

3 tips and a DASHboard for your physical and mental (Tennis) wellbeing

We are experiencing three weeks into a new normal, which now includes social/ physical distancing and remote working. This means that routine and structure to our days become more important than ever to make sure that we start and end each day well and positively: to actively punctuate our days with activity/ exercise and perhaps meditation that you enjoy doing and which keeps you fresh and motivated to study/ research and be able to be focused effectively when you need to be.

The impact of furloughing and the current lockdown tend to manifest through feelings of disconnection (even though we may be hyperconnected through various social media platforms), uncertainty and anxiety, a drop in focus/ motivation or a sense of reduced performance and little progression, less movement physically, easier access to food (I'll explain later), and disrupted sleep routines.

Accordingly, at a time when we are all missing the wonderful community that is Tennis and OULTC, I thought it would be good to share some practical tips on taking care of our physical and mental health and wellbeing that you may find useful.

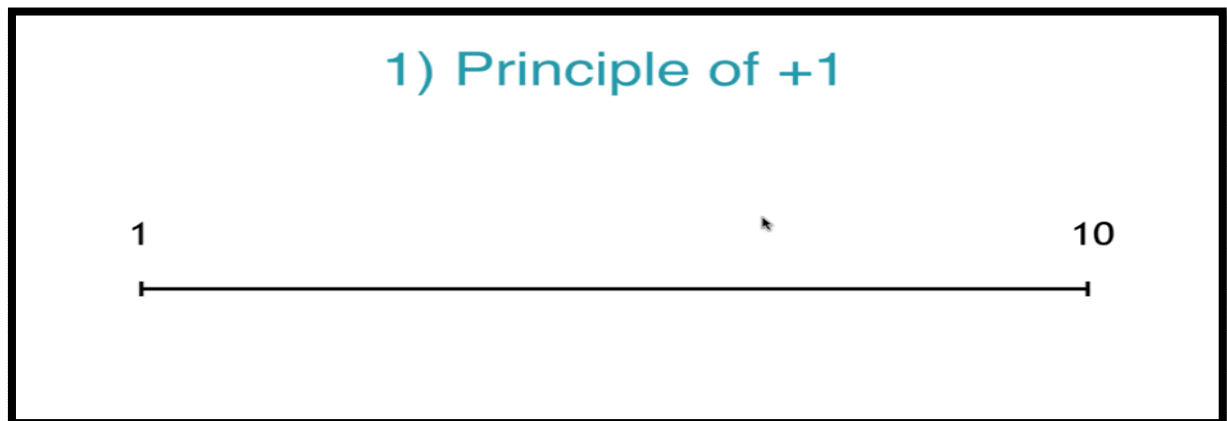
Physical and mental wellbeing:

- 1. 3 principles**
- 2. DASH for physical wellbeing and simple practical tips**



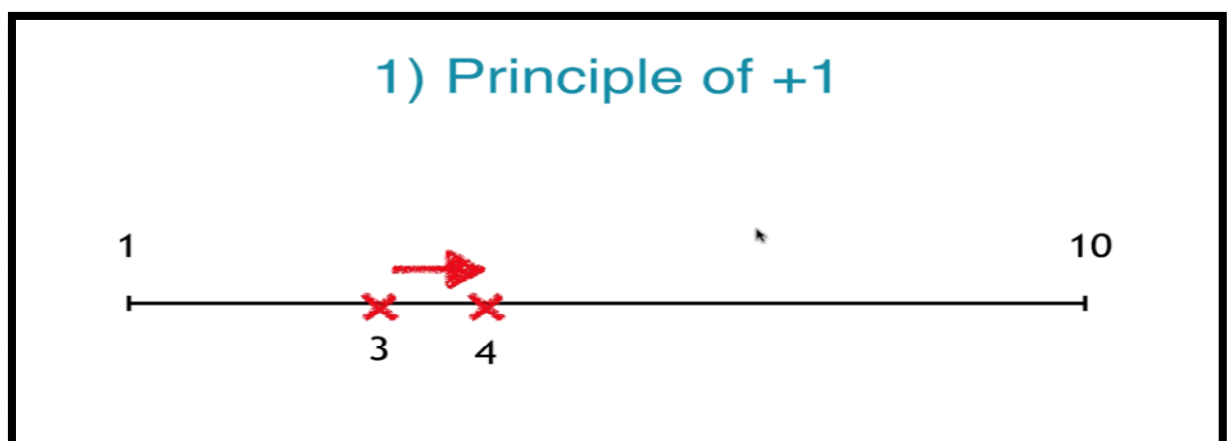
Our natural movement has been impacted negatively, and there is (probably) more food at our immediate disposal, so snacking and “food hunting” is tempting and it becomes easier to open the fridge when our normal triggers of “its time to eat” might have been thrown out of kilter.

