

LIVE WELL



WORK WELL

Health and wellness tips for your work and life—
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Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions

Some of us may have welcomed 2016 by making New Year's resolutions to better our lives in some way—either for health, work or relationship reasons. However, diligently working on these goals for 12 months can be a daunting challenge. To help you achieve your New Year's goals, follow these three pieces of guidance:

1. **Be specific:** Divide your main goal for the year into smaller, more manageable goals. For example, if your main goal is to become more fit, set a smaller goal to be able to run 1 kilometre in a certain amount of time by February, and then either challenge yourself to beat that time by March or set a new goal.
2. **Record your progress:** For some goals, it may be difficult to see immediate progress. That is why you should regularly record your progress to give yourself time to reflect. If you realise what you are doing is not working, do not give up. Instead, adjust your strategies and methods, and keep trying.
3. **Focus on the journey and not entirely on the outcome:** Adopting healthy daily practices is more beneficial in the long term than achieving a specific, quantifiable goal.

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Loneliness Is Bad for Your Health

Research suggests that loneliness may be more than just a feeling of isolation, but a potential societal epidemic that has serious negative health consequences. A study conducted by The Big Lunch, a nationwide community programme, revealed that about two-thirds of UK adults identify as being lonely.

One explanation for the pervasive nature of loneliness is the prevalence of social media and digital technology. Despite the fact that these modern conveniences are supposed to help build connections and relationships, they can—at times—only highlight the distance. It is this disconnect between expectations and reality that some researchers believe exacerbates feelings of modern loneliness.

And, while occasional bouts of loneliness are common, extended periods that last for several weeks could be potentially damaging. Research parallel to The Big Lunch's study revealed that some of the potential negative impacts of loneliness are as follows:

- An increased risk of dying prematurely
- An increased risk of developing a sleep disorder
- An increased risk of developing self-destructive behaviours
- Increased feelings of stress, anxiety and depression
- Reduced strength and effectiveness of the immune system

In fact, an October report from the Equal Opportunities Committee called on the Scottish Government to treat loneliness and isolation as public health issues with the potential to be as damaging as poverty or poor housing. Loneliness does not have to be a constant presence in anyone's life. If you are experiencing extended periods of loneliness, consider following these two pieces of guidance:

1. **Take a 'time out':** When you begin to feel lonely, try to identify the thoughts, actions or events that led to those feelings, and record them. By taking a 'time out' you are able to reflect on your thoughts and identify any harmful ones.

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Winter Vegetable Pie

Lessen the chill this winter with a heaping plate of this robust and satisfying veggie pie:

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 large onions, thickly sliced
- 1 Tbsp. flour
- 2 large carrots, cut into small batons
- Half a head of cauliflower, broken into florets
- 4 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 1 sprig of rosemary, leaves finely chopped
- 400g can of chopped tomatoes
- 200g frozen peas
- 900g potatoes, cut into chunks
- 7fl oz. milk

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat and add the onions. Cook until softened and then stir in the flour. After about two minutes, add the carrots, cauliflower, garlic and rosemary. Stir regularly until the vegetables have softened.

Then, add the tomatoes and a full can of water. Cover the mixture with a lid and let it simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the lid, stir, and cook the mixture for an additional 10 to 15 minutes. Once the sauce has thickened, season with salt and pepper, and stir in the peas.

While the vegetables are cooking, boil the potatoes for 10 to 15 minutes until they are tender. Then, drain the pot and mash them. Stir in enough milk until the potatoes have reached a smooth consistency.

After the vegetables have finished cooking and the potatoes have been mashed, heat the grill. Spoon the vegetable mix into a pie dish and top it with the mashed potatoes. Place the dish under the grill for a few minutes until the top is a crisp golden brown.



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2. **Be proactive:** You have to make some effort. The first step in doing this is to identify your interests, what you want to achieve and figuring out the best way to achieve it. Even if you do not always participate at meetings, a local club or organisation is one way in which to meet like-minded people.

Left unchecked, loneliness can become a serious condition. If you are experiencing severe loneliness, consider discussing your feelings with a mental health counsellor.

Is Binge Watching Bad for Your Brain?

With the convenience of online streaming services, binge watching your favourite television shows has become quite common. However, spending hours on the sofa is not only unhealthy for your physical health, but for your brain health as well.

A US study tracked more than 3,000 young adults for 25 years in order to measure physical activity and television's effects on their cognitive abilities. The study found that those who spent more time watching television (and, consequently, less time being active) had slightly lower brain-processing speeds and worse executive function. However, the connection between heavy television viewing and cognitive abilities is speculative, as the researchers only measured cognitive function at the end of the study.

Yet, what the researchers can definitively argue is that there must be a healthy balance between watching TV and exercise. Therefore, if you spend one evening watching your favourite television show, do something active the next day—even something as simple as taking a walk around your neighbourhood.



More than **66 per cent** of Britons label themselves as being lonely.

Loneliness may increase the risk of premature death by as much as **30 per cent.**



SOURCE: The Big Lunch, and Brigham Young University