

# Nine Habits of Healthy, Happy, High-Performing Brains

he@lth  
work

Learn how to **optimise your brain health** by implementing these lifestyle habits.

## 1 **SLEEP: A priority, not a luxury.**

Our body clocks are guided by the rising and setting of the sun. **Quality sleep has many benefits on our overall health** and particularly our brains helping to consolidate memories, spark creativity, improve mental function and smooth your rough emotional edges, giving you greater control over your thoughts and feelings. Ignoring these cues can potentially have serious consequences on our health including increasing the risk of depression and dementia.



## 2 **MOVE: Your clever human brain evolved on foot.**

Your brain and nervous system evolved to move you around, sense and interact with the natural world. **Your brain evolved not to think or feel but to move.** Therefore, moving through the natural world by whatever means you enjoy most is the best exercise for your brain.



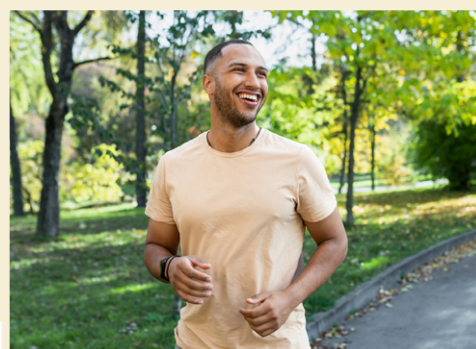
## 3 **NOURISH: Eat real food, not too much, mostly plants.**

Your ancestors and their smart brains were trotting around hunting, fishing and foraging for food. You evolved to eat food from the rivers, forest and sky. What sets apart those who live the longest is not the minutiae of their diet but the absence of refined, processed food. **Eat less than you feel you need** – your brain evolved to work most optimally when you're slightly hungry and looking for food.



## 4 **NURTURE: You're wildlife too.**

The world around us has a profound impact on our brains and behaviour. You may already be aware of the restorative and neuro-protective benefits of the natural world. **You're happier and healthier when surrounded by nature, parkland or even indoor plants.**



## 5 CALM: Find your place or moment of calm.

Not all stress is bad, but chronic or toxic stress, especially when out of your control, has harmful effects on mind and brain health. The key to buffering stress is to **find ways to improve your perceived ability to cope**. Find peace amid the chaos. Paying attention to your breath, a core component of many mindfulness practices reduces anxiety and depression and improves sleep.



## 6 CONNECT: Your life story is not of 'me' but of 'we'.



Being loved and connected to other people protects against stress. Socialising involves many cognitive demanding functions such as thinking, feeling, sensing, reasoning and intuition. The influence of social isolation is comparable to smoking.



## 7 CHALLENGE: Challenge your mind and stay curious.



Children naturally tend to run and play, whereas adults tend to take life more seriously. We don't stop playing and learning because we get old. We grow old because we stop playing and learning. People who **stay mentally engaged in life and challenge themselves to step out of their comfort zone** have reduced risk of age-related cognitive decline and dementia.

## 8 FEEL: Savour positive emotions and experiences.

Wallowing in the good that comes your way may send you on an upward spiral of positivity. What fires together, wires together in the brain, so **practising and repeating positive experiences and emotions** leads to more of the same, and better mental and physical health.



*"We don't laugh because we're happy.  
We're happy because we laugh."*

## 9 SEEK: Is it awesome? Does it help?

With purpose and meaningful work come positive emotions – **love, compassion, and gratitude** – which counteract stress. Living a meaningful life seems an unlikely addition to a list of neuroscience-based advice but having a '**purpose in life**' correlates to robust brain health, mental health and even longevity.



Learn more about optimising your brain health by completing the **21 Day Challenge** on the HUB.