

Healthy habits and fitness activities alone aren't going to make you truly well, if your inner being isn't nourished. Here's how to start the year right, by feeding your inner core.
By Sudeshna Ghosh.

10 ways to... nurture your soul

1 FORGIVE YOURSELF

Draw from ancient Hawaiian wisdom and practice the Ho'oponopono technique of mental cleansing. Based on the philosophy that it is important for us to 'make things all right' with our own self, people in our lives and our genealogy, it helps to resolve past issues and move on in a positive way. There are four key phrases to remember when practising the Ho'oponopono: "I love you"; "I'm sorry"; "Thank you"; "Forgive me". Bring to mind anyone that you feel you share any negativity with, then suffuse them with the healing energy of love from your higher self, repeating these phrases over and over. Once the healing is complete, then have a discussion in your mind to resolve the issues and ensure you forgive each other. The next time you think of him or her, you should be able to do so without any negative emotion – if you can't, then continue repeating the process. This can also be done with yourself, if you have issues from your past you haven't been able to let go of.

2 SWIM IN THE SEA

Your aura is the bio-energy field surrounding your body that reflects your current physical and spiritual health. "The aura absorbs energies around it like a sponge, therefore it is important to cleanse your aura regularly, as busy, stressful lives can leave it heavy and dull," says aura alignment expert Shivani Adalja (www.shivaniadalja.com). Salt has historically been known across cultures as a natural cleanser with healing qualities, and bathing in seawater not only helps clear your aura, it also encourages toxin release and rebalances minerals in the body. Heading out for a dawn ocean swim can have an amazing effect on how you feel.

3 START YOUR DAY WITH CHI

According to energy practitioner Melany Oliver (www.melanyoliver.com), it only takes two minutes in the morning to get your chi flowing. She says, "Close your hands into a loose fist and tap all over your body. Start by tapping your head and waking up the brain, then move down to the base of the skull to stimulate blood flow to the brain. Tap down every part of your body to stimulate all the meridians (energy pathways), and spend some time on areas such as the shoulders where we tend to hold a lot of tension."

4 COLOUR YOURSELF HAPPY

When was the last time you did something just for the simple joy it provides? Relive the childlike pleasure of putting colour to paper by taking an hour out of your day and sitting down with some paper and colouring pencils or crayons. Start with a few minutes of meditation, or simply sit in silence taking a few deep breaths, to calm the mind. Then, to stimulate the creative right-brain activity, draw a circle on the paper and divide it into eight wedges. Fill in these wedges exactly as you please – with different colours and patterns. Just go with your instinct without worrying about technique, achieving a final goal or how it will be judged.

5 PLANT SOMETHING

Even if you don't have green fingers, the process of planting a seedling, nurturing it and watching it sprout and grow is like manna for the soul. It is a simple process that takes us back to nature in the purest way possible. Start small with a few herb pots in your garden or windowsill – and you will have the added benefit of fresh, healthy ingredients to add to your cooking!

6 TRY DIY REFLEXOLOGY

A good way to cope with frazzled nerves and stress with calmness, is through reflexology. Melany recommends this quick-fix technique that will help balance your inner being: "Apply pressure to the solar plexus point on one of your hands with your opposite thumb. This is located 0.5 cm or so above the middle of the palm. Slowly move the finger down towards the thumb applying pressure, and then up again. Do this 15 times on both hands."

7 TREAT YOURSELF WELL

Most of us tend to put our own desires last on a day-to-day basis. You don't have to worry about consciously taking me-time out – start with just being nicer to yourself, as a habit, and quietening your inner critic. Whenever you are beating yourself up about something, just stop to think – would you speak like that to an eight year old? Probably not! Start talking to your inner being as you would to a child – kindly and gently. You can take this a step forward to include regular little treats for yourself – it could be anything, as long as it's dedicated to making you feel special.

8 GET GROUNDED

"Grounding is a technique that helps your energetic self to be in tune with your body, which allows you to be 'in the moment' completely, and aligns your body at an optimum frequency with the earth's energy," says quantum energy healer Amirah Hall (www.Amirahhall.com). Sit on a chair with your eyes shut and feet flat on the floor. Create a mental image of an electric cord connecting the base of your spine to the centre of the earth. Secure this cord in your spine, and imagine the gravitational pull of the earth sucking out all the negative and blocked energies from you. You can visualise the centre of the earth to be a beautiful place, such as a soothing lake, and also picture the cord to be something else, like a waterfall. Once you get used to it, this technique can be practised anywhere – at work, sitting in traffic, or while watching TV.

9 PAT A PET

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of stroking an animal, from stress relief to heart health. But what research cannot prove numerically, is the pure, soul-uplifting joy of bonding with a pet – even if it is not your own. Their unconditional affection, innocence, playfulness, and ability to find joy in simple things is infectious, so make an effort to get out there and spend some time with your four-legged friends.

10 THUMP THREE TIMES

Traditional Chinese Medicine is based on the philosophy of 12 meridians running through our bodies, and wellness can be found through applying healing techniques on these. The three key points we should focus on, according to Melany, to rebalance our energies, deal with negativity, and balance our blood chemistry are the kidney, thymus and spleen. The meridian point for the kidney is located just between the collarbone and the breastbone; the thymus is located in the middle of your chest; and the spleen is below the armpit, where your bra would sit. Firmly tap or thump these three points alternately (don't worry about hitting the exact point, the general area will do), totalling up to three rounds. If you feel a little tender or sore, then you know you've got the right spot. Doing this for just two minutes every day will result in a feeling of wellness, from inside out. **A**