Finding Balance
Resource Booklet
By Women Unbounded
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Presented by Women Unbounded
Do certain foods increase your metabolism?

It’s easy for the media and news to promote fad diets and to make you believe that there’s a huge secret to “hacking” your metabolism. Some common metabolism “hacks” include: spicy foods, metabolism drops, cold water, and juicing.

Important to Note:

● Many platforms advertise these “hacks” in order to sell you a product and make a profit. The truth is, metabolism is complicated and is not easily influenced. Since metabolism is highly variable due to things like your age, gender, and genetics - it’s hard to influence your metabolism with a single type of food. At best, the effects of these foods are short-lived.

● Think about these “hacks” realistically. For example, are you really going to eat spicy food every meal to “boost” your metabolism?

● When assessing any past research, do consider the participants of the study as these participants tend to be obese and the purpose of the research is towards eliminating chronic diseases.

● If you are part of the general, healthy population - the methods detailed in the study are not likely to be meant for you.
So how do you actually improve metabolism?

- Eat adequately for energy and nourishment!
- Build muscle through strength training - because muscle is the most metabolically active tissue in the body.

The science behind it

The idea that certain foods have an effect on metabolism is usually in reference to TEF, which contributes to your TDEE. A lot of people believe that your *calories out* is solely the number of calories burnt on your fitness tracker after a workout. But this is only referring to EAT, which merely contributes to 5% of your TDEE!

While TEF is for food, this only contributes to 10% - which is also not a lot. Furthermore, a large number of diets have not been created by scientists or nutritionists, but are created by the diet industry to feed off your fear, in order to make you buy into a diet that profits them.

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**EAT = Exercise Activity Thermogenesis**
- Calories we burn through planned exercise, such as running or doing a weights workout

**TEF = Thermic Effect of Food**
- Calories we burn through digesting food and absorbing nutrients from food
- Some foods require more energy to digest, which is why you’ll often see articles about “foods that help boost your metabolism” - they don’t boost it, they just take a little more energy to break down

**NEAT = Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis**
- Calories we burn through movement outside of planned exercise
- Unplanned movement includes getting out of bed, walking to the kitchen, etc.

**BMR = Basal Metabolic Rate**
- Calories we burn at rest every day
- Supports daily functions your body must do to exist, such as brain and heart functions

**TDEE = Total Daily Energy Expenditure**
- The sum of the four processes above, or the sum of REE (Resting Energy Expenditure) and NREE (Non-Resting Energy Expenditure)

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*Source: Lift Yourself*
MYTH #2

Is there a “best time” to eat dinner?

- Our dinner times are based on our circadian rhythm, an internal process that regulates our sleep-wake cycle. However, for weight management, energy balance (i.e. energy in and energy out) will always be king.
- The timing of when we consume food will not affect the amount of calories (i.e. energy) a food item has or influence the energy balance of your body.
- However, eating higher-glucose food items at night is less optimal for people who are insulin-sensitive. Due to the circadian rhythm, we are less insulin sensitive at night. As such, it is not recommended for diabetic patients to eat so much carb-heavy foods at night due to the effect on their blood glucose levels. Hence, diabetic patients are usually more sensitive to the timing of their meals.
- The idea that eating late at night leads to weight gain may come from the temptation to consume high caloric foods at night. For example, when the midnight cravings hit - would you rather eat prata or a salad?
- In summary, eating late at night will not affect your weight loss. As long you maintain an energy balance throughout the day, you won’t be gaining weight.
2. Intermittent Fasting (IF)

Intermittent fasting (IF) refers to a diet centred around alternating periods of when you eat and when you fast. Here are some common variations:

- **16:8** - a 16-hour fast, followed by an 8-hour eating window per day
- **Eat, stop, eat** - a 24-hour fast during 1-2 days a week and eating normally for the rest of the week
- **5:2** - 2 days a week consuming 500-600 calories per day, while eating normally for the rest of the week

The idea behind IF is that when you eat normally after an extended fast, you won’t fully compensate for the food that you’ve gone without, in turn creating an energy deficit (and thus, weight loss). Some proponents mention that IF is relatively easier to maintain compared to other diets, which helps with adherence (but this is subjective). However, based on a **2019 research review done on IF**, 8 out of 11 studies found no significant differences between IF and regular calorie restriction for weight loss. As such, IF is probably not significant for your daily lives either!
3. A quick breakdown of other fad diets:

- **Atkins diet:** similar to keto (low-carb).
- **“Cheat meal” diet:** strict eating followed by opportunities to “indulge”.
  - This is not recommended if you are working through disordered eating or have an eating disorder.
  - We should not place morality on food, such as “good” versus “bad” food. Food is food, and it is there for us to enjoy and to nourish our bodies. The morality of food comes from humans and the numerous marketing campaigns designed to make us feel bad about certain food items.
- **Blood type diet:** using one’s blood type to determine what kind of food to eat.
  - This has no scientific basis to it. Most studies that were conducted were either poorly designed and lacked evidence. (PMID: 23697707)
- **Paleo diet:** assumes that human digestion hasn’t changed since the ancient times, and follows the diet of “hunters and gatherers” by restricting certain food groups. (PMID: 27051985)
  - This diet is not reflective of our modern physiology and lifestyle which can lead to the development of nutritional deficiencies.
  - Most studies were also poorly designed and have produced mixed results.

4. A final word on fad diets

- The diet industry is a multi-billion dollar industry worldwide. The products or diets marketed are either based on fear, or for your best interests (often the former).
- Furthermore, fad diets are created with some form of restriction and there are many reasons why restriction never works in the long-run. For example, you start obsessing even more about food, acting like a band-aid, training you to ignore your body’s natural hunger and fullness cues. Instead of focusing on diet tools and plans, trust your body!
- Finally, there is no one size fits all - and if someone preaches that, RUN.
PART B: A Balanced Diet

What should you include in your meals?

- Macronutrients to have in each meal: **Carbohydrates, Protein, Fats**
- Key food groups: **Fruits & Vegetables, Wholegrains, Meat and Alternatives, Dairy**
- Being on a diet you don’t love is not sustainable.
- Don’t forget what you love: e.g. tastes, textures

Questions to Ask BEFORE a Meal

1. **How long will this sustain me?**
   - Take note of this before you eat or buy it!
2. **Does this have all the important food groups?**
   - What do I need to add more of?
   - Use the “my healthy plate” image at the side as a reference!
3. **Will this satisfy me, and will I enjoy it?**
   - Note that protein is the most satiating food group (which is keeps you full and satisfied the fastest), followed by fats, then carbs.
4. **Will this meal / snack nourish both me and my body?**
   - Do you feel nutritionally and emotionally nourished?
5. **How will I feel after I eat it?**
   - Does this makes you feel good?
   - Perhaps it’s the environment you’re in rather than the food itself.

Concluding Remarks

If you are unsure about certain pieces of information regarding diets or having a sustainable relationship with food, go through these 2 thought processes:

1. **Logical:**
   - Does this diet / food rule actually help me achieve my deeper goal, long-term goal(s)?
   - Does the science behind it make sense?
2. **Emotional:**
   - How will implementing this work for me or make me feel in the long-run?
Tips to Prep Your Meals

1. PREP COMPONENTS, NOT MEALS

Prepping full meals can be cumbersome. And you might get bored after day 3… Instead, prepare your raw ingredients or components of your meals which allows you to pick & choose what you want to eat on the day, saving you time in the kitchen. This includes:

- Washing and cutting raw fruits and vegetables
- Batch cooking proteins with simple seasoning so you can add flavour with sauces later (see below)
- Pre-cooking grains like rice or quinoa to use as meal bases

2. YOU DON’T HAVE TO MAKE EVERYTHING FROM SCRATCH

If you’re one of the lucky ones that can find prepped ingredients in the grocery store like chopped veggies, salad mixes, and microwavable meals (check for quality!), this can be a huge time saver. Also, there’s nothing wrong with getting cooked proteins like rotisserie chicken, deli meats, and canned fish which you can quickly throw into your meals.

3. BATCH & STASH SAUCES AND DRESSINGS

Pick a few recipes of your favourite sauces/dressings, make a big batch and store in the freezer for later. By having these different toppings on hand, you’re unlikely to get bored as you can literally build a different meal each day. Pro-tip: portion out into ice cube trays and defrost when needed!

Grab a cute container, mix & match from your fridge buffet-style, and you’ve got your meal ready in minutes!
Just a gentle reminder:

- Focus on the things you CAN control.
- Stay in your lane.
- Don’t fixate on the numbers.
- Do what you know you need to do to make progress.

So while you can’t control how much weight you lose, you CAN control:

- The foods you choose to eat
- The effort and discipline you put into your workouts
- The effort and discipline you put into your recovery (HEY, who’s getting enough SLEEP here?)
- The people you choose to surround yourself with
- The social media accounts you choose to follow
- How you choose to respect your body every. single. day.

