

HAPPY RITUALS

Make this autumn the time to create new rituals for a calmer, more contented you

Think of someone you know who's successful and happy and you can be sure that they will have a handful of rituals they live by. But why are these habits so important? Often passed off as superstitions, rituals can aid the mind to focus, concentrate, reduce anxiety and, essentially, help you succeed. Anyone can adopt their own bank of rituals to help lead a more contented life.

Start by considering the parts of your day and week that bother you, stress you out or simply could be improved upon. Perhaps you're always rushed in the morning or feel you waste time when travelling to work. Next, create some happy habits or rituals, ones that are achievable (with a little effort) and that you won't want to break. Write them down and commit to them. Here are some ideas and expert tips to get you started...

4 WAYS TO... make Mondays a breeze

1 Plan ahead – get your outfit and lunch organised on Sunday night, to help save time and avoid last-minute panic or indecision.

2 Don't hit snooze. 'Although it can be tempting, this often leaves us feeling more tired during the day,' explains sleep expert James Wilson from The Sleep Geek (thesleepgeek.co.uk). 'Even if you fall back to sleep in those five-minute intervals, the sleep you get has no real benefit.'

3 Shift your mindset. Changing how you feel about the day can be very powerful. 'Having that "Friday feeling" every day will make you feel

better and allow you to be happier and more successful in life,' says life coach Aimee C. Teesdale (aimeecteesdale.com). 'To create this positive mindset, start the day by writing down a list of all the things you're grateful for, including the benefits that come from what you do. Then think about what you want to get out of the week, and go out and make it happen.'

4 Plan something fun for Monday evening. Having something to look forward to can get you through even the toughest Mondays.

Inspiration in a podcast

Make the most of your commute

- **Saints of Somewhere** An impressive roll call of guests, from top athletes to musicians, talk about life and what they've learned along the way.
- **No Such Thing as a Fish** Researchers from the TV show QI share the weird and wonderful facts they've discovered each week.
- **TED Talks Daily** Thought-provoking talks by some of the world's leading thinkers.

3 IDEAS...

shake the midweek slump

1 Turn a night in front of the TV into an impromptu movie night with your partner, family or friends... complete with movie snacks, obviously.

2 Get baking! Freshly made chocolate brownies on a Wednesday evening feels pretty

indulgent. Plus your co-workers will love you if you take the leftovers into the office.

3 Knock on a neighbour's door for a quick catch-up, or call that friend you've been meaning to chat to for months – mood boost guaranteed!

