

A HAPPIER YOU

Life hacks from the experts

By Lotte Brouwer

If you're stuck in a rut, whether it be your relationship, your career or life in general, we've got all the top tips from the experts to help get you unstuck.

1 Change your mindset

Where are you in terms of mindset right now? Are you in a fixed or a growth mindset? Explains Claire Finlay, founder of mental wellness group Resilience Zone: "A fixed mindset tends to be very limiting, with lots of thoughts of 'not yet', 'this is never going to be possible', 'I'm not good enough', 'I'm not ready' type thoughts. The more we expose ourselves to this type of thinking, the more we start to believe it's true and the less likely we are to take action. In a growth mindset, we are much more positive. We believe in our ability to improve and progress. A growth mindset admits that things might be challenging, but it counteracts the negativity by agreeing there is a way forward."

She adds: "Reframe your thoughts. We suggest adding in the word 'yet'. For example, 'I can't see a way around this yet, but I will keep trying.'"

2 Practice gratitude for what you do have

Gratitude may be one of the most overlooked tools for increasing happiness. According to the Happify app, gratitude is the single most powerful method of



increasing happiness instantly. All it takes is thinking about all the positive things in your life – rather than ruminating on the negatives. Feeling more grateful for what you do have will help you be happier and less envious of others, it can help increase self-esteem, help you feel more optimistic and less materialistic. To practice, you could spend five minutes every day writing down what you feel grateful for. One simple tip we love is this: just before you fall asleep, think of three things you are grateful for that day, and three things you are proud of (they don't have to be huge) – it can make a real difference.

3 Invest in the relationships around you

Happiness coach Chloe [@thehappinesshelper] tells us: "There was a study on happiness, and the study spanned over 80 years. What do you think the indicator of a happy life was? It's the quality of our relationships."

A lot of our happiness comes down to our connection with other people. So if you want to feel happier and more fulfilled, then have a look at how much effort you're putting in to the relationships you value. Show you care.

4 Tackle inner demons

Many of us listen to an inner critic that tells us we're not good enough. Your inner critic can feel suffocating and is often the reason we don't act on the things we want to carry out, whether that's bringing a business idea to life or putting new health habits in place. "To calm that critical voice down, you need to change the way it speaks to you," says Claire Finlay. "Make an effort to talk to yourself as you would a good friend. It won't happen overnight, especially if your inner critic has been with you from a young age, but with practice you can become your own cheerleader."

5 Stop comparing

If you could be anyone in the world or have anybody's life, would you choose yours? "If the answer is no, then you might have a case of comparison-itus," says happiness coach Chloe. "You're thinking other people have a better life than you. And it might be true, it might not be true, but either way it doesn't matter and it's just making you feel negatively about your own life. So stop comparing and just focus on what you'd like to do with your own life, and how you can improve things, rather than living in comparison." »



6 Wave to future you A powerful exercise to get clarity on what you want from life is to carve 15 minutes for yourself, close your eyes, and picture the 80-year-old version of yourself.

"Imagine you are old, you are happy and you feel fulfilled. Keeping your eyes closed, hold your hands out in front of you and notice how they are wrinkly, your skin is thin, your veins are raised... As the future you, reflect back on your life - at the happy life you created, and all the memories you've made. What does that life look like, how is it different from your current situation and what steps do you need to take to change things?" says Chloe.

Now write it all on a piece of paper, and list the memories, milestones and accomplishments you'd like to create. Let this shape a five-year plan, a two-year plan and a six-month plan.

7 Get off autopilot mode Do you ever feel like life is just passing you by? Maybe a week goes by, and you think: 'Where did that week just go? Or worse still, a whole month or even a year has gone, and you think: 'What have I done with that time?'

Life is just an accumulation of time – so you've got to spend it wisely, and spend it on what you want, while cutting out what you don't want. "Between 40-95% of our lives is lived in habit," happiness coach Chloe tells us. Habit is the automatic, repetitive behaviour, the same thoughts and the same actions that keep us in autopilot mode. But challenges are where the magic happens.

When you break out of your comfort zone and you start creating new habits, that's what gets you new jobs, new friends, new hobbies, or even a new romantic partner. It all starts with breaking outside of your comfort zone.

8 Try breathwork Is grief, pain or heartbreak holding you back? Sign up for a breathwork class to help you process, let go and move forward. Says coach Aimee Robinson: "Deep, conscious connected breathing helps quiet down the mind and tune into the body. It accesses and releases unprocessed emotions stored in the body, leaving you feeling lighter, allowing you to gain more clarity and most importantly of all, connected deeper with yourself."

