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HEALTH



HEALTHY HABITS ARE ONE OF THE VERY BEST THINGS for helping us feel more energetic, happier and more in balance. When we are feeling a bit low, a quick 20-minute burst of exercise can change our mood and raise our happiness level.

How we eat, sleep, and move can have dramatic impacts on how we feel.

But it's not just exercise (though that is a great place to start!). Paying a little bit of time and attention to our health also helps us cope better with the challenges in life. Research comes back to the same basic principles; we already do all of them: eat, sleep,

move. Focusing on the quality and quantity of each can have dramatic impacts on how we feel right now and in the future.



It is curious that we often don't realise how precious our health is until we have a problem. Taking time to do our preventative checks, going to the dentist and the optician, and seeking timely help for that sore back, all matter.

*A quick 20-minute burst of exercise
can change our mood.*

Prioritising these checks is a commitment to our self-care in looking after our overall wellbeing.

Sometimes it's difficult to put our health first, perhaps because we spend a lot of time caring for others and don't have time for ourselves, or perhaps because it can seem like too much effort when we are already worn out. But not focusing on our healthy habits only makes this more difficult.

GET MOTIVATED

Being motivated is the key to success. If our goals are clear, like “I want to feel calmer and happier”, “I want to look great” or “I want to win the tennis competition”, it's easier to get out for a walk, eat a healthy meal, or even have an early night. Motivation helps us to make better choices for how we care for our body and mind.



Life Balance HEALTH

We can make a choice at any time to do something for our health. It doesn't matter how small it seems. Picking the apple over the cookie. Walking rather than driving. An early night over a late-night movie. An alcohol-free week. A few minutes of meditation.

Small changes can snowball into long-term habits.

Small changes do make a difference. And they can also snowball into much bigger long-term changes. No one becomes a marathon runner over-night. It starts one day with a small change that becomes a habit, then a routine and then a regular part of life.

EASY DOES IT

When we do these actions over and over, our brains make pathways to make it easier for us. As we keep doing this action, the connections get stronger and stronger and it takes us less and less effort to do. The brain re-wires itself to make this choice without thinking and you can move on to the next thing.



When we do actions over and over, our brain makes pathways to make it easier for us.

It sounds obvious, but if you want to eat more fruit and fewer cookies, put a big bowl of apples and satsumas on the kitchen counter, and put the cookies somewhere difficult to access. If you want to exercise first thing in the morning, lay out your gym kit the night before so it is the first thing you see when you get up. Want to go to bed earlier? Set an alarm to tell you it's time to turn the screens off.

Choose the habits that suit the lifestyle you want. Getting up at 5am to exercise may be perfect for some, but for others it sounds like torture. If you are in the latter group, pick a different goal: something you actually want to do. Make choices that work not only with the life you have, but the life you want.





