

# The Power of Nature

The effects of nature on health are far reaching and science has found that improving mood is the very start of its benefits. A major study found people who spend two hours per week in green spaces were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don't.

## Lessens aggression & attention deficit disorder

- Reduces feelings of isolation
- Promotes calm
- Supports pro-social behaviour



## Connection to nature increases self-esteem

- Supports positive body image
- Leads to greater respect for what our bodies are capable of, rather than just what they look like.



## BENEFITS OF NATURE AND WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

### Improves mood & happiness

- Increases time away from technology
- Allows us to absorb ourselves in nature and recharge
- Lessens our concerns and obsessive thinking



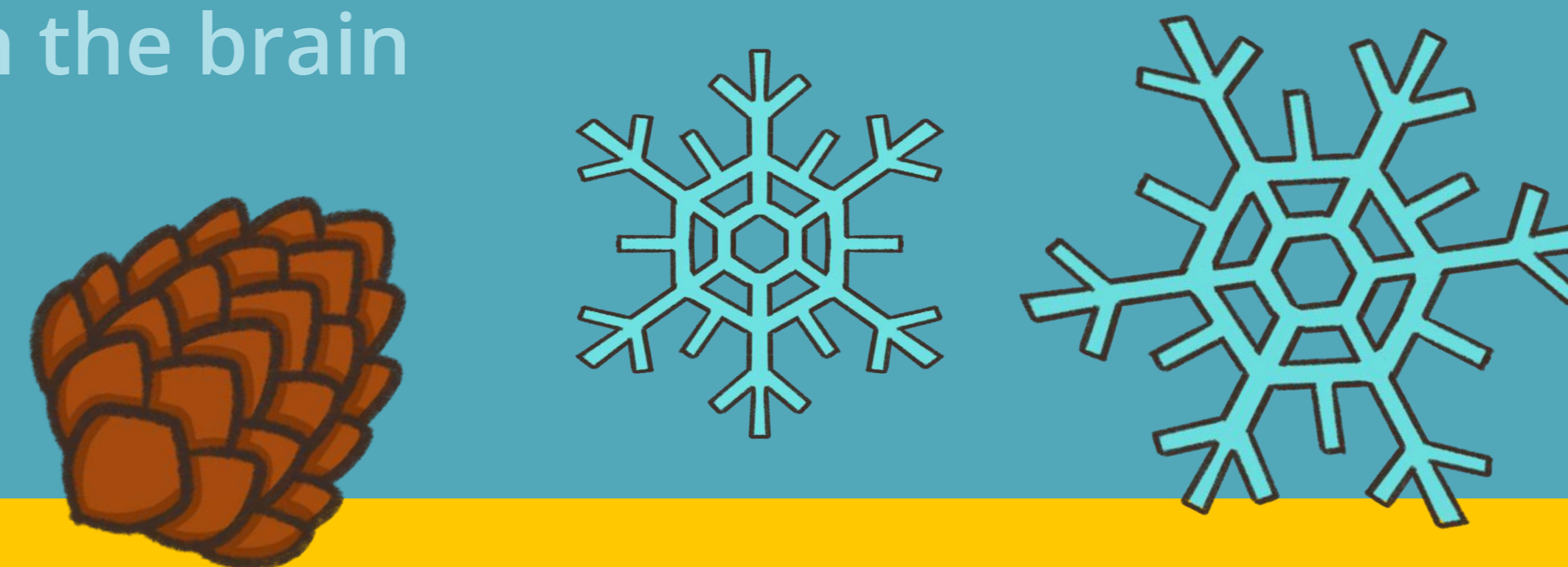
### Phytoncides (plant chemicals) enhance immune system

- Elevates levels of Natural Killer (NK) cells in the immune system which fight tumours and infections.

TIP: Essential oils from cedars emitted in a room initiate the same effect.

