

Our experts

EACH MONTH, OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS SHARE THEIR WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE, FROM FINANCE AND FASHION TO BEAUTY AND ENTERTAINMENT

PENNY WESTON ►
HEALTH & WELLBEING

Fitness, wellness and nutrition expert Penny helps you get more from your workout



► HILARY SIMS
HEALTH & WELLBEING

Counsellor and therapist Hilary shows you how to let go of the stress of perfection



► PROFESSOR CASSIE HOLMES
LIFE & TIMES

Happiness guru Cassie shows you how to find more joy in every day



SALI HUGHES ►

BEAUTY
Renowned beauty journalist Sali shares the secret to easy skincare



Exercise *your intuition*

TRANSFORM YOUR WORKOUTS FOR THE BETTER AND GET THE MOST FROM YOUR FITNESS BY FOLLOWING HOW YOU FEEL

There's no point sticking rigidly to a set exercise regime if your mind isn't in it,' says wellness expert Penny Weston. 'To me, wellness is taking a journey to improve your lifestyle. If you tailor your exercise to how you feel, it will contribute to your overall feeling of wellness, rather than feeling like a chore.'

'Intuitive fitness is the art of tuning in to your body's natural intelligence and listening to emotional cues. Listening in this way gives you the chance to make informed, mindful choices on how your body needs to move that day, as opposed to sticking aimlessly to a rigid schedule. Exercising intuitively also means choosing to exercise for self-care and other health benefits, rather than to burn calories.'

Whatever workout you plump for, exercise prompts our bodies to release feelgood chemicals such as endorphins, serotonin and dopamine, which boost our sense of wellbeing and suppress hormones that cause stress and anxiety, such as cortisol. Embracing exercise to suit your mood is key to reaping the many mental health benefits that come with it, and should increase your desire to exercise, to boot. Read on to discover Weston's exercise styles for every mindset...



If you're struggling with brain fog...

Take your exercise outside. 'Any form of exercise or movement has a positive impact on your mental health, but this is never more true than exercise in the great outdoors,' says Weston. 'The light and fresh air alongside movement is a natural mood booster, and works wonders for distracting and calming a crowded mind.'

'A brisk walk or jog in nature, such as a park, woodland or

along a riverside path, is ideal for beating brain fog, and moving at a steady, consistent pace gives you the opportunity to take in your surroundings – it's like a form of mindfulness as well as exercise. Studies also suggest that time outdoors can help improve short-term memory and boost your attention, ideal if you really need to focus your mind on an important project.'

Words: Larissa Chapman. Images: Shutterstock



If you feel hormonal...

Try something gentle, such as wild swimming. 'Movement is great for relieving symptoms of tension and hormonal imbalance brought about by menopause, but it's best to keep it gentle,' says Weston.

'A cooling swim will get your heart pumping without working up a sweat or putting undue pressure on muscles and joints, which might be feeling

sore or tense at this time. Wild swimming, in particular, is great if you're feeling irritable.

'The cold water increases adrenalin, leading to feelings of euphoria and lowering blood pressure in the process. What's more, swimming has no end of health benefits – it burns calories, works the cardiovascular system, builds core strength and develops flexibility.'

If you feel low...

Get your heart pumping with something fun and uplifting. 'While you can't force happiness, you can do things to increase endorphins – your feelgood hormones – which will, in turn, increase feelings of joy,' says Weston. 'Opting for something high-octane is the best way to shake the blues. Dance or Zumba classes are ideal; whether you join a class in person or online, aerobic activity is guaranteed to lift your spirits – and the music helps, too!'



If you're feeling stressed...

Choose yoga, and focus on breathwork. 'If you are experiencing stress and burnout, yoga is the obvious choice,' says Weston. 'It's one of the most helpful ways to boost your mental health, as it combines physical activity with the meditative practice of breath work.'

'Moving in this relaxed, flowing motion immediately reduces stress and strengthens your parasympathetic (rest and digest) nervous system.'

'If you're feeling at a point of burnout, moves that require you to stay low and close to the mat can create a feeling of security, too. A recent US study has discovered that mindfulness-based health practices, such as yoga, can dramatically improve employee wellbeing and ease productivity issues.'

For an array of online yoga sessions at your fingertips, visit welcometomade.com/online/

If you feel happy and content...

Challenge yourself with HIIT. 'When you're feeling mentally great – not too stressed and in a happy place – this can be the perfect time to challenge your body with a mix of resistance and cardio moves.'

'These kinds of workouts involve short bursts of high-intensity movement and often require concentration, too, so they're best done when you feel in the zone and on top of your game. Not only are they a lot of fun, they flood your body with feelgood hormones and kickstart the calorie burn, which lasts long after you've finished your workout.'



If you feel frustrated...

Let it all out with a boxercise class. 'Sometimes, it just helps to release pent-up feelings,' says Weston, 'and a boxercise class is a great way to do this in a controlled manner. There are so many benefits of boxercise – it's great for cardio and balance, as well as coordination, but also for letting out tension. Punching a boxing bag can help you to overcome negative feelings, as it creates the outlet your body needs to get rid of frustration.'



WHATEVER YOUR EMOTIONS

'However you feel, consider getting involved in a team sport or a class,' says Weston. 'We often associate team sports with school, but there are plenty of adult hockey, netball, tag rugby teams and the like crying out for members of all ages. Surrounding yourself with like-minded people can be a real morale boost and help with all kinds of feelings – positive or negative. Talking is one of the most powerful tools when it comes to mental health, so having a team to talk to can be invaluable... and that's on top of the many benefits of the exercise itself!'

If you're anxious...

Try walking meditation. 'Combining exercise with meditation is a wonder-pairing for calming angst,' says Weston. 'Mindfulness is the art of controlling your thoughts to focus your attention on the present moment, taking note of all the different sensations, from the sounds around you to the feel of your clothes against your skin. People might not realise you can combine meditation

with exercise, such as walking, thus reaping the benefits of both.

'As you embark on your walk, listen to the sound of the ground under foot and feel the air on your skin. Tune in to your emotions and thoughts, and try to observe them like a bystander, without judgment, until you feel your anxieties lift.'