FINDING YOUR BALANCE

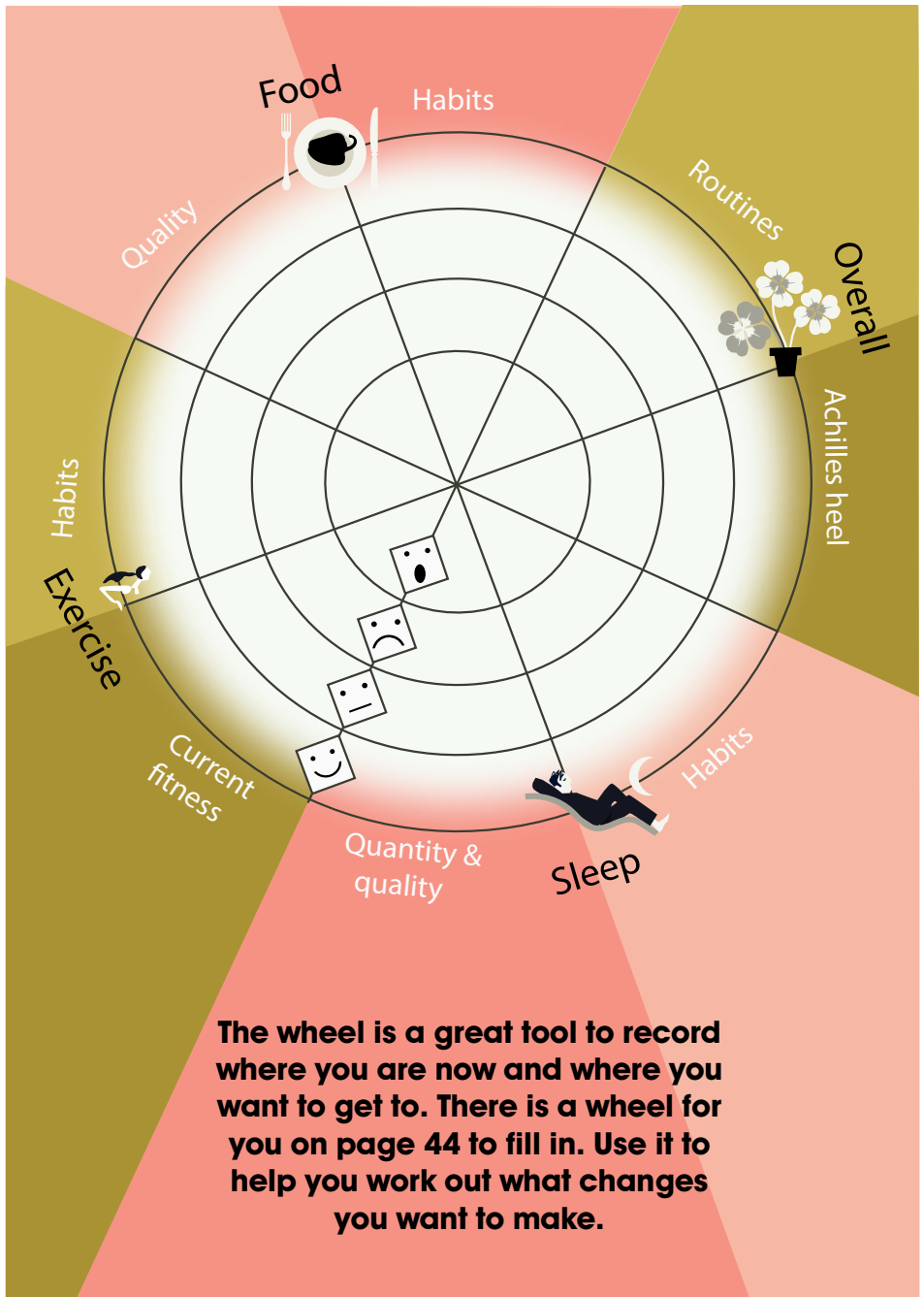
GOOD HEALTH MEANS SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO ALL OF US. STEPHEN HAWKING — WHO LIVED WITH ALS FOR 55 YEARS, FOCUSED ON HIS SPIRIT AND MAINTAINED HIS BODY AS A VESSEL FOR HIS MIND TO BE ABLE TO UNRAVEL THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

A TOP ATHLETE OR DANCER wants to be in the best physical shape to perform now, regardless of the consequences later. Some of us are okay with being able to run for the bus without being out of breath, others want to be fit enough to climb Mount Everest with a heavy back-pack.

Spend a little time thinking about what a good health balance would be for you, how you'd like to feel, and what specific steps you can take to get there. For example, if you want more energy, does that mean going to bed earlier, eating more fruit and vegetables, or doing more physical activity?

On the coming pages, there are questions and an exercise to help you explore your health goals and what habits can help you feel more in balance.

Our health is very personal. Some of us are okay with being able to run for the bus, others want to climb Mount Everest.



The wheel is a great tool to record where you are now and where you want to get to. There is a wheel for you on page 44 to fill in. Use it to help you work out what changes you want to make.



JOURNAL PROMPTS

JOURNALING HELPS YOU TO SET AND ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS.
HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU START WRITING.

