



## Be more caveman!

by Emma Symons (Yes she's back!)

Is stress good or bad? A fairly simple question, you might think, but stress can actually be both.

I'm sure we all know someone who has suffered the negative effects of stress, or many of us will have suffered it ourselves to some degree. Around 60% of working days are lost due to stress-related illnesses, so what can we do to reduce our daily stress?

To understand stress, we need to go back to our prehistoric ancestors where the fight or flight response developed to keep them safe from predators and angry neighbouring tribes! This kind of stress response, known as short term stress, is a good one. The sympathetic nervous system kicks in to get the heart pumping and flood the body with cortisol and adrenaline ready to run or fight. When you then realise the danger has passed and you're not going to be eaten by a velociraptor, your parasympathetic nervous system kicks in to slow the heart, counteract the stress hormones and relax the body. Cavemen got it right!

The problem with modern life is that, instead of only calling on the fight or flight response when we need it, we keep ourselves in a constant state of stress through busy workloads, family pressures, feeling we are not good enough and constantly replaying in our heads those moments in our day that have frustrated or irritated us and, although our hearts may not be constantly pounding, we can't entirely relax either.

We are no longer allowing the parasympathetic nervous system to calm us down and bring us back to that state of relaxation and this causes the adrenal glands to become fatigued – leading to exhaustion, lowered immunity and a whole host of other health issues.

How do we help reduce the effects of stress?

Try to ensure that you get a good balance of antioxidants, iron, magnesium and B vitamins in your diet as these help to protect the body from stress. The seeds from the much-maligned stinging nettle are excellent for supporting and repairing the adrenal glands and are free and plentiful. Taking some time each day to really rest by taking a walk in nature, snoozing on the sofa or meditating, will also help repair and recharge the batteries.



## BANK HOLIDAY BRAMBLE COCKTAIL

Grab a punnets of fresh blackberries (or just buy them frozen) to create this tasty cocktail which combines zingy lemon with a sugar syrup, crème de cassis and, of course, gin. Serve with plenty of ice for the ultimate refreshment.

200g caster sugar

200ml Bombay Sapphire Dry Gin

100ml freshly squeezed lemon juice

50ml crème de mûre (or crème de cassis)

To garnish – 4 whole blackberries and a twist of lemon zest

Make a simple syrup: heat 100g caster sugar and 100ml water in a pan – do not boil. When the sugar dissolves, remove from the heat and stir in rest of the sugar. Strain into a lidded jar and leave to cool. (This syrup can be kept in the fridge for up to six months.)

Put the gin, lemon juice and 50ml of the syrup into a cocktail shaker. Half-fill with crushed ice and shake.

Fill 4 tumblers with ice, leaving 3cm at the top and strain the cocktail into the glasses. Drizzle a quarter of the crème de mûre (or cassis) over each so it trickles through the ice.

Garnish with a blackberry and zest, then serve.



"Sometimes the best solution is to rest, relax and recharge. It's hard to be your best on empty."  
Sam Glenn



## Turmeric – the wonder spice!

I have mentioned turmeric previously and have started to use it again after a break. I've read up a lot about this and it's amazing for aching joints which I have experienced recently, as it has great anti-inflammatory properties. It's also great for the brain and some studies have shown it can reverse some brain damage caused by Alzheimer's.

The dose is not clear as very small amounts are absorbed in the bloodstream, but the recommendation is that you can take up to 4 teaspoons daily; I use this in herbal teas or curries/stews.

There is also a great drink to aid sleep containing turmeric:

### Golden Milk

240 ml of milk, 1 tspn of ground turmeric, ¼ tspn of black pepper  
½ tspn of honey, ¼ tspn of ground nutmeg

Heat all the ingredients except the nutmeg on a medium heat for 5 minutes. Pour into a mug before bed and sprinkle the nutmeg on top.

## GOING BANANAS!

Did you know the three stages of ripeness of bananas offers different health benefits?

**Green stage** – has high levels of prebiotics, high in fibre.

**Yellow stage** – sweeter in taste, higher level of antioxidants, easier to digest.

**Brown stage** – sweetest time to eat, has the highest level of antioxidants, best for baking.

## Bank holiday bonanza fun!

Hard to believe that this weekend heralds the arrival of the first of our (hopefully) sunny bank holiday weekends. Sadly, the dates don't quite line up with the long-anticipated reopening of indoor dining, but thanks to the ingenuity of lots of local business owners, there's still plenty of things you can do, to ease safely back into the summer social scene.

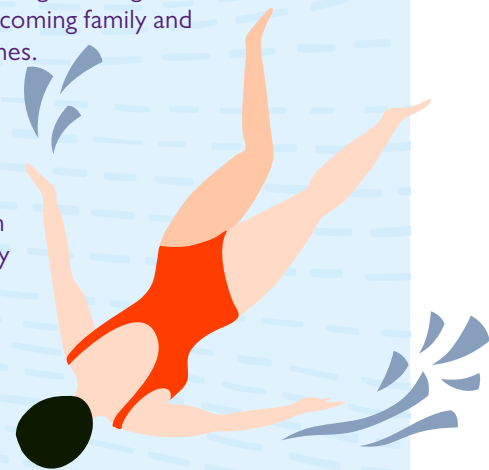
You can meet in groups of six to order food and many local cafes and bars allow you to order food straight to the park for an effort free afternoon – Google those in your local area for more information. Alternatively, ask your friends to each bring one element of a picnic to help share the preparation and load. There are some brilliant picnic recipes here: [www.jamieoliver.com/recipes/category/occasion/picnic](http://www.jamieoliver.com/recipes/category/occasion/picnic)

If you're thinking of heading into London for the first time in a while, there are literally hundreds of bars and restaurants offering outdoor terrace drinking and dining – check out the best of them here: <https://secretldn.com/summer-terraces-london> Or visit the newly-opened world's largest Italian food market, 'Eataly', boasting over 5,000 Italian and local food producers and 2,000 wine merchants with take away stalls, shops and outdoor dining: <https://secretldn.com/eataly-london-italian-food-hall/>

Fancy a day bathing in the salt air? Now that we're allowed to, take a trip to the seaside and drink in the benefits of the sun, sea and sand / shingle! Here's 15 of the best within a two-hour drive of London: <https://secretldn.com/beaches-near-london-seaside/> Why not try some cold-water swimming whilst you're there!

If you're staying more rural and feeling less adventurous, why not go on a bluebell hunt, or hone your photography skills capturing the beauty of the cherry blossoms in full bloom. Or catch up on some gardening and home DIY in anticipation of soon welcoming family and friends back into your homes.

However you spend it, be sure to build in some proper down time to recharge and reconnect. Try switching off your tech for a few hours and be fully present in the moment.



Ever wondered why bank holidays are called bank holidays? The name originates from the days on which the banks were closed for trading. Bank employees didn't get time off back then as they were too busy, using the bank holiday to work on the accounts and tidy up the bookkeeping.