### It is full of fractals – never-ending geometric patterns

- Increases alpha waves in the brain
- Boosts relaxation
- Combats mental fatigue



### Supports higher levels of wellbeing in those with social isolation.

- Nature provides something to connect to
- Buffers the effects of loneliness



### Supports the rehabilitation process for those suffering stress-related mental health issues

- Reduces stress
- Fatigue
- Anxiety & depression
- Supports recovery to return to work



## FOREST BATHING OR FOREST THERAPY means walking in the woods or other green environment.

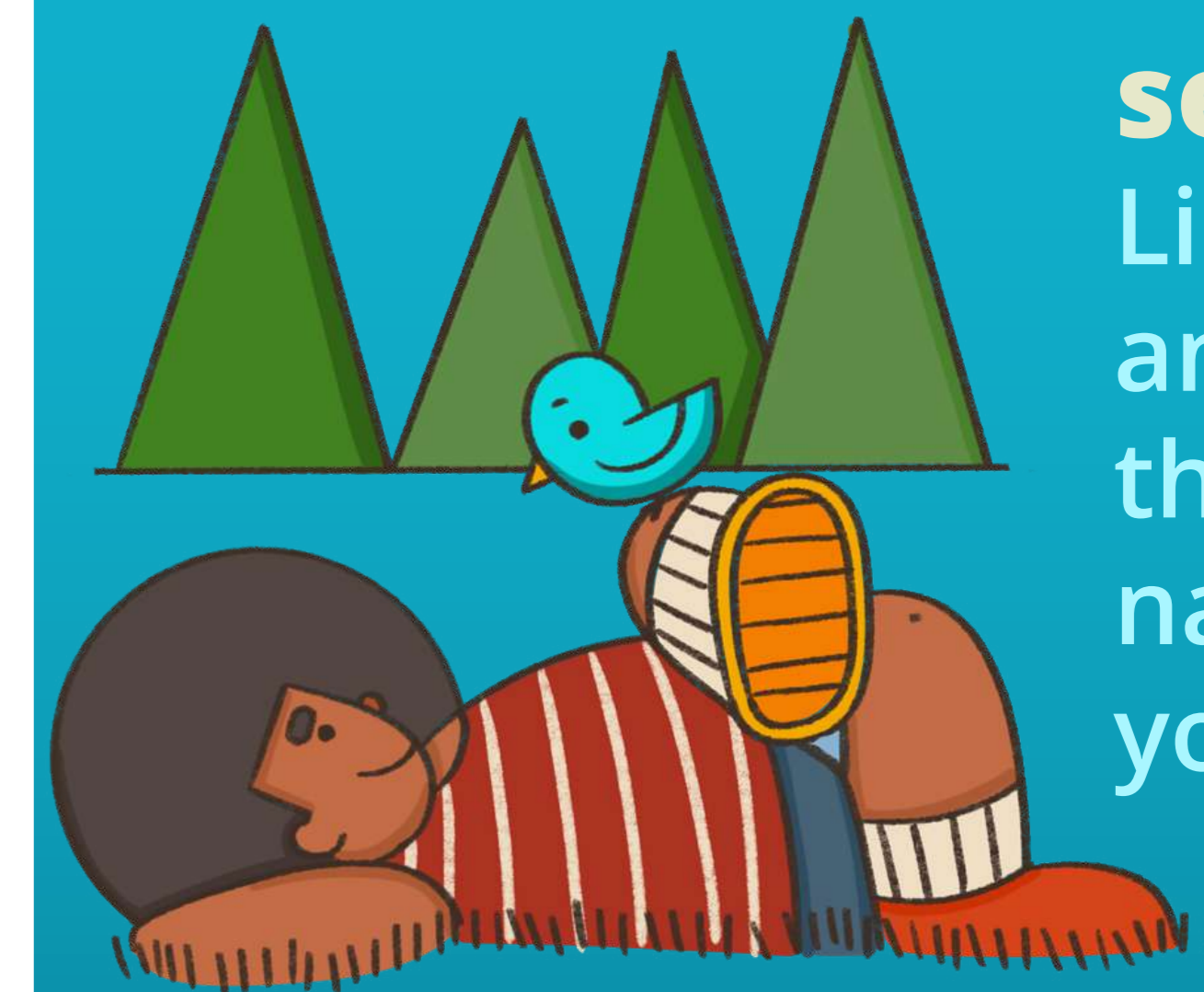
### Find a spot

It can be any green space. A forest with conifers can be particularly beneficial but you can still gain benefits in an urban park.



### Engage all your senses

Listen, smell, touch and look. Soak up the feel of the nature surrounding you.



### Don't hurry

Try and take your time. Ideally spend some quality time enjoying the experience.



### Appreciate the silence

Make the most of some time away from the constant noise of our modern environments.



# SOCIAL WELLBEING



Human beings are social creatures by nature. We not only crave interactions, we need them in order to thrive. This is what makes social wellbeing an integral element of our overall wellbeing, even though it can easily get neglected in our busy lives.