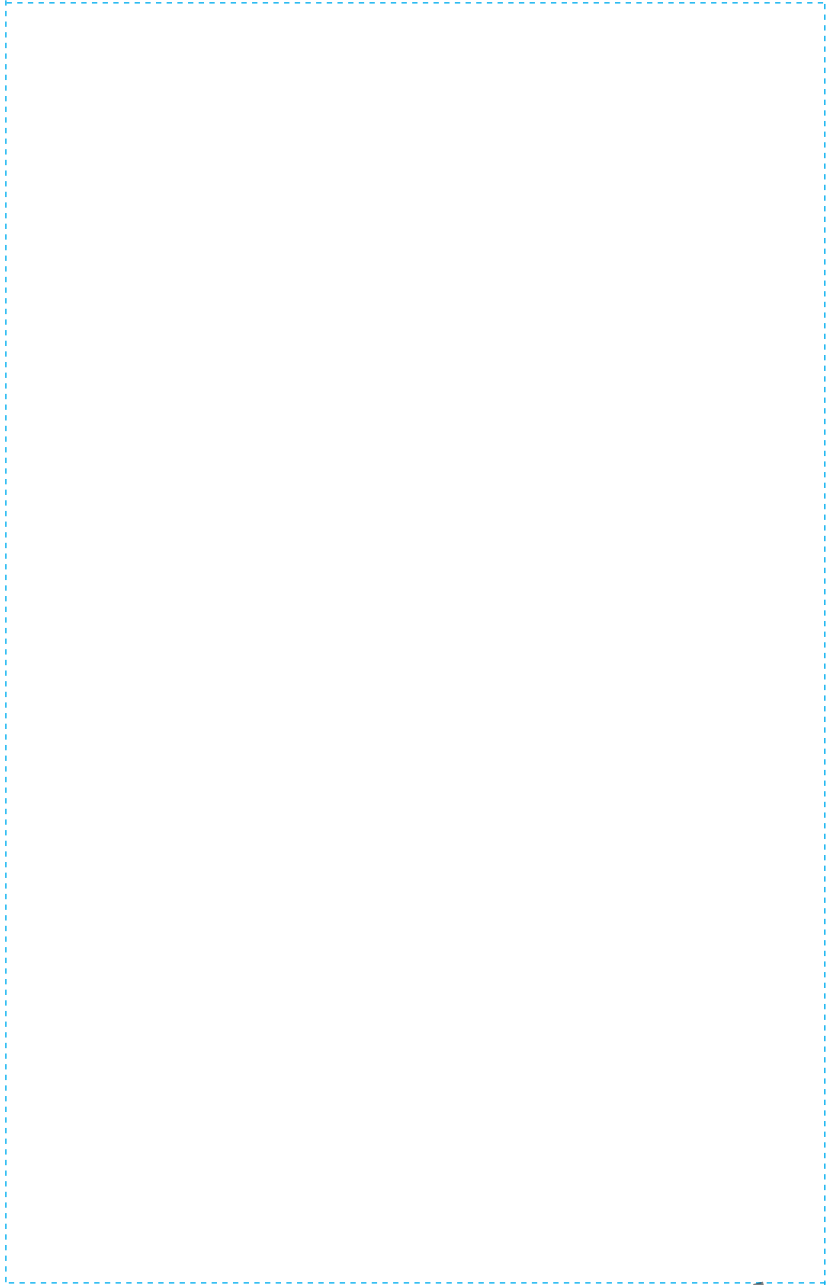
1. WHAT DOES MY MOST HEALTHY SELF LOOK LIKE? HOW AM I BEHAVING? WHAT AM I DOING?
WHAT'S DIFFERENT FROM HOW I AM NOW?
2. WHERE DO I FEEL MY HEALTH IS MOST OUT OF BALANCE?
3. WHAT CHANGE WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE TO MY HEALTH?
4. WHAT IS MY "WHY"? WHY DO I WANT TO FOCUS ON THIS AREA NOW?
5. WHAT'S THE GREMLIN ON MY SHOULDER WHISPERING IN MY EAR?
WHAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY OF ME HAVING BETTER HEALTH?
6. WHAT ACTION CAN I TAKE TODAY TO IMPROVE MY HEALTH?

FOR MORE SUGGESTIONS GO TO THEHAPPYLADDER.ORG OR WRITE WHAT COMES TO MIND.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.

START WHERE YOU ARE. USE WHAT YOU HAVE. DO WHAT YOU CAN. - ARTHUR ASHE





Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.

