

Positive Psychology Ideas



We generally need to train our entire nervous system to relax more. In a world where anxiety and depression are at the highest recorded levels. Studies show 50-70% GP visits can be traced back to psychological stress and tension, this means increased cortisol in our system that blocks our immune system from functioning effectively and halts neural growth. Here are some ideas....

Breathing Full deep breathing allows richer oxygenated blood.

Breath out through mouth to expel all air from lungs, engages Left prefrontal cortex by taking conscious control of an automatic process. Improves cortical blood flow to the more rational brain that keeps worry loops in check.

Easy to fit into day, e.g.: at the traffic lights, before a meeting.

Sleep Dim the lights closer to bedtime, begins the increase of Melatonin.

Bed is for sleep, not TV, not emailing, not worry - its a rule.

Shower or bath before bed relaxes the body and signals sleep time.

An 8 hour sleep most of the time is essential for the Hippocampus to discharge into memory all the input from the day. Having enough REM cycles is a key for learning and new neural pathways to be built.

A dark and not stuffy room aides in melatonin production for sleep.

Food Limit caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, artificial sweeteners in excessive amounts or late at night, they inhibit, *sleep, memory, neural growth, functioning and REM sleep.*

Eat nuts as a late evening snack: Protein aids in neural growth.

Regular intake of water and green vegetables also aids in new neural growth and brain functioning.

Strengths Assess your strengths and find a matching job that really engages your talents.

Exercise Lack of serotonin leads to negative loop thinking. Regular aerobic exercise for more 25 minutes at a pace at 70% of your maximum increases serotonin levels naturally.

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- Nature** Being in or near nature reduces stress and anxiety.
In nature people engage in healthier habits, less smoking, less alcohol, more exercise.
Patients in hospital with a window to nature - heal quicker.
People who live near nature have less domestic violence and social connection.
- Vision** Having a long term purpose and vision even if a bit unclear in detail but is concordant with your strengths and values improves resilience to times of stress, and improves well being.
- Mindfulness**
Getting immersed in the present moment relieves stress. Being fully present in the moment can be done anywhere anytime, trains the mind to stop negative looping thoughts and improves serotonin levels. Meditation class teaches the brain how to be fully present.
- Gratitude** Commit to reflecting on five things to be grateful for each day, studies have shown that people who did this daily showed increased well being and resilience to stress.
- Random Acts of Kindness**
Commit to three random acts of kindness each day, holding a door, going out of your way to help someone increases serotonin in yourself and the receiver of the act of kindness. It's a win-win!
- Writing** Understanding your emotions through writing. Writing down your thoughts, worries and challenging negativity has amazing effects in your brain. People who write using more positive emotion words about themselves show increased wellbeing, better sleep and improved emotional intelligence.
- Connect with Others**
Connecting in positive social settings, being around other people engages our mirror neurons and thus increases serotonin and dopamine, the well being chemicals of the brain. Neural imaging has shown social isolation increases stress response within the brain increasing cortisol, which suppresses the immune response and neural growth.

People who experience 3:1 positive to negative emotions daily, flourish in life and live 8-10 years longer - Dr Barbara Fredrickson "Positivity"