Social well-being can be defined as a sense of belonging, social inclusion and social stability that stems from meaningful relationships

Fire up creativity

Light but meaningful conversations

Important for mental wellbeing

Weak ties, casual acquaintances



Strong ties – close friends and family

## SOCIAL WELLBEING AT WORK



Social inclusion and a sense of belonging




Camaraderie, common sense of purpose



Company values and corporate social responsibility



Opportunities to socialise outside of work (but no pressure to)



Feeling valued as a person, colleague and employee



Healthy, supportive relationships with colleagues & managers

### ...AND ONLINE:

research during the pandemic found that technology can be good for social connectedness, helping alleviate isolation and loneliness, but there were also negative effects, such as increased tiredness and anxiety. 'Zoom fatigue' has different causes, from the slight delay which makes our brain work harder, the absence of cues we normally rely on such as body language, to seeing ourselves as we speak.

Prop up your screen to create a straight line from your face to the speaker's, making it easier to see micro-expressions

Light your face from the front

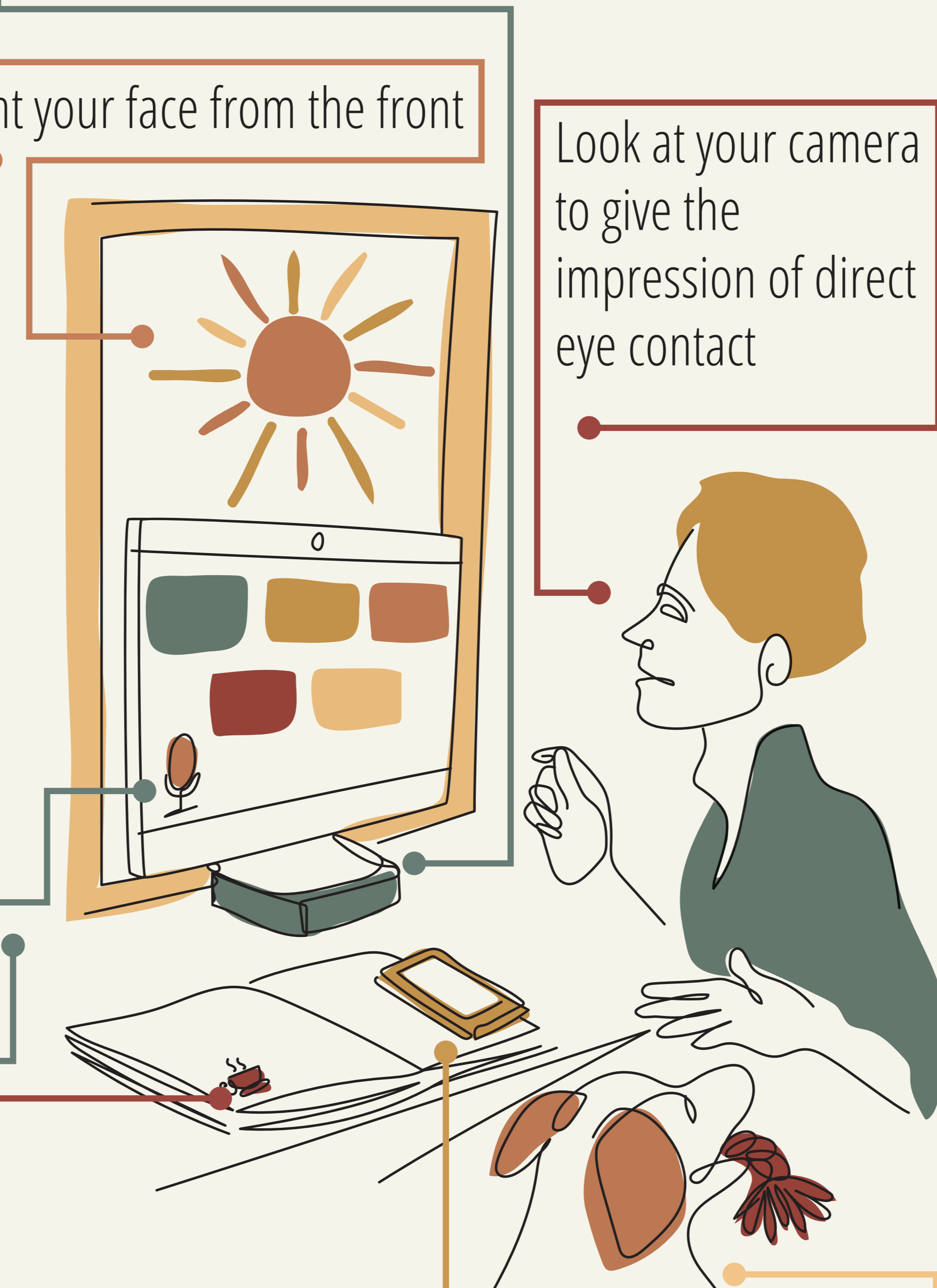
Look at your camera to give the impression of direct eye contact

