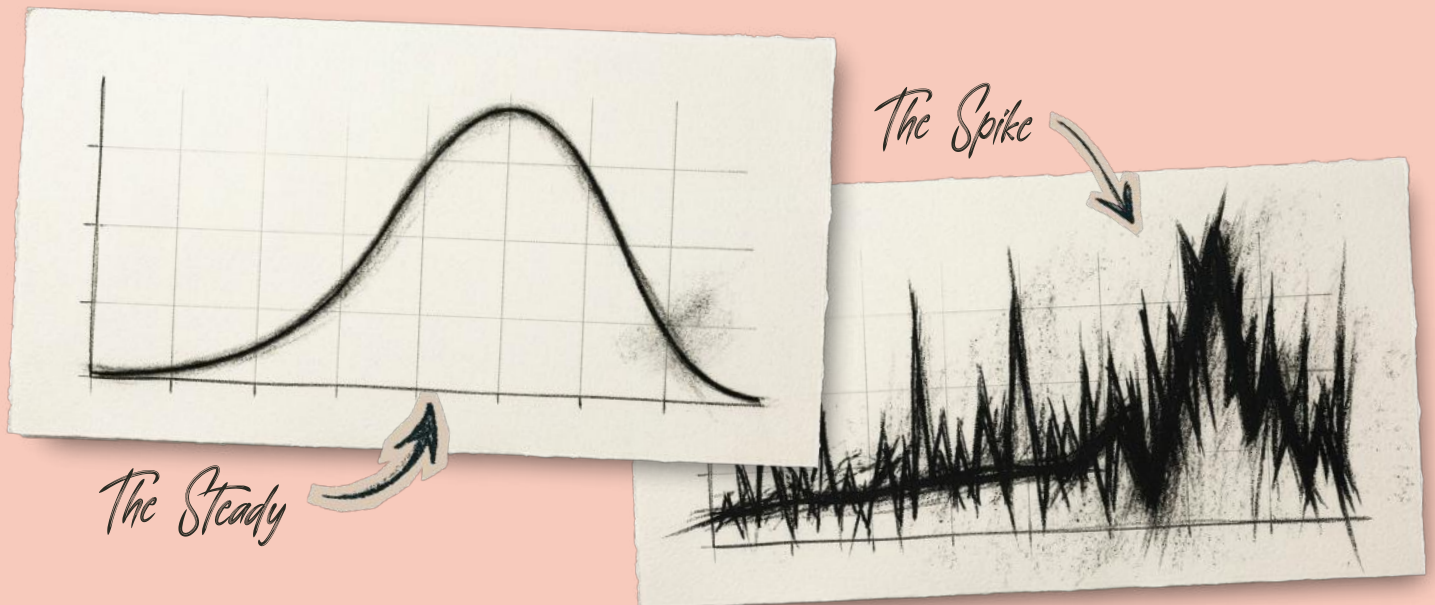
EATING FOR Clarity

What we eat doesn't just fuel our bodies, it shapes how we think, focus, and feel throughout the day. Blood sugar plays a central role in this process. Glucose, the body's primary energy source, circulates through the bloodstream and fuels everything from muscle contraction to complex cognitive tasks. When glucose levels rise and fall dramatically, however, the brain often experiences the same instability: bursts of energy followed by fatigue, irritability, and mental fog. Developing a little awareness around glucose can make a surprising difference to clarity, mood, and sustained energy throughout the day.

Inspired by the work of **Jessie Inchauspé**, a growing number of people are learning to think less about strict dieting and more about how foods affect blood sugar patterns. Her approach focuses on understanding how different combinations of foods influence the body's glucose response. The goal isn't perfection, it's stability. Large glucose spikes followed by sharp crashes can place extra load on the nervous system, triggering stress responses that leave us feeling wired, tired, or unfocused. Instead of relying on willpower or rigid restrictions, the emphasis is on small shifts that help the body maintain steadier energy throughout the day.

Highly refined carbohydrates eaten alone, things like pastries, white bread, sugary cereals, or sweetened drinks, are more likely to produce dramatic glucose spikes. These foods are rapidly broken down into sugar in the bloodstream, causing glucose levels to rise quickly. When this happens, the body releases a surge of insulin to bring levels back down. Sometimes this response overshoots, causing glucose to dip lower than before and leaving us with a familiar slump in energy or concentration an hour or two later. Many people recognise this pattern as the mid-morning brain fog or the afternoon energy crash that sends them searching for another coffee or snack.

Over time, repeated spikes and crashes can contribute to fatigue, cravings, and difficulty maintaining steady focus. Some people find they become irritable or restless during these dips, while others experience a heavy sense of tiredness that makes even simple tasks feel harder than they should. Stabilising blood sugar can therefore have benefits that extend far beyond physical energy, it can also support emotional balance and mental clarity.



How to avoid



The good news is that small adjustments to how we eat can smooth these fluctuations significantly. One of the most effective strategies is pairing carbohydrates with protein, fibre, or healthy fats. These nutrients slow the digestion and absorption of carbohydrates, allowing glucose to enter the bloodstream more gradually. For example, eating fruit alongside yoghurt or a handful of nuts creates a slower glucose response than fruit alone. Choosing sourdough or wholegrain bread instead of highly processed white bread can also provide more fibre, helping to slow digestion and support steadier energy.

Adding vegetables to meals is another simple way to support blood sugar balance. Fibre-rich foods such as leafy greens, broccoli, lentils, and beans not only provide important nutrients but also help regulate the speed at which glucose enters the bloodstream. Even herbs, seeds, and spices contribute small amounts of fibre and plant compounds that can support metabolic health. Over time, these small additions help create meals that are naturally more balanced and sustaining.

Interestingly, the order in which foods are eaten may also influence glucose responses. Starting a meal with vegetables, protein, or fats before eating carbohydrates can help reduce the size of a glucose spike. This approach allows fibre and protein to begin slowing digestion before carbohydrates

enter the system. Something as simple as eating a small salad before a pasta dish, or starting breakfast with yoghurt and nuts before toast, can shift the body's metabolic response in a helpful direction.

Timing around movement also plays an important role. The body is designed to use glucose as fuel during physical activity, which means movement can help stabilise blood sugar levels. Gentle exercise after eating, even a short walk, helps muscles absorb circulating glucose and use it for energy, reducing the likelihood of a sharp spike. This is one reason why a brief walk after meals is often recommended as a simple metabolic habit.

When eating before movement or exercise, balanced snacks tend to work best. Something that combines protein and fibre with a moderate carbohydrate source can provide steady fuel without overwhelming the body's glucose regulation. Examples include oats with yoghurt, a banana with peanut butter, an apple with almonds, or wholegrain toast with eggs. These combinations release energy gradually, supporting both physical performance and mental focus. Eating for clarity involves building meals that work with the body's natural systems.

TRAVELLING TO THE

Isle of Man

The Isle of Man is closer than you think, yet stepping off the plane or walking off the ferry feels like arriving somewhere entirely apart. This is a place that invites you to slow down, look closer, and let its atmosphere take over.

There are plenty of reasons to travel here, but perhaps the best one is the landscape itself. The island is defined by a sense of real beauty. You will find 18 National Glens, where deep woods, tumbling waterfalls, and hidden paths feel almost unchanged by time. Then there is the coast, ringed by Raad ny Foillan, a footpath that moves between high windswept cliffs, long stretches of beach, and small harbour towns with ancient castles standing proudly in the background, echoing the history of this magical place.

That balance of nature and community is why the entire island holds UNESCO Biosphere status. The land feels cared for, serving as a living part of the island's culture. It is the kind of place where a walk becomes much more than exercise, it becomes a way to connect directly with the island's rhythm.

There is also a rich, layered identity here. The Isle of Man has long drawn people in and shaped their stories. The Bee Gees were born in Douglas, Tyson Fury recently made it his home, and a wide cast of writers, athletes, and artists have been influenced by its shores. History and folklore feel ever-present, living comfortably beside everyday life.

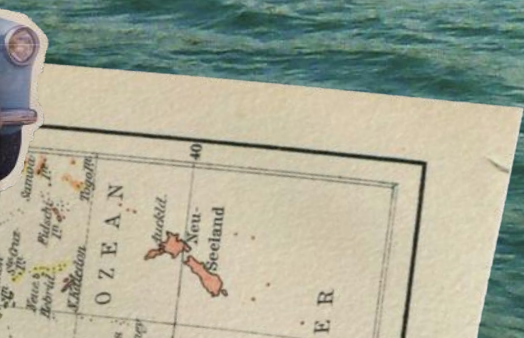
What makes all of this so appealing is the accessibility. Reaching the Isle of Man is remarkably simple, with direct flights from London,

Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Dublin, and Belfast. You can leave a major city and, in less than an hour, touch down at Ronaldsway Airport with the hills rising in the distance.

For those who prefer the water, the ferry journey into Douglas Harbour offers its own kind of theatre. Whether you sail from Liverpool, Heysham, Dublin, or Belfast, arriving by sea means watching the bay curve open ahead of you, with the stone walls of the Tower of Refuge standing guard in the water. Built in 1832 to offer sanctuary and provisions to shipwrecked sailors, this miniature castle gives your arrival an immediate sense of resilience and history before you even step ashore.

The journey is easy, but the reason to hop on that plane or board that ferry goes much deeper. You travel to the Isle of Man to find a place that feels restorative, wild, and welcoming. You come for the views, the paths, and the history, and you leave with the rare feeling of having found somewhere that asks only for your presence.







STEADYING HERBAL TEAS

Across centuries and across cultures, tea has been used in very different ways: in ancient Egypt for calming and medicinal infusions, in China as a daily restorative, in Japan as a meditative ritual, in Britain as a social pause, and in Morocco as a symbol of welcome and hospitality. However it is served, tea grounds us because it slows the pace of the moment, asks us to be present, and gives the body something warm, simple, and familiar to return to.

AUTUMN EMBER TEA

A softly spiced evening cup with apple, ginger, and cinnamon. It feels warm, a little nostalgic, and very good when the day is ready to slow down.

You will need

- 1 apple, sliced.
- 1 small cinnamon stick.
- 3 or 4 thin slices of fresh ginger.
- 1 to 2 tsp maple syrup or honey, optional.
- 350ml water.

How to make it

- Add the apple, cinnamon, ginger, and water to a small pan.
- Bring to a gentle simmer and let it bubble softly for 10 to 12 minutes.
- Strain into a mug.
- Stir in honey or maple syrup if you want it sweeter.

Why it works

Ginger is often used to support digestion and bring gentle warmth, while cinnamon gives the drink that cosy, spiced depth. Apples add a soft fruitiness along with antioxidant compounds, and honey or maple syrup rounds everything out with a mellow finish.

LITTLE BLACK CHAI

A small, fragrant cup that feels like a soft reset. Warm spice, a little milk, and just enough sweetness to make the whole thing feel calm and comforting.

You will need

- 1 cup water.
- 2 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed.
- 2 to 3 thin slices fresh ginger.
- 1 small cinnamon stick or 1 half cinnamon stick.
- 2 cloves.
- 2 black peppercorns.
- 1 small tea bag, or 1 tsp loose black tea.
- 1 to 2 tbsp milk, dairy or plant based.
- 1 tsp maple syrup or honey, optional.
- A tiny splash of vanilla, optional.

How to make it

- Add the water, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and peppercorns to a small pan.
- Bring to a gentle simmer and let the spices infuse for about 5 minutes.
- Add the tea and simmer for another 1 to 2 minutes.
- Stir in the milk and warm through briefly.
- Strain into a mug and sweeten with maple syrup or honey if you like.

Why it works

Cardamom brings fragrance, ginger adds warmth, cinnamon gives depth, and cloves and black pepper build that classic chai finish. Tea and milk make it feel rounder

and softer, while a little vanilla adds a mellow, comforting note

AFTER DINNER MINT

A fresh, gentle cup for when your stomach wants something calm. Lightly sweet, softly minty, and soothing enough to feel like a small reset.

You will need

- A handful of fresh mint leaves.
- 2 cups water.
- 1 teaspoon honey.
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, optional.
- 2 to 3 thin slices fresh ginger, optional.

How to make it

- Lightly crush the mint leaves with your fingers and place them in a mug or small pot.
- Add the fennel seeds and ginger if using.
- Pour over the water and bring to a gentle simmer, or just steep in hot water for 5 to 7 minutes.
- Strain into your cup.
- Stir in honey once it has cooled slightly.

Why it works

Mint can feel cooling and calming, while fennel and ginger bring a little more digestive support and warmth. Honey softens the flavour and gives the tea a rounder, more comforting finish.

Breath

Breathing — it's the very first thing you do in this world and the very last. Between those two breaths, you can expect to take around 663 million more. Most you'll never even think about. Some you'll take intentionally during periods of quiet contemplation or meditation. You'll breathe a little faster as you plod through that marathon you can't remember agreeing to, when you fall hopelessly in love, or that time you tripped over a step and went tumbling down the stairs in Corfu (or maybe that was just me).

How you breathe shapes how you live. It sets the rhythm of life. And you certainly notice when it's not right — take the word of this breathless asthmatic.

You might think that, with more than 20,000 breaths a day, we'd be masters at it. But most of us are actually a little sloppy. We breathe through our mouths. We fail to engage our diaphragms. And we often have no idea that different breathing techniques even exist (they can be surprisingly useful).

But when you get it right, breath becomes something far more powerful than background biology. It becomes a tool: a way to influence the body and calm the mind.

A bridge, if you will.

Take a deep breath... let's begin.

THE SUBTLE SCIENCE OF BREATHING

Try to raise your blood pressure just by thinking about it. Or make your neurons transmit faster, or your colon speed up digestion?

Breathing is a strange physiological process. It's one of the few that's both automatic and controllable. Interestingly, in ancient Greece, the word *pneuma* originally meant breath or air, later taking on the meaning of spirit or soul. In Christianity, it became the word used for the Holy Spirit, and it's where we derive English words like *pneumatic* and *pneumonia*.

And a little like a soul, breath continues without our control. But through conscious decisions, we can influence it. And these decisions aren't arbitrary. By speeding up, slowing down, or changing the depth of our breathing, we can create profound physiological effects.

James Nestor popularised this knowledge in his book *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*. As he notes, breathing can activate different branches of your nervous system — the sympathetic system to ramp up the body, or the parasympathetic system to calm it down. It can speed up or slow your heart rate and alter the oxygen-carbon dioxide balance in your blood.

With just a few tweaks to your breathing, you can enter a deep meditative state, possibly help lower physiological stress markers and activate the parasympathetic nervous system. Some breathing techniques may affect arousal, perceived energy and performance, but should be used with care.

Little wonder the ancient Greeks - founders of philosophy and the Olympics - spoke so highly of the *pneuma*. To them, breath wasn't just air moving through the lungs. It was the force that animated life itself.

THE MODERN BREATHING EPIDEMIC

You're probably breathing wrong. Maybe not all the time, but definitely some of the time. Be honest: you almost never think about how you breathe. You probably wouldn't even know how to identify problematic breathing, let alone fix it.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Picture the scene: you're sitting staring at your phone, your mouth hanging open, your posture slumped — your body like a pile of dirty clothes, shapeless and formless. Each of these factors can disrupt healthy breathing, raise stress levels and increase heart rate.

First, you're staring at your phone. Constant stimulation keeps your brain switched on, naturally increasing your breathing rate. Next, your mouth is hanging open. It's almost impossible to breathe through your nose with your mouth open, and nasal breathing helps filter, warm, and humidify the air.

As A Bridge

A photograph of a person's hand reaching out to touch the slats of window blinds. The scene is dimly lit, with light filtering through the blinds, creating a pattern of light and shadow. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, reaching towards the center. The background is a soft, out-of-focus view of the outdoors.

"In a busy world that encourages shallow breathing, returning to the breath is one of the simplest ways to restore balance."

By Dr Joseph Nightingale

BREATHING EXERCISES TO TRY

1. NASAL BREATHING
2. THE 4-6 RELAXATION BREATH
3. THE ONE-MINUTE RESET
4. BREATH AND MOVEMENT



Lastly, your posture collapses. Your chest can't expand properly, and you're certainly not breathing into your abdomen.

The result? Greater fatigue, more anxiety, reduced exercise performance, and poorer concentration. Yes, really. The good news is that breathing habits can change with a few minor fixes.

SIMPLE BREATHING PRACTICES TO START TODAY

NASAL BREATHING

Nasal breathing has gained a lot of attention recently — with good reason. Your nose is designed to inhale air, warming and filtering it to reduce the risk of infection.

It also releases nitric oxide, a compound that helps expand blood vessels. When inhaled through the nose, air reaching the lungs can enhance oxygen uptake.

If you're not a routine nasal breather, it can take a little adjustment. Most people find the biggest challenge comes during sleep. Nasal strips or mouth tape can help. However, mouth tape is not suitable for everyone; seek professional advice if you snore, suspect sleep apnoea or have breathing issues. It's also worth thinking about tongue position: it should rest against the roof of your mouth, not lolling around at the bottom.

THE 4-6 RELAXATION BREATH

The 4–6 relaxation technique is a simple breathing exercise for calming the body. Perfect if you're about to go into a job interview or dealing with a difficult emotional situation.

Here's how it works: Inhale for 4 seconds. Exhale for 6 seconds. Repeat for 2–3 minutes.

Another variation is box breathing: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and repeat.

THE ONE-MINUTE RESET

Five deep breaths. That's all it takes to reset.

Stop whatever you're doing. Close your eyes if you can. Then take five slow, deliberate breaths. Focus entirely on the breath, and feel the tension begin to ease.

Definitely a technique you'll want in your arsenal.

BREATH AND MOVEMENT

Breathing isn't just about sitting in a calm room with your eyes closed. Most breaths we take happen on the move.

Try pairing breathing with walking or stretching—for example, inhaling for three steps and exhaling for four.

Integrating conscious breathing into movement is one of the best ways to shift unhealthy breathing habits. You might be surprised how much it carries over into moments of rest.

THE SMALL HABIT THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

True happiness in life often comes from appreciating the little things. And there's nothing smaller (or more constant) than the breaths you take.

It doesn't require equipment or training. Yet it's often the best place to begin when trying to live with more focus and intention. Like I said at the start, breath is the bridge to everything else.

So start paying attention to your *pneuma*. Take a deeper breath. Slow it down. Notice it. The ancient Greeks may not have had modern physiology, but they understood something important: breath isn't just air moving through the lungs. It's the spirit of life itself.

