



## Friends Are Good for Your Health

by Andy Holter

With the new lockdown comes an opportunity for developing new and better friendships with the colleagues that we work with. Whilst we can all recognise that friendships are important, facing challenging times together can help us develop stronger and healthier relationships with one another and help us get through difficult times, as well as to share in the better times. Studies have shown that having supportive relationships is a strong protective factor against mental illnesses and helps to increase our mental wellbeing.

**Let us look at some of the key benefits in having good friendships:**

### Friends lower stress

When we feel close to someone, levels of progesterone, a hormone that helps reduce stress and anxiety is produced. When stress levels go down, so does your risk for health conditions like heart disease, obesity, and depression.

### Friends can motivate you to be healthier

If you are looking to start a new workout routine or a healthier diet, look at your social circle. You may have more success if your friends employ the healthy habits you are hoping to adopt. When we have close friends who exercise, save money, or volunteer, we are more likely to also engage in those same behaviours.

### Friends teach you about yourself

Now might be a good time to think about friendships that are especially meaningful to you. People strive to present themselves as positive and competent and like to talk about their friends, often talking about their current self or the person they would like to become.

Along those same lines, if you realise that a particular relationship does not reflect your values, it's okay to say goodbye. We are often afraid to let go of friendships maybe for the nostalgia of the past; the thought that they may be useful in the future; or how it looks to others when we have fewer friends, but there are times when it is not just okay but helpful for our success and self-identity to let a friendship fade away or break away.

### Friends just help you feel better

A lack of friendships and social support increases the risk of developing low moods, anxiety or even depression. One of the key treatments for depression is helping individuals expand their social network and increase the amount of time they are spending with friends. In fact, good friendships predict health and happiness which certainly helps promote good wellbeing.



## CPJ Book club!

Many thanks to those of you who have already been in touch to express an interest in joining our 'virtual' book club. For those still on the fence, be brave and dive in – there's no commitment to read piles of books per month I promise. All we're asking is your best book recommendation a brief para review to share with colleagues in the first Wellbeing newsletter of each month.

To kick things off, Emma Packer, fellow avid book lover, has her best-read review – see attached book review. It's an absolute 'belter' to kick us off... I loved every page of this. If you'd be interested in sharing your best reads please do drop me a line: [emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk](mailto:emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk)

Don't forget to kick start healthy intentions with our free colleague wellbeing resource [www.active-equilibrium.com](http://www.active-equilibrium.com)

Click on the 'Corporate' tab, the password is corporate. A box will then appear and the password is Swan.



Remember to join Andy Holter on Zoom every Thursday at 10am for 30 minutes of wellbeing, camaraderie and fun!

## New Year health tips from Elaine

Seventy per cent of our immune system depends on a healthy gut, so it is crucial that we include plenty of fibre in our diets. Try and eat lots of variants of fibre such as fresh fruit, nuts, beans and wholegrains and seeds. Foods that contain good bacteria (probiotic foods) are all great for a healthy gut.

Here are some foods that contain probiotics:

- live yoghurt (try and stick to natural and not flavoured ones as they can contain added sugar)
- green olives
- cheese: the best ones are cheddar, gouda and parmesan.
- Miso: a paste made from fermented soy, popular in Asian countries.

You can buy miso products from Holland & Barratt such as soups.

- Kombucha; a sweetened, fermented black tea from China, very popular with nutritionists and celebs who claim this is great for staving off alcohol cravings and can help with weight loss.

Stress and anxiety can also cause havoc to our gut – too much stress increases acidity and can cause reflux. I have mentioned reflux previously which related to over indulgence of rich foods. Wellbeing activities such as yoga and breathing exercises can help and also try avoid wearing tight clothing around the stomach. Avoid caffeine and spicy foods. Dehydration can also cause reflux so increase your intake of water.

### Dry January

Many people decide to quit alcohol after the Christmas holidays to detox and to generally improve their health for the new year. So what actually happens to your body when you stop drinking alcohol?

- Skin and hair condition improves
- Weight loss
- Reduced puffiness and redness of skin and eyes
- Improved immune system
- Encourages healthy cell growth
- Lowers cholesterol
- Reduces the risk of diabetes
- You save money!

## Colleague Creative Corner

A new addition for 2021, I'll be asking colleagues from across the business to share their top tips for unwinding at the end of the day to hopefully provide inspiration to one another.

First up, **Bobbie** shares her crafty tips...

For many years now I have used arts and crafts to help me unwind and relax after a difficult day or week. Personally, I struggle to practise mindfulness; my mind wanders and I'm terrible at 'letting thoughts go'. When the pandemic hit, like many others, I rediscovered my box of arts and craft projects that was sat up in the attic gathering dust! Treating myself to 30 minutes of colouring-in or an hour of embroidery has now become a healthy habit. I frame it as a 'treat' because it makes it feel more enticing and it's an activity to look forward to, something which is particularly difficult at the moment with visits to see loved ones or holidays away from home feeling a little out of reach right now.

Your arts and craft project doesn't have to be detailed or complex, it can be as simple as digging out some colouring pens and doodling in-front on the tv or deciding to finish that line of cross-stitch before getting ready for bed.

Here is an example of the things I've made I've also done other things in the past such as completing a lego set, mosaic and flower arranging."

If you have a hobby or tip you'd like to share with colleagues, please drop me a line: [emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk](mailto:emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk)



## MICHELLE'S NEW YEAR GRAND CANYON TRAIL CHALLENGE – WHO'S IN?

Michelle from RH has signed up to do a virtual Grand Canyon trail over 15 weeks this new year to motivate herself to get back on track health-wise. If you're looking for something to challenge yourself, [here's the link](#). You simply log your daily activity, be that walking, running, cycling or swimming and set your own goals.

They also have a team challenge event all done virtually:

<https://wellness.myvirtualmission.com>

Please let me know if you're keen and we can look to get up either local challenges, or a CPJ-wide challenge, giving us all something positive to work towards in 2021.