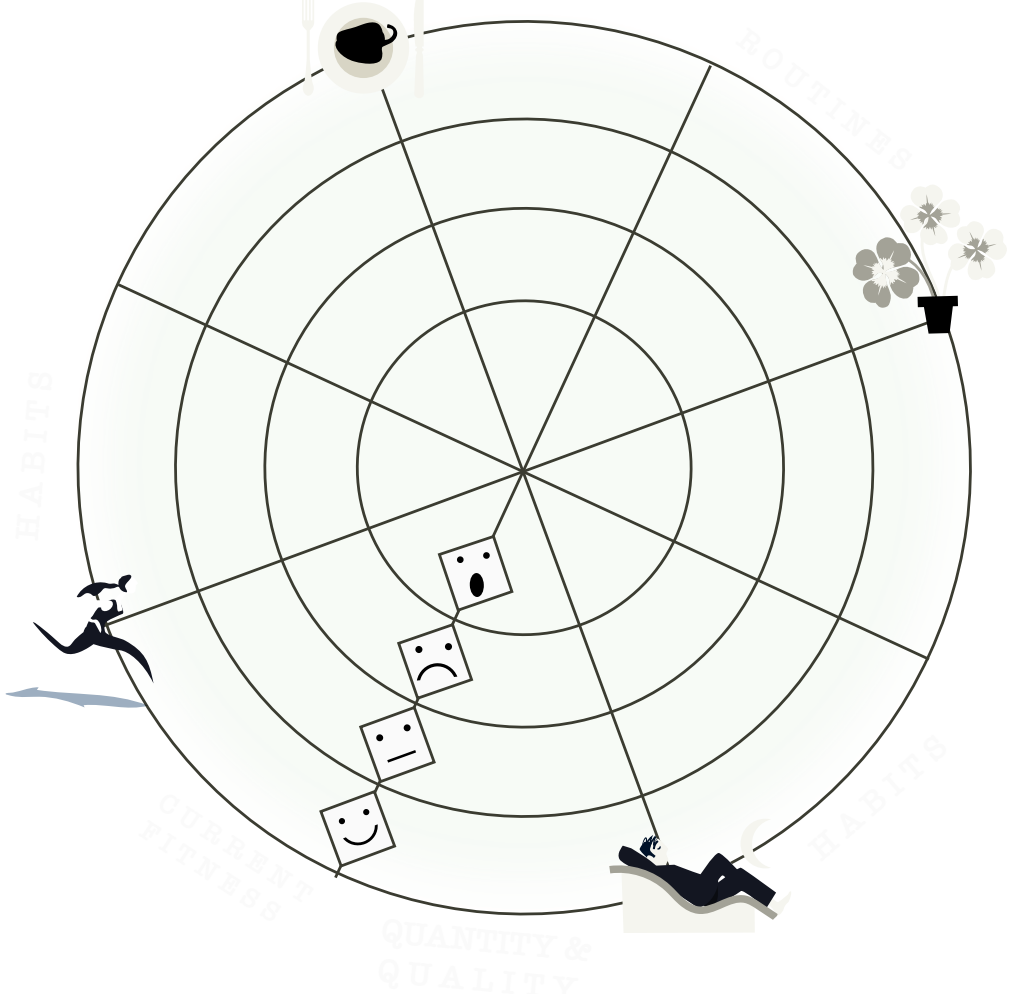
IT DOES NOT MATTER HOW SLOWLY YOU GO, SO LONG AS YOU DO NOT STOP. - CONFUCIUS





MY WHEEL

See example on page 39



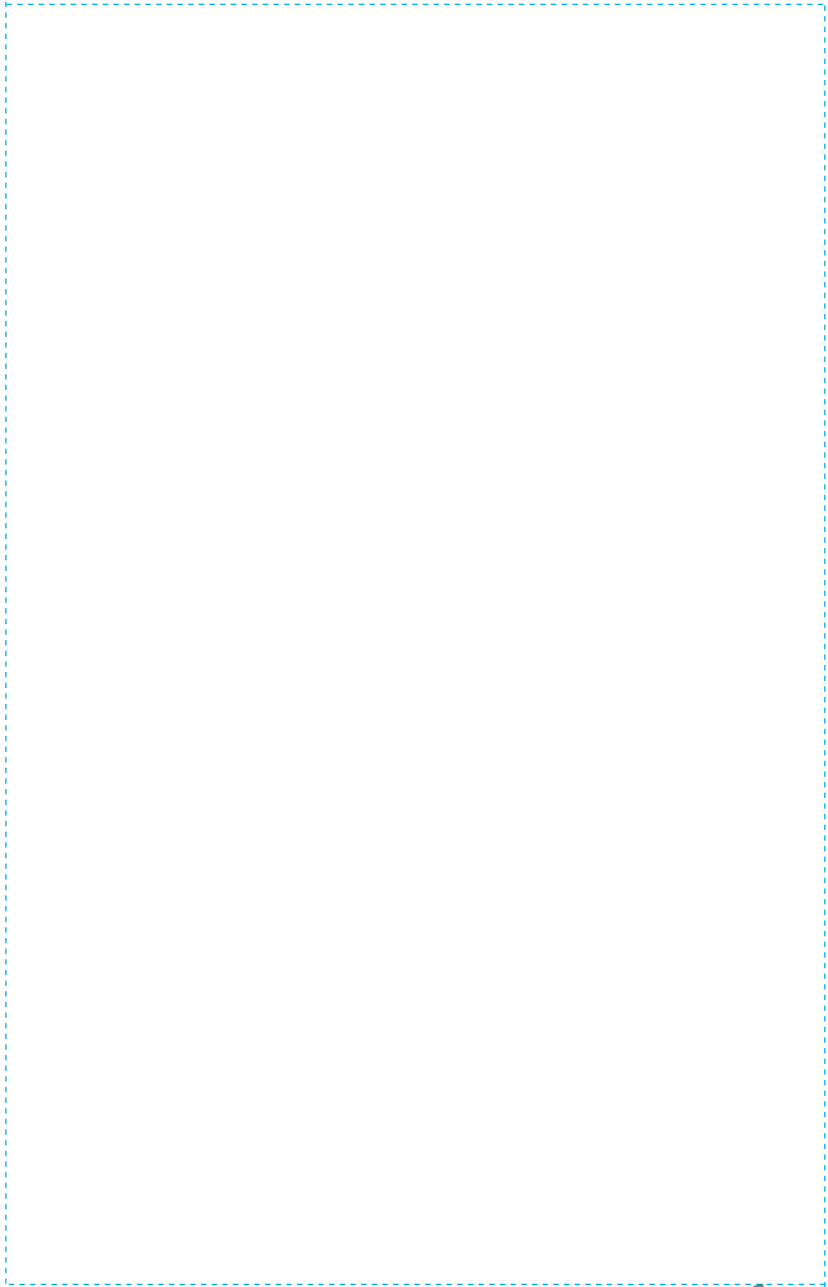
Fill in each segment with an area that is relevant for you. Mark with a dot where you feel you are right now, and connect the dots. Mark with a cross where you want to be in - say - six months time, and connect the crosses. When you look at your scores, think about what's going well and what's not? What, specifically, would be different if your score was better? What area is the most important to make changes? What is needed for that to happen?



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.

BY CHANGING NOTHING, NOTHING CHANGES. - TONY ROBBINS





Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed blue lines.



A banana has approximately 30% of your recommended daily intake of vitamin B6.
A 10 SECOND HUG CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH.
Ginger can help to reduce cramps, bloating & nausea.
BROCCOLI CONTAINS TWICE THE AMOUNT OF VITAMIN C AS AN ORANGE AND HAS AS MUCH CALCIUM AS WHOLE MILK.
Massaging healed scars can help them fade away.
BEING AN OPTIMIST CAN HELP YOU LIVE LONGER.
Lack of exercise now causes as many deaths as smoking.
ANXIETY CAN MAKE BAD SMELLS SMELL EVEN WORSE.
Your blood takes up nearly one tenth of your body weight.



Photo: Sean Cahill

STEPHEN FLYNN (41) STARTED THE HAPPY PEAR WITH HIS TWIN DAVID, TO MAKE PLANT-BASED FOOD ACCESSIBLE, AVAILABLE AND FUN FOR EVERYONE.

STEPHEN AND DAVID FLYNN - IDENTICAL TWINS - BECAME INTERESTED IN FOOD AND HEALTH within a week of each other