Stay on mute when not talking

Try staggering meetings with non-screen breaks in between

Beware of social media usage as a coping mechanism, driven by habit, and boredom

Take time to unplug on a regular basis and really connect with others



## COMMUNICATING FOR SOCIAL WELLBEING

- Practise active listening
- Be open to compromise
- Disagree with others respectfully
- Share your feelings honestly
- Ask for what you need from others
- Expect to be treated with respect & honesty
- Reach out to see what others might need
- Practise empathy - the awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns

## BENEFITS OF A SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL NETWORK

- Build emotional resilience and mental health
- Establish healthy boundaries that support communication & trust
- Spending at least 6 hours socializing a day reduces stress and worry (inc time working, on the phone, sending emails)
- Lower risk of depression, decreased immune function, and high blood pressure
- Develop healthy assertiveness skills
- Live longer, become healthier
- Increase self-esteem
- Feel more engaged and productive at work
- Those with strong relationships are 50% less likely to die prematurely

# NUTRITION TIPS

# FOR A HEALTHY STRESS RESPONSE

Stress can be triggered by changes in our environment, our body, or our thoughts. Our body is designed to deal with stress and there are things we can do to support a healthy stress response.

## Our fight or flight response

Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated, and ready to deal with danger



Muscles tense, blood flow to the muscles increases, heart races, breath goes faster



