DAY 9: Motivation, flavonoids and gratitude

Hello Take Five friends,

It's already day 9 of our challenge and you may be feeling the benefits of your small changes - better sleep, more energy, brighter mood or improved fitness.

If you haven't managed your action every day, or even at all, don't be disheartened. We understand that life can get in the way, but this could be the day you get started. Our aim is that Take Five To Age Well will inspire long-lasting change, so it's never too late to do something amazing for your future self. A few days ago we introduced the idea of behaviour change and today we are honing in on **motivation**. Such an important part of everything we do! So ask yourself - what motivates you? Why did you sign up to this programme? If you are struggling with motivation, we've got you with some hacks to help:

- Write down your reasons for the behaviour
- Connect it to your identity - "I'm someone who…"
- Imagine the future you who benefits from the change
- Making your goal specific
- Give yourself cues - for instance, if you want to get up and go on a morning walk, put your walking clothes and shoes out so you see them the moment you wake up and they are the easiest things to put on.
- Pair the activity with something enjoyable - it might be walking with a friend or listening to your favourite music - give your emotions a boost when taking on your action.

With that in mind, if today is day 1 for you, let's go - you've got this!

Summary:

- **Flavonoids**: offer health benefits, including reduced inflammation, better muscle maintenance and stronger blood vessels, with research linking higher intake to lower risk of major chronic diseases as we age. Found in colourful fruits, vegetables, tea and dark chocolate.
- Fruit juice can be enjoyed in moderation, but **whole fruit** is a better choice for fibre and slower sugar absorption.
- **Movement is a proven mood-booster**, releasing feel-good chemicals like endorphins and serotonin while lowering stress hormones.

- Spending time outdoors whilst connecting with others boosts mood. Options include local walking groups, or simply a walking catch-up with a friend or accessible activities like seated gardening.
- Practising **gratitude** is a small daily habit linked to improved mood.
- The **Hillingdon Advice Partnership** offers practical support on everything from wellbeing to financial advice, helping residents stay informed and empowered.

For more information...

Eat

Why an apple a day really can keep the doctor away!

Have you ever heard of flavonoids? If not, don't worry – the headline is they are great for you and chances are you've been eating them as part of your diet already. Flavonoids are a compound found in many fruits, vegetables and grains that give rise to vibrant colours. They also have amazing health benefits – a 2025 study found that a higher intake of dietary flavonoids is linked to a reduced risk of death across all major chronic diseases. They are particularly beneficial as we age due to reducing inflammation, helping maintain muscles and supporting our blood vessels. Foods that are rich in flavonoids include tea, blueberries, strawberries, oranges, apples, grapes, plums, red cabbage and dark chocolate. Delicious!

Drink

Today is all about juice. We're not saying that juice is bad, or to cut it out completely, but there are some good reasons to keep an eye on how much you're drinking.

Firstly, if you eat whole fruit, you're getting that all important fibre (see above!), which is significantly reduced when juiced. Fruit contains sugar – fructose - and when eaten whole, the fibre helps the bloodstream absorb it more slowly. If you just drink the juice, it's easy to drink a lot quickly and this can mean a lot of extra sugar in your bloodstream. This can put your teeth at risk as well as increase the likelihood of weight gain and diseases such as Type II Diabetes. Diabetes UK explains this in more detail on their website. If you drink juice to hydrate, try diluting it with water so that you can spread your recommended amount over the day.

Move

Move for your mood is the message today. As we keep saying, physical activity is great for our physical health but it is also brilliant for our mental health and wellbeing. When we exercise, our brains release endorphins and serotonin which are feel-good chemicals that boost mood, reduce stress and help us feel energised. Movement

also reduces stress by lowering levels of stress hormones (cortisol and adrenaline) in the body so that your mind *feels* less stressed out. It can also decrease the risk of depression and anxiety is often prescribed as a treatment for depression. Finally, physical activity can improve how you see yourself, your sense of self-worth and confidence. Overall, moving our bodies is amazing for us - in fact, the world renowned Gerontologist Robert Butler once said; "*If exercise could be packed into a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medicine in the nation.*"

So, what are you waiting for - check out the Hillingdon Sport and Physical activity directory now or simply take a walk out of your door now!

Connect and engage

We've signposted you to lots of reading today, so let's change it up with a podcast.

Have you ever found that conversation flows when you're walking with a friend? The Open University and The Parks Trust explore the mental health benefits of outdoor therapy in this short podcast. We hope it inspires you to arrange a walking catch up with someone you haven't seen for a while – this could be in person or over the phone. If you aren't sure who to walk with, Hillingdon Council has various walking groups that meet or Age UK Hillingdon have a welcoming walking programme.

We understand that living with limited mobility can make it more difficult to get outside. You could try seated gardening with accessible raised beds or ask a friend to take you to the local park to sit and enjoy the fresh air for a while. Any time you can manage to spend in nature can be beneficial.

Think

Take a moment right now to think of something you are grateful for? It could be anything - Rachel from the Take Five team once wrote "peanut butter on toast".

Gratitude is a simple exercise but done regularly (which can be harder some days than others), it is an amazingly powerful tool for mental and physical health according to research. Research suggests that gratitude can provide wellbeing benefits from better sleep and mood to even physical benefits such as improved cardiovascular health and perhaps even longevity. So, take a moment and ask yourself the following?

- What happened today that was good?
- What am I taking for granted that I can be thankful for?
- Which people in my life am I grateful for?
- What am I most looking forward to this week, month, and year, and why?

- What is the kindest thing someone has said or done lately?

And don't stop today, try and take a moment everyday to foster some gratitude for something, however small.

Tip of the Day!

Today we want to share the Hillingdon Advice Partnership with you. The service, which is specifically for adults in Hillingdon, is made up of four charities: Age UK Hillingdon, Nucleus Legal Advice, Bell Farm and Disability Advice and Support Hillingdon (DASH). It provides a **single point of access for a range of advice services:** information and advice, debt and financial advice, health and wellbeing advice, community outreach and disability advice. Individuals or family members can refer into the service online or over the phone (020 8044 5676 (9am – 5pm Mon to Fri excluding bank holidays).

That's it for today, we wish everyone a wonderful day 9.

Take care everyone,

Team Take 5

Reminder: This information is general guidance and if you have any concerns over your own health please speak to your medical professional.