

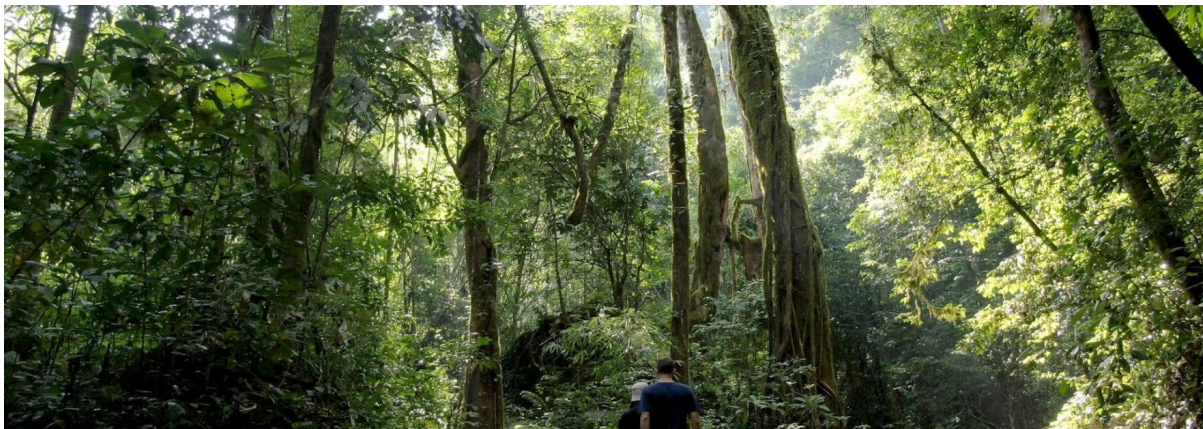
Grow Right A-Head [The Hives]

Sometimes, you just “can’t even”. That’s okay! Here are some tips and tricks for small changes you can make, things you can try, or habits you can build that will help you be the best **You** that you can.

Stop, and Smell the Serenity

Every single one of these ideas has been scientifically studied and *proven* to promote mental health and wellbeing. These are some easy or creative ways to give yourself time to pause, regroup, de-stress, relax, or bounce back – which ones are familiar to you already? Do you have any favourites?

- Meditation
- Shinrin Yoku or Forest Bathing (walking in nature with no other inputs, just you and the outside!)
- Exercise
- Journalling
- Creative Writing
- Crafting; performing a concentrated physical activity with your hands
- Singing
- Dancing (the Macarena counts, but the dad-shuffle doesn’t...)
- Extreme sports (believe it or not!)
- Spending time with a loved one
- Petting a dog or cat (imagine if you did both!)
- Strength training
- Eating dark chocolate (hallelujah!)
- Sleep
- Wearing comfortable textures (fuzzy socks, here we come!)



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Gettin' Well With A Little Help From Your Friends

Direct, person-to-person contact with a trusted companion triggers the release of neurotransmitters tasked with regulating our response to stress and anxiety. Shaking hands or, better still, exchanging a high-five releases a hit of oxytocin – which in turn lowers your cortisol levels, which lowers stress!

Strength in Numbers

Researchers believe the human need for social interaction occurred around the time our predecessors stopped foraging for food by night, and began to hunt and gather by day. Being active in daylight meant that our ancestors were more susceptible to predators, and so began to band

together on their expeditions – it pays to stick with your tribe! Family, friends, work family (because we all know that work husbands and work wives and work mums and work dads are very much a thing!) and your community groups are all powerful allies in your quest for mental wealth!

Growth-Up: Reach out to someone you care about today – whether it's a hug or a hug GIF, everything counts!

Physical Health, Mental Wealth!

Speaking of mental wealth – physical health is a cornerstone for building mental wealth. Studies over several decades have concluded that exercise is a key component for happiness and stability. Whether it's burpees or bushwalks, kettlebells or kayaks, dumbbells or dance classes – just 150 minutes of moderate exercise activity over a week has been proven to promote mental health and even assist with reducing the impact and severity of depression and anxiety. 150 minutes a week breaks down to only about 20 minutes a day! So, the next time you're feeling overwhelmed, irritable, confused or anxious, slide on those sneakers and get moving! Go for a walk, a jog, dance around your living room, throw some weights around at the gym, do some mindful stretching – do something that you love, and it'll love you back!

Growth-Up: This month, try doing an exercise you haven't done for a while, or something you've never done before. Reflect on how you feel afterwards – enjoy the endorphin and dopamine boosts!

Little Miss Sunshine – A Good Role Model!

Scientific studies have shown that just 15 minutes of Vitamin D exposure first thing in the morning can lessen the impact of cortisol on the body – cortisol being the hormone that is released when we're stressed, helping us to respond to emergencies (or making us super irritable on our back-to-back Zooms meetings!). Vitamin D is best and at its most effective in the form of our glowing, golden beauty – the sun!

Growth-Up: For the next week, weather permitting, get outside for a 15 minute walk before you launch into your workday, and reap (and enjoy) the benefits!

Grow Beyond ASPIRE

Here are some deeper resources to learn about nurturing your mental health:

UoA's own [Change and Resilience Hub](#) – a wealth of resources to support you!

[Waiora Wellbeing Community](#) – Our very own Teams site for all staff, dedicated to sharing wellbeing ideas and resources!

Mental Health NZ's Five Ways to Wellbeing: <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/five-ways-to-wellbeing>

Mental Health Awareness Week – Sept 18-24, 2023: <https://mhaw.nz/>

Employee Assistance Programme: <https://www.staff.auckland.ac.nz/en/human-resources/support/employee-assistance-programme.html>

Finding Happiness: <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-find-happiness-4584480>

The Japanese Concept of “Ikigai” – Life Purpose and Fulfillment: <https://www.sloww.co/ikigai/>

Stuck for something to do? Try this “Hobby Generator”! <https://findhobby.net/>

Handy resources for mental wellness: <http://justathought.co.nz/>