EAT WELL FEEL GOOD

Simple recipes for *calm,*
energy, and everyday *balance.*
Made for 2

Overnight Berry Oats

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup oats
- 3/4 cup milk or plant milk
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1/2 cup mixed berries
- 1 tsp honey or maple syrup
- Pinch of cinnamon
- Spoon of Greek yoghurt or coconut yoghurt, optional
- Toasted almonds or seeds, to serve

Method:

Combine the oats, milk, chia seeds, honey, cinnamon, and half the berries in a jar or bowl. Stir well, cover, and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, top with the remaining berries, yoghurt if using, and a sprinkle of toasted almonds or seeds.

Sweet Potato and Black Bean Bowl

Ingredients:

1 small roasted sweet potato, cubed
1/2 cup black beans
Handful of spinach or mixed greens
1/4 avocado, sliced
1 tbsp olive oil
Juice of 1 lime
1/2 tsp cumin
Pinch of smoked paprika
Salt and pepper
Optional: pickled onions, coriander, pumpkin seeds, crushed tortilla chips

Method:

Add the sweet potato, black beans, and greens to a bowl. Drizzle over olive oil, lime juice, cumin, paprika, salt, and pepper. Top with avocado and any extra toppings you like.

Mediterranean Chickpea Bowl

Ingredients:

1 cup cooked chickpeas
1/2 cup cooked quinoa
Handful cherry tomatoes, halved
Handful cucumber, chopped
Handful of spinach or rocket
2 tbsp crumbled feta
1 tbsp olive oil
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 tsp tahini
Fresh parsley or mint
Pinch of salt and pepper
Optional: olives, pickled red onion, pumpkin seeds

Method:

Add the chickpeas, quinoa, vegetables, and greens to a bowl. Whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, tahini, salt, and pepper, then drizzle over the top. Finish with feta, herbs, and any extra toppings.

One-Pan Roasted Veg and Salmon

Ingredients:

1 salmon fillet
Broccoli florets
Sliced courgette or peppers
Sliced sweet potato
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp lemon zest
1 tsp honey
1 clove garlic, crushed
Salt, pepper, and paprika
Fresh dill or parsley, to finish
Optional: lemon wedges or a spoon of yoghurt & garlic dressing

Method:

Heat the oven to 200C. Toss the vegetables with olive oil, salt, pepper, and paprika, then spread them on a baking tray. Mix the salmon with lemon zest, honey, garlic, and a little oil, then place it on the tray and roast 15 - 20 minutes until the salmon is cooked through and the vegetables are tender. Finish with fresh herbs and lemon wedges.

Savoury Miso Sesame Oats

Ingredients:

1/2 cup oats
1 cup water or vegetable stock
1 tsp white miso paste
1 tsp soy sauce or tamari
1 tsp sesame oil
1 spring onion, sliced
1 handful spinach or pak choi
1 egg, fried or soft-boiled, optional
1 tbsp sesame seeds
Optional toppings: mushrooms, avocado, kimchi, chilli flakes, or roasted vegetables

Method:

Cook the oats in the water or stock until soft and creamy. Stir in the miso, soy sauce, sesame oil, and spinach until the greens have wilted. Spoon into a bowl and top with spring onion, sesame seeds, and any extra toppings you like. Add an egg if you want something a little more filling.

WORRYING ABOUT Sleep

Most people who struggle to sleep don't just have a sleep problem. **They have a thinking problem.** The body, left alone, knows how to sleep. It's the mind that gets in the way, looping through the meeting you had today, last week's conversation with a friend, that constant sense that something is wrong that you can't quite name. And then, somewhere along the way, a new thought or two joins the queue: **why can't I get to sleep? Why do I keep waking up?**



Victoria Cooper is a CBT-I Practitioner and UKIHCA Registered Health Coach, working with clients across the UK online and in-person on the Isle of Man.

That's when sleep anxiety begins to set in. And it has a way of making everything feel worse.

A 2026 UK survey of 2,000 adults found that racing thoughts are now the number one thing keeping people awake at night, overtaking being too hot, which topped the list just two years ago. That's a telling shift. Basic physical discomforts often have a direct and obvious route to solve them. A psychological one that feeds on your attempts to fix it is much harder to solve.

The scale of the problem is striking, yet often hidden. Only 27.9% of UK adults get the recommended seven or more hours of sleep per night. Just 14.3% wake up feeling consistently refreshed. And anxiety is already widespread before anyone has even pulled back the duvet: in any given week in England, six in every hundred people are diagnosed with Generalised Anxiety Disorder. Among 16 to 29-year-olds, that figure rises to 28%.

Sleep and anxiety have a circular relationship. Anxiety disrupts sleep. Poor sleep then increases anxiety. A large study following over 53,000 university students found that insomnia was associated with a threefold increase in the risk of developing a major depressive episode within a year, and nearly the same increase for Generalised Anxiety Disorder. Poor sleep doesn't simply reflect a troubled mind; over time, it actively creates one.

Several specific pressures are making this worse in the UK right now.

The first is screens. Over 91% of Britons use screens before bed. The two most popular pre-sleep activities are watching TV and scrolling on a phone. Research consistently links bedtime social media use with delayed sleep onset and more frequent night waking. For heavy users, the effect is pronounced. One large UK cohort study found they were more than twice as likely to report a late sleep onset compared to average users.

Part of this is the blue light and stimulation effect, which most people have heard about. But the content matters just as much as the medium.

Doomscrolling through newsfeeds before bed raises cortisol and keeps the brain in a state of alert, precisely the opposite of what sleep requires.

The second pressure is newer, and less discussed: sleep tracking. The UK is one of Europe's largest markets for wearable health devices, and alongside that growth has emerged a phenomenon researchers call orthosomnia: anxiety about achieving perfect sleep scores. Essentially, viewing the data from last night stresses people out, which then disrupts the following night's sleep. The harder someone with orthosomnia tries to engineer better sleep, the more elusive it becomes. Trackers are particularly problematic for perfectionists and people with Type A tendencies, where a single bad night's data can trigger a spiral.

Clinicians have noted a rise in orthosomnia cases since the pandemic, when remote health monitoring became widespread. The practical advice from sleep researchers is to look at weekly trends rather than individual nights, check in with how you actually feel before opening any app, and take a break from tracking altogether if the data has become a consistent source of stress. Alternatively, you can use your smartwatch to set a wind-down reminder, switch everything off and reduce notifications before bedtime.

What actually works to reduce sleep anxiety?

The NHS and NICE both recommend Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia, or CBT-I, as the first-line treatment for chronic insomnia. This is above sleeping pills. CBT-I works by identifying and restructuring the thought patterns that sustain sleep anxiety. Thoughts like 'I'll never get to sleep, I have to fall asleep right now, or tomorrow will be ruined' create the very arousal that prevents sleep. CBT-I replaces those patterns with more accurate, less catastrophic ones and changes the behaviours that reinforce the cycle, such as spending excessive time in bed or using alcohol to wind down.

Depending on where you're based, access through the NHS can involve a wait, but digital options have improved significantly. Sleepio, a NICE-recommended

CBT-I programme, is available free in parts of the UK without a prescription. Sleepstation is another NHS-approved option, accessible through GP referral in some areas with no waiting list. For someone with uncomplicated insomnia, no previous failed treatment and the ability to adhere to a digital programme, they can be highly effective.

Research suggests that working one-to-one with an accredited practitioner has some advantages over digital programmes like Sleepio, particularly for people whose insomnia is more complex. Dropout rates for self-guided digital CBT-I programmes average around 36%, and studies show it's the therapeutic relationship, not just the content, that matters. A trained practitioner may also identify what's actually driving the insomnia and adapt the approach accordingly, which is essential when anxiety, rumination, or comorbid conditions are part of the picture.

What CBT-I doesn't do is teach you to force sleep. That's the point. Sleep anxiety is sustained by the belief that sleep is something you can and must control. The harder you try, the less likely it is to come. Effective treatment starts with learning to let go of trying to control everything around your sleep, and understanding that wakefulness isn't a catastrophe, that lying quietly in the dark has value, that the mind can learn not to treat bedtime or your bed as a problem to be solved.

For most people with sleep anxiety, the path to better sleep isn't a new supplement, stricter bedtime or a more sophisticated sleep tracker. It's addressing the relationship with sleep itself: the expectations, the fears, the mental habits that have quietly turned rest into something else altogether.

It can certainly be harder work than the latest so-called "hack to fix your sleep in a week". But it's actually the work that lasts.



Scan the QR code to visit: sleepcoach.im

KNOCKALOE

& Joseph Pilates

*Inside a wartime machine, something unexpected happened: **Joseph Pilates** began shaping the method that would later carry his name.*

During the First World War, Knockaloe became the largest civilian internment camp in the British Isles. At its height, more than 20,000 men were held on farmland near Patrick, behind barbed wire, watchtowers and strict military routines. The camp was built to control movement, time and contact. For the men inside, life was shaped by waiting, uncertainty and the daily effort to remain mentally and physically intact.

Joseph Pilates arrived at Knockaloe not as the founder of a finished system, but as a young German man with a strong physical background. Before the war, he had trained in boxing, gymnastics and self-discipline, and he carried with him a belief that the body could be developed through focus and control. In the camp, those ideas met a harsher reality. Confinement did not allow men to move freely, yet it made movement more necessary than ever.

Accounts of camp life suggest that internment was not only physically restrictive, but psychologically corrosive. The phrase “barbed wire disease” was used to describe the mental strain of captivity: boredom, anxiety, repetition and the slow erosion of identity. Pilates appears to have understood that the body could become a defence against that pressure. By observing fellow internees, studying posture and movement, and encouraging physical exercise, he began developing ideas that would later be associated with his name.

That history matters because Knockaloe was more than a place of imprisonment. It became an unusual social and creative world under constraint. Among the internees were artists, musicians, craftsmen, performers, teachers and thinkers. Men wrote, painted, staged performances, made furniture, organised classes and invented ways to give structure to days that might otherwise have dissolved into boredom. The camp was controlled from the outside, but inside it, prisoners created systems of meaning.

Pilates belonged to that wider culture of adaptation. His work was not separate from the camp's conditions; it was shaped by them. In an environment where men had little privacy, little freedom and little certainty, the disciplined body offered something that could still be owned. Strength, balance, breath and concentration became more than physical skills. They were ways of resisting passivity.

Life at Knockaloe was intensely regulated. Men classified as “enemy aliens” were held not because they had necessarily committed crimes, but because wartime suspicion made them appear dangerous. The camp operated almost like a temporary town, with huts, kitchens, workshops, medical areas, fences, rules and routines. Yet unlike a town, it existed to contain its inhabitants. Every aspect of life reminded the men that their independence had been suspended.

This is what makes the Pilates story compelling. His method did not emerge from luxury, leisure or a modern fitness studio. It grew, at least in part, from a place where ordinary movement was restricted and morale had to be actively protected. The body, for Pilates, was not simply something to strengthen. It was something to organise.

Through control of breath, precision of movement and attention to posture, the individual could recover a sense of order when the surrounding world felt unstable.

Knockaloe therefore sits at an important point in the history of Pilates. It was one of the places where his thinking appears to have sharpened. The camp gave urgency to ideas he already carried: that physical health depended on mental focus, that movement could restore confidence, and that discipline could help the body withstand pressure.

What remains most striking is that the camp did not only confine people. It also forced them to create. Men taught one another, made objects, built communities, organised performances and preserved skills that might otherwise have disappeared under the weight of captivity. In that sense, Knockaloe produced not just a history of imprisonment, but a history of resilience. Joseph Pilates seems to have absorbed that lesson deeply. His later work would present the body as a whole system, one in which strength, control, breathing and concentration were connected. That idea feels inseparable from the conditions of the camp. When life becomes restricted, the smallest forms of control can become powerful. A breath, a stretch, a repeated exercise, a disciplined routine: all can become ways of holding the self together.

Pilates shows how pressure can produce form. Knockaloe was designed to reduce freedom, but within its boundaries men found ways to think, make, teach and move. Some of the most enduring ideas do not begin in comfort. They begin in necessity, when the body and mind are forced to discover what they can still do.

*In a place built to contain
the body, Pilates began to
see movement as a form
of control.*



MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

It's Never Too Late To Start!

By Vivien Speers

You may feel that meditation is either **shamelessly confusing** or **frustratingly inaccessible**. But trust me, I get it.

Before I began my own meditation journey, I believed that the serious practice of meditation only belonged to the self-righteous cliques.

Nevertheless, one lunchtime I decided to give it a go and attend a class. My first mistake was wearing a skirt. I had gone straight from the office and wrongly assumed we would all be sitting on chairs.

My knees crackled as I tried to squat, and then thumped down onto my tiny purple pillow. If I sat cross-legged like the chap next to me, in his sensible fisherman's pants, then I would most certainly have been showing my knickers. So, I settled into a kind of sideways kneel—not unlike a Victorian damsel in distress riding sidesaddle. I could neither close my eyes, breathe properly, nor stop counting the minutes until my release.

Needless to say, I rushed out of the class like a guilty imposter and managed the much more accessible and familiar practice of self-sabotage all the way home. I ticked the meditation box. I had tried it, but nope. *"It's just not for me"* became my mantra.

So, it might surprise you to learn that I have been teaching meditation for over fifteen years. When I learned about the science behind the benefits of a daily mindfulness practice, it helped to break the illusion that meditation was exclusive. Conversely, I realised that we all have instant access to meditation. The tools of the brain have always been there just waiting to be tapped into. You might raise an eyebrow if I said that to begin, you just have to focus on the breath. But it really can be as simple as that. Because if you can breathe, you can meditate.

When you realise that your brain is always ready to apply the information you feed it, there's a paradigm shift. You accept that you can be in control of your mind—and not the other way around. Think of your brain as a small child that needs some training. Have you noticed that when you focus—really focus—on something, you lose track of time? This is often referred to as being in a “flow state,” which can last for minutes, days or even weeks. But however long it lasts, that focus can only happen in the present moment. Your brain will hold onto that focus for as long as you keep feeding it the same information.

Imagine you're learning Spanish because you're travelling to Málaga next week. You learn some key words, try them out on the locals when you arrive, and pick up more as the week goes on. Then you go back home, weeks and months pass, and you haven't practised the Spanish you learned—so your brain lets go, and you can't remember anything other than hola. Repetition is key for anything you want to master.



So, we have *present-moment awareness* and *focus*. You can't have one without the other. Then we add in repetition.

If you're just starting out on your mindfulness meditation journey—or are a reluctant beginner—try this:

Choose a time in the day or night when you can give yourself just five minutes, even if that means setting your alarm five minutes earlier.

Get comfortable. Your brain will look for distractions, so don't give it any excuses.

Close your eyes and see if you can **focus on the breath** coming in and out of your body. Notice the breath's journey as it travels into the lungs. Do you feel your belly expand a little on the inhale? Is the exhale longer than the inhale? Don't try to change your breath to answer these questions—just notice. Be an observer of your breath without judging it. Don't even question whether this is meditation or not; it's simply being mindful of your breath. Try to keep that focus. Remember, your brain is learning.

Then do the same thing the next day, and the one after that, and so on. Keep it to five minutes when you're just starting, and know that you're training your brain to recognise this new experience. It takes time and repetition. When you feel ready, expand the time to ten minutes. Maybe, over time, you'll extend it to twenty. But don't run before you can walk.

Thoughts will come and go—that's normal for everyone. It's also why it's called a *practice*.



RECIPE CARD

Ingredient	Quantity
Finely Sliced Onion	1
Well-Fermented Kimchi	200 g
Gochujang	1-2 tsp
Soy Sauce	1 tsp
Vegetable Stock	400 ml
Extra Firm Tofu	400 g
Sugar	
Mushrooms	
Cooked Rice	
Courgette	
Spring Onion	



Kimchi Jjigae

Kimchi is one of Korea's most beloved fermented foods, made by salting and fermenting vegetables with ingredients like **garlic, ginger,** and **chilli**. Fermented foods are often discussed for the way they may support gut health, and kimchi also brings **fibre, flavour,** and plenty of **character** to the table.

This stew takes that same lively, tangy base and turns it into something warm and filling, with tofu, mushrooms, and vegetables added for depth and texture. It works best with well-fermented kimchi, which gives the broth its signature sharp, savoury flavour (Made for 1)

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 200 g well-fermented kimchi, chopped
- 2 tbsp kimchi brine
- 1 tbsp gochujang
- 1–2 tsp gochugaru, optional
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- 400 ml vegetable stock
- 400 g extra firm tofu, pressed and cut into chunks
- 1 handful mushrooms, sliced
- 1 handful cabbage or pak choi, shredded
- 1 small courgette, sliced, optional
- Salt, to taste
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 1 spring onion, sliced
- Sesame seeds, to finish
- Cooked rice, to serve

Method

Heat the vegetable oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 4 to 5 minutes until softened, then stir in the garlic and cook for another minute.

Add the kimchi and fry for a few minutes until it becomes fragrant and slightly darker around the edges.

Stir in the gochujang, gochugaru if using, soy sauce, sugar, vegetable stock, and kimchi brine. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 10 to 15 minutes so the kimchi softens and the broth becomes richer.

Add the mushrooms, cabbage or pak choi, courgette if using, and tofu. Simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes, giving the tofu time to absorb the flavour.

Taste and adjust with a little extra soy sauce, kimchi brine, or salt if needed. Stir through the sesame oil just before serving.

Finish with spring onion and sesame seeds, and serve hot with cooked rice.

The fermented kimchi base gives the stew its sharp, savoury depth, while the tofu and vegetables make it warm, filling, and colourful. It is a good example of how a classic dish can stay true to itself while becoming a little more generous.

All About Pilatesology



Alisa Wyatt has built more than a platform, she has created a living archive for **classical Pilates**



*Alisa Wyatt has built more than a platform. She has created a **living archive for classical Pilates**. Through Pilatesology, she and her husband Jack have helped safeguard the original method while **nurturing a global community** of teachers and students who care deeply about its future.*

*Her story is one of **movement, curiosity, resilience, and devotion** to a craft that changed her life.*

A LIFELONG LOVE OF MOVEMENT

Alisa describes movement and learning as two of the strongest forces guiding her life. As an English major in Los Angeles in the early 90s, she often found herself slipping into the dance department or taking fitness classes whenever she needed a break from thinking. She has always been drawn to the challenge of being a beginner, the awkward, rewarding process of learning something new until it begins to make sense in the body.

