



15 EXPERT IDEAS TO HELP YOU SPRING INTO THE NEW SEASON
WORDS Catherine McCormack

Spring Serenity

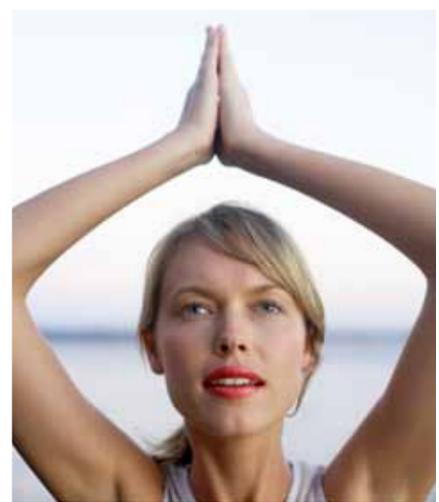
One look to nature and it's easy to see why spring is the season of renewal and rebirth. "Just as the environment around us bursts with colour and beauty, spring is the time when we need to stimulate the body and reawaken from the winter slow down," says David Stelfox, a naturopath and head of remedial therapies at Endeavour College of Natural Health. Spring is also the ideal time to reflect, reassess and re-plot your life. "It's the time of year when we feel energetic, enthusiastic and positive about the possibilities ahead," says Andrew Griffiths, author of *The Me Myth* (\$29.95, Simon & Schuster). Make the most of this season with our favourite experts' tips to boost mind, body and soul.

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1 PRACTISE SELFLESSNESS
"Of all the people I meet, the ones who are truly happy, who laugh out loud, who are healthy and vibrant, they are the ones who share the 'selfless' gene – and it really shows," says author Andrew Griffiths. Research shows that altruism reduces stress and increases self-confidence. It can be life changing. "For many people, this is how they find their purpose in the world and gives their life meaning," says Andrew. Start today by praising a friend or colleague, helping a stranger or volunteering for a charity.

2 SHOP OUTSIDE THE SUPERMARKET
Skip the supermarket this weekend and taste the flavour of spring at your nearest farmers' market. Not only will your palate approve of locally grown, in-season fruit and veg and delicious homemade specialty goods, you'll be helping support your local community and more sustainable food production practices. To find markets in your area, visit farmersmarkets.org.au

3 DOWNLOAD A GUIDED MEDITATION
The secret to long-lasting health and vitality? Making time to relax. Researchers at Harvard Medical School discovered people who practise meditation over the long-term "switch on" powerful genes that protect the body from pain and disease. It's called the "relaxation effect", and it can be just as powerful as medication for countering the negative effects of stress and anxiety. For a quick course in zen, download one of the many iPhone apps on your handset or a soothing audiobook, such as *Mindfulness Meditation* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, on iTunes or click on mentalworkout.com.



4 SIP AWAY ALLERGIES
The downside to blossoms and bulbs? Pollen. "Spring can be an unpleasant time for allergy sufferers," says David Stelfox, who recommends natural stinging nettles, available at natural food stores, to help keep your head clear. "They have natural antihistamine properties and reduce the swelling of the nasal capillaries." Ginger, which has anti-inflammatory properties and enhances circulation, is another easy option. Grate finely, steep in hot water with honey and enjoy.

5 GET A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP
For a brain and body boost, head to bed. "Sleep rejuvenates, recharges and detoxifies the body, and repairs damaged tissues," says Dr Reza Samvat, a sleep disorder specialist. "While you sleep, your body and brain work together to prepare you for a new day." For a more restful night, remove mobile phones and electronic equipment from your bedroom and switch off power points. "The suggestion is that electromagnetic fields interfere with brain waves and REM [rapid eye movement] sleep," says Lyn McLean, director of EMR Australia.

6 DETOX HAWAIIAN-STYLE
A rhythmic style of massage where the practitioner uses his or her hands, arms and elbows in long, flowing strokes, Ka Huna activates circulation, softens muscles and drains the lymph system – all elements of a spring detox. "Massage works on the physical idea of removing blockage; it's not uncommon for people to have emotional release during and after the treatment," says Nemara Hennigan from The Sydney Ka Huna Centre. Enjoyed in a heated room with gently scented oils and music, the ka huna experience is like "meditating and being massaged at the same time", explains Nemara. "It's quite a spiritual experience."



People who practise meditation
OVER THE LONG-TERM PRODUCE POWERFUL GENES THAT PROTECT THE BODY FROM PAIN AND DISEASE. IT'S CALLED THE 'RELAXATION EFFECT'

7 DO MORE YOGA
With its emphasis on conscious movement and connection, yoga is an ideal way to rediscover yourself after the long, cold winter. "Spring classes are often about getting the circulation moving and using breath to cleanse the lungs and open the heart," says Patty Jaswant Kikos, vice-president of the Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association. "It's very much about rebirth and coming out of your shell." Kundalini classes combine mantra and meditation with breath and movement.