9 Sort out your relationships Consider a weekly Zoom session with a relationship counsellor to help untangle recurring issues via relate.org.uk. The website also offers advice pages and a relationship MOT quiz. Also: "Small, meaningful gestures are cherished far more than grand displays, so create some good relationship habits and do something for your partner every day. From a cup of tea in bed to a loving embrace when they return home from work, daily gestures speak volumes," offers Dr Jacqui Gabb, chief relationships officer at Paired, and Professor of Sociology and Intimacy at The Open University.

If finances are a source of tension, then it's a good idea to make an appointment with a financial advisor.

10 Look at your career goals Career coach Dina Grishin offers these tips... Seek inspiration by attending some webinars on career change or on finding your dream job. Hearing other people's stories often sparks ideas. Get clarity on your strengths and values. What activities do you enjoy doing, and what's important for you now (values change at different life stages)? Some will value travel and freedom, others want stability, and others may want recognition. Sometimes we feel stuck because we need more creativity and growth than our jobs can give us, but it might not be the right time to leave a job. In this case, try a new hobby like pottery, painting or creative writing or start a new course.

11 Make time for you Key to all this is making the time for yourself for your wellbeing, however you pursue that. There are now so many great tools around that can help create good habits. 'Yours' is an app that aims to help rejuvenate your body, mind and soul with musical soundscapes, meditations, sleep stories plus advice from a team of expert psychologists. If you're struggling to move forward, reach out for help, whether that be a counselling service or a good friend. www.yoursapp.co.uk

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THE THAMES RIVIERA

From boating and kayaking to soaking up the glorious views from restaurants and pubs, here's the best waterside attractions...

By Lotte Brouwer



GoBoat, Kingston

All aboard

Our gorgeous stretch of river was immortalised in Jerome K Jerome's *Three Men In A Boat* as they ventured from Kingston to Oxford. And you can head off along the route, taking in gorgeous landmarks such as Hampton Court Palace. Book an electric GoBoat near Kingston Bridge and pack a picnic. Or head for overnight jaunts and hire a river cruiser from Le Boat, which is fully kitted out and easy to operate. J Martin & Son, near Hampton Court, rents out rowing boats for pottering on the Thames. Or take a cruise with the historic Turks Launches, which go from Kingston to Richmond or Hampton Court.

Dine in a waterside restaurant

You're spoilt for choice if you want to dine by the river. Head to Kingston Riverside for waterside dining at the likes of Cote, Hache for burgers and great Indian at Chakra. Battersea Power Station has a great selection of spots. For the ultimate riverside foodie experience, it has to be The River Café in Hammersmith. For a local gem, try Hideaway for tapas and a lively atmosphere, tucked away in Thames Ditton Marina. Gaucho Richmond is a top spot for steaks.

Walk the river

The Thames Path is a long-distance walking trail, following the Thames for 185 miles (298 km). The section through London alone stretches 40 miles, so unless you're a dedicated walker, pick a section. We recommend starting the route from Putney, and following it through Hammersmith to Barnes, stopping for lunch, then heading back again.



Le Boat



Get fit on the Thames

Take your pick from kayaking, paddleboarding and canoeing and book lessons so you can enjoy it all safely. Try Back Of Beyond Adventures in Richmond – take a kayak around Eel Pie Island, before heading for a pint at The White Swan in Twickenham. Albany Outdoors in Kingston has activities for kids and adults, including sailing and kayaking. Or try Active 360 in Kew for paddleboarding.

On the cheap vs blow the budget

You can take to the water in style with a Thames Limo, which uses the gorgeous Riva-style wooden speedboats for around £800 per hour. Book from a central London location or SW London, including Richmond and Chelsea Harbour. Alternatively, pick up a day pass for the Uber Boat by Thames



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Clippers for just under £19. Hop on and hop off – there are 24 piers between Barking and Putney. Why not board from Putney, hop off at Battersea Power Station or Southbank for lunch, then adventure all the way up the river to Greenwich, before heading back again. Or get hearts racing with a Thames RIB experience with the superfast jetboats whizzing past London's iconic sights.

Idyllic spots for a rosé

Stroll through Canbury Gardens in Kingston, admire the views and pitch up at the vast terrace at The Boaters. Take the Thames path and walk towards Teddington for The Anglers, which also has a huge garden. Over in Barnes, try The White Hart. The Ship in Wandsworth is another of our favourites. [T&L](#)



The White Hart, Barnes