**Magnesium** relaxes tension

Green leafy veg, nuts and seeds, legumes

Epsom salt bath



**Vitamin C** supports our adrenal glands and helps protect the immune system

Kiwis, peppers, parsley



**Black tea** may speed up recovery from stress

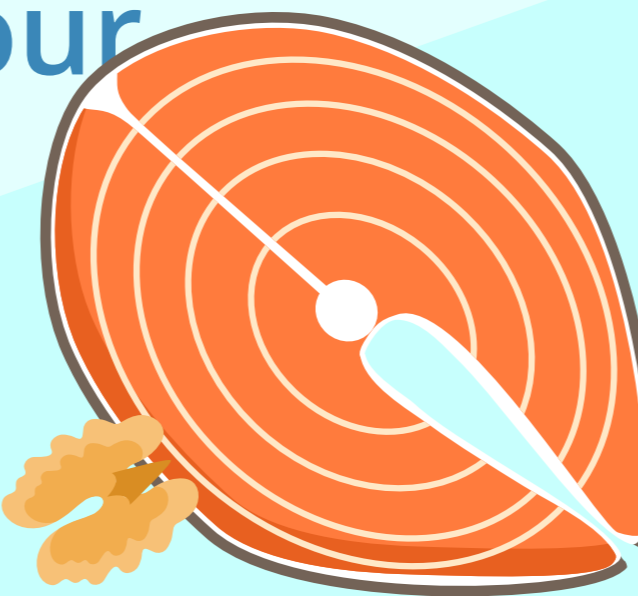
Green tea

Chamomile tea



**Omega 3s** improve our adaptation to stress

Oily fish, flaxseeds, walnuts



**Exercise** boosts endorphins and takes your focus away from stressful thoughts

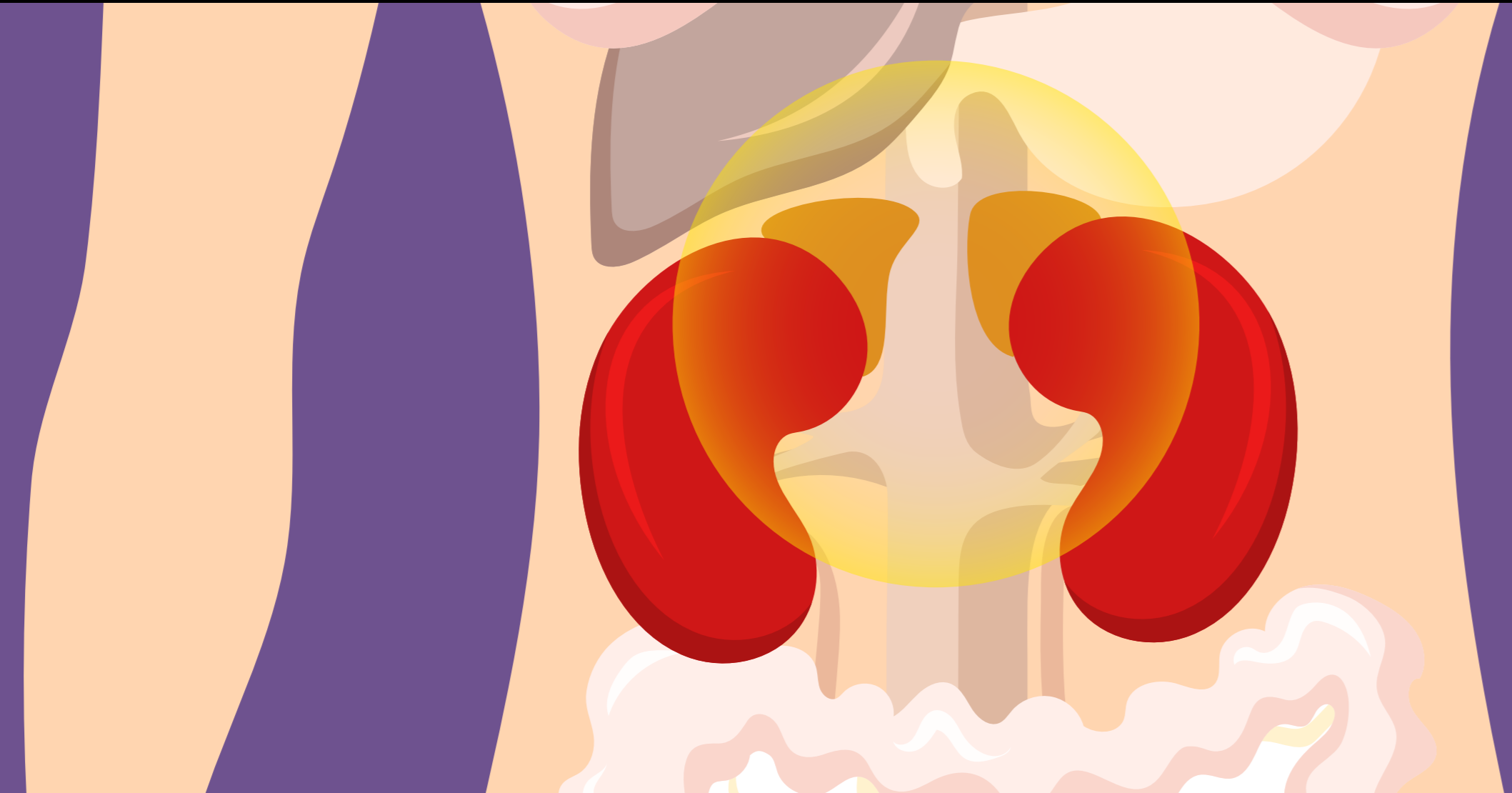


**Try herbs** such as St John's Wort (not alongside antidepressants)

Valerian root



Our adrenal glands release hormones adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol



Stress becomes negative when it builds up over time, causing wear and tear both physical and emotional. This can eventually lead to physical symptoms, or compulsive behaviours linked to food, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, shopping...



**Potassium** helps lower blood pressure

Raw veggies to chew on, avocado, spinach



**B Vitamins** may improve our perceived stress levels

Whole grains, meat, eggs, legumes



Take **regular breaks** to prevent stress from building up



**Complex carbs** boost serotonin and keep blood sugars balanced. Avoid sugar and refined carbs, they provide only short term relief

Porridge, brown rice, rye bread



**Stress and the 'Gut-brain' axis: it's more than a gut feeling!**

- 1. Look after your gut bacteria:** they help regulate your stress response but are also altered by chronic stress.
- 2. Include fermented foods rich in probiotics**
- 3. Avoid high fat diets** as they are a risk factor for gut inflammation and affect our stress response.
- 4. Short chain fatty acids are key** to gut-brain communication. We get them from:
  - Lots of veggies
  - Garlic, leeks, onion
  - Green bananas, (cold) potato salad, legumes
  - Apples, apricots, oranges, carrots
  - Cheese and butter (in moderation)



Increases...

Headaches, blood pressure, inflammation, risk of heart disease and diabetes

Weakens / damages...

Bones, muscles, immune system, digestion, sleep, libido and fertility, breathing