If you’re doing what you need to do, and you’re enjoying the process, the outcome almost becomes secondary.

And if you’re NOT okay with the outcome, then what’s one achievable thing you can change today to help?

Things you can control

- The effort you put into your food
- The effort you put into your workout
- Who you choose to connect with
- Your mindset

Things you cannot control

- The number on the scale
- How motivated you are
- What other people think about you
- Other people’s progress or success
Traditional dieting has taught us that we can’t trust our own bodies that we’re reliant on someone to tell us exactly what and when to eat something, and how bad we are if we veer off the plan.

Being told what to do deprives us of the opportunity to become independent thinkers about our body and how it needs to be nourished. We relinquish all of it to someone who’s never lived a day in our lives.

And because of that, we become dependent.

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF when you’re concerned about your food:

1. How physically hungry am I right now?
2. How satisfied will eating/not eating this make me feel?
3. How will eating this make me feel physically? Mentally?

You are the CEO of your health, you know your body better than anyone, trust your intuition, listen to the signals and be honest with yourself.

Understand the difference between physical and emotional hunger and find foods that that align with your goals, instead of eliminating everything.

All in all, just #eatthefood.
For years we’ve been told, to see results:

- Eat less to lose weight. Burn more. Eat 1200 cals a day. Cut out carbs/sugar/dairy/fat…. basically eat as little as possible.
- This has warped our perception of what “enough” food really is.

By not eating enough you could be hindering your progress and ability to:

- Gain muscle, perform in the gym, recover from workouts, LIVE A FULL LIFE.

Not sure if you’re under-eating?

Here are some signs:

- Always getting sick
- Hair loss
- Lack of appetite
- Mood swings
- Cold hands/feet
- Loss of menstrual cycle
- Constipation
- Insomnia or poor sleep
- Depression or anxiety
- Inability to lose fat or change body comp
- Insatiable hunger or cravings
- Niggling injuries, excessive soreness
- Low energy, chronically feeling like sh*t
- Stalled progress in the gym, not building PRs or muscle
- Brain fog or difficulty in concentrating

So, what to do if this is you?

Well, the most obvious answer would be to eat more food and prioritise rest.

- It’s important that you’re still putting nutrient-dense whole foods at the top of your list rather than just eating any calorie in sight. The point is still HEALTH not just food.
- If you’re curious about how much you should actually be eating, @precisionnutrition has a fantastic calorie calculator.

Other considerations:

- Take 2-3 FULL rest days per week
- Make sure you’re getting 7-9 hours of QUALITY sleep
- Set a goal of hitting 10K steps per day
Simple Recipes

Hummus Wrap

Ingredients
1. Tortilla wrap
2. Hummus spread
3. Vegetables/toppings of your choice
   - E.g. cucumbers, carrots, sprouts

Optional:
- Chilli oil or olive oil
- Falafel
- Fried tofu

Steps:
1. Spread a generous layer of hummus on the tortilla wrap - leaving the sides
2. Add your vegetables and toppings in the centre of your wrap
3. Sprinkle your oil of choice over the vegetables and wrap it up by folding the two sides in and rolling it up
4. You can either cut the wrap into two or eat it whole

Meal prep tips:
- You can use a toothpick to hold it together if you’re putting it in the oven
- You may freeze the wrap after making it which is good up to a week
- When you remove it from freezer, microwave it for a minute and it’s good to eat!

Overnight Oats

Ingredients:
1. Bowl/container
2. Instant/rolled oats
3. Milk of your choice
4. Toppings of your choice
   - Fruits - e.g. strawberries, blueberries
   - Chia seeds (optional)
   - Kaya (optional)
   - Pumpkin (optional)

Nutritional tips for a balanced meal:
- Oats - fiber whole grain
- Milk - dairy, calcium
- Fruits - fruits and vegetables
- Chia seeds - protein and healthy fats, high in omega 3
- Nuts and seeds - healthy fats

Steps:
*No specific measurements, add as much as you like*
1. Add all the ingredients except fruits into your bowl or container and cover it
2. Store in the fridge
3. Remove from fridge when you are hungry and top with fruits, nuts or seeds

Presented by Women Unbounded
Pancakes

Premix:

Ingredients:
1. 4 cups all-purpose flour (sieved)*
2. 3 tbsp baking powder
3. 2 tsp baking soda
4. 1 tsp salt
5. 2.5 - 3 tbsp sugar
6. Cinnamon (optional)
7. Coffee (optional)