After college, she moved to New York City and began working as a book publicist. It was there, just around the corner from her office, that she discovered Pilates. What began as a stress-relieving escape from an intense job soon became something much deeper. Training with Romana Kryzanowska and her teachers introduced her to the physicality of classical Pilates and the extraordinary power of being seen before you can see yourself. That belief in her ability became a quiet turning point, helping her reconnect with herself as she moved through depression and the aftermath of an abusive relationship.

Eventually, Alisa left publishing and taught Pilates from her New York third-floor walk-up for more than a decade. The studio began in her kitchen, much like Pilatesology itself would later do.

THE BIRTH OF PILATESOLOGY

The idea for Pilatesology emerged organically during the DVD era. A friend in the internet world warned her that DVDs were becoming obsolete and suggested a membership website instead. The timing was right. Alisa had already begun sharing the idea with Pilates friends, and the response was enthusiastic.

At the time, there were online fitness platforms, but nothing that truly focused on classical Pilates. That gap became the opportunity. Pilatesology was designed to preserve and share the original method with care, depth, and integrity, not as a catch-all wellness site, but as a focused resource for those who value tradition.

Even the name reflects that intention. It combines Pilates and Contrology, honouring both the public name the method became known by and the original term Joseph Pilates used for his work.

A PARTNERSHIP BUILT ON SHARED STRENGTHS

Building a business with her husband was not just practical, it was natural. Their partnership grew out of complementary strengths and a shared passion for the work. Alisa brought her deep knowledge of classical Pilates, along with her communication, marketing, and writing skills. Jack brought technical and visual expertise, helping shape how the content would work on camera and online.

Working so closely together taught Alisa just how observant and patient Jack is. She speaks warmly of his eye for detail and his customer-service instinct, which became a surprisingly important part of running a digital platform. Together, they formed a team capable of turning a demanding creative vision into something sustainable.

A TIME CAPSULE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

What makes Pilatesology distinctive is its commitment to classical Pilates as a living tradition. Alisa cares deeply about preserving the voices, stories, and cues of the first-generation teachers who learned directly from Joseph Pilates. She spent as much time as possible learning from Romana Kryzanowska, Kathy Grant, Jay Grimes, and Sonje Mayo, knowing that those firsthand stories would not always be available.

That sense of urgency shaped Pilatesology's mission. For Alisa, the platform is a time capsule, a place to capture the words and teachings that might otherwise be lost, so future generations can continue to learn from them.

Her focus now is on the next generation: teachers who will carry the torch forward with depth, integrity, and connection. She sees her role as helping people she believes in succeed and reach the audiences they are meant to serve.

BUILDING SOMETHING THAT LASTS

When asked what advice she would offer someone hoping to turn a passion into a sustainable business, Alisa's answer is practical. Passion matters, but it is not enough on its own. A real business needs a clear plan, a specific audience, and a genuine solution to a problem people have.

She emphasises the importance of asking the right questions early: Who are your customers?

How will they find you? Why will they stay? Just as important are the systems that support a good experience, from booking to rebooking, from remembering client goals to keeping everything running smoothly.

Her perspective reflects years of lived experience: creating something beautiful is one thing, but making it work consistently is what allows it to endure.

WHAT SHE HOPES JOSEPH PILATES WOULD SEE

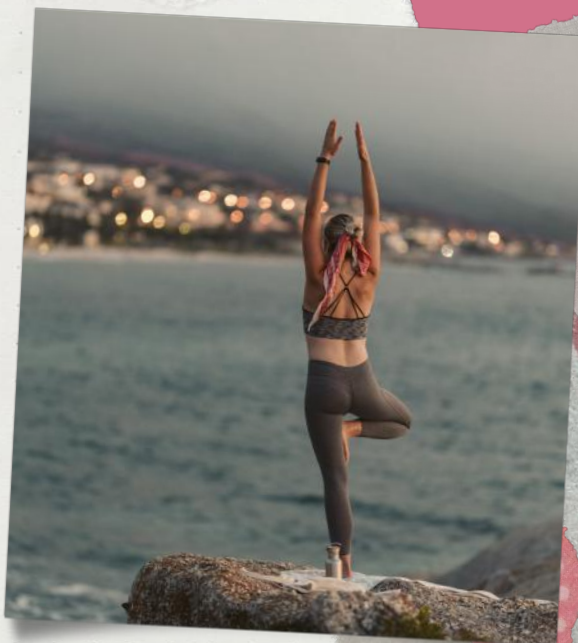
If Joseph Pilates himself could see what she has built, Alisa hopes he would feel honoured, proud, and seen. That, perhaps, is the essence of Pilatesology, not just a platform, but a tribute to a method, a lineage, and the people who kept it alive.



Find out more at
pilatesology.com



Wellness often lives in the things we repeat without much ceremony. These **small habits** may seem ordinary, but they **shape the way a day feels**. They give the body rhythm, comfort, and a sense of being looked after.



Ordinary



Food has its own kind of ritual too. Something as simple as avocado on toast, olive oil over vegetables, or fruit eaten slowly can become a quiet act of care. Nourishment does not need to be complicated to matter. When we pause long enough to taste what we are eating, food becomes more than fuel. It becomes a small reminder that the body deserves attention before it has to ask for it.

Movement can be one of the simplest ways to arrive back in your body. Yoga does this gently. It asks you to notice where you are holding on, where you can soften, and where you feel steady. A few slow stretches, a sun salutation, or simply breathing through a posture can change the tone of the day. The point is not to perform it perfectly. The point is to feel present inside yourself again.



Rest begins long before sleep. It starts in the choices that tell the body the day can start to soften. A bath. Lower lights. Fresh pyjamas. A book instead of another scroll. These things may seem small, but the body understands them. They create a boundary between doing and recovering, between the outside world and the private space where we can finally let go.

Rituals



Ordinary rituals are meaningful because **they remind us that care does not have to be grand.** Sometimes it begins with the smallest repeated thing, done with a little more attention.

NATURAL DRINKS



FOR YOUR
NERVOUS
SYSTEM

In today's fast moving world, our nervous systems are often asked to do too much. Deadlines, digital noise, poor sleep and daily stress can leave the body feeling wired, tired, or somewhere in between.

Supporting the nervous system is not only about relaxation techniques. It is also about what we give the body to work with. Natural drinks cannot solve stress on their own, but they can become small daily rituals that help the body slow down, hydrate, and return to balance.

For centuries, **chamomile** has been used as a bedtime infusion. Its calming reputation is partly linked to apigenin, a plant compound that may interact with receptors in the brain involved in relaxation and sleep. A warm cup in the evening can become more than a drink. It becomes a signal to the body that the day is ending.

Lemon balm, a fragrant herb from the mint family, has also been studied for its calming effects. Traditionally used to ease tension and support mood, it makes a gentle tea for moments when the mind feels busy. Taken warm or iced, it offers a simple way to pause, breathe, and reset.

Golden milk brings together turmeric, milk or plant based milk, cinnamon, and sometimes honey. Turmeric contains curcumin, a compound studied for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. A pinch of black pepper and a little fat can help the body absorb it more effectively. But beyond the science, golden milk is also comforting. It is warm, grounding, and quietly nourishing.

Green tea offers a different kind of support. It contains L theanine, an amino acid associated with calm attention, as well as a modest amount of caffeine. That combination is why many people find green tea gentler than coffee. It can support focus without the same sharp edge, making it a useful choice for mornings or slow afternoons.

Caring for your nervous system does not always require supplements or elaborate routines. Sometimes it is as simple as choosing the right drink. Something brewed, blended, or poured with intention. These natural elixirs can become daily rituals that may bring calm to chaos, one sip at a time.



*The next time
you reach for a
drink, choose
one that doesn't
just **quench**
your thirst,
choose one that
steadies your
soul.*

THE MIND



R EADERS

These are books for anyone who has ever found their own mind slightly surprising. They move through science, story and experience with curiosity, asking why we feel what we feel, see what we see, and become who we become.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

by Michael Pollan

Michael Pollan enters the world of psychedelics with the curiosity of someone opening a locked room and finding scientists, patients, mystics, therapists and nervous first-timers already inside. The book follows the history of psychedelic research, its collapse into taboo, and its return to serious study around depression, addiction, end-of-life distress and consciousness.

What makes it work is Pollan's caution. He does not write like a salesman for transcendence. He writes like a person trying to understand why a single experience can make the self feel looser, death feel less absolute, and the mind feel less like a prison. It is part science book, part cultural history, part travelogue into the edges of perception.

BEING YOU

by Anil Seth

Anil Seth takes on one of the oldest questions in the world: why does being alive feel like something from the inside? His answer is wonderfully unsettling. Consciousness, he argues, has less to do with receiving reality as it is and more to do with the brain making its best controlled guess.

This is the book to read when you want your own senses to feel slightly suspicious. The colours, sounds, body feelings and sense of self that seem so immediate are all being actively built. Seth writes with clarity, but the ideas stay strange in the best way. You come away feeling that the world has not changed, but your confidence in your own version of it has.

HOW EMOTIONS ARE MADE

by Lisa Feldman Barrett

Lisa Feldman Barrett's book is a quiet provocation. Instead of treating emotions as fixed little programmes waiting to be triggered, she argues that the brain constructs emotional experience using body signals, past experience, language and context.

That idea can feel oddly liberating. Anger, sadness, anxiety and joy become less like invaders and more like meanings the brain is making in real time. The book asks us to stop treating emotions as universal facial expressions and start seeing them as deeply shaped by learning, culture and the body. It is sharp, useful, and occasionally uncomfortable in the way good science can be.

THE MAN WHO MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A

HAT by Oliver Sacks

Oliver Sacks wrote about neurology as if every case contained a whole life, not just a diagnosis. In these clinical tales, people lose memory, recognition, bodily certainty or ordinary perception, yet remain full of personality, humour, dignity and surprise.

The title story, about a man with visual agnosia, has become famous, but the power of the book lies in its tenderness. Sacks reminds us that the mind is not only a system that can break. It is also a place where people keep improvising, adapting and becoming themselves in ways medicine alone cannot fully describe. Read it less as a textbook and more as a humane encounter with the strangeness of personhood.

THE EXTENDED MIND

by Annie Murphy Paul

Annie Murphy Paul challenges the idea that thinking happens only inside the skull. Her book argues that we think with the body, with movement, with rooms, with tools, with nature, and with other people. It gives language to something many of us know instinctively: a walk can solve what a desk cannot, a conversation can unlock a thought, and a room can either sharpen the mind or flatten it.

This is the most practical book on the list without feeling like advice. It makes intelligence feel less lonely. The mind becomes something spread through gesture, space, rhythm, paper, friendship and environment. For anyone who has ever needed to move in order to think clearly, it feels like a beautiful permission slip.

AGE Gate



Children have been asked to do something many adults struggle with: resist platforms built to keep them watching, reacting, comparing and coming back. The phone sits beside the bed. The feed refreshes without end. The group chat keeps moving after midnight. Childhood now stretches across two worlds at once, one physical and slow, the other always awake.

The UK government wants to draw a harder line. From Spring 2027, under-16s are expected to be blocked from certain social media platforms, with stronger age checks and tighter rules around high-risk features. Ministers describe the plan as a way to reduce harm, improve wellbeing and give young people more room for ordinary childhood: play, sleep, school, family, friendships and time away from the scroll.

The concern comes from more than screen time. Research around social media and mental health remains complex, but the risks are clear enough to take seriously. Heavy use has been linked with poor sleep, body image pressure, cyberbullying, lower self-esteem and depressive symptoms in some young people. The danger can be sharper for teenagers already feeling lonely, anxious or excluded.

Adolescence is a sensitive stage. The brain is still learning how to read status, threat, belonging and identity. A comment can feel enormous. A silence in a group chat can become a story. A photo can become proof of worth. Social media did not invent insecurity or bullying, but it can make them constant, public and hard to escape.

The feed also changes attention. It rewards interruption and turns boredom into something to fix instantly. It offers emotion in small, sharp hits: envy, outrage, amusement, fear, desire, relief. For a young person trying to build a stable sense of self, that is a noisy place to grow up.

Still, a ban is a blunt tool for a delicate problem. Some teenagers will find ways around it. They may lie about their age, use older accounts, borrow devices, move into gaming spaces, or gather in private corners of the internet that adults understand even less. Australia's early experience

with under-16 restrictions has already shown how difficult enforcement can be when young users are determined and age checks vary in strength. There is also the privacy question. If people have to prove their age online, someone has to check. That may mean facial estimation, identity documents, device signals or other forms of age assurance. Used badly, a safety policy could create a new kind of everyday surveillance.

The strongest argument for the ban may be cultural. Laws set expectations. They tell parents they are no longer fighting alone. They tell platforms that children should never have been treated as acceptable collateral in the attention economy.

But protection has to reach beyond the age gate. Safer design, better default privacy, less addictive feeds, stronger moderation and proper access for independent researchers all have a role. So do youth clubs, public spaces, mental health services, digital education and families with real support behind them.

Some young people also find genuine connection online, especially those who feel isolated offline. Disabled teenagers, LGBTQ+ teenagers, young carers, neurodivergent young people and those living somewhere they feel unseen may rely on digital spaces for humour, information and friendship. Protection should reduce harm without cutting off every doorway to belonging. The ban is both a policy and a confession. It admits that children were left too long inside systems designed for engagement before wellbeing. It admits that household rules alone were never enough.

Will it work? Partly, perhaps. It may reduce exposure, change expectations and push platforms to take age seriously. It may help parents hold a boundary. But it will not end teenage curiosity, loneliness, comparison or the need to belong. An age gate can mark the entrance. It cannot build the world on the other side.

For this to mean something, young people need safer technology and better reasons to look up. The point is not a screenless childhood. The point is a childhood no longer designed by machines that profit from keeping attention trapped.



THE ESSENTIALS

Tools for at home practice

1. The Mat

Your foundation for practice. A good mat gives you comfort, grip and a clear space to arrive, breathe and move with intention.



2. The Weights

Small weights add strength and awareness. They help you move with control, build confidence and bring extra focus to simple exercises.

3. A Notebook

A place to track your progress. Write down goals, reflections, questions and small wins so your practice becomes something you can see growing.



4. A Strap

A strap supports safe, deeper movement. It helps you stretch without forcing, improve mobility and meet your body exactly where it is.

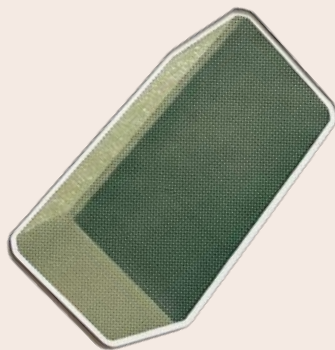


5. Scent

A simple scent can shift the mood of your practice. Lavender, peppermint or eucalyptus can help create a feeling of calm, clarity or fresh energy.

6. Blocks

A block brings the ground closer. Use it for balance, support and alignment, especially when your body needs steadiness, space or a little extra comfort.







THE WEEKLY SHOP

.....

IN A WORLD OBSESSED WITH
CUTTING FOODS OUT, SCIENCE
SUGGESTS THE REAL KEY TO
HEALTH MAY SIMPLY BE ADDING
MORE PLANTS IN.

.....

SHOPPING LIST

.....

LENTILS
FERMENTED VEGETABLES
MIXED SEEDS
HERBS
WHOLE GRAINS

.....

READ MORE →

We like to think of health as something we achieve through effort, a workout, a juice cleanse, a routine. But real health often begins in something far simpler: the humble weekly shop. Every basket tells a story about how we nourish ourselves, how we live, and increasingly, how far we've drifted from what our bodies truly need.

For all the noise around diets, calorie counts, and clean eating, science is quietly uncovering a different truth: it's not about restriction, it's about diversity. **Professor Tim Spector**, genetic epidemiologist and author of *Food for Life*, *The Diet Myth*, and founder of the Zoe nutrition project, has shown that the single strongest marker of good health isn't cutting out food groups, but how many different plants you eat each week.

His studies, drawing on data from tens of thousands of people, show that those who eat 30 or more types of plants per week (vegetables, fruits, grains, seeds, nuts, legumes, herbs, and even spices) have richer, more resilient gut microbiomes. In other words, their internal ecosystem is stronger, more adaptive, and better equipped to handle everything from stress to inflammation.

It sounds simple, but most of us don't come close. The average Western diet is now mostly made of ingredients that are heavily processed. Many are also stripped of fibre, the very thing that feeds the microbes which, in turn, protect us. Somewhere between convenience and routine, we've lost colour, texture, and variety.

The cost isn't just physical. The gut and the brain are in constant dialogue via the vagus nerve, a superhighway of communication that influences mood, clarity, and energy. While we'll save the deeper science of the microbiome for a few pages on, what's clear is this: what we eat shapes how we think and feel.

Think of it like this: your gut is an orchestra. Each plant food, a carrot, a handful of lentils, a sprig of parsley, is an instrument. The more instruments you have, the richer the music.

The good news? Rebuilding that harmony doesn't require drastic change. It's about curiosity and colour. Try swapping lettuce for rocket or watercress; add herbs, seeds, or fermented foods; mix grains; try something new each week. Each different plant you add is a small act of renewal, a note in that internal symphony.

There's beauty in the ritual of shopping with awareness. Walking through a market, noticing what's seasonal, choosing with the senses; the act itself becomes a practice in mindfulness: reconnecting with food as something alive, not manufactured.

Spector often says that food is data, information your body reads and interprets. But perhaps it's also poetry: a language between us and the natural world. When we fill our baskets with diversity, colour, and life, we're not just feeding ourselves; we're feeding the community of trillions within us that keeps us balanced, resilient, and whole.

Your gut is an orchestra. Each plant food, a carrot, a handful of lentils, a sprig of parsley, is an instrument. The more instruments you have, the richer the music.



How the Body Finds Its Line

There is an intelligence in the body that operates completely under the radar. Before we even consider posture or poise, our muscles are already making tiny adjustments to keep us upright and balanced. But enter the modern era, bringing with it an entirely new physical shape: we are no longer upright, we are considered the human croissant.