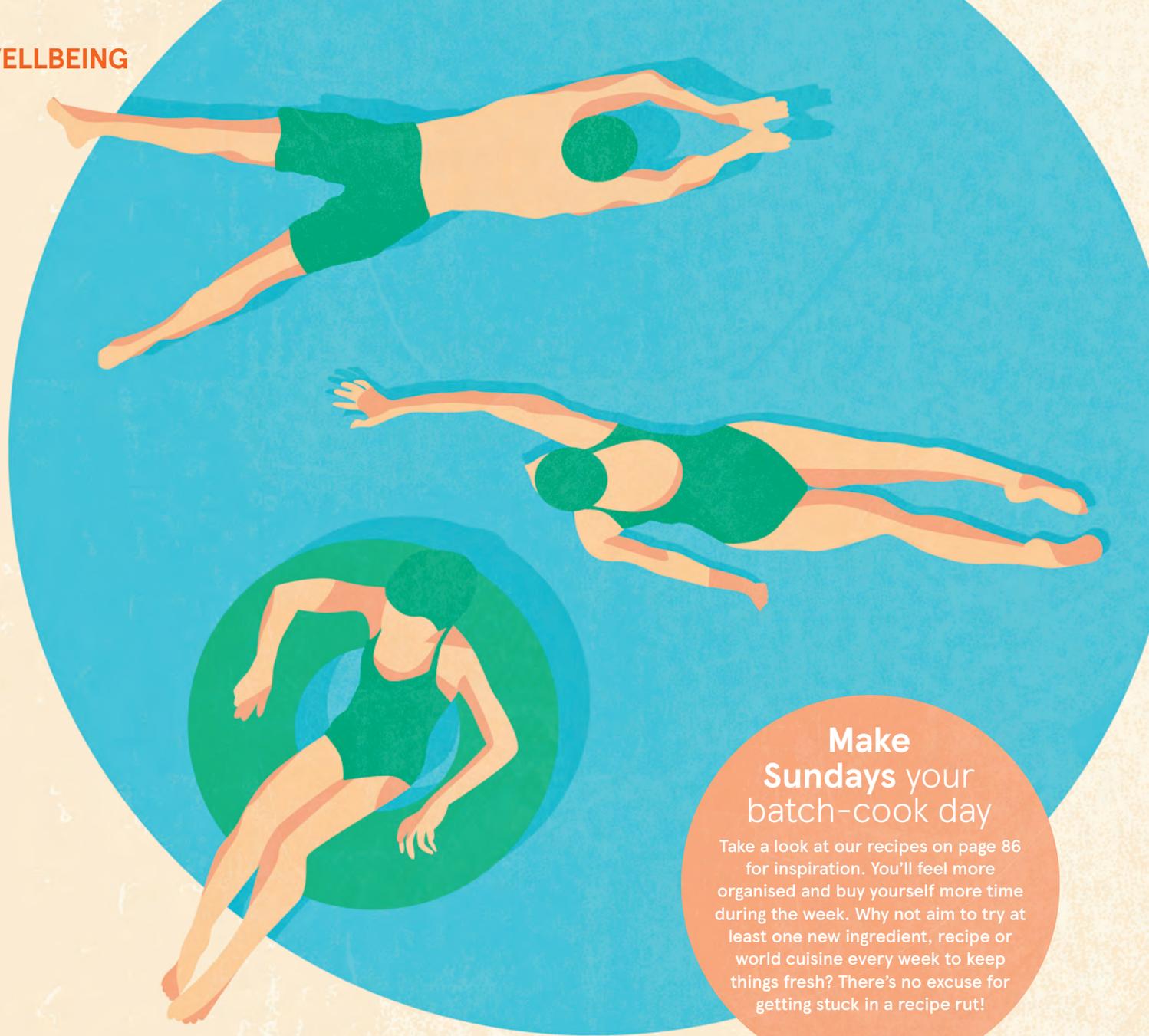


Stretch your body!

Do it every day and you'll soon feel the benefits

Struggling to fit exercise into a busy life? Pilates teacher Adele Smyth (purebodypilates.co.uk) says just five minutes of stretching each morning can make a difference. 'Daily stretching can provide astonishing benefits to your overall wellbeing, posture, joints, circulation and stress levels,' she says. Try these:

- **Leg stretches** Lie on your back, knees bent to your chest. Lift your head and shoulders off the floor then extend one leg as you draw the other in. Swap legs.
- **Knee rolls** Lie on your back, knees bent at 90° and arms out to your sides. Drop both knees to one side, hold, then swap to the other side.
- **Cat stretch** Kneel on all fours. Breathe in for four, flexing your spine to the ceiling like a cat arching its back; hold for five seconds. Then breathe out for four, relaxing your spine as you do so. Repeat as many times as you wish.



Make Sundays your batch-cook day

Take a look at our recipes on page 86 for inspiration. You'll feel more organised and buy yourself more time during the week. Why not aim to try at least one new ingredient, recipe or world cuisine every week to keep things fresh? There's no excuse for getting stuck in a recipe rut!

7 WONDERS of the weekend

- 1 Make breakfast an event,** whether it's pancakes with all the toppings for the kids or a quick smashed avocado on toast and a good coffee. See page 57 for our breakfast ideas.
- 2 If Saturdays are packed** with ferrying the kids to activities, have a quick family catch-up in the morning to work out a plan. A family calendar is ideal for keeping a busy household organised – and ultimately happy!
- 3 Unplug.** If you find yourself absent-mindedly reaching for your phone, start that book you've

been wanting to read for ages instead, or get outside and go on a phone-free adventure.

- 4 Book in get-togethers with friends and family.** If it's in the calendar, chances are it will happen. If you end up sending dozens of messages between you trying to organise a date, try Doodle (doodle.com), where everyone can 'tick' their available dates on an online calendar and even make meeting place suggestions.

- 5 Do one thing to make life easier,** whether it's buying a basket for stashing those things that

usually end up sitting on the stairs for days, or reorganising an overflowing kitchen drawer.

- 6 Try something new** or go somewhere you've never been before. A change is as good as a rest! Take it in turns with friends or family members to pick where to go and what to do.

- 7 Don't fill up every second of your weekend** because you feel you have to. Sometimes doing nothing is best for mind and body, so allow yourself time to potter, read, listen to music – whatever you enjoy – guilt-free.