The first principle is to use **+1**, a scaling technique, to reflect on what behaviours we are currently experiencing and where we think we are in terms of managing our diet, sleep, nutrition and activity right now on a scale of 1 to 10?



A common approach is to change our behaviours dramatically, in an “all or nothing” cycle (ridiculous targets usually directed towards the perfect), when practical step changes are more sustainable, e.g. I can use the additional time I have at home to get absolutely “shredded” and get a six pack by doing five HIIT sessions per day, or take the first steps to recognise what I could do more of to feel having more energy or better concentration through being better hydrated and taking note of what I drink

- What does a **+1** improvement look like for you
- What things will you see yourself doing differently?
- What will you notice when this is happening?



The second principle is the **Pareto Principle (the law of the vital few)**: where **80%** of your results come from doing just **20%** of all the things that you could do, e.g. you focus on the 20% of your best customers who are giving you 80% of your sales. When we apply this to our health and wellbeing, we need to **flip the principle and to focus on the 80%**: that you know you can enjoy better physical and mental wellbeing if most of your choices and habits are healthy and you can still be human, e.g. yes you can breathe, of course you can have some chocolate (in moderation!)

- So, how can you take off the burden or the pressure of perfection which can tend to lead up to feeling overwhelmed?
- What actions could you decide to put in place to help you here?
- What lifestyle choices are strong ones for you right now?
- Are you being kind to yourselves, e.g. remember that a nice scoop of ice cream doesn't have to be accompanied by two scoops of self-loathing?
- Using the 80% principles positively might mean something as simple as making an agreement with yourself to not go more than two days in a row without a good stretching session or cardio workout
- What "wellbeing" post-it note reminder might you stick on your mirror in the morning?

The third principle of self-management is **to be Specific, e.g. use What, When, Where**



What = drinking two glasses of water

When = first thing in the morning

Where = at my kitchen sink, just before I start my work or go for a walk/ exercise activity

We can have some fun with this: what are the habits you are going to do, when will you be doing them, and where?

Wellbeing DASH board: Diet, Activity, Sleep, Hydration

You don't have to be getting 9 hours of sleep, or drinking 3 litres of water a day, or eating 5-10 portions of fruit and vegetables, **but just doing a few of the following things consistently well will help:**

DIET	ACTIVITY	SLEEP	HYDRATION
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Monitor sugar intake and limit to 30g a day2) Plan in 5-10 portions of fruit and veg3) Omega 3 fats from chia seeds, oily fish, walnuts, soybeans etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Stand up and move for minimum 5 minutes every hour2) Track steps and set a daily target of 5-10,0003) Exercise daily (stretch, walk, run, HIIT etc.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Screen curfew 30-60 minutes before going to bed2) Monitor caffeine intake (coffee, tea, energy drinks)3) Gratitude journal	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Keep bottle or glass with you while you work2) Track how much you drink3) Water as the gold standard (avoid too many soft drinks and juices)

If you could only focus on a few things here, what would most experts recommend?

- Monitor your free sugar intake (e.g. those sugars not naturally found in fruit and veg)
- Build in pockets of movement each day and set some targets as what gets measured tends to get done, e.g. what is the most creative way you can still socially distance and get 5,000-10,000 steps in a day, and what are the opportunities to do some more movement?
- Take a caffeine curfew, e.g. caffeine can take 8 hours + to process through your system so you may want to stop drinking tea/ coffee/ red bull in the early afternoon so you can sleep well
- Power down your brain at night, e.g. using the principle of +1 start with turning all your tech off 15 minutes before you go to sleep, then extend this to 30, 45 and finally 60 -minutes to help maximise your sleep effectiveness. Keeping a gratitude journal (recording and writing down three things that you have been grateful for or that have gone well that day) is also a proven way of setting your mind in a positive state for a restful sleep
- Water really is the gold standard now, so track how much you drink as it is much easier than you think to rack up the amount of fluid per day, e.g. use a pint glass rather than a small beaker or keep a bottle by your work space

