

4 HEALTHY HABITS TO HELP YOU AGE WELL AND LIVE FULLY

What if you could extend your healthiest, happiest years? These four simple habits can help. Read on for healthy ageing tips that can help you stay active and connected, at any age.

Ageing well isn't just about adding years to your life, it's about making those years happy and fulfilling. These four simple habits can help you stay active, engaged and socially connected as you grow older.

Top tips...

1 Keep that body moving

Physical activity is a cornerstone of healthy ageing, with scientific evidence suggesting that people who stay active in old age can not only live longer, but may also live better – meaning that they enjoy more years of life without pain or disability.¹ What's more, studies on happiness show that people benefit more when they engage in moderate and high-intensity exercise, which increases the heart rate.

You can increase the number of steps you take with simple, everyday activities such as gardening, dog walking, swimming, playing golf or bowls, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. HBH Howick Views has an onsite gym with regular exercise classes – or you could consider joining Virtual Village East's weekly walking group or Safe & Strong exercise programme.

2 Stay connected with others

Recent happiness research shows that social connections are hugely important to overall wellbeing and life satisfaction – whether it's spending time with family or friends, joining a club or social network, or having a cuppa with a neighbour.

In fact, studies show that prolonged loneliness and isolation can be more detrimental to your health than smoking² – and has been linked to poor cognitive function and a higher risk of dementia.³

In happier news, one study shows that connecting with others can increase happiness levels by up to 83%. If you don't see family or friends as often as you'd like, try calling them more often, or learn how to use Facebook, Facetime, or Zoom.

Community involvement can also increase happiness levels, such as volunteering or joining a club or church group. Social networks such as Virtual Village East, can provide numerous opportunities for social gatherings, including coffee mornings, informative seminars, and outings.

3 Be grateful, every day

Studies have found that having a more optimistic mindset and practising gratitude can buffer against negative emotions, improve resilience, and increase happiness. 'Counting your blessings' or listing things throughout the day that you're grateful for can help you think more positively and feel happier – and this is backed by scientific research.⁴

'Three good things' is an easy habit to adopt - simply write down three things that went well every day and reflect on what was good about these. Or tell someone what you're grateful for that day or sending thank you messages. There are also numerous gratitude apps with daily affirmations that help you keep track of your gratitude.

No matter how you do it, daily feelings of gratitude are associated with higher levels of positive emotions and better wellbeing - so keep it up!

4 Spend time with pets

Not surprisingly, numerous studies have found that pets provide many health and happiness benefits, reducing incidents of depression and anxiety, while providing companionship and helping to boost our happiness and self-esteem levels.

That's why, when you visit HBH, you'll notice several pets, both communal and individual, including dogs, cats and budgies. You'll also see volunteers and visitors of all ages, because having plenty of people around creates warmth, spirit and opportunities for joy and spontaneity - key ingredients for a happy, healthy and more fulfilled life.

Sources:

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32207799/>

² <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/loneliness-has-same-risk-as-smoking-for-heart-disease>

³ National Institute on Ageing, 2022

⁴ <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/scp-0000050.pdf>

THE EDEN ALTERNATIVE

Encouraging connection

Regular opportunities for connection and companionship are an essential part of the Eden Alternative, a resident-centred philosophy of care that's central to HBH Senior Living's high-quality aged care. At the heart of the philosophy is the belief that the three major problems of residential care are loneliness, helplessness and boredom, and that these can be overcome by:

- Loving companionship - especially with animals and children.
- Providing opportunities for residents to give as well as receive care.
- Imbuing life with variety and spontaneity by creating an environment where the unexpected and unpredictable can take place.

As a charitable organisation, we aim to create opportunities for all older people to age well and live fully, through homes, care, community and advocacy.



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