when they were miles apart travelling the world separately. When they returned to Ireland, they started their mission to inspire people to eat more vegetables and fruit. They began selling organic fruit and vegetables out of a van. Stephen jokes, “It was unheard of back then, people thought we were selling drugs! But really we wanted to make a community of like-minded people”. The Happy Pear has now grown into a large, cheerful community, with popular restaurants, a bakery, online courses, best-selling products and award-winning cookbooks.

The Happy Pear is on a quest to promote healthy, mainly plant-based, but more importantly organic whole food, made with love as a way to happiness. Stephen explained, “In the early years we were quite obsessed. In our first restaurant I didn’t even want to serve anything with sugar, because that was bad for you, and you’d get enough of that.”

There is no green juice or kale that can fix a toxic self-image.

These days, the philosophy of The Happy Pear is less rigid. “Over time – especially after we had kids, we came to realise that eating cake every now and then is not a bad thing. There is no perfect. I was on a raw food diet for a while, and I was in optimum health, but felt a little isolated. Now I’m back on a whole food plant-based diet. But I also believe that a cake can be healthy too. I think balance is really important. If you love your coffee and your wine, great. Healthy eating is not necessarily kale and lentils, it doesn’t have to be an all or nothing thing. We’ve all probably met someone that lived to the age of 90 that didn’t know what the hell quinoa was, didn’t do yoga, smoked cigarettes, drank whiskey every day, but laughed a lot, and had a lot of love in their life. I think that’s equally as important as lentils. There is no green juice or kale that can fix a toxic self-image.

