

KANTAR

Energy, empathy
and endurance

The three key ingredients to
flourishing during the pandemic
and beyond



Think of the movie 'Chariots of Fire'. Based on the true story of British Olympic gold medallist Eric Liddell, it's about endless determination, working hard to achieve your goals, and doing what you love. But that's hard to do when your own body's reserves are running low.

Unfortunately, most of us are merely running on fumes now, living day-to-day and trying to do as much as we can to assert some control in times of crisis, which only serves to put us at risk of illness and even burnout. Despite sleeping in later than we used to when commuting into the office each day we feel tired all the time, frustrated, overwhelmed, anxious and stressed. But we're also in the midst of a pandemic.

The stakes seem higher than before, with the prevailing sense of anxiety the biggest threat to our wellbeing as we grieve what we've lost and feel **anticipatory grief** over what we feel we have lost of the future. So, it's time to refocus on ourselves to be of better service to others.

"Me first," so I can be of service

When everyone around you is anxious and on edge, the best way to stay healthy and help those around you is by **taking care of yourself**

Remember:

Self-care isn't for sissies
Self-care is not for the weak
It is not a luxury
It is not selfish



Improving energy levels to heal your body, mind and soul

The steps to reclaim work-life balance are hardly a mystery – it's the age-old advice on healthy living, updated for the digital era.

For the body to combat fatigue, improve your physical energy flow as follows:

- **Get moving:** Get up out of that seat as we are at our most productive when we focus on tasks for 90-minute stretches followed by 20-minute breaks.
- **Practice breathing and do yoga:** Improving lung capacity is so important in warding off the effects of the Coronavirus, and many studies with the elderly show attending a class once a week for 6 weeks improves overall health and boosts energy. Do breathing exercises to bring calmness.
- **Drink lots of water:** Not having enough water has the same impact as drunk driving and dehydrated drivers make twice as many mistakes on the road. Even slight dehydration makes it easier for viruses to survive.
- **Eat small portions regularly:** This keeps your blood sugar levels stable. Keep your palate and senses satisfied with colourful, healthy food and make it a fun time for your family.
- **Early to bed:** Strive for consistent sleep patterns that support your body's health. Institute sleep routines like reading and relaxation exercises without screens or devices to help you unwind.

To increase your mental alertness and stay calm:

- **Limit your news intake:** Incessant news media coverage of a crisis can be overwhelming and threaten your mental health, so create designated times to look at news content then shut it off, well before bedtime.
- **Meditate:** When asked what had changed for him under COVID-19, the [Dalai Lama responded](#): 'Nothing. Follow his example with [compassion meditation](#), which helps release tension. Start small, even 20 seconds of mindfulness can be enough.
- **Tap into your creativity:** This relieves stress, boosts your self-esteem and gives a sense of accomplishment. But remember it's the process of creating that's beneficial, more than the end product.
- **Set boundaries and stick to them:** Create balance in your life with a 'switching off' ritual at the end of the workday, like going for a walk or sitting in the garden with a cup of tea.
- **Reframe the narrative:** Rather than ruminating on your stressors at the end of the day, write down nagging thoughts and identify your feelings, the story you're telling yourself and the facts of the situation before deciding on action. Our negativity bias can distort reality and hurt our mental health if we don't reframe the story.

Remember that soul energy leads to the 'helper's high'. It is about both gratitude and generosity, the yin and yang of the soul. There's lots to feel grateful for, from food to eat to a roof over your head, and gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions. Grateful people are also more generous, so focus on gratitude every day so it becomes a habit to make deposits in your mental health bank because aside from being good for the soul, doing so has a powerful feel-good effect on the body and mind.

Empathy, the cornerstone of emotional intelligence (EQ)

In the Disney classic 'Beauty and the Beast', Beast saw himself as a monster and only learned to love himself and others once Belle let him in on the transformative power of empathy. Developing empathy is crucial for establishing relationships as it helps you understand what others are going through. [Children as young as 18 months](#) can demonstrate empathy, but it's on the decline. In the US, they've even coined the term 'empathy deficit disorder'.



Endurance and the third-quarter phenomenon

Studies of people isolated in submarines, space stations and polar bunkers reveal an inflection point where the frustration of being cooped up inside becomes harder to bear, a time of hollow-eyed stares, odd fixations and interpersonal conflict as days grow sludgy as weeknights blur into weekends. We're entering that now in South Africa as we feel rising despair and resentment.

This is the third-quarter phenomenon. Though it's not tied to a set period, having moved to a lower stage of lockdown made this relative as it served as a signal that it can't be much longer now. This re-energised hope, even though infections are rising. The uncertain duration of restrictions could stretch this phenomenon over many months.

To get through these times, do what you can to keep your own mood and energy high and build empathy for endurance within your own family and community, as dips are inevitable. Learn to forgive yourself, as isolation impacts us all.

We miss the social interactions and holidays that used to energise us but hold on to what history has proven: Those who have been through something like this come out the other end much stronger, with a better idea of their values and how to act on them. Don't lose sight of the potential to become a better person. So, **create structure** in your day and stay social online. We'll undoubtedly face a different world post-COVID-19, and we will interact with each other, our health and the environment in a different way to how we did in the life we remember. Watch the 'Pursuit of Happiness' for an example of what it is to persevere and hang in there – we're all in this together.

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