

The five LIFE LESSONS you need to know

Be top of the class with these small tweaks

Summer's over and if you have little ones, they're heading back to school. But it's not just the kids who could do with a routine shake-up. With the help of a few handy hacks, you too can find ways to be happier and healthier.

Sounds like another thing to add to your to-do list? It needn't be, according to behavioural expert Stephanie Chivers, who suggests: "Make changes by finding things you can fit into your everyday routine." Here are our top life hacks...

CAREER MAKE A STAND

We all want to be more productive at work but forget reorganising your desk. Instead stand up! Choosing to stand improves productivity by 46%* and enhances teamwork and cognitive function.

Researchers believe it's a decrease in discomfort (sitting for more than 20 minutes places pressure on the spine, tightens hip muscles, shortens hamstrings) that keeps you focused. So if your boss won't invest in a standing desk, get vertical next time you're having a mental block and see your productivity soar. Walking meeting, anyone?

HEALTH THINK YOURSELF FIT

Research by the University of Freiburg shows that people who started a fitness session with a positive mindset immediately saw greater physical and mental benefits than negative Nancys doing the same routine. "Our belief in how much we will benefit from physical activity has a considerable effect on our wellbeing," explains sports psychologist Hendrik Mothes.

A study published in the journal *Frontiers of Human Neuroscience* also showed that merely thinking about exercise can increase heart rate, improving overall fitness. Beats extra laps, right?

FAMILY CREATE A BUCKET LIST

Bored of hearing about, and failing to achieve, that magical work-life balance? Ease the guilt about not dining at the table together by trying this instead.

"Make a family bucket list together at the start of term and transform family bonding into a game," says relationship expert James Preece. "It brings you closer and you'll all want to collaborate because everyone's had a say in what you'll do."

SOCIAL MUTE THE GROUP

Experts consistently highlight the value of friendships in overall wellbeing - warding off everything from obesity and inflammation to high blood pressure.

Make the most of yours by muting that group chat with all your gal pals. Phone-obsessives feel much less socially connected** while, face-to-face interactions can fend off depression.***

Forget the WhatsApp chat and make your IRL catch-ups more authentic when you ask how your friend is. "Online friendships can't substitute real-life ones," reminds psychologist Irene S Levine.

MONEY SPLIT UP YOUR DOSH

If we can't have more cash, then we'd at least like more control over it. If maths is your least favourite subject, financial planner Tina Weeks recommends a simple four-account approach.

"Have an essentials account (for dealing with things like your mortgage and utility bills), a monthly staples account (gym membership, internet), a variables account for luxuries like clothes and socialising, plus a savings account for anything leftover," she says.

"Once you work out what you need to 'feed' the first two, you can relax in the knowledge no big bills will sneak up as you go about spending the 'variables' money. It also makes it a lot easier to see - and then streamline - where that disposable cash is going.

"Eradicating money worries is proven to improve your happiness," says Tina. *F*

**'MAKE
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BUCKET LIST
TOGETHER'**