Our relationship with ourselves and a little love in your life is at least as important as lentils.”

The brothers get up early every morning to meditate and then go for a swim in the ocean at sunrise.

The brothers are on a mission. “Eating mainly plant-based is the best thing to do for your health and the single biggest thing you can do for the climate. In the UK, half of all calories consumed are ultra-processed foods, and 9 out of 10 people don’t get their daily intake of nutrients or fibre. What we eat every day has a massive effect, also economically and politically: what industry do we support, what agriculture system, was it grown organically, without pesticides, what carbon was released in the process and transport, etc.”

“Eating healthy will help you to feel good, sleep better, and feel more fit, giving you the best base to explore other aspects in life”. The brothers get up early every morning to meditate and then go for a swim in the ocean at sunrise. “We serve coffee, croissants and over time more and more people are joining us, it’s great fun”.

THE HAPPY PEAR SHARE THEIR AMAZING RECIPES IN SEVERAL COOK-BOOKS, ON THEIR WEBSITE THEHAPPYPEAR.IE AND ON INSTAGRAM @THEHAPPYPEAR



1. 80 PERCENT OF PEOPLE SUFFER FROM NECK OR BACK PAIN AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIFE. GOING INTO CHILDS' POSE—OR AS YOGIS SAY BALASANA — FOR 1 MINUTE A DAY HELPS TO PREVENT THIS.

2. GOOD BALANCE IMPROVES YOUR LIFE EXPECTANCY. PRACTICE STANDING ON ONE LEG WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED. IT HELPS YOUR BRAIN CREATE NEW CONNECTIONS AND STRENGTHENS THE COORDINATION BETWEEN YOUR EARS, EYES, JOINTS AND MUSCLES.

3. IF YOU FIND IT HARD TO RESIST SNACKS, USE YOUR LESS DOMINANT HAND TO PICK AT THEM.

4. BLUE LIGHT INTERFERES WITH YOUR MELATONIN PRODUCTION AND CAN DISRUPT SLEEP. USE THE NIGHT TIME SETTINGS ON YOUR DEVICES TO REDUCE BLUE LIGHT WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN. OR WEAR BLUE-LIGHT BLOCKING GLASSES.

5. RESEARCH FROM NASA SHOWS THAT SOME PLANTS CAN CLEAN TOXINS FROM THE AIR. CHRYSANTHEMUM IS THE CHAMPION AND AN IVY PLANT IN YOUR BATHROOM CAN REDUCE FUNGAL SPORES BY 80%.



DOCTOR PETER MILLS

“EVEN WHEN WE KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING, WE DON’T ALWAYS PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH.”

A CAN OF COKE, A COUPLE OF CIGARETTES AND A MARS BAR. This was often Peter’s breakfast as a junior doctor. The irony of it, when he was dishing out health advice as his job, is not lost on him. “I knew it wasn’t the best choice, but when you’re 20 something, you feel invincible and just do what feels good at the time.”

The change came when he found himself not feeling very good. Feeling tired. Feeling anxious. And “then kids came along and there was even more pressure on my time and mental space, and you recognise you need to make changes.” He started going to the gym and eating more healthily.

*When you're 20 something, you feel invincible
and just do what feels good at the time.*

With a tendency to throw himself into projects and always strive for excellence, one thing he found himself not being very good at was taking time out to reflect on what was going well and what was not. Taking this time is something he discovered is key for his wellbeing and also an early warning sign for things getting out of balance.

These days, good health includes Pilates and circuit classes, a new-found enjoyment of cooking, and a deliberate effort not to burn the candle at both ends. Asked what his number one recommendation to others would be, he says, to spend time understanding yourself, what you are good at, and what you like doing.

“Spending time on this inward reflection is important because you can make changes to your path. You may not know the end destination, but the journey is just as important; not every day will be lovely, but are you doing the things you want to?”

DR PETER MILLS (54) IS A SPECIALIST IN RESPIRATORY DISEASE IN THE NHS AND IS ALSO EUROPEAN MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR CIGNA EUROPE. HE HAS JUGGLED A DEMANDING CORPORATE CAREER WITH A DESIRE TO REMAIN CLOSE TO PATIENTS IN HIS HOSPITAL CLINIC AND RAISE A FAMILY.