Steps:
1. Mix all ingredients and store in an air-tight container

Extra notes:
- Premix can be kept for a month
- Oat, almond & wheat flour can be used

Making the Pancake batter:

Ingredients:
1. 1 cup of your assembled premix
2. 1 egg
3. 1 cup milk
4. 1 tbsp melted butter/oil
5. (½) Mashed bananas (optional)

Steps:
1. Turn on stove, add a dash of oil or butter to coat the pan
2. Add in pancake batter from a height to create volume in a circle
3. Cook till bubbles form on one side and flip to cook the other
4. Cook till light brown

Other Recipes

Baked salmon in foil:
https://ifoodreal.com/baked-salmon-recipe/#wprm-recipe-container-36758

Honey garlic salmon:
https://ifoodreal.com/honey-garlic-salmon/#wprm-recipe-container-37443

Oven-baked chicken breast:
https://ifoodreal.com/baked-chicken-breast/#wprm-recipe-container-39282

Chicken breast with tomatoes and garlic:
https://ifoodreal.com/chicken-breast-with-tomatoes/#wprm-recipe-container-37299

Vegetarian quesadilla:
https://ifoodreal.com/vegetarian-quesadilla/#wprm-recipe-container-40057

Vegetable and lemon broth:
How did you find a lifestyle that works for you?

**Sarah (Functional Nutritional Therapy Practitioner & Health Coach)**

Being an athlete, Sarah had a busy schedule and lifestyle that took a toll on her body, causing her to lose her period for 3.5 years due to burnout and fatigue. With more responsibilities and commitments, she realised that it was about **prioritising different things in her life**, doing the things she enjoys versus the things she should do or what social media deems as ‘goals’. Diet wise, she has tried almost every diet. Her mindset was to lose weight or achieve aesthetic and performance goals in her sport which turned out to be unsustainable. Now, she no longer stresses on the food she eats but more on the **experiences around the food**. All in all, it’s about figuring out the best option that will help you find a sustainable lifestyle you enjoy versus one you stress about. Do also remember to have a social life as it does help as well.

**Clara (Advertising Executive & Social Media Content Creator)**

In terms of diet, Clara has tried going vegan. However, seeing that it was not sustainable for her, she is working towards the next best alternative - being vegetarian. It was very eye-opening for her as, there are many affordable vegetarian options that are easily accessible. At the end of the day, she **listens to her body** and does her best to reduce her meat intake.

Being in her industry, it is common to work overtime. For her, it is a matter of where **her priorities lie in this stage** of her life. Currently, it is building up her career. So she leaves her workout for the weekend, where she has more time. However, she does feel that she is still finding a lifestyle that works for her.
How did you find a lifestyle that works for you?

**Nadia (Model & Freelance Presenter)**
Similar to Sarah, Nadia is flexible about her diet but tries to opt for healthy, whole and clean foods. When she can, she eats more vegetables and fruits and does not count calories. Additionally, she does not have much snacks at home, something she adopted throughout her journey towards healthy eating. In terms of food, she is quite flexible as it is more about the experiences but will eat what she likes in moderation. By fitting exercise or yoga into her work schedule, it allowed her to find out what exercises work for her. Personally, she likes to combine yoga with cardio/HIIT/Tabata and she has fun doing it. Everyone is different and has their own preferences and it is important to be mindful of what you do. You don't have to jump on whatever fad is on Instagram. Instead listen to your body and find what works for you.

**Jamie (Founder of Our Health Atlas)**
Her healthy lifestyle began when she was 16/17 years old. She was stressed with IB/ A levels and started getting more into fitness. This slowly led to her being so fixated with maintaining her nutritional intake, that she started forgoing bonding with her family. Eventually, she realised that it was not worth sacrificing time with her family just to focus on eating well and exercising. As she went through her education, she realised that there are so many other things that can affect health and wants to ensure that people who approach her can receive the treatment they deserve in terms of their health. Rather than focusing our time and attention on our weight, we can redirect it to quality time with loved ones.

**Jolin (Head of Partnerships at FIT Summit)**
Jolin started with a raw vegan diet due to gut allergies and inflammation, and also went through a phase of orthorexia (being obsessed with eating healthy). When she was a raw vegan, she had zero social life, even with her family and friends. But now, she has moved to a guilt-free diet which is mostly plant-based and eats what she likes in moderation.
How do you know if a plant-based diet is for you? Do you feel a difference in your energy levels, mood and skin after having adopted one?

