



Practical and Evidence-based List of Tips for Well-being, Prosperity and Mental Health

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) has compiled a **practical and evidence-based list of tips for well-being, prosperity and mental health**. Whether you want to learn to be more content in general or are struggling to cope with a challenging situation it is worth checking these out.

Find below 15 of these tips:

➤ **Look after your basic needs first: Eat and Sleep.**

Before trying to tackle any of the complex demands of day-to-day life it is vital that we start with good energy levels. Feeling tired and/or hunger can make many problems seem worse, so make sure to get the sleep you need and maintain a good balanced diet.

➤ **Do what you love.**

Getting good at something doesn't often come easy. Its practice that makes perfect. If you like something, you are more likely to work hard at it to become very good at it. When it comes to choosing what you would like to do, choose something that you like.

➤ **Don't let a little anxiety stand in your way.**

While there are obviously certain fear-inducing situations or activities that should be avoided, often we can avoid doing things that we want to do which are potentially of benefit to us. Actively engaging in these activities or situations can add to our experience of well-being. Avoiding only results in increased anxiety about these activities/ situations.

➤ **Listen to your body and use your breathing.**

Take time each day to pay attention to your body and what it is telling you. Try to recognise when your body and mind are stressed. Can you feel the tension of stress building up? Sore back? Headaches? Don't ignore these signals. Try to alleviate them before they build up. Take a few deep breaths, then imagine you are breathing into and out from this tension and letting it go. This can be the most useful immediate tip to stop getting caught in a cycle of stress.

➤ **Set academic goals to better yourself, not others.**

It can be a competitive world and we can often feel pressured to do better than the people around us, rather than simply trying to better ourselves. Research has show that students

who work towards improving their own performance, rather than working towards outperforming others, show the best motivation, learning strategies and academic outcomes.

➤ **Set yourself realistic goals.**

Break your big goals into smaller steps or tasks. Smaller tasks are much easier to complete and it's easier to see your progress. This also provides a gradual sense of accomplishment that can motivate you to continue. Rome wasn't built in a day but some of it was!

➤ **Focus on the things you can change.**

When you are not doing as well as you would like at a particular behaviour try as best you can to focus on what you can change and on what is controllable e.g. the amount of effort you put in or on the way you are going about it. This can help to foster a more positive feeling of hope and help you to persist at the task.

➤ **Write things down.**

Writing things down can greatly help when planning and/or when coping with a problem(s). It can help you to organise and formulate your situation, thoughts and feelings. It can allow you to look at the situation as an outsider and to subsequently rewrite it from this more detached perspective. You can then keep, delete or tear up these notes when you're finished.

➤ **Be flexible in your thinking.**

Avoid as best you can "all or nothing" "black or white" and absolute thinking. Do you find yourself using words like "should", "must" and "can't"? Using such language can mean that you end up living by very fixed rules. This can lead to increased stress and even anxiety or low mood. Try substituting a different word. Instead of "I must" or "I should", try "it would be helpful if I ...". In addition notice how you label events. Is missing that bus really a disaster? Or is it a nuisance, inconvenience and annoying? How you think and talk about events can really influence your mood and its intensity.

➤ **Ask for help.**

The longer you leave a problem the worst it may become. Don't be afraid to ask for help from a family member, friend, tutor, student support adviser, or professional. Asking for and accepting help from a trusted family member and/or friend strengthens your ability to cope. If you feel overwhelmed or have difficulties meeting your goals on your own, consider seeking help from a professional.

➤ **Engage in meaningful, creative activities.**

Get involved in meaningful creative work. Do things that challenge your creativity and make you feel productive? Things like playing an instrument, drama, drawing, writing, singing, building something etc.

➤ **See fun as a priority not an indulgence.**

Give leisure time a priority. Do things for no other reason than that it feels good to do them. Listen to music, read a good book, take a walk, go to a fun movie, meet up with a friend. Fun is an emotional and well being necessity.

➤ **Get active.**

While physical activity (that suits you and your level of ability) is good for your body, exercise is good for the mind too. Regular exercise gives you energy, improves your mood and relieves stress, anxiety and depression. Once you get into it it can also be great fun!

➤ **Drink alcohol responsibly and in moderation.**

The low risk recommended weekly guidelines on alcohol consumption for adults are:

- Less than 11 standard drinks (approx. 110g of alcohol) in a week for women, and
- Less than 17 standard drinks (approx.. 170g of alcohol) in a week for men.

➤ **Develop and maintain close relationships.**

Almost every close relationship may involve some negative experiences. However the positive emotions, shared experiences and closeness that come with such relationships have a strong link with well-being and health and also help to buffer against stressors.

For a full listing of the Psychological Society of Ireland's 40 tips for mental health, well-being and prosperity visit www.psihq.ie

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