Thanks to smartphones, laptops, and the endless scrolling of daily life, we spend a remarkable amount of time folded forward. The head drops, the shoulders round, the spine curves, and suddenly we resemble a popular French pastry. The neck bears the brunt of this bakery-inspired alignment, carrying the heavy weight of our digital lives while our body is loudly begging for a break from this newly found structure we find ourselves in.

There is, of course, science behind why this shape can feel so uncomfortable. Forward head posture and rounded upper back positions have been linked with greater strain through the neck and upper back, and they can also alter the way the ribcage and diaphragm move. In plain terms, when we collapse forward for long stretches, the body has less room to organise itself efficiently. We may not notice it straight away, but over time the effects can show up as stiffness, fatigue,

shallow breathing, or a general sense that everything feels a little more compressed. Finding your line offers a delightful remedy to this modern shape. True alignment feels like a deep sigh of relief for the skeleton. It involves guiding the head back over the spine, letting the shoulders melt into place, and allowing the hips to fully support the frame. The experience feels wonderfully easy, like returning to your own personal architecture.

A well-aligned body moves with effortless grace. As we unfold the croissant, we breathe more fully, stand taller, and project a quiet physical confidence. There has also been interest in whether upright or expansive postures can nudge self-perception and confidence in the short term, although the idea is best understood as suggestive rather than conclusive. The adjustments remain beautifully subtle, a lifted gaze, a lengthened spine, a rooted stance. Together, they change the way we inhabit ourselves and the way the body feels to live in.

In the end, the body is always trying to find its line. Not a rigid line, not a perfect one, but a living one. The kind that lets us move with less strain, carry ourselves with a little more ease, and step out of the croissant shape and back into something closer to our natural form, leaving the pastries safely at the bakery.



14 DAYS

To Sharper Focus

Focus often feels fragile in an always-on world. Messages arrive, tabs multiply, thoughts drift, and the mind can start the day already scattered. Attention gets pulled in many directions at once, which is why even a small daily practice can make a meaningful difference.

Over 14 days, mindfulness offers a simple way to train attention with more care and consistency. Research suggests that regular mindful practice can support concentration, mental clarity, emotional steadiness and cognitive resilience. Even 5 minutes a day can begin to strengthen the brain's ability to return, reset and refocus.

The beauty of this practice lies in its simplicity. You bring your attention to one thing at a time: the breath, the body, the sounds around you, or the thoughts passing through. Each time the mind wanders and you gently guide it back, you are practising focus. That return is what matters!

Fourteen days can help you notice subtle but powerful changes. You may find it easier to settle into a task. You may feel less mentally cluttered. You may begin to respond with more patience, rather than reacting on autopilot. Focus is not about forcing the mind to stay still; it is about building a steadier relationship with attention.

There is no perfect way to begin. A few quiet breaths in the morning count. A short body scan before bed counts. Sitting in silence for five minutes counts. So does stepping away from your phone and noticing the feeling of your feet on the ground. Small moments of awareness build over time.

This 14-day practice is simply an invitation to notice what changes when you start paying attention. A little more clarity. A little more calm. A little more choice in where your mind goes. Over time, those small shifts can sharpen focus in a way that feels steady, supportive and real.

A LITTLE SUPPORT

Guided apps can help you begin, especially when the mind feels busy. You do not need one, but they can offer structure, reminders and short practices.

CALM

Good for sleep, relaxation, breathing and gentle daily meditations.

HEADSPACE

Clear, beginner-friendly guidance for focus, stress and sleep.

INSIGHT TIMER

A huge library of free meditations, music, talks and timers.

BALANCE

Personalised sessions that adjust to your mood and goals.

SIMPLE TIMER

Sometimes a timer is enough. Set two minutes, close your eyes, and begin.



*Exhale Pilates is the UK's most **highly respected and loved Pilates brand**, pioneering the Classical method with fun and highly restorative workouts that transform the body. **They embody the core principles created by Joseph Pilates.***

At Exhale, everything we do, from how we teach, to the apparatus you use, to how you feel when you walk in, is intentional.

So no matter what brings you to Pilates, whether you're recovering from an injury, future-proofing your body, or supporting other sports and training you love, our team will meet you exactly where you are.

So what makes us different?

**Experienced, Educated Teachers
Expertise you can trust!**

Our teachers are highly trained, many with decades of experience

and all have completed over 600 hours of in-depth, hands-on training.

They study the entire Classical system, from mat to every piece of apparatus, so they understand the body beyond just exercises and choreography.

They know when to challenge, when to support, and how to help your body thrive.

Every session is guided by knowledge and care.

The Apparatus Designed for Your Body

All our studios are fully equipped with authentic Classical Pilates apparatus, each spring, strap and dimension crafted to meet your body where it is... and make it work!

It's not a one-size-fits-all workout.

It's a system that adapts to you, helping you build balance, strength, and true alignment.

Teachers with Heart & A Welcoming Studio

Beyond technique, what makes Exhale special is our people.

Our teachers care deeply about you, your journey, your goals, and how you feel every time you leave the studio.

You'll always be supported, encouraged, and reminded of what your body is capable of.

A Method That Lasts a Lifetime

A method, not a moment.

We don't follow fitness fads.

We teach the Pilates method as it was designed to be an intelligent, sustainable movement that builds strength, mobility, and balance for life.

Feeling inspired to come move with us or do your teacher training at our studios?



**Head over to our website
for more information:**

exhalepilateslondon.com

EXHALE PLATES



L O N D O N



MIND THE GAP

What the UK's mental health picture tells us about
the brain, the body and the limits of treatment

Mental health in the UK has become both **more visible** and **more strained**. We talk about anxiety, depression, burnout and neurodiversity with far more openness than previous generations did, yet **the services designed to help are under real pressure**. The result is a complicated picture. **Awareness has improved. Stigma has reduced.** Treatments are better researched than ever. At the same time, too many people are still waiting, relapsing or finding that the standard options do not quite meet the complexity of their lives.

Mental health in the UK has become easier to talk about, but harder for many people to manage. We have more awareness, better language and less shame than previous generations, yet the systems designed to help are under real strain. The result is a complicated picture: more people are naming what they feel, more people are reaching for support, and too many are still waiting, relapsing, or finding that standard care does not quite meet the shape of their lives.

The latest figures make one thing clear: mental health has moved from the margins into everyday life. In England, common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression are affecting a larger share of adults than they did a decade ago. Young adults stand out in particular, with rising levels of distress, self-harm histories and symptoms that often arrive alongside pressure around money, work, identity and the future.

For children and young people, the picture is just as serious. Around one in five people aged 8 to 25 had a probable mental disorder in 2023. Behind that phrase are ordinary families trying to get through school mornings, friendships, exams, online life, sleep problems and the long wait for help. The numbers matter, but only because they point to something human: a generation carrying more than it should have to carry.

Care can change lives. Talking therapies, medication, crisis support and specialist services all have their place. For many people, the right treatment brings relief, structure and a way forward. But recovery is uneven. Some people find support quickly and respond well. Others drop out, wait too long, or receive help that only touches one part of a much bigger problem

That gap matters. Mental health rarely presents as a single, neat issue. Anxiety can sit beside poor sleep. Depression can be tangled with loneliness, grief, pain, debt, trauma or burnout. A person may need therapy, but also safety. Medication, but also housing. Better sleep, but also less chaos at work. When life itself keeps generating pressure, treatment has to work harder.

This is why the future of mental health care needs a wider lens. The brain matters, but so do the body, relationships, income, food, movement, rest and the conditions people live in. Research increasingly points towards a more connected view of mental health: one that includes the nervous system, inflammation, hormones, the gut-brain axis and the daily environments that either steady us or wear us down.

The gut has become part of this conversation, and for good reason. The gut and brain communicate through nerves, immune signals, hormones and microbial activity. Studies suggest the microbiome may play a role in mood and stress responses, but it should

be discussed with caution. Gut health is relevant. It is not a magic switch. A probiotic will not untangle trauma, poverty, chronic stress or depression on its own.

What feels more useful is a balanced message: mental health care should be more joined up. Therapy and medication can be essential. So can sleep, nutrition, movement, social connection, financial security and a life with enough space to recover. These are not lifestyle extras. They are part of the ground a person stands on while trying to get well.

The UK is therefore standing in a difficult but important place. We know more than we used to. We have treatments that help many people. We also have services under pressure, unequal access, and too many lives shaped by stress before care even begins. The next stage of mental health care has to be more precise and more human: serious enough to treat illness, broad enough to understand people, and honest enough to admit that recovery rarely happens through one intervention alone.

Mental health is brain health, body health and social health. The future lies in treating it that way.



Parent Brain



What new science is revealing about how mothers and fathers are changed by care.

For generations, parents have described feeling changed after a child arrives. More alert. More vulnerable. More distracted. More protective. Until recently, those changes were usually spoken about as emotion, instinct or exhaustion. Now brain imaging is giving the experience a clearer shape.

In 2017, neuroscientist Elseline Hoekzema and her team published one of the first major human studies showing that pregnancy leaves long-lasting changes in the brain. They followed women from before conception to after birth and found reductions in grey matter volume, especially in regions involved in social understanding. At first, “loss” sounds worrying. In neuroscience, it can also suggest refinement. The brain may be becoming more specialised for reading another person’s needs.

That idea has become even more interesting with newer work. In 2024, Laura Pritschet, Elizabeth Chrastil, Emily Jacobs and colleagues mapped one woman’s brain across pregnancy with 26 MRI scans, from before conception to two years after birth. They found widespread decreases in grey matter volume and cortical thickness during pregnancy, alongside increases in white matter microstructure. In simpler terms, some areas appeared to slim and fine-tune, while communication pathways temporarily became more efficient.

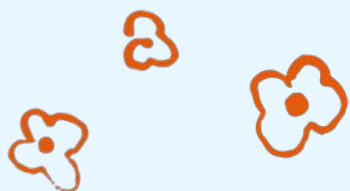
These changes tracked the rise and fall of pregnancy hormones, especially oestrogen and progesterone. The researchers were careful about what this means. The study followed one person in exceptional detail, so it cannot explain every pregnancy.

But it gives science one of its clearest pictures yet of the maternal brain changing week by week. For mothers, this helps explain why early parenthood can feel so intense. The brain is adjusting to a child who cannot use words yet. It has to notice sound, breath, facial expression, danger, hunger, discomfort and connection. A mother may feel foggy or unlike herself, but the research does not support the simple idea that motherhood makes the brain worse. It points instead to adaptation under pressure.

The father’s brain changes too, though usually through a different route. Fathers do not undergo the same pregnancy hormone shifts, so their changes appear more closely tied to contact, repetition and involvement. Darby Saxbe at the University of Southern California and Magdalena Martínez-García in Madrid scanned first-time fathers before and after birth. Their work found changes in cortical regions linked with visual processing, attention and social understanding of the baby.

More recent fatherhood research has added another layer. A 2026 study by Negin Daneshnia and colleagues followed fathers across the first 24 weeks after birth. It found early changes in grey matter volume, followed by later region-specific increases, as well as changes in networks involved in attention, emotion and attachment. The strongest changes appeared in the early weeks, when sleep is broken and the baby’s needs are constant.

Fatherhood seems to be shaped by doing: holding the baby, learning the cry, waking at night, feeding, carrying, soothing, playing, returning again after getting it wrong. The brain receives the child through repetition. Care becomes information. The difference between mothers and fathers is not a question of who loves more, but of pathways. Mothers often enter parenthood through pregnancy, birth, hormones and bodily change as well as care. Fathers are altered more by proximity, responsibility and repeated involvement. Biology opens one door. Practice opens another.



There is also a warning inside the research. A brain becoming more sensitive to a baby may also become more exposed to strain. New parents can carry love, anxiety, sleep loss and low mood at the same time. Parenthood adapts the brain, but adaptation can be exhausting. This makes support feel less like a luxury and more like part of the biology of care. Parental leave, shared responsibility, sleep, mental health support and time with the baby all help shape how parenthood is lived.

The science is still young, but it is already changing the story. Parenthood is not only a role people step into. It is a period of neuroplasticity, a time when the adult brain adjusts to the demands of keeping another human close. A child does not simply change a parent's schedule. They change what the parent notices. Slowly, through hormones, attention and repeated care, the brain learns the child. And in learning the child, the parent is changed too.





BAM Clothing shares
our passion for movement,
wellbeing, and community.
You can read an interview with
BAM here!

BAM CLOTHING

Find out more at
bambooclothing.co.uk



What was the original idea behind BAM, and what gap did you feel was missing in clothing at the time?

The “aha” moment came from our founder, Dave Gordon. He was on an expedition across Greenland with a team of elite Gurkhas, surrounded by one of the last truly untouched wildernesses on Earth. It was there that he realised he wanted to build a business that was genuinely sustainable and viable long term.

When he came across bamboo, soft, regenerative, and incredibly versatile, he knew he had found the foundation for that idea. That was back in 2006. From those early days, with Dave running things out of his garage, to now having a team of around 50, the core values have not changed. The goal was always to create a business that could act as a blueprint for doing things properly, and we are proud to say we have stayed true to that while constantly pushing ourselves further.

Describe BAM in three words?

Freedom. Soft. Unapologetic.

For readers discovering BAM for the first time, what makes the brand different from other lifestyle or activewear labels?

If you are discovering us for the first time, welcome. The first thing you will notice is the feel. Most activewear today is essentially made from refined oil, polyester, whereas we are fabric first, nature based, and completely free from forever chemicals.

We focus on natural fibres because they work with your body, not against it. They regulate temperature better and feel far more comfortable on the skin. Almost everyone says the same thing the first time they try BAM: “Wow, this is so soft.”

If you are used to leggings that itch or tops that feel like you are wrapped in plastic, that is exactly the problem we set out to solve.

Why was bamboo chosen as such a central fabric for the brand?

Bamboo really is a bit of a miracle plant. It grows incredibly fast, uses far less water than cotton, and does not need pesticides, which is what first drew us to it.

What has kept it at the heart of the brand is how it performs. It is naturally breathable, which means you do not need to wash it as often, something people often overlook when thinking about sustainability. And practically speaking, who does not want a smaller washing pile?

It allows your skin to breathe rather than trapping moisture like synthetics do. Once you have worn bamboo for a workout or a long hike, going back to purely synthetic fabrics just does not feel right.

Are you seeing any notable changes in how people shop for essentials and active inspired clothing?

Yes, one of the biggest shifts we are seeing is the rise in second hand shopping. While sales of new clothing across the industry have plateaued, resale is growing, which is a really positive move environmentally.

It is something we actively support through our Pre Loved programme. Customers get 120% of the resale value back as BAM credit, which helps keep garments in circulation for longer, exactly what they are designed for.

We are also seeing continued demand for versatile, multifunctional pieces, activewear that works just as well day to day. And of course, fashion cycles still play a role. Wider leg shapes are coming back, leaning into a more relaxed, tracksuit inspired look, which we love and have reflected in our collections.

How has BAM grown from its early days into the business it is now?

We have grown as a direct to consumer, online brand. One of our biggest breakthroughs came from something quite simple, sending out catalogues with a free pair of sample socks. That really put us on the map and drove a significant increase in orders.

It is something we do less of now, mainly because of cost, but it worked incredibly well at the time. These days, people are more likely to discover us through word of mouth, press coverage, or social media, but every now and then we still send out a pair of socks, so you might get lucky.

What have been the biggest turning points in the brand's journey?

We have come a long way from those garage days. One major turning point was moving beyond basic tees into more technical products like performance leggings. That proved bamboo could handle even the toughest workouts.

Another was our decision to be completely transparent about our impact. We introduced digital “DNA passports” in every product, allowing customers to trace exactly where and how each item was made. At the time, that level of openness was quite pioneering, especially for a smaller UK brand. Alongside that, everything has grown: the range the team, and our customer base, and we now have a much larger office too.

Which product best represents the brand today?

Our bamboo socks are probably our most iconic product. Once people try them, they rarely go back, and we have become known for them. From there, many customers move on to pieces like our Ultimate Balm Leggings. They are incredibly soft and ideal for yoga or Pilates, really embodying what BAM is all about.

Could you tell us a little about the people behind BAM?

We are a close knit team based in Devon, outdoor lovers, runners, yogis, and a few tech enthusiasts mixed in. Dave is still very much involved and hands on day to day. We test everything ourselves, often on weekend adventures, before it ever makes it onto the site. We are small enough to care about every detail but ambitious enough to want to change the industry.

At the heart of it, we are trying to make it easier for people to live active lives without the environmental guilt that comes with synthetic clothing, and to make movement feel better, which is exactly what our products are designed to do.

THE HIDDEN *COST* OF CONNECTION

We have never been easier to reach. That is not the same as being close.

A message can find us anywhere now: in bed, in a queue, on a walk, halfway through dinner, three minutes after waking up, two minutes before sleep. The phone lights up and there it is — someone needing, asking, sending, reacting, reminding. A friend, a colleague, a group chat, a news alert, a delivery update, a stranger with an opinion. Life arrives constantly, in fragments.

At first, this felt like freedom. We could stay in touch with anyone. Work from anywhere. Share things instantly. Know what was happening as it happened. Distance became smaller. Silence became optional. Waiting became almost extinct. But connection has a cost, and most of us are paying it in attention.

The problem is not that technology connects us. That part can be wonderful. A voice note from someone you love. A message that makes you laugh in the middle of a flat day. A video call with a person who would otherwise be far away. These things matter. They can soften loneliness, maintain friendships, and keep families stitched together across cities and countries. The problem is that we are overconnected.

We are available in a way humans were never designed to be available. Every hour can be interrupted. Every thought can be broken. Every quiet moment can be filled before it has a chance to become anything useful. We tell ourselves we are just checking, just replying, just clearing the notification. But piece by piece, our inner life becomes something that can be entered at any time. That is not a small thing, and it is likely not what humans were built for.

Attention is not just a productivity tool. It is how we experience our own lives. It is what allows us to read properly, think deeply, listen without half-leaving the room, notice the person in front of us, and follow a feeling to its end. When attention is constantly pulled outward, life becomes thinner. We are present, but not entirely. We are listening, but also scanning. We are resting, but still reachable.

This is why constant connection can leave people feeling oddly tired, even on days when they have not done much. The brain is not simply responding to messages; it is waiting for them. That waiting has weight. A phone on the table is not just an object. It is a small open door. And through that door comes a world that allows us to shut off from the one in front of our eyes.