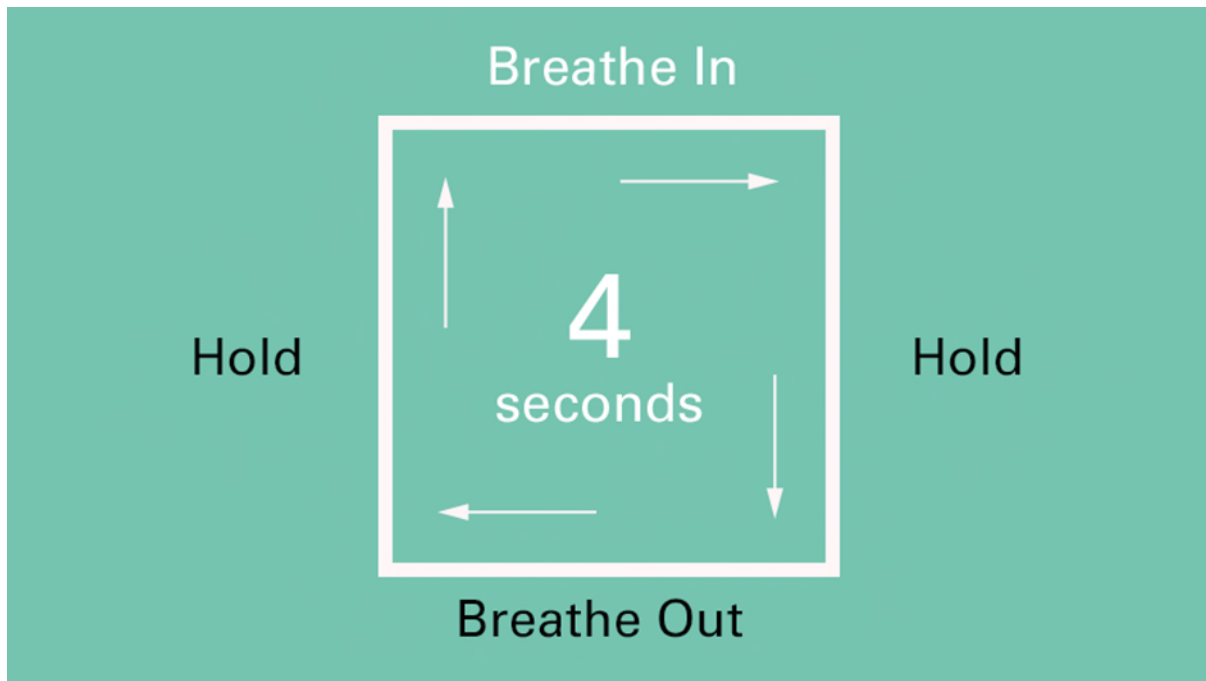


Two breathing techniques that can help reduce stress and anxiety:

Box breathing

Box breathing technique: sitting or standing comfortably/ hands on diaphragm and chest

- Slow, deep breaths (inhaling through the nose, exhaling through the mouth)
- Focus on the inhale for four seconds, holding the breath for a further four seconds, starting the exhale for four seconds and holding this for the final four seconds (visualising a box shape and the sides of the box as you experience each breathing stage)
- Repeat this cycle 1-6 times depending on your confidence, start with a breath cycle what works for you and your practice and try to develop the ability to gradually increase your breathing range so that you can control the rhythm
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJJazKtH_9I
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFdZXwE6fRE> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljQxIzUQihs> versions for children for those OULTC members needing to manage their children as well



When can we use this method?

- Before or during stressful events for us
 - As part of a pre-sleep routine

Benefits:

- To reduce stress
- Promote calm and reframing
- Can improve mental focus
- Can improve mood

4-7-8 breathing (also known as “relaxing breath”)

- Breathing in through the nose for four seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and then exhaling out through the mouth for 8 seconds
- Develop the ability to play with the duration of the inhale and exhale so that it works for you
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N02BnHwS5FE> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJ7VSirHuQA>



Some useful Oxford resources supporting mental health

<https://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/learn-mindfulness/online-sessions-podcasts/>

Currently running a series of free mindfulness webinars also available as podcast with useful grounding et al mindfulness practices

<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/covid-19-resources#collapse1918241>

Oxford University pages with links to wellbeing support

Some useful national resources supporting mental health

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/coronavirus.html>

<https://mhfaengland.org/remote-working-resources/everyone/>

MIND and MHFA provide free resources and guidance as well as a bank of podcasts and interviews with a range of public figures talking about how they have managed the ups and downs of their careers