Rather than just a specific kind of diet, perhaps mindful eating might relate better to most people. A way to do so is **asking yourself questions** such as "Would this make you happy?, How would you feel after eating this?, Would this make you full?" before eating. This can reduce the emotional impact after eating or the hormonal fluctuations that may come. With regards to having a plant based diet, research has shown that there will be lesser inflammation and more phytonutrients. While some may enjoy a plant-based diet, not everyone will. Your energy levels, mood and skin are not solely dependent on your diet. Other elements (eg. lifestyle) will play a part. Every individual is different. **What’s important is that you find what works best for you.**

**What are some tips to gain body positivity?**

While there is much talk about body positivity where you have to love your body and how it looks. That’s not always the case. It is hard to love and embrace your body everyday. **Body love is more about body respect - respecting what your body does for you.** Think about it, a cheat meal, is just a meal or food. Having to struggle with the guilt and shame of eating a specific meal is only going to negatively hinder your mental state rather than eating that food itself. At the end of the day, food is food and you have to trust what your body is going to do with it. Rather than thinking about the particular food, focus on the other things around you. "Are you with friends or family or loved ones? Are you enjoying yourself or does it make you happy at that moment? Does it make you satisfied at the moment?" If the answer is YES, then why worry? When struggling with negative thoughts, **reframe** them and think about how this meal is serving you or how does this experience serve you. This will alleviate the guilt and let you thoroughly enjoy it. The more guilt and shame you have around it, the harder it is for your body to digest it, resulting in you getting ill or nauseous, bringing you back into this vicious cycle. **Slow down, stay mindful and enjoy your meal.**
How do you overcome days when you cannot love yourself?

**Focus on being grateful.** Despite having a ‘cheat meal’, understand that it will not affect, for example, the next workout. Avoid obsessing over the repercussions of that one meal. What matters is **living in the now and what your body wants.** You’ll naturally feel happier when your body is satisfied. It’s all about finding that balance. Another important thing is to **thank your body** for what it can achieve (such as being able to walk home from the MRT, our eyesight, being able to enjoy the little things). These little aspects of gratitude does help in positively shifting your mindset. The first step is always tough, but step by step you will see some progress and be in control of your life.

How can we fight the stigma surrounding individuals with larger bodies in a culture that focuses on diet and body weight?

This stigma is perpetuated in articles claiming this diet is good for certain people or is the in thing now and at the end of the day, it is all media talk. One should take it with a pinch of salt and at the end of the day, **everyone is different with different body types** and we all cannot choose a diet because some media choose to say so. In the context of the modelling industry, this stigma does exist where models are asked to diet and fit into a certain size. There is an argument that designers create all these sizes that models have to fit in but it is actually changing now. Nowadays, more brands are showcasing different models, sizes as well as moving towards diversity and inclusion. There are many platforms to fight this such as, [@shitmodelmgmt](https://www.instagram.com/shitmodelmgmt/). This anonymous platform allows models to send in their experiences in the industry such as body shaming. It is unhealthy to restrict yourself to a certain body shape and diet. Social media is not real as it shows 10% of a person’s life.

**Tip:** Unfollow accounts you can’t relate to or feel is not authentic, instead follow more productive accounts such as [@i_weigh](https://www.instagram.com/i_weigh/). This will help your mental well-being and when you are happy within, it shows on the outside and nothing can affect you.
Panel Q&A

How has your life changed since prioritizing self-care, and what are some tips?

**Jamie**

Your routine should accommodate your life rather than letting your routine take over your life. By ditching her previous rigid and obsessive fitness and lifestyle routine, Jamie slowly realised that she has more time and mental space to focus more on what she had in her life then (university) and now (starting her own business).

**Some action tips regarding body image struggles:**

- Try following people of diverse bodies rather than seeing one kind of body.
- For nutrition and fitness, know that weight is not the only thing. Instead find what your true purpose is, in which you can fall back to in time of difficulties.

**Sarah**

Rest is productive. Prioritising rest when her body or mental state is not great, and eating the food she needs to eat have been very helpful towards her health. By consistently making these small changes, you will see a positive change in both your health and mental state.

- **Focus on your sleep / eating one vegetable a day / drinking water** - these are the small things that you can do daily and be proud of yourself for doing them. You don’t need big lifestyle changes to love your body.

**Clara**

Clara turns to **skincare or working out** as one of her self-care activities to **relieve her stress**. Good food is also something she could look forward to.

- **Don’t stinge on your me-time.** It is important to consciously dedicate time to yourself and not be afraid to do things you enjoy even if you are busy, e.g. setting aside 5 minutes to do a nice face mask. These little things do help.