There is an emotional cost too. Being connected means we are exposed to more lives than we can realistically care for in a healthy way. We see everyone's achievements, holidays, griefs, arguments, announcements, bodies, babies, breakfasts and breakdowns. We know too much and not enough. We are invited to compare, react, worry, admire, envy, judge and perform, often before we have even brushed our teeth. No wonder people feel crowded in their own minds.

Maybe connection isn't about how many people we can reach, but how deeply we can meet them.

The strange thing is that all this connection can still leave us lonely. In fact, sometimes it makes loneliness more confusing. We have hundreds of contacts, endless updates, group chats that never sleep, and yet the nervous system may be asking for something else: one real conversation, one unhurried meal, one person who is fully there. Contact is not the same as intimacy. Response is not the same as understanding. Being seen online is not always the same as being known.

Work has also slipped through the same door. For many people, the working day no longer ends cleanly. It fades. Emails arrive at night. Messages are answered over the weekend. A quick reply is seen as the norm. Work can now follow you home. Long gone are the days when we had to pick up a phone to speak to our colleagues. Now, a message can arrive silently and still demand the same urgency.

The cost is not always dramatic. More often, it is a slow erosion. It is the quiet disappearance of boredom, the loss of daydreaming, the shrinking of proper rest. It is the feeling that every spare moment should be filled, every pause should be useful, every thought should be interrupted moment should be filled, every pause should be useful, every thought should be interrupted before it has time to become anything of its own. Over time, we become less patient with anything that cannot be refreshed, skipped, answered or resolved quickly. Even our own minds start to feel inconvenient when they ask for stillness.

And yet boredom, silence and distance have always had a purpose. They give the mind room to sort itself out. They allow desire to return. They make creativity possible. They help us know what we actually think before the world tells us what everyone else thinks.

A life with no gaps is not necessarily a full life. Sometimes it is just a crowded one. The answer is not to disappear into the woods or throw the phone into the sea, tempting as that may occasionally be. Connection is part of modern life, and much of it is genuinely useful. The question is whether we can make it serve us rather than train us.

That might mean keeping the phone out of the bedroom. Turning off notifications that have mistaken themselves for emergencies. Letting messages wait. Protecting walks, meals and conversations from the constant possibility of interruption. Refusing the idea that every empty moment must be filled. Allowing people to know that you are not available every second, and discovering that most things do not collapse as a result.

It might also mean being more honest about what kind of connection actually nourishes us. Not all contact is equal. Some exchanges leave us warmer, steadier, more human. Others leave us scattered and vaguely diminished. The difference is worth noticing. Real connection should return us to ourselves, not pull us endlessly away.

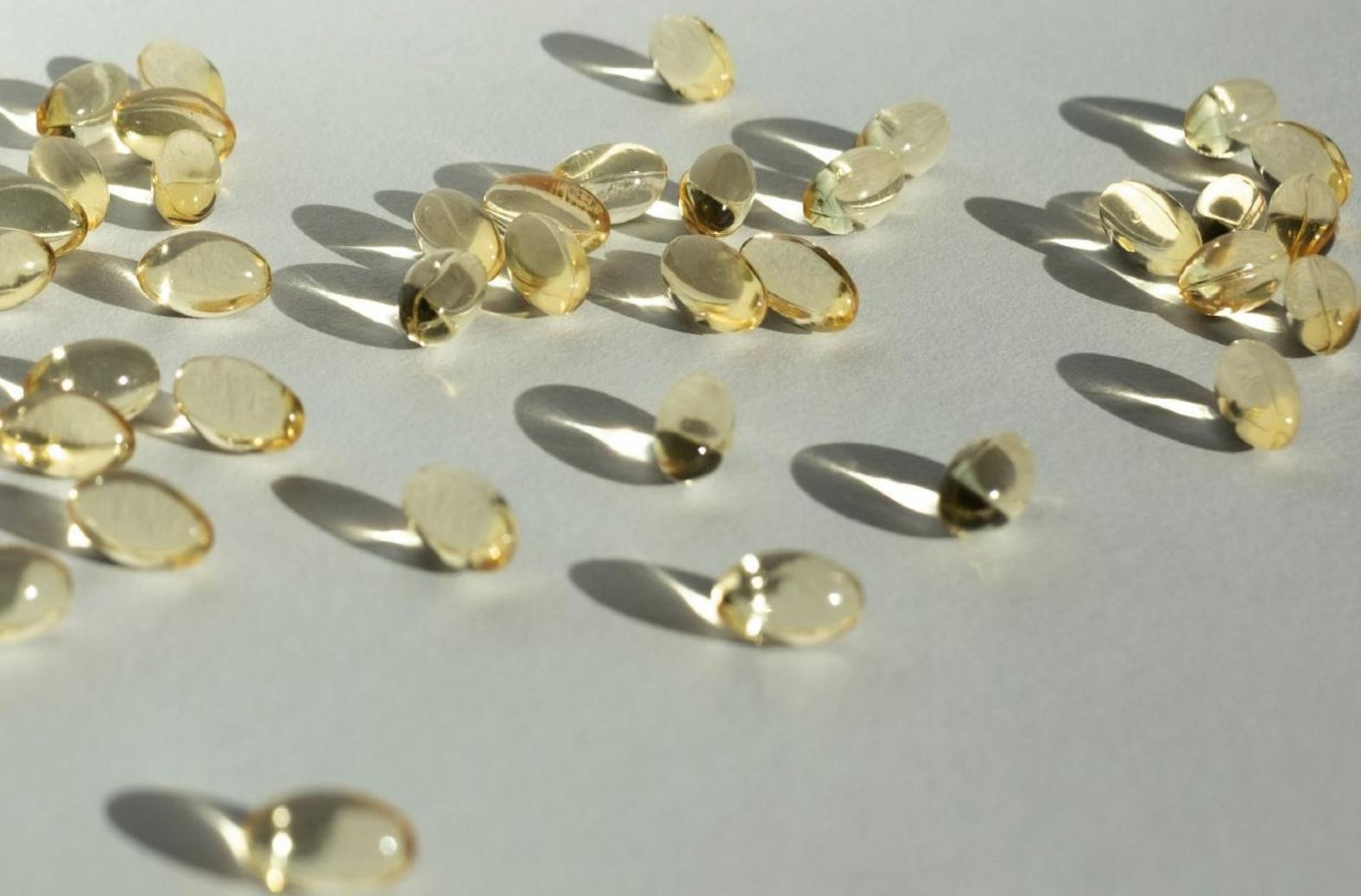
Perhaps the hidden cost of connection is that it can make us forget the value of being unreachable. Not as an act of rejection, but as an act of recovery. A closed door. A quiet hour. A walk without commentary. A thought allowed to finish. A conversation in which nobody checks the screen.

We don't need less connection because people matter less. We need better boundaries because people matter more. Because attention is one of the most generous things we can give. Because presence is harder to fake than a reply. Because a life spent constantly available to everything can slowly become unavailable to itself.

The world will keep asking for access. The work is learning when not to grant it.



DAILY



DOSE

We live in the age of the capsule. Vitamin D for energy. Magnesium for calm. Collagen for skin. Greens powders for everything. Open a cupboard, scroll a feed, walk into a health store and the message is the same: if something feels off, add something.

And before we take more, we need to ask a better question. What are we actually lacking?

Good science does not begin with a trend. It begins with context. Diet, sleep, stress, blood work, medication, hormones, sunlight, digestion and life stage all change what the body needs. A supplement that is useful for one person may be pointless for another. In some cases, it may even be harmful.

The best researchers are clear on this. Supplements are not a substitute for food, and food is not just a delivery system for isolated nutrients. A tomato is not simply vitamin C. Salmon is not simply omega-3. Lentils are not simply iron. Whole foods contain fibre, minerals, antioxidants and thousands of compounds that work together in ways no capsule can fully copy.

That does not mean supplements are useless. Far from it. Vitamin D can matter for people who are low, especially where sunlight is limited. B12 is important for vegans, some vegetarians, older adults and anyone with absorption issues. Iron can be essential when deficiency is confirmed. Folate is important before and during early pregnancy. Omega 3 may be useful for people who rarely eat oily fish.

But the key word is need.

The most oversold supplements are the ones marketed as universal insurance. Multivitamins, beauty capsules, detox blends, immune boosters, fat burners and extreme dose formulas often promise more than the evidence can support. The US Preventive Services Task Force does not recommend beta carotene or vitamin E for preventing heart disease or cancer, and says evidence is still insufficient for many other vitamin and mineral supplements in healthy adults.

The regulation is also weaker than many people realise. In the United States, supplements are regulated more like foods than medicines, which means products can reach shelves without the same pre-market proof of safety and effectiveness required for drugs. Harvard physician Dr Pieter Cohen has warned that this creates real risks around purity, dosing and hidden ingredients.

So where should we buy?

Not from panic. Not from influencers selling discount codes. Not from brands that promise miracles, detoxes, hormone resets or instant transformation.

Buy from need. *Buy after asking what your diet already gives you. Buy after checking whether symptoms could have another cause. Buy after blood tests when deficiency is likely or symptoms are persistent. Buy products that are third-party tested, clearly dosed and transparent about ingredients. Avoid megadoses unless a clinician has recommended them.*

Because wellness is not built by adding more and more. It is built by finding out what is missing, then giving the body exactly what it needs.



Helping the world capture and share itself in
immersive and exciting
ways



HERO13 Black

Since its founding, GoPro has grown far beyond its action sports roots to become a trusted and versatile tool for professional filmmakers, cinematographers and content creators around the world. GoPro cameras have been used in major Hollywood feature films and series productions, prized for their durable, compact design, exceptional image quality and mount-anywhere capability to capture unique perspectives that expand the limits of visual storytelling.



*GoPro Fluid Pro AI
Gimbal*



Whatever the mission, GoPro

Founded in 2002 by Nick Woodman, a photo and video enthusiast in search of a better way to film himself and his friends surfing, GoPro has grown into a relentlessly innovative brand loved around the world for its insanely versatile and enabling products. We strive to be a force for positivity, celebrating all things awesome while inspiring people to pursue their passions. We are GoPro and we love what we build.

THE BENEFITS OF *JUICING*

A bright, cold glass of fresh juice feels like a direct line to vitality. Made with the right ingredients, it delivers a quick, concentrated burst of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants in a form the body can absorb quickly. It offers a simple way to add more plant-based nourishment to a busy day, especially when you want a lift that feels clean and restorative.

The most sustaining juices lean heavily on vegetables. Dark leafy greens, celery, cucumber, and ginger offer deep, earthy nutrition and may support steadier energy than fruit-heavy juices. While an apple or a slice of pineapple adds a lovely touch of sweetness to a green blend, fruit-heavy drinks carry high concentrations of natural sugars that hit the bloodstream rapidly. By keeping vegetables at the centre, you secure all the brightness and hydration of fresh produce while ensuring your energy remains steady and balanced.

It is also essential to remember the role of fibre. The pressing process separates the fibrous pulp from the liquid, and that fibre is exactly what helps the digestive system feel full, supports a healthy gut microbiome, and moderates the absorption of sugar. Because of this, juice truly shines as a brilliant companion to a balanced diet, working in complete harmony with whole foods.

Juicing can be a daily spark, a concentrated infusion of colour, hydration, and liquid sunshine. Pour a glass to celebrate fresh produce and flood your system with vitality, while letting your meals provide the essential crunch, fibre and fullness of the whole plant. When approached intentionally, juicing becomes a powerful, energising glass of goodness.





Seen here is **Legacy Pilates'** beautifully designed classical equipment. Legacy creates apparatus that brings craftsmanship and elegance to the studio experience.

Scan the QR code to visit
legacyapparatus.com



The Art of Apparatus

Step into a classical Pilates studio and the first impression is often not of exercise, but of design. Polished wood, taut springs, precise metal frames, and beautifully balanced proportions give the apparatus an almost sculptural presence, as though each piece belongs as much in an interiors story as in a movement practice. Yet these are not decorative objects. They are part of a meticulously developed system, created to strengthen the body through control, alignment, resistance, and flow.

At the heart of classical Pilates is the idea that the body is trained most intelligently when it is challenged in different ways. Rather than relying on one machine to do everything, the method moves you through a family of apparatus, each one refining a different quality: strength, stability, spinal mobility, balance, coordination, or breath-led control. The result is not simply a workout, but a remarkably coherent physical education.



The names, admittedly, do not always sound especially soothing. The Electric Chair and the Guillotine seem less like invitations to wellness than like relics from a very stylish dungeon, but the joke ends with the names. In practice, these pieces are elegant expressions of Pilates' mechanical intelligence, designed to **reveal weakness, improve symmetry, and teach the body how to move with exactness.**

The genius of classical Pilates lies in how the apparatus work together. On the Reformer, the moving carriage and springs teach the body to organise itself under dynamic resistance, building strength through the centre while improving posture, and fluidity. It is often the most recognisable piece, but it is only one chapter in the larger story.

The Cadillac introduces another dimension entirely. With its raised bed, canopy frame, bars, and spring attachments, it can support deep stretching, rehabilitative work, upper- and lower-body strengthening, and a host of exercises that ask for both mobility and control. Joseph Pilates is widely said to have regarded it as one of his finest inventions, and its blend of grandeur and versatility explains why it still feels so iconic.

The Chair family, meanwhile, distils the method into something smaller and more concentrated. Compact in size but formidable in effect, the Chair develops leg strength, pelvic support, balance, and upper-body control, often in upright positions that feel startlingly relevant to how we actually move through daily life. It is one of the clearest examples of Pilates' brilliance: minimal apparatus, maximum truth.

Then come the Barrels, among the most elegant pieces in the room. Their curved shapes invite the spine to lengthen, extend, and articulate, opening the chest and hips while supporting stronger posture and deeper abdominal organisation.



Where the Chair can be humbling, the Barrel often feels revelatory, showing just how much space the body is capable of finding when it is properly supported.

What makes the classical system so sophisticated is that each apparatus teaches the body something it can carry into the next. A movement first learned with support on the Cadillac may later appear with greater challenge on the Reformer; stability developed on the Chair can sharpen balance and control elsewhere; spinal freedom discovered over a Barrel can transform the quality of standing and walking. The body is not merely exercised from station to station, but educated through a sequence of experiences.

This is where Pilates feels particularly modern, despite its early twentieth-century origins. The apparatus offer immediate feedback through springs, surfaces, and moving parts, allowing the practitioner to feel deeper alignment. In a culture that often rewards speed and excess, classical Pilates remains devoted to something rarer: precision.



THE MAGICAL WORLD OF FUNGI

The Quiet Intelligence of Fungi

The world of mushrooms holds a quiet, living intelligence. Fungi act as far more than soil recyclers. They operate as silent communicators, building vast underground networks that send electrical pulses and share resources through the earth. Some researchers describe these fungal signals as an early language, where patterns of spikes resemble words, suggesting that mushrooms communicate entirely through their roots.

Everyday mushrooms and the mind

The mushrooms on our plates may be gently shaping our mood. A large study by researchers at the Penn State College of Medicine, led by Djibril Ba, analysed diet and mental health data from tens of thousands of adults and found that regular mushroom eaters experienced greater overall mental wellness. This is possibly thanks to ergothioneine, an antioxidant that protects the brain from everyday stress. Researchers believe these antioxidants actively support the brain and encourage lasting mental health.

Shiitake and the immune system

Shiitake serves as much more than a kitchen staple. Its beta glucan compound lentinan has been studied for decades as an immune boosting agent. Research shows lentinan increases key immune signals and calms the acute effects of inflammation, beautifully crossing the line between food and medicine. These fungal sugars support highly balanced immune responses, turning the humble shiitake into a quiet guardian of the body and its defences.

Reishi for calm and resilience

Reishi has long been called the mushroom of immortality in Eastern traditions, and modern science is starting to catch up. Clinical work shows Reishi extracts may boost key immune cells while its triterpenes reduce stress and support calm. Reishi acts as a natural balancer, helping the body adapt to stress and find its centre, making it a quiet ally for both mental and physical resilience.

Maitake and mood balancing

Maitake acts both as an immune booster and a potential mood support fungus. Its natural sugars activate immune cells while influencing brain pathways. Early animal work hints that a unique maitake compound crosses into the nervous system and supports short term mood elevation. This creates a subtle kind of fungal medicine, quietly linking the gut, immunity, and the mind.

Chaga as a cellular shield

Chaga is a dark fungus that grows on birch trees and has long been used in northern folk medicine for its antioxidant punch. Modern work focuses on its high polyphenol compounds, which reduce everyday stress and support cellular

health. Researchers suggest that its dense profile protects cells from damage, offering a layer of defence drawn straight from the birch bark.

Fungi that eat plastic

Beyond the clinic and the kitchen, some fungi function as silent environmental helpers, digesting our plastic waste from the inside out. A research team led by Professor Scott Strobel at Yale University discovered that a species of fungus from the Amazon, *Pestalotiopsis microspora*, can survive by breaking down polyurethane. Similar discoveries in Pakistani landfills show fungi producing enzymes that slice plastic into simpler molecules. Ecologically, these fungi are already being explored for earth-cleaning projects, transforming pollution into living networks of renewal.

Psilocybin and mental healing

Psilocybin, found in certain magic mushrooms, is now being studied in clinical trials for severe depression and trauma. At the Centre for Psychedelic Research at Imperial College London, researchers have shown that psilocybin quiets the busy parts of the brain, loosening rigid loops of thought and allowing fresh perspectives to arise. In one landmark trial, a large majority of participants reported meaningful relief after a few carefully guided sessions. Experts argue that psychedelics hold great promise in helping individuals heal and suggest legalising these substances as medicines for safe clinic prescription. Just remember, these are still illegal substances and not for consumption by the public.

Lion's Mane and cognitive preservation

Lion's Mane looks like a frozen waterfall of white icicles, holding a brilliant brain builder underneath. Its compounds stimulate nerve growth factor, a protein that encourages brain cells to grow and reconnect. At the Queensland Brain Institute, Professor Frederic Meunier and his team discovered that bioactive compounds from Lion's Mane could promote the extension of brain cells, creating entirely new pathways for memory and focus. Beyond boosting everyday cognition, researchers are actively exploring its potential to support the ageing brain. Clinical studies involving older adults with mild cognitive impairment show that daily supplementation with Lion's Mane extract improves scores on standardised tests measuring memory and thinking abilities. This suggests they may play a vital role in preserving cognitive health and slowing the progression of conditions like Alzheimer's disease.

