

SEVEN SIMPLE STEPS TO START FEELING BETTER RIGHT AWAY

1. Recipe without Sugar

Most of us associate sweet treats with happiness. Do something good, get a cookie, achieve something, win brownie points, feeling down, open the carton of ice cream. And most of us associate the idea of giving up refined sugar with sadness and deprivation. I probably don't need to tell you all the sad things sugar really does to us, like give us mood swings, damage our immunity, exacerbate inflammation, and the list goes on. But I do want to give you some happy news. You can give up refined sugar and still have indulgent sweet treats. So for now, don't worry about giving anything up. Just try this delicious recipe that tastes like a decadent chocolate pudding, but is much nicer on your body.

Creamy Sugar Free Non- Dairy Chocolate Pudding:

INGREDIENTS

6 ounces unsweetened dairy-free yogurt (such as coconut yogurt)
2 tablespoons cacao powder
2 drops liquid stevia
1/8 teaspoon vanilla extract
Sprinkle of coarse sea salt
Dairy-free whipped topping, optional - (Reddi-Wip Almond & Coconut Non-Dairy Whipped Cream is a tasty brand to try)

DIRECTIONS

Put the dairy-free yogurt, cacao powder, stevia, and vanilla extract in a small bowl and mix to combine. Sprinkle with the sea salt. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to set. Serve with dairy-free whipped topping if desired. Makes 1 serving.

2. Breathing Exercise

Do you ever find yourself suddenly feeling anxious? Sometimes so anxious that it's hard to breathe. Or maybe sometimes you wake up in the middle of the night and you find your mind racing and you feel like you'll never get back to sleep. In situations like these, or any time when you're feeling more stressed out than peaceful, there's a simple breathing exercise that can quickly turn things around and help you feel better. It's an exercise that settles the mind, body, and emotions. It helps infuse your body with oxygen, release toxins, and calm your nervous system. It's a practice long used in Ayurvedic Medicine and Yoga.

Here's all you do:

Hold your right thumb over your right nostril to plug it closed. Inhale slowly through the left nostril until your lungs are full. Hold for four seconds. Release the right nostril and then plug the left with your right pinkie. Slowly exhale for a count of 8. Once you've exhaled fully, inhale slowly through the right nostril, hold for four seconds, release the left nostril and plug the right nostril with your right thumb, and then exhale through the left nostril for a count of 8. Practice four rounds on each side—more if you have time.

3. Take a Walk Outside

How much of your day do you spend sitting in front of a computer with no natural light to speak of and maybe no signs of natural life other than yourself? Probably a lot, if you're like most people. Numerous studies have shown that getting outside and moving your body has all kinds of benefits, and there are many reasons movement is good for your body. But it's also good for your mind and emotions because simply getting outside and walking increases your endorphins, the chemicals in your brain that act as natural painkillers and make you feel happier.

So let's take advantage of this and go outside for a walk. Even 15 minutes can make a big difference. Ideally, walk somewhere where you truly feel surrounded by nature, such as by the ocean or in the woods. Feel the healing, calming vibes you get from the water or the trees.

And if you'd like to kick it up a notch, try this grounding exercise: take off your shoes and socks and walk barefoot on the ground, and feel the sensations of being connected and in contact with the earth in this way.

4. Improve Your Sleep:

Not everyone can be as lucky as Sleeping Beauty and sleep soundly for over 100 years. But maybe compared to that, aiming for the recommended 8 hours a night isn't so unrealistic?!?! Good sleep can lower your risk for a variety of serious health problems, reduce stress, improve mood, help you maintain a healthy weight, and even minimize the dreaded "brain fog." But how can a real life Sleeping Beauty achieve these radiant health benefits? Well here are 2 easy "to do's" to help you sleep better starting tonight! First, find the right temperature for your bedroom—a cooler room enhances the quality of sleep (studies have found that many people sleep best at around 68 degrees, but experiment and see what works best for you). Next, avoid looking at bright screens for two to three hours before bed. Electronic screens emit Blue Light, which makes your brain and body think it's time to wake up.

5. Give and Receive Touch:

Did you know that friendly touch or hugging, whether it's with a trusted fellow human or a furry four-legged companion can considerably boost your health?Cuddling with loved ones increases the release of oxytocin~ the hormone that gives warm, relaxed, peaceful feelings. At the same time, touch helps decrease the levels of the stress hormone, cortisol (commonly known as the "fight or flight" hormone). Massage is another powerful way to achieve these health benefits, which include increased heart health, reduced pain, and improved mood. Daily touch can be as essential to our wellbeing as rest, eating well, and movement.

6. Bring Something of Beauty Into Your Home.

Simply adding a bit of beauty to your surroundings can dramatically improve your mood and even boost your health. Consider getting some flowers, candles, and/or essential oils. The soothing scent of lavender promotes relaxation and sound sleep. Eucalyptus is energizing and can help improve focus. Simply burning a candle has relaxing properties and can help reduce stress and aid meditation. Candles with essential oils fill a space with a gentle scent that can transform the feeling of a room. Studies have shown that flowers have the power to enhance mood and even increase feelings of life satisfaction!

7. Develop an Attitude of Gratitude:

Having a good day or a good night starts with having good thoughts. What you think, you feel, and what you feel becomes your experience. And feeling good starts with remembering all the things you have in life to be grateful for. So, how do you cultivate an attitude of gratitude even when life doesn't seem to be going the way you want? A great way to start is with this simple, yet transformational, process. Every night before you go to sleep, write down 5 things you're grateful for. Even on a hard day, you can be grateful for having air to breathe, a bed to sleep in, a temperature-controlled room, and many other things we tend to take for granted that we are actually exceptionally lucky to have. So, start keeping a gratitude journal of just 5 things a day, and see how much more happily you sleep and wake up!

Bonus tip: Get yourself something inspirational to read either right before you go to sleep or right after you wake up. Filling your mind with optimistic, inspired thoughts at the start or end of your day can help quiet your own negative thoughts and fears and lift your spirit profoundly.