**Nadia**

The changes she has seen are in the way she approaches life and her perspective of things. By finding time to focus on her health and wellbeing, she has more energy and clarity to make better decisions. She chooses things that mean a lot to her and not for others.

- **Try meditation** and keeping a **gratitude journal**. By dedicating some time to do these things, it helps you find space for yourself.
- Start a habit of **not using social media as soon as you wake up**. Instead, after waking up, listen to a 5 minute meditation audio or look out of the window and reflect on your tasks for the day. This may help you keep a clear mind and be more focused and unflustered.
Additional Resources

- Free online course on The Science of Wellbeing by Yale University
  https://www.coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being

- “Trust Your Hunger and Make Peace With Food” - Eve Lahijani
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ssr2UD89EWQ

- “What is a healthy relationship with food?” - Rhiannon Lambert
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CQyaeZWAXE

- “Muscle Dysmorphia – The Male Eating Disorder” - Scott Griffiths
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vs7nKcPsAXI

- Banter BUILD 2 - Honouring cultural heritage in your definition of health

- Banter BUILD 3 - Exposing your subconscious food police
  https://www.bodybanter.com/banter-build/exposing-your-subconscious-food-police

- Overtraining & Undereating in Hypothalamic Amenorrhea with Sarah Widjaja:
  https://open.spotify.com/episode/6JdgmOqpaVkf6rmdvcrP4

- Chatting Grit interview with Sarah Widjaja:
  https://open.spotify.com/episode/5VyTCHKsGyvDbYO5H3zZq?si=9rFwem_SqeCky_n_KtWsq

- Free meditation + yoga app https://insighttimer.com/

- High protein foods cheat sheet

Brands and Accounts who Address / Preach Diversity and Inclusion

- @i_weigh - An account by founder @jameelajamilofficial about radical inclusivity
- @femalecollective - Celebrates, uplifts, supports, and empowers women everyday
- @girlfriendcollective - Sustainable, ethically made activewear that is body inclusive
- @fentybeauty - A makeup brand by Rihanna made for all skin tones
- @hara_thelabel - Sustainable clothing store that champions body diversity and inclusivity, sharing messages that will uplift and empower your spirit
Meditation

1. Bring your hands in front of your heart centre, palms together, eyes closed & take a few moments to tune into the body.

2. Keeping a straight spine, rotate your shoulders back and sit in silence

3. Give yourself some time to switch off the brain & your mind and tune into your breath.

4. Take a deep inhale into the stomach, then upward to chest then collarbone.

5. On exhale, bring awareness from collarbone, downwards to chest, then stomach.

6. Repeat this a few times. Enjoy the sound of your own breath and use this time to pay attention to the body. Feel if there are any areas of tightness and use your breath to guide you through this tension, to the tight areas of the muscles, relaxing your body down.

7. As you do this, set an intention for this practise. Think of a 1 word mantra for yourself, e.g. acceptance (accepting your own body, accepting yourself the way you are)

8. Repeat this mantra and keep breathing into your stomach, up to your collarbone and exhale slowly. On the last few times when you exhale, let a big sigh out.

9. Then gently bow down to your fingertips & slowly open your eyes to look into your palm before slowly bringing your head up.
Yoga

1. Stay in a seated position and start by looking downwards as you inhale.
2. Slowly tilt your head up towards the ceiling then start by draw a big circle with your nose to the left as your exhale and inhale to move up to the right.
3. Repeat this a few times, relaxing the tension in your neck and shoulders
4. Use this time to thank your body for carrying out each day.
5. After a few rounds, change sides by inhaling as you move your head up to the right and exhaling as you move your head downwards to the left.
6. Repeat this movement a few times before returning to the centre.

Bhramari Pranayama Exercise (Humming Bee Breathing Technique)

Pranayama - the science of ‘Qi’ or the vital force

1. Find a comfortable space where you are in a seated position, shoulders relaxed, a straight spine & belly sucked in
2. Start with both hands up by your side in a 90 degree angle, then bring your thumb to gently press onto the inner lobe of your ear as you exhale everything out.
3. As you inhale through your nose and into your stomach, close your eyes and gently press onto your inner ear lobe then hum it out as you exhale.
4. Try to maintain your exhale long and steady, feeling the vibrations traveling in your mouth and throat. You might even feel tingling sensations in your hands and arms.
5. The practice relieves stress and tension around the head, ears, neck and throat. The vibrations created helps to harmonise the mind and directs awareness inwards, inducing a relaxed, meditative