A final note from the fungal web

Mushrooms remind us that intelligence comes in many forms. Some grow in forests, some live in our kitchens, some heal the mind, and some help the planet recover from the items we leave behind. In the dark, they keep making connections, and that remains their most remarkable lesson of all.





The Island That keeps its Secrets

You cross to the Isle of Man thinking you are coming for scenery, weather, sea light and silence. Then, somewhere between the mist on the hills and the sudden dark of a glen, you begin to understand that this is an island that has never entirely agreed to be ordinary.

Perhaps it begins, as these things often do, with a bridge. A small bridge on the A5 between Douglas and Ballasalla, unremarkable to the eye except for the way people change as they approach it. Conversations pause. Voices rise, politely. "Hello Fairies." A greeting offered out of habit, affection, caution, or all three. On the Isle of Man, folklore has never been packed away into childhood. It is stitched into the rhythm of island life so thoroughly that it can feel less like performance than manners.

The older imagination still clings to the island because the landscape knows how to hold it. Here, mist is not just weather but Manannan's Cloak, the sea god's veil thrown over the land. The wells, stones, glens and hills are not merely scenic stops. They are places thick with old stories, carrying blessing, warning, memory and consequence.

Take the Saddle Stone in Braddan, set into a wall beside the road. Legend says it was once the saddle of a mischievous little man in a green jacket, turned to stone when he was caught after riding a vicar's horse through the night. Later generations came to it to make wishes, and women once straddled it in the hope of fertility. A stone becomes more than a stone when a community keeps returning to it with longing.



Or take Chibbyr Feeyney in Lonan, a roadside well said to be where the Little People draw their water. The story goes that the water becomes wine at their feasts. Humans may drink the water, but not the wine, for that would place them under fairy power. It is a very Manx kind of enchantment, beautiful, near and edged with consequence.

Across the island, folklore gathers around places where the world already feels slightly ajar. At Ballafreer, the White Lady, a quartz pillar at a farm gate, was once circled before sunrise by women seeking luck, fertility and blessing. At Sherragh Vane, deep in plantation country, a dead mother was said to return each night to tuck her children into bed. On Snaefell, the spring called Farrane Fing was once carried to the dying as a holy comfort, and pilgrims stopped there on their summer climb up the mountain.

Then there is Peel Hill, where one of the island's most vivid tales rises out of rock and sea. St Patrick is said to have come across the water from Ireland on horseback, only for Manannan to cover the island in mist and leave him lost at sea with a beast approaching. A curlew, a goat and a cockerel warned and guided him. His horse's hoof struck Peel Hill and a holy well sprang from the earth. In the tale that follows, the sea beast is turned to stone and the island reveals itself as Christian and pagan, local and mythic, all at once.

The Isle of Man's magic is not only in the grander legends. It lives too in the beings that seem born of its weather and edges. The Glashtyn belongs to water and uncertainty, sometimes horse, sometimes goblin, sometimes a shape shifting danger.

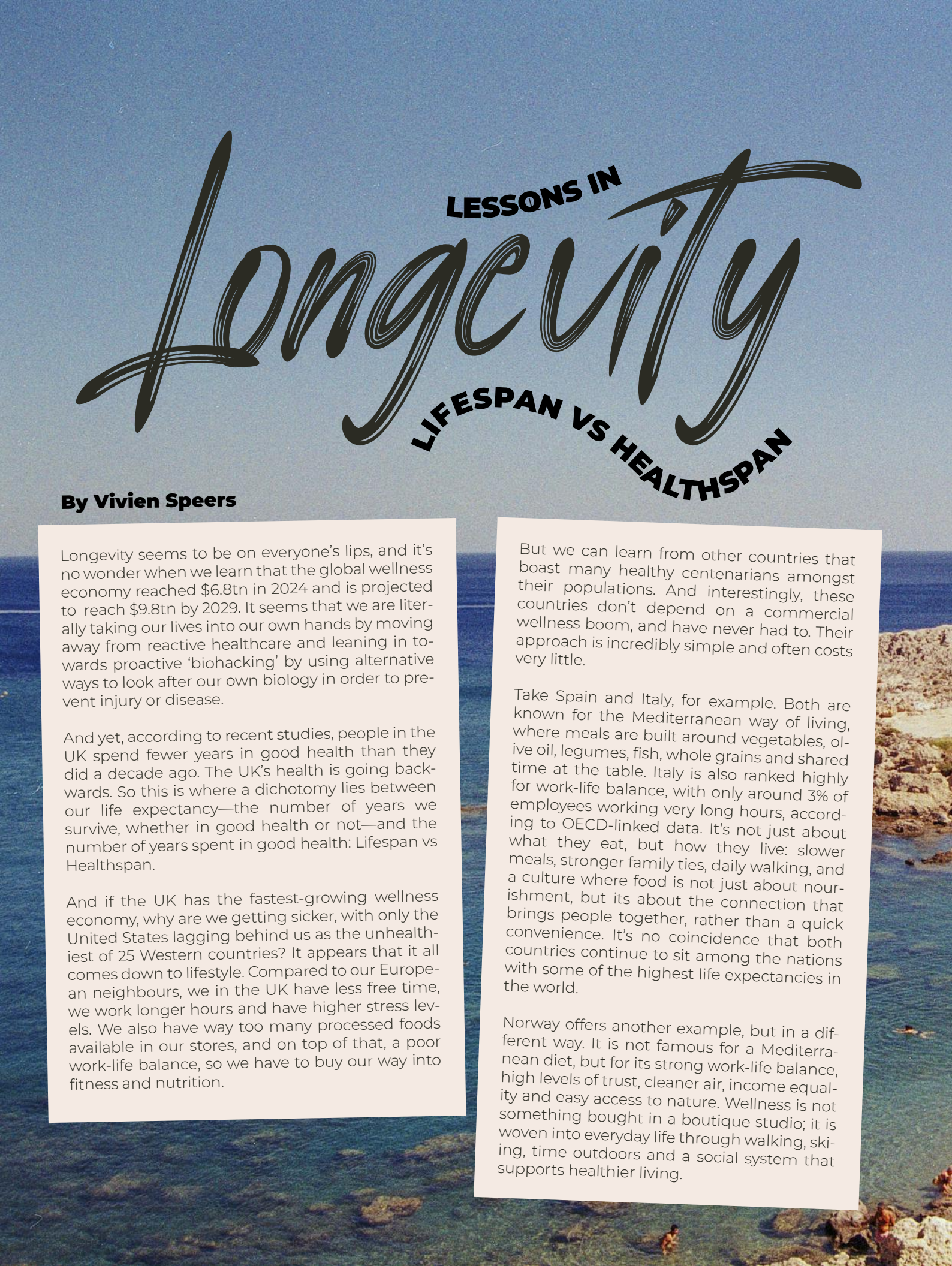
The Fenodyree, shaggy and wild, belongs to rural life and rough intelligence. The Moddey Dhoo, the black dog of Peel Castle, is one of the island's most enduring shadows. These figures are not decorative. They feel as if the land made them, and then refused to let them leave.

What makes these tales feel alive is not simply that they have survived. It is that the island still looks like the sort of place where they could happen. The glens are damp and fern dark, with water talking to itself below the path. The headlands can change mood in minutes. Ancient stones sit quietly in fields and suburban streets. The sea is always near, and mist can erase the horizon so completely that another world feels less like fantasy than a matter of attention.

That may be the real enchantment of Mann. Not that everyone literally believes, but that the island encourages a way of seeing in which belief is not the only measure of truth. You greet the Little People because the act itself places you differently in the world, humbler, softer, more alert. You walk into a glen and lower your voice, not because you expect an answer, but because the place has already spoken.

So perhaps the Isle of Man is not magical in the simple sense. Perhaps it is something better. A landscape still thick with meaning, where old stories have not been driven out by modern life but continue to move just beneath it, like water under stone. Here, enchantment is not escape. It is attention. And once the island has taught you that, even the smallest bridge begins to feel like an invitation.





Longevity

LESSONS IN

LIFESPAN VS HEALTHSPAN

By Vivien Speers

Longevity seems to be on everyone's lips, and it's no wonder when we learn that the global wellness economy reached \$6.8tn in 2024 and is projected to reach \$9.8tn by 2029. It seems that we are literally taking our lives into our own hands by moving away from reactive healthcare and leaning in towards proactive 'biohacking' by using alternative ways to look after our own biology in order to prevent injury or disease.

And yet, according to recent studies, people in the UK spend fewer years in good health than they did a decade ago. The UK's health is going backwards. So this is where a dichotomy lies between our life expectancy—the number of years we survive, whether in good health or not—and the number of years spent in good health: Lifespan vs Healthspan.

And if the UK has the fastest-growing wellness economy, why are we getting sicker, with only the United States lagging behind us as the unhealthiest of 25 Western countries? It appears that it all comes down to lifestyle. Compared to our European neighbours, we in the UK have less free time, we work longer hours and have higher stress levels. We also have way too many processed foods available in our stores, and on top of that, a poor work-life balance, so we have to buy our way into fitness and nutrition.

But we can learn from other countries that boast many healthy centenarians amongst their populations. And interestingly, these countries don't depend on a commercial wellness boom, and have never had to. Their approach is incredibly simple and often costs very little.

Take Spain and Italy, for example. Both are known for the Mediterranean way of living, where meals are built around vegetables, olive oil, legumes, fish, whole grains and shared time at the table. Italy is also ranked highly for work-life balance, with only around 3% of employees working very long hours, according to OECD-linked data. It's not just about what they eat, but how they live: slower meals, stronger family ties, daily walking, and a culture where food is not just about nourishment, but its about the connection that brings people together, rather than a quick convenience. It's no coincidence that both countries continue to sit among the nations with some of the highest life expectancies in the world.

Norway offers another example, but in a different way. It is not famous for a Mediterranean diet, but for its strong work-life balance, high levels of trust, cleaner air, income equality and easy access to nature. Wellness is not something bought in a boutique studio; it is woven into everyday life through walking, skiing, time outdoors and a social system that supports healthier living.

And perhaps the simplest lesson of all comes from Japan, a country famous for longevity and home to almost 100,000 centenarians as of 2025. The Japanese diet is traditionally rich in fish, soy, seaweed, rice, vegetables and fermented foods, but their healthspan is not only about food. Many older people stay physically active well into later life, remain connected to their communities, and continue to feel useful and purposeful. In Okinawa, often discussed as one of the world's "Blue Zone" regions, this sense of purpose is known as *ikigai* or a reason to get up in the morning.

So when we look at the countries that are moving forward rather than backwards, we can see that a healthy, long life is fully accessible in the Western world, but it's up to us to take control of our wellbeing by following the simple, healthier ways of living outlined above. We can do it too. We always have a choice.

And here are the takeaways...

Eat whole foods and avoid UPFs (Ultra-processed foods), and be sure to check how many ingredients are listed on any packaged food; the shorter the list, the better.

Move well: Walk more, climb stairs, and practice gentle yet strengthening movements. Even short bursts of 15-minute walks around the block can be beneficial. Pilates is a great way to move your body with its mindful focus on low-impact core strengthening and increased flexibility.

Spend less time on your phone and socialise in person by either catching up with friends or helping out in a local community; the latter also adds a vital sense of purpose. Modern longevity is what we want to aim for. And we can make this our goal as we have all the ingredients to live a long and healthy life.



Healthy Eating Might Be Wrecking Your Gut



Dr Radha is a UK-trained doctor with over a decade of NHS experience, now focused on preventative, root-cause health. She helps busy professionals restore their gut, energy, and hormones, without extremes, confusion, or cutting out everything they enjoy.

GLUTEN
LOCAL

I'm a doctor... and I got this wrong.

These days, people call me "The Health Sherpa" because I help others navigate the climb toward better health. Yet for years, I was trudging my own steep trail, lugging the wrong supplies in my rucksack, convinced I was making all the right choices.

I wasn't living on homemade kefir and foraged kale, but I ate what most would consider sensible. Fruit and vegetables daily. The occasional treat, because balance, right? Meals that looked reasonably healthy and wouldn't alarm a nutritionist.

At least, that's what I told myself.

Looking back, much of it was convenience disguised as health. Foods marketed as wholesome but still heavily processed. Carb-heavy meals grabbed out of exhaustion after long shifts. I barely moved. Stress was my constant companion. And like so many in healthcare, I quietly accepted feeling a bit rubbish as just part of the job.

Until my body started whispering. Bloating. Cramps. Energy crashes. Sluggishness. Skin breakouts.

So I did what many people do: I tightened control. Out went the treats. Portions shrank. Carbs disappeared. I piled on more rules, expecting myself to work out daily, devour research, hunt for the purest whole foods, and sprinkle in superfoods for good measure.

And still, I didn't feel better.

It took me longer than I'd like to admit to recognise what was missing. It wasn't just what I was eating. It was how I was eating.

We've become obsessed with food choices while ignoring the state we're in when we eat.

I was grabbing bites of salad between patients, half-focused on blood results while chewing mechanically through something technically "healthy" that my body barely had the capacity to process.

My nervous system was constantly switched on in a low-level stress state.

Efficient, perhaps. But ideal for digestion? Not quite.

Even when the food improved, my gut wasn't in a position to receive it. You can eat the most nutrient-dense meal in the world, but if your body feels stressed while eating it, your gut will respond differently.

And I knew I wasn't alone.

I see it in so many high-performing, capable women who do everything "right" yet still struggle with bloating, low energy, stubborn weight, hormonal imbalances, hair thinning, and difficulty building muscle. Women who are disciplined. Conscientious. "Good." But somewhere along the way, healthy eating stopped feeling nourishing and started feeling tight, tense, and ruled by fear.

Fear of eating too much.
Fear of getting it wrong.
Fear of losing control.
Fear of gaining weight.

Meals become rules. Foods become "safe" or "off-limits." Variety disappears. Guilt creeps in. It looks disciplined, but your body experiences it as restriction and stress. So when you don't get the results you want, you end up blaming the food... or yourself.

When you start to notice it, it's remarkable how often fear disguises itself as wellness. Part of the trouble is that our world quietly applauds overdrive. Busyness is a badge of honour. Powering through exhaustion is called resilience. Eating lunch while firing off emails has become the adult norm. Somewhere, we started believing that pushing harder would get us to the top faster, tuning out the gentle calls for rest.

But the body doesn't work like that.

Digestion, recovery, and hormone balance all happen best when the body feels safe enough to slow down. At the same time, the gut thrives on diversity. Different plants. Different fibres. Different inputs. A microbiome fed on restriction becomes less resilient over time, not more.

This is where many people get stuck, believing more discipline and more rules will bring success, only to find their rucksack heavier with every new restriction.

But real health isn't built through extremes. It's built through the patterns your body experiences every day.

Your body adapts to what you repeatedly carry, stress or calm, nourishment or pressure, rhythm or chaos. Not the occasional green juice. Not the "good week" before a holiday.

When you make your ordinary routines more nourishing, you transform your biology.

Or, as I often remind my clients: Your health isn't what you say — it's what you live.

Ironically, I'm still the person with the green smoothie. I still read labels. I still often say no to cake. But now, my approach feels lighter. Less like survival training, more like understanding what truly deserves space in my rucksack.

I've let go of rigid food rules and the pressure to be perfect. Instead, I focus on habits that fuel my energy, support my gut, and actually fit into real life.

I eat and live today for how I want to feel every day as I climb toward peak health.

That's a very different kind of healthy.

Create space around meals

Before your next meal, pause for one full breath. Even slowing down for a minute helps your body switch into digestion mode.

Add before you remove

Add one new plant food to your week. More colours. More variety. More life on your plate. Your gut prefers variety.

Loosen the grip

Notice where your food choices are driven by fear rather than enjoyment or nourishment. Awareness changes more than restriction ever will.

A hiker with a backpack is walking away on a mountain trail. The trail is a narrow path cut through tall, dry grass. The hiker is wearing a light blue t-shirt, khaki shorts, and a green cap. The background shows a vast mountain landscape with rolling hills and a steep, rocky cliff on the right. The sky is clear and blue.

WALK THIS WAY

**The low tech fitness habit having
a high impact moment**

A person with blonde hair tied back, wearing a black cap, a black backpack, and black shorts, is seen from behind walking on a dirt path. The path is surrounded by tall, dry grass. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains under a clear sky.

*Those taking at least
7,000 steps a day had
a **50 to 70 per cent**
lower risk of death
than those taking
fewer steps.*

Walking has had a rebrand. Once seen as the thing you did when the bus was late, it is now part workout, part social club, part mental reset. There are walking apps, step challenges, walking meetings, city hiking groups, hot girl walks, silent walks, coffee walks, pram walks and Sunday stomp clubs. The humble walk has become one of the easiest ways to move more without making fitness feel like another job.

Part of the appeal is that walking is beautifully low maintenance. Just shoes, a route and a reason to leave the house is necessary. The NHS says even a brisk ten minute daily walk can bring health benefits and count towards the recommended 150 minutes of weekly activity for adults. Brisk means you can talk, but singing would be a struggle. A useful test, and mildly humbling.

Walking also has a surprisingly strong health case. A large study of middle aged adults found that those taking at least 7,000 steps a day had a 50 to 70 per cent lower risk of death than those taking fewer steps. More than 10,000 steps did not show further reduction in that study, which is good news for anyone who has ever paced around the kitchen at 10.47pm trying to satisfy a watch.

And what about running? Running can be brilliant, especially for cardiovascular fitness, bone loading and those who genuinely enjoy it. But for many bodies, brisk walking is easier to repeat, easier to recover from and less likely to come with the issue of sore knees, tight calves or a sudden need to buy compression socks. Harvard's review notes that, when the same amount of energy is used, brisk walking has shown similar benefits to running for reducing the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

The social side matters too. Outdoor walking groups have been linked with improvements in blood pressure, fitness, mood and quality of life, with good adherence and few reported adverse effects. In plain English, people tend to stick with walking because it feels doable, especially when someone else is expecting them at the corner.

The new walking culture is also wonderfully adaptable. Use an app if you like a target. Join a walking group if you want company. Try a podcast walk when you need to disappear into someone else's thoughts. Make it a meeting when the conversation feels better side by side. Turn it into a coffee loop if motivation requires caffeine. The best walk is usually the one you will actually do.