8 SUPERCHARGE YOUR CREATIVITY
Follow the natural rhythms of your body clock and capitalise on your daily creative high. "Mid-morning our chi [life energy] starts to move through the heart, giving us insights into who we are and the projects we're working on," says Jost Sauer, a traditional Chinese medicine practitioner and author of *The Perfect Day Plan* (\$22.99, Allen & Unwin). "Between 11am and 1pm, we are at our most expressive and creative." Dedicate these two hours to important meetings, problem solving or new projects.

9 EMERGE YOURSELF IN WATER Since the 19th century, water has been used to relieve pain, restore health and increase wellbeing. "For a natural hit of hydrotherapy, swim in the sea or pool whenever possible," says David Stelfox of Endeavour College of Natural Health. Recreate the beach at home by dissolving mineral salts in a warm bath. As your skin soaks in the magnesium, tight, tense muscles will melt, leaving you soft, supple and relaxed.



10 GET OUT OF THE GYM British research shows that people who exercise outdoors enjoy twice the amount of psychological and emotional health benefits as those sweating it out in the gym. "Focus on how good exercise makes you feel, rather than the aesthetic effects it has on the body," says Patrick Timmins from Kapow Women's Outdoor Fitness.



Green exercise

CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS WALKING THE DOG, RIDING YOUR BIKE OR JOINING A HIGH-INTENSITY OUTDOOR TRAINING GROUP

11 START A KITCHEN GARDEN Whether you live in the city or sprawling suburbia, growing sprouts is an easy way to indulge in gardening. A fast-growing, 'living' food, sprouts are full of essential vitamins, nutrients, protein and antioxidants. "Sprouts help to alkalise the body and clear acidic toxic wastes, enabling the body to heal itself and build a stronger immune system," says Isabell Shiphard, author of *How Can I Grow and Use Sprouts as Living Food?* (\$37, Shiphards Herb Farm).

Isabell's Expert Growing Guide

- 1** Place 2-3 tbs of mung bean, adzuki, lentil or chickpea seeds into a glass jar with a wide neck. .
- 2** Fill the jar three-quarters full with warm water and soak seeds for 8-12 hours until they've swollen to double or triple their size.
- 3** Place a piece of gauze or net over the opening of the jar and hold it in place with a rubber band. Up end the jar, to stand at a 45° angle, so all the water can drain away. This is how the jar will stand for the length of time it takes to sprout.
- 4** Rinse seeds 2-3 times a day – pour in 1-2 cups of cold water, drain immediately, then gently roll the jar in your hands to loosen seeds. Return jar to its 45° angle. Seeds should stay moist, not wet.
- 5** Sprouts will be ready to eat in 2-4 days and can be eaten when 1-4cm long.

12 EAT FOR THE SEASON "Spring eating is all about foods that grow really quickly, foods that match the energy of the season," says Janella Purcell, a naturopath, nutritionist and author of *Elixir: How To Use Food as Medicine* (\$29.95, Allen & Unwin). "As the days grow longer and warmer, you'll naturally be craving lighter foods that will help detox your liver," says Janella. Swap winter soups and roast dinners for steamed veggies and quick stir-fries.



Be mindful of meditation
TAKE THE TIME TO CLEAR YOUR HEAD OF STRESS AND SWITCH OFF. MEDITATION IS JUST ONE WAY TO RE-ALIGN YOUR SENSES

13 JOIN A COMMUNITY GARDEN Get your green fix – and sharpen your social skills – by joining a community garden. Depending on the size of the garden, you'll be able to nurture everything from sweet peas to string beans, as well as learn a few new tricks along the way. "The main outcome is learning how to grow plants, and work cooperatively with others," says Russ Grayson from the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network. To find a plot in your neighbourhood, visit communitygarden.org.au.

14 EXERCISE WITH OTHERS Whether you play team sport, sign up to group training or power walk with a work colleague, exercising with others is not only more likely to keep you motivated, but, says Patrick

Timmins from Kapow Women's Outdoor Fitness, "a group dynamic provides positive social contact away from the pressures of work and family, and helps us unwind and focus on our health and wellbeing." It's also a rewarding way to spend time with friends and family.

15 SWITCH OFF YOUR SENSES If you worked late all winter, now's the time to reverse the trend and reap the rewards. "The most important thing to do between 5 and 7pm is to make a conscious decision to switch off," says Jost Sauer. "At this time our energy is in our kidneys, and if you use this time to keep working you create excess mental energy that can affect your sleep." Instead, catch up with friends, prepare a beautiful meal or spend quality time with your partner.

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