Start small. Ten minutes after lunch. Twenty minutes before work. One longer walk at the weekend. Pick a route you enjoy enough to repeat, then change it when boredom arrives. Walk quickly when you want energy. Walk slowly when you need to unravel. Invite a friend when you want connection. Go alone when your head is full.

Walking works because it fits real life. Just put one foot in front of the other and watch something shift.

THE HIDDEN GARDEN WITHIN

Inside you lives an entire world where trillions of bacteria, fungi, and viruses that outnumber your own human cells live. Together, they form your microbiome, an invisible ecosystem that may influence aspects of digestion, immunity, mood, and even thought. Once dismissed as mere “gut flora,” these microscopic companions are now recognised as a vital organ in their own right.

In the last decade, research from institutions such as King’s College London, University College Cork, Stanford University, and The Weizmann Institute of Science has begun to uncover just how profoundly this inner world influences our outer one. The gut, it seems, doesn’t just feed us — it speaks to our brain, our immune system, and perhaps even our emotions.

Scientists now call this complex communication network the microbiota-gut-brain axis. Signals travel through nerves, hormones, and immune pathways, creating a constant dialogue between our digestive system and our central nervous system. According to a review published in *Frontiers in Immunology* (2020), around 90% of the body’s serotonin — a neurotransmitter associated with mood, sleep, and appetite — is produced in the gut, not the brain. This discovery highlights the biological bridge between how we eat and how we feel.

At University College Cork, neuroscientist Professor John Cryan and psychiatrist Professor Ted Dinan have been among the leading figures exploring this connection. Their research, published in *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* (2019), shows that gut bacteria can influence the production of neurotransmitters

such as GABA and serotonin, affect stress responses, and even shape social behaviour. Cryan often reminds audiences that “what’s good for your microbes is good for your mood.” (*The Psychobiotic Revolution*, 2017).

Meanwhile, at King’s College London, Professor Tim Spector’s pioneering ZOE Project has demonstrated that people with more diverse gut microbiomes — supported by eating at least 30 different plant foods per week — have better metabolic and immune health. In *Food for Life* (2022), Spector writes that “diversity of plants equals diversity of microbes,” a key predictor of longevity and disease prevention.

THE GUT AS AN IMMUNE ORGAN

Around 70% of the human immune system resides in the gut lining, constantly communicating with microbes to decide what’s safe and what’s a threat. This makes the microbiome not only a digestive partner but a gatekeeper of inflammation. Research from the Weizmann Institute of Science has shown that when microbial diversity declines — due to antibiotics, stress, or ultra-processed food — inflammation rises, and the immune system becomes less discerning, contributing to autoimmune disorders and allergies.

The gut’s immune cells don’t act alone. They rely on short-chain fatty acids like butyrate and acetate, which are produced when beneficial bacteria ferment dietary fibre. These molecules help maintain the gut barrier, reduce inflammation, and support brain health by crossing the blood-brain barrier. Studies from Harvard Medical School (*Cell*, 2021) suggest that these microbial metabolites may even protect





against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.

FERMENTED FOODS: FRIEND OR FAD?

Fermented foods are often praised for replenishing the microbiome, and rightly so — but not all ferments are created equal. Traditional ferments such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, miso, and kombucha can be beneficial sources of live bacteria when made naturally, with minimal ingredients. However, many commercial versions are pasteurised or contain high levels of added sugar, which can feed harmful bacteria and negate the benefits.

As microbiologist Dr Erica Sonnenburg of Stanford University explains, “You can’t out-supplement or out-probiotic a bad diet.” (Stanford Medicine, 2021). Real fermentation, she notes, should be alive, sour, and refrigerated — not shelf-stable or sweetened. The healthiest approach combines fermented foods with prebiotics — the plant fibres that nourish good microbes.

FROM THE GUT TO THE BRAIN

The gut-brain connection is no longer theoretical. Imaging studies from UCLA show that women who consumed fermented milk products daily for four weeks displayed altered activity in brain regions associated with emotion and sensation (Mayer et al., *Gastroenterology*, 2013). Another study from Oxford University found that probiotic supplementation altered emotional decision-making in healthy adults (PNAS, 2015). While these effects are modest and not yet fully understood, they suggest that the microbiome can influence cognition and emotion in measurable ways.

WHAT WE STILL DON'T KNOW

For all its promise, microbiome research remains young. Scientists are still determining whether microbial imbalances cause diseases like depression or are simply consequences of them. The field is moving fast, but the complexity of microbial ecosystems — thousands of species

interacting in real time — means there are more questions than answers.

There's also growing debate around “microbiome hype.” Not every supplement or probiotic drink on the shelf delivers real benefit. As Cryan and Dinan wrote in *Nature Microbiology* (2020), the future lies in precision rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. One person's beneficial microbe might be another's irritant, making personalisation key.

Despite the gaps, the science offers clear guidance: eat a variety of plants, as fibre fuels beneficial bacteria that maintain the gut lining and support mental wellbeing; avoid ultra-processed foods high in emulsifiers, sweeteners, and preservatives, which have been shown to disrupt microbial balance; choose fermented foods without added sugar or pasteurisation; and prioritise deep sleep, stress management, and time outdoors, all of which influence microbial diversity.

In this emerging picture, wellness looks less like control and more like care. The microbiome reminds us that health is relational — a conversation between our choices, our microbes, and the world around us.

The more we learn, the clearer it becomes: to look after the mind, we must first look after the microscopic life that supports it. The hidden garden within us is not metaphor but biology — and it is, perhaps, the most important landscape we'll ever tend.

The hidden garden within us is not metaphor but biology — and it may be the most important landscape we'll ever tend.



FIT FOR THE YEARS AHEAD

The Healthspan Movement Formula

Build the base:

Aim for regular aerobic movement — brisk walking, cycling, swimming, dancing or steady hiking.

Keep muscle in the system:

Train strength twice a week, prioritising legs, hips, back, core and grip.

Practice steadiness:

Add balance work: single-leg stands, heel-to-toe walking, tai chi, yoga or controlled step-downs.

Use intensity sparingly but honestly:

Short bursts — stairs, hills, fast walking — can be powerful when matched to your fitness level.

Respect recovery:

Adaptation happens after the session, not only during it. Sleep, food and rest are part of the programme.



*The most useful workout is the one that **protects your heart, preserves your strength, steadies your balance** and still **fits into an ordinary life.***

For years, longevity has been sold as something complicated: blood panels, biohacking gadgets, cold plunges, supplements with improbable claims. Yet one of the strongest predictors of a longer, healthier life remains beautifully low-tech: the body's ability to move well, often, and with enough challenge to keep adapting.

The evidence is not subtle. A 2024 overview of meta-analyses, representing more than 20.9 million observations, found cardiorespiratory fitness to be a strong and consistent predictor of both illness and mortality in adults. Put plainly, the fitter your heart and lungs are, the more resilient your body tends to be over time. The American Heart Association has gone so far as to describe cardiorespiratory fitness as a clinical "vital sign" because it can independently predict cardiovascular risk, regardless of familiar markers such as blood pressure, smoking, cholesterol, and body weight.

But the modern longevity workout is not just about running further or chasing a faster split. The better question is: what does the body need to keep doing at 70, 80 or 90? It needs to climb stairs without hesitation. Rise from the floor. Carry shopping. Recover from a stumble. Keep bone, muscle and balance in the system for as long as possible.

That is where strength training earns its place. Muscle is not vanity tissue; it is metabolic, protective and deeply practical. A large national cohort study of more than 416,000 US adults found that both aerobic activity and muscle-strengthening exercise were associated with lower mortality risk, with the greatest benefit seen when people did both. The reduction was not reserved for athletes. Even modest, regular strength work made a measurable difference.

The sweet spot appears less extreme than many imagine. Recent research continues to suggest that around 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week, paired with two sessions of muscle-strengthening work, is a reliable foundation for long-term health. For older adults, a 2024 review found that 7.5 to 15 MET-hours per week — broadly in line with public health guidelines — was linked with a 19–30% lower risk of death from any cause and a 25–34% lower risk of cardiovascular mortality.

Still, longevity is not built only in neat one-hour blocks. Some of the most interesting research is looking at brief, vigorous bursts of movement: climbing stairs with intent, walking quickly uphill, carrying heavy bags, cycling hard for a minute. Wearable-device studies suggest that these short bouts of vigorous incidental activity are associated with lower mortality risk, though the strongest evidence so far is observational, not proof of cause and effect. The takeaway is not that three minutes replaces a well-designed routine. It is that the body notices intensity, even when it arrives in fragments.

Balance deserves equal respect. It is the quiet skill that allows strength to be useful. Falls are not a minor inconvenience in later life; they can change independence, confidence and health in a single afternoon. Exercise programmes that target balance and strength have repeatedly been shown to reduce fall risk in older adults, with evidence supporting practices such as tai chi, progressive strength training and supervised balance work.

A longevity routine, then, need not be elaborate. It should be layered. Walk briskly enough to raise your breathing. Lift, push, pull and squat against resistance. Practice balance before it becomes a problem. Add short flashes of effort when your body is ready for them. Rest well enough to repeat it.

The point is not to train like a younger version of yourself. It is to train for the life you still want access to: getting down to the garden, carrying a suitcase, dancing at a wedding, walking home without thinking about the hill.

Longevity is often spoken about as extra years. Movement makes a better promise: more usable years.



Hot **Cold**

By Vivien Speers

*Is **hot** and **cold**
therapy for you?*

Conversations around the health benefits of a hot sauna versus an ice-cold water plunge are very much in vogue at the moment, with studies weighing up which of the two therapies shouts the loudest. But how do you know which one might be good for you? Are you supposed to alternate between the two? Does one work without the other?

If we dive into the pros and cons of each therapy, we discover that in Finland, 90% of Finns enjoy a hot sauna at least once a week, with many making it a daily ritual, whereas only 15% take regular cold plunges. Despite the difference in percentages, cold plunging is relatively new, and if we add an icy dip to a post-sauna indulgence, then this trend becomes a little more subcultural. And yet, this health craze is growing rapidly and globally. And hey, if Finland keeps topping the charts as one of the happiest countries in the world, then maybe we should take notice.

But is it for everyone?

Hot saunas are good for your cardiovascular health by raising your heart rate and dilating blood vessels. Regular use can also improve your sleep quality due to the release of tension in your muscles. But you need to make sure you hydrate before and after, and look after your blood pressure by standing up slowly after a session. Be mindful.

Taking the risks aside, contrast therapy, which combines heat and cold, can feel incredibly invigorating. Moving between a sauna and cold water may stimulate circulation, encourage an endorphin release and leave you feeling awake, clear and alive. But while saunas have been studied for decades, cold plunges still need more research, especially when it comes to long term benefits and who should avoid them.

Cold plunges can be advantageous after a workout, as they may help reduce inflammation in the muscles and joints, improve your energy, concentration and mood. But the immediate shock of icy cold water to your body can be dangerous for your heart. Check the temperature of the water first, and if you are new to cold plunging, avoid very cold water, especially below 10 degrees, unless you have proper guidance.

Moving between a sauna and cold water may stimulate circulation, encourage an endorphin release and leave you feeling awake, clear and alive.

Risks aside, if you wish to explore the idea of 'contrast therapy', which is combining the two therapies together, you may increase your blood circulation, experience an endorphin release, and feel super invigorated. But while hot sauna therapies have been around for decades, don't forget that cold plunges are still relatively new in the mainstream, and we need more studies to calculate the benefits over the risks.

So, what to do? The best advice is to check the health of your cardiovascular system first. There are many exercises you can do to measure your HRR, or Heart Rate Recovery. A simple one is to raise your heart rate to a comfortable maximum by either running on a treadmill, going up escalators, jumping up and down, or doing burpees, and then check your pulse.

One minute after you stop, check your heart rate again by taking your pulse for 15 seconds and multiplying that by four. If the gap between the two numbers is 18 bpm or more, then this is generally considered good. For example, if your heart rate reaches 100 bpm when running at full capacity, and one minute later your pulse reads 75 bpm, then that's a 25 bpm difference and therefore in the desired range for good health.

And if you are a novice to either therapy, then start S.L.O.W. If it's a sauna you try, then only stay for 10-15 minutes at first and gently increase your time each visit. Your body has to slowly adapt to extreme heat exposure.

And if it's a cold plunge that's calling you, then don't expect to endure any temperature less than 10 degrees Celsius or stay in for more than 30 seconds at first. And never, ever, put your head under the cold water at the same time as your body, as this can disrupt your nervous system.

A much simpler and easily accessible way to experiment is with hot and cold showers in the comfort of your own home, and to see how you feel. You'll be surprised at how challenging it is to stay under a cold shower for even up to a minute, and it's a great introduction to hot and cold therapy. You can alternate between the two temperatures for as long as feels comfortable, and it's a fun and safer way to increase your heart rate, alertness and oxygen intake.

We are all unique and, despite the increasing trend in cold water plunges, you have to know your own limits. Find what's right for you, and you only, and most of all, have fun experimenting.

Disclaimer: Hot and cold therapy is not suitable for everyone. If you have heart disease, blood pressure issues, fainting, epilepsy, respiratory conditions, pregnancy, recent surgery or any health concern, seek medical advice first. Never cold plunge alone.

Micro Recovery



Why Calm Is Built in Small Pauses, Not Saved for Later

Stress is often treated as something we fix only after it becomes too much. We wait for the weekend, the holiday, the bath, the long walk, the quiet evening. But the nervous system does not only respond to big escapes. It also learns from the smallest signals of safety repeated throughout the day.

Micro-recovery is the practice of creating short, intentional pauses before stress becomes the baseline. It is not about avoiding pressure or pretending life should always feel calm. It is about giving the body enough moments of release that tension does not have to keep carrying over.

A minute of slower breathing, a shoulder roll, a walk around the room, or a few focused movements can tell the body that the threat has passed. Over time, these small interruptions can help restore clarity, steadiness, and connection.

Why Stress Builds When Recovery Is Delayed

Stress is not always the problem. In short bursts, it helps us respond, focus, and act. The difficulty begins when the body keeps preparing for demand long after the moment has passed. Breath becomes shallow, muscles stay braced, attention narrows, and the mind begins to treat urgency as normal.

When recovery is delayed, the body receives very little evidence that it is safe to soften. You may finish one task and move straight into the next, answer

messages while eating, or carry the tension of one conversation into the rest of the day. Nothing dramatic has happened, but the system never fully resets.

This is why rest cannot only be saved for the end of the week. The body needs smaller signals, more often. Recovery works best when it becomes part of the rhythm of living, not a reward for surviving exhaustion.

Small Signals That Help the Body Reset

Micro-recovery can be simple. It might be three slower breaths before opening an email, unclenching the jaw at a red light, standing up between tasks, or letting the shoulders drop before a difficult call. These moments may seem minor, but the nervous system reads repetition more than drama.

Movement is especially useful because it brings attention back into the body. Pilates does this through breath, control, alignment, and rhythm. It asks you to notice where effort is needed and where tension is only habit. That awareness can change the quality of the whole day.

Recovery does not have to look still or silent. Sometimes it is a stretch. Sometimes it is walking, breathing, lying down, shaking out the hands, or stepping away from a screen. The point is not to perform relaxation perfectly. The point is to interrupt the loop before stress becomes your only setting.

The Everyday Practice of Coming Back to Yourself

A calmer life is not built by removing every challenge. It is built by noticing the moment stress begins to shape your pace, your posture, your tone, and your attention. Micro-recovery makes that awareness practical. Instead of waiting until you feel depleted, you learn to step in earlier, before tension becomes the atmosphere you live inside.

You might catch it in the small transitions: the rush between appointments, the way you hold your face while replying to messages, the impatience that appears when nothing is actually urgent. These are invitations to interrupt autopilot. You soften the grip, slow the reaction, change the environment, or give yourself one clear minute before continuing.

Over time, this becomes more than stress management. It becomes a form of self-trust. The body learns that pressure can rise without taking over, and the mind learns that calm does not require perfect conditions. It can be rebuilt in ordinary places, through small acts of attention, repeated often enough to become a way back to yourself.

GROUNDING

STRENGTH THAT STARTS IN THE FEET

We tend to think of strength as something visible: shoulders, abdominals, thighs, the body's architecture above ground. Yet much of our stability begins lower, in the small, often neglected muscles of the feet.

The foot is far more than a passive platform. It is a sensing organ, a spring, a balance system and a messenger. Each step sends information upward: texture, slope, pressure, direction. Before the hips organise and the spine responds, the feet have already read the room.

This is the more interesting meaning of grounding. Less vague promise of calm, more physical intelligence. The evidence for "earthing" as a medical treatment remains limited, with many claims resting on small or weakly controlled studies. What is better supported is simpler, and perhaps more useful: time outdoors, contact with varied terrain, and the strengthening of the feet can all influence balance, gait, confidence and nervous system tone.

In a 2021 study published in Scientific Reports, adults who spent six months doing daily activity in minimal footwear increased foot strength by an average of 57.4 percent. The finding does not mean everyone should suddenly throw away their shoes, but it does suggest that feet respond to use like any other part of the body. Protect them too much, and they may lose capacity. Ask a little more of them, gradually, and they can adapt.

For ageing bodies, this matters. Foot strength is tied to balance, walking ability and fall risk. Recent research suggests that targeted exercises for the small muscles under the foot may improve some measures of balance and functional mobility in older adults, though the evidence is still developing and not every study shows dramatic change.





The forest adds another layer. Uneven paths, roots, moss, stones and soft ground ask the body to pay attention. A pavement lets the foot repeat. Woodland makes it listen. This kind of walking is more than cardiovascular exercise. It is balance practice, visual scanning, ankle mobility, sensory training and quiet concentration disguised as a walk.

Walking through trees feels different from exercise performed under strip lights. The body is working, but it is also orienting. The feet are sensing. The legs are stabilising. The eyes are resting on irregular green. The immune system, the nervous system and the musculoskeletal system are all receiving signals that cannot be replicated by another hour indoors.

And when trees are out of reach, the practice can be almost embarrassingly simple. Stand barefoot on a safe surface and notice where the weight falls. Lift and spread the toes. Press the big toe down without gripping. Walk slowly over grass, sand or woodland track when you can. Strengthen the calves. Train balance. Choose shoes that allow the foot to move.

The point is to restore a relationship. Between body and ground. Between balance and attention. Between strength and sensitivity.

It is the ability to stand well, walk well, recover balance and feel the surface beneath you. It is the quiet confidence of feet that still respond, legs that still carry, and a body that knows how to meet the earth.





THE SPECIAL INGREDIENTS THAT MAKE A Wellness Trip!! Work



Lizzie Adamson-Brown founded Rhythm and Routes to take health and well-being travel seriously. Beyond spas. Beyond the occasional yoga weekend. Into the real, more useful reasons underneath.

There is a particular morning on a good trip. You wake before the alarm. The light is soft. The air has a warmth to it, slow and unhurried, and for the first time in months your shoulders have dropped from somewhere up around your ears. Nobody needs anything from you yet. You breathe, and the breath goes all the way down.

Most people have had a version of that morning once or twice in a lifetime. Very few have had it on a trip they booked themselves. That morning comes from decisions made weeks earlier: timing, pace, where you sleep, how far you travel to reach it. Get those decisions right and the trip does quiet, lasting work on the body and the mind. Get them wrong and you come home more tired than when you left.

Lizzie is the founder and lead travel strategist of Rhythm and Routes, a boutique travel business on the Isle of Man. She has spent 26 years in the travel industry, including senior corporate travel at American Express, and she holds the TTB Wellness Travel Adviser of the Year award for 2026, won inside the first 10 weeks of running the business independently. A second industry award was voted for by suppliers themselves, the people who see how a specialist adviser actually works.

For years she watched the well-being end of travel get sold as a spa with a treatment menu, or a yoga retreat with a smoothie bar. Pleasant enough, and restful for a weekend. A long way short of what travel is able to do for someone whose health is the reason they are going.

"I focus on the ingredients that make a wellness trip work for you... Timing, pacing, fit, energy, environment, and expectation," she says. "Those are the things nobody puts in a brochure, and they are the things that decide whether a trip helps you or sets you back."

What well-being travel actually is

Health and well-being travel, done properly, is a clinical proposition rather than a cosmetic one. It covers longevity and metabolic health. It covers sleep, when sleep

has stopped working. It covers mental resilience, post-treatment recovery for people coming through serious illness, travel built around grief and loss, and travel structured for neurodivergent minds who find an ordinary itinerary overwhelming.

These are serious categories.

- Someone recovering from cancer treatment has a different relationship with heat, altitude, and fatigue than they had a year before.
- Someone who has struggled to sleep properly for 18 months needs an environment built around rest, rather than a packed schedule of excursions.
- A bereaved traveller, as the writer Ash Bhardwaj has put it, often needs a trip that reflects what they are feeling rather than one that cheerfully contradicts it.

The wrong trip, in every one of these cases, costs more than money. This is the territory Rhythm and Routes was built to provide, and the part most of the travel industry has left alone. It is also the part where small mistakes do real harm. A flight routed through one too many connections. A property at the wrong altitude. A schedule that looks restful on paper and exhausts the person living it. These details rarely show up on a booking site. All of them show up in the body, three days in, when it is too late to change them.

Why the judgement is the product

Knowing this territory takes time and direct experience, rather than a search engine. The travel industry has been through four major disruptions in 30 years: the arrival of the internet, the period after 9/11, COVID, and now artificial intelligence. In each one, the advisers who leaned in and got clearer about what only a person could offer became more useful, not less. The judgement is the product. So is the conversation it comes out of.

Behind every recommendation sits a directory of more than 160 wellness properties and specialist resorts, each one chosen because Lizzie or someone she trusts has stayed there and tested it in person.





You learn what a place does to a recovering body by being in it, rather than reading its website.

With specially contracted villas and resort suppliers putting their backing behind her health and well-being concept, the gap was clearly real, and somebody finally moved to fill it.

For the practitioners reading this

There is a second income strand to the work, and it speaks directly to many of this magazine's readers.

A lot of therapists, coaches, and clinicians reach a point where they want to take their own clients away on a retreat. Then they meet the stress of flight logistics, accommodation requirements, transfers, contracts, contingencies such as food, and the hundred small decisions that sit outside the work they are actually good at. So most quietly let the idea go.

"I make your hosted retreat possible," Lizzie says. "The practitioner arrives at the villa or resort and does the thing they are there to do. Everything logistically underneath it has been handled."

Lizzie has written a guide on how to host your perfect retreat, which you can access by emailing her directly.

Getting to know Rhythm and Routes

Lizzie Adamson-Brown grew up without travel. It was unavailable to her, and she was told plainly that she should have a profession rather than chase the industry she loved, so she qualified as a teacher. But after a health scare in 2000, she realised that her passion lay in travel and that health is a priority.

"So, I decided to combine the two. Why not travel and help your health too?" Lizzie says.

Her work is really about giving other people access to something she once could only dream of reaching: the understanding of the world that comes from meeting other cultures, other religions, other ways of living, in person.

She built her career the long way, across 26 years that took in senior corporate travel and a steady move toward the work she cares about most. During COVID, she and her partner Colin ran the Mind Body Travel podcast, which reached the top 10 in its UK category.

She founded Rhythm and Routes with Colin, who runs operations, and took the TTG Wellness Travel Adviser of the Year award in the firm's first 10 weeks.

What sets her apart is something quieter than polish. She is gentle by temperament in an industry that often rewards the hard sell, and she has built a successful travel business by refusing to become someone else. Clients come to her because she listens first, because she has carefully checked and vetted the areas she recommends, and because she tells them the truth, including when the truth is that the trip they have in mind is the wrong shape for what they need.

She works with a small number of people at a time. That is the point.

Why should you contact Rhythm and Routes?

The Isle of Man is quietly becoming a place that takes well-being seriously, from the practitioner community gathering across the Island to the world record Pilates attempt at Knockaloe on 19 July 2026. Rhythm and Routes sits inside that movement.

If you are planning a trip where your health, your recovery, or your peace of mind is the reason you are going, the detail is everything, and the detail is the work that Rhythm and Routes provides.

Have a conversation before you book. One call, no obligation. It is the difference between a trip that works for you and one that fits badly.



Contact Lizzie:
lizzie@rhythmandroutes.com
rhythmandroutes.com

THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OF PILATES

34 MOVES



In 1945, Joseph Pilates published *'Return to Life Through Contrology'*, a book with a powerful idea at its centre: the body and mind work best when trained together.

To Pilates, physical fitness was the foundation of a full and happy life. He believed a well-developed body, guided by a clear mind, could carry us through daily life with energy, ease and vitality. His famous line, “physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness,” still reads like the heartbeat of the method.

The 34 mat exercises in *Return to Life* were his practical expression of that belief. They required only the body, breath and complete attention. Each movement required the “complete coordination of body, mind and spirit.”

THE BOOK THAT BUILT THE METHOD

Return to Life Through Contrology set out the original mat sequence that still underpins classical Pilates today. The 34 exercises were presented as a complete system, designed to develop the body evenly, restore vitality, improve posture and sharpen mental focus.

Pilates believed modern life had pulled people away from their natural strength. His answer was Contrology: a disciplined method of movement that taught the body to work with intelligence, balance and purpose.

The Hundred wakes the breath and circulation. The Roll Up and Roll Over articulate the spine. The abdominal series builds strength and stamina. Twists, kicks, balances and inversions follow, asking the body to move with awareness from the inside out.

MIND AND BODY AS ONE

For Joseph Pilates, the mind directed the body. Every movement demanded attention. Every repetition had a purpose. The goal was mastery: to move with such focus and control that strength became natural, balanced and useful.

This is what made Pilates feel ahead of its time. Long before modern conversations around mindful movement, nervous-system regulation and functional strength, Pilates described a practice where breath, posture, concentration and movement worked together.

His method asked people to return to themselves through discipline. To listen more closely. To move more precisely. To build a body capable of meeting life with strength and grace.

BREATH, CONTROL, PRECISION

The language of Pilates is exact because the method is exact. Concentration brings the mind into the body. Control gives each movement purpose. The centre gives the body its power. Precision refines every action. Breath gives rhythm, oxygen and life. Flow turns separate exercises into one continuous practice.

Pilates wrote that breathing is “the first act of life and the last.” In *Return to Life*, breath sits at the heart of the work. It fuels the movement, clears the body and restores energy.

Pilates asked for full participation. The body moved, the mind guided, the breath connected everything.

WHY THE 34 STILL MATTER

The original 34 moves still matter because they are clear, demanding and complete. They ask for attention, breath, discipline and practice. They build strength with intelligence and create a body that moves as one connected whole.

In a world of constant reinvention, their power lies in their simplicity. A mat. A body. A sequence. A method that asks us to move with awareness rather than force.

The 34 moves are Joseph Pilates' original language. They carry his belief that health begins with coordination, that strength begins with control, and that the body and mind become stronger when they work together.

Master the movement. Wake the breath. Return to life.

THE HUNDRED

ROLL UP

ROLL OVER

LEG CIRCLES

ROLLING BACK

SINGLE LEG STRETCH

DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

SPINE STRETCH

OPEN LEG ROCKER

CORK-SCREW

SAW

SWAN-DIVE

SINGLE LEG KICK

DOUBLE KICK

NECK PULL

SCISSORS

BICYCLE

SHOULDER BRIDGE

SPINE TWIST

JACK KNIFE

SIDE KICK

TEASER

HIP TWIST

LEG PULL FRONT

SWIMMING

SIDE KICK KNEELING

LEG PULL

SIDE BEND

BOOMERANG

SEAL

CRAB

ROCKING

CONTROL BALANCE

PUSH UP

His method asked
people to return to
themselves through
discipline.





CONSCIOUS CAFFEINE

Coffee is for many a small ceremony before work begins, a warm cup beside a book, a pause that gives shape to a morning. Its mistake was never pleasure. Its mistake was becoming a substitute for rest.

Caffeine occupies a peculiar place in modern health culture, suspended somewhere between pleasure, dependence and moral suspicion. We cherish it as ritual, criticise it as vice and rely on it as infrastructure, sometimes within the same morning. At its best, coffee is deeply civilised: a carefully made espresso, a few minutes of quiet, the fragrance of roasted beans before the day begins to gather speed. At its worst, it becomes a way of asking the body to keep performing long after its reserves have thinned.

The science is more interesting than either devotion or guilt allows. Moderate coffee intake has been associated in large observational studies with a lower risk of several chronic diseases and lower all-cause mortality, although this kind of research cannot prove that coffee itself is responsible. Still, it does complicate the old idea of coffee as something merely tolerated by the body. Part of its appeal to researchers lies beyond caffeine itself, since coffee contains polyphenols and other plant compounds that may help explain why decaffeinated coffee is also linked with some favourable health outcomes.

The difficulty is that caffeine's benefits and liabilities often arrive through the same mechanism. By blocking adenosine, one of the chemical signals that helps build sleep pressure, caffeine can make the morning feel sharper and more available; taken too late, or in quantities that exceed a person's tolerance, it can quietly interfere with the very rest that tomorrow's energy depends on. Many people say they can drink coffee in the afternoon and sleep without trouble, yet sleep quality is not always something we can judge from memory alone.

A better relationship with caffeine begins with discernment. There are cups that bring pleasure, clarity and rhythm, and there are cups that simply postpone the message the body has been sending for days. The difference is rarely moral, but it is meaningful. Coffee can be a

beautiful companion to a well-rested life; it becomes a poorer bargain when it is asked to stand in for the rest our body is screaming for.

Alternatives to the usual cup

Mushroom coffee

Blends such as DIRTEA usually combine coffee with functional mushroom extracts, often with less caffeine than a standard cup. The appeal is a gentler lift, rather than the sharp rise and fall of stronger coffee. Lion's mane, chaga, cordyceps and reishi all have interesting research around cognition, stress and immunity, but the evidence for mushroom coffee itself is still early, so it is best treated as a lower-caffeine ritual rather than a cure-all.

Matcha

Matcha offers caffeine in a different atmosphere. Because it contains L-theanine, it may feel steadier for some people than coffee, although the response is individual. Research suggests that caffeine and L-theanine together may support attention and mood, but the evidence is more promising than definitive.

Decaf coffee

Decaf is underrated. It keeps the bitterness, warmth, and ritual of coffee without the same nervous-system charge. It is especially useful in the afternoon, when the desire is often for a pause rather than stimulation.

Chicory coffee

Roasted chicory root has a dark, bitter flavour and no caffeine. It also contains inulin, a prebiotic fibre, although higher amounts may cause bloating or digestive discomfort in sensitive people.

Cacao

A small cacao drink can offer depth and comfort with much less caffeine than coffee, though it still contains stimulating methylxanthines such as theobromine. Think of it as evening-adjacent, rather than entirely sleep-neutral.

The Night Shift of The Mind

Dreaming may be one of the most ordinary mysteries we live with. Every night, the brain builds private worlds that can feel emotional, strange, deeply familiar, or completely absurd, and yet they arise from a body that is fast asleep and a mind that is anything but idle.

For decades, scientists have debated what dreams are for. Some think they help with memory and learning, others see them as a by-product of the brain organising information, and many now believe they do a bit of both. Research from Harvard and elsewhere suggests that sleep supports memory consolidation, problem solving, and creativity, which may help explain why dreams often feel like they are remixing the day's material into something new.

What the brain is doing

The dreaming brain is busy in a very particular way. During REM sleep, when many vivid dreams occur, the brain shows patterns that are quite different from ordinary waking thought. Studies using EEG, neuroimaging, and sleep recording have found strong activity in areas linked to emotion and memory, including the amygdala and hippocampus, while the prefrontal cortex, which helps with judgement and control, becomes less active.

That shift matters. It helps explain why dreams can feel so emotionally charged, so oddly logical, and so free from the usual rules of real life. The mind is still making connections, but it is doing so with fewer

filters, which is why a dream can move from a kitchen to a train station to a childhood house without ever pausing to explain itself.

Why dreams feel familiar

Most dreams are built from fragments of memory, emotion, and experience rather than entirely new material. Researchers at MIT and Harvard have described dreaming as part of the brain's way of processing recent and older memories, recombining them in ways that may support learning and mental flexibility.

This is why dreams often include people you know, places you have visited, and situations that feel emotionally recognisable even when the plot is bizarre. The brain seems less interested in telling a tidy story than in sorting, linking, and rehearsing pieces of experience.

The phone problem

One of the more charming findings in dream research is how rarely smartphones appear in dreams. Despite how much of waking life they occupy, several reports have found that mobile phones show up only in a small percentage of dreams, with one summary pointing to roughly two to three percent.

That does not mean modern life disappears from dreams entirely. Cars, transport, and movement often appear far more frequently, which some researchers suggest may reflect the deeper sensory and emotional impact of physical motion compared with communication devices.

Dreams may feel **irrational**, but beneath their strange logic the sleeping brain is **sorting memory, feeling, and experience** in ways science is only **beginning to understand**



In other words, the dream brain may be more interested in journeys than notifications.

How the switch works

There is still plenty of scientists who do not fully understand, but one of the most interesting discoveries is that dreaming appears to be tied to specific neural activity. Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley identified a neural switch that seems to help turn dreaming on and off during REM sleep, pointing to a more precise mechanism than people once imagined.

This supports the idea that dreaming is not just a vague side effect of sleep, but a distinct brain state with its own patterns and triggers. It also helps explain why some dreams are vivid and memorable while others vanish almost instantly on waking.

Why it matters

Dreaming matters because it sits right at the meeting point of consciousness, memory, emotion, and creativity. It can look irrational from the outside, yet inside it may be doing some very practical work, helping the brain process information, integrate emotion, and test out strange combinations of experience.

That is part of what makes dreaming so compelling. It is ancient, universal, and private, and it gives us a nightly reminder that the brain is never truly off. Even in sleep, it keeps making meaning, building images, and opening doors into worlds we do not fully control.



MEET CONTR



RUBY GRIFFITHS | CO-FOUNDER

Ruby Griffiths brings together psychology, neuroscience and movement expertise within the 34Moves philosophy. With a background in Psychology, a Master's in the Neuroscience of Mental Health and over 600 hours of APEI equipment Pilates training, she brings both academic depth and practical experience to her teaching.

ANDIE JAMES | DESIGN & MARKETING

Andie is the queen of marketing and design. She has an instinct for what people feel and what truly draws them in, creating stories and visuals that inspire curiosity, connection, and the desire to experience a better life.

STEPHAN BAUM | CO-FOUNDER

Stephan brings a strategic, business-minded perspective to 34Moves. With training in Business Administration, Strategic Management, Finance and New Business Development, he helps shape the vision behind the brand.

VIVIEN SPEERS | CONTRIBUTOR

Vivien Speers is a writer, mindfulness guide, and yoga teacher with 15 years' experience holding reflective spaces for others. Formerly a London advertising copywriter, she holds a Diploma in Freelance Journalism and is an active member and session host at London Writers' Salon. Her background in meditation, yoga, and travel brings warmth, curiosity, and human connection to her writing.

DR RADHA MEASURIA | CONTRIBUTOR

Dr Radha is a UK-trained doctor with over a decade of NHS experience, now focused on preventative, root-cause health. She helps busy professionals restore their gut, energy, and hormones, without extremes, confusion, or cutting out everything they enjoy.

CAROLINE PETE | CONTRIBUTOR

Caroline Pete brings over seven years of experience in the travel and entertainment industries, combining strong writing skills with a sharp eye for detail and organisation. Her thoughtful, polished approach makes her a valuable contributor to both editorial and creative projects.

RHYTHM & ROUTES | CONTRIBUTOR

Lizzie Adamson-Brown & Colin Brown from Rhythm & Routes specialises in bespoke long-haul travel and wellness experiences, shaped around each client's needs, pace and personal interests. With over 25 years of expertise, the team takes a thoughtful, holistic approach to designing journeys that feel considered, restorative and entirely individual.

DR JOSEPH NIGHTINGALE | CONTRIBUTOR

Joseph Nightingale brings together medicine, science and search strategy. With an MBBS, a background in pharmacovigilance and drug safety, and a Master's in Ecology, he has a strong grounding in evidence, risk and systems thinking. He now translates complex medical and scientific subjects into clear, trusted editorial.

VICTORIA COOPER | CONTRIBUTOR

Victoria Cooper is a CBT-I Practitioner and UKI-HCA Registered Health Coach, working with clients across the UK online and in-person on the Isle of Man. sleepcoach.im

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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Headquarters
Inönü Mah, Alpkaya Cad.
Umit Is Merkezi 49/6
34775 Atasehir, Istanbul

Contact
www.legacyapparatus.com
info@legacyapparatus.com
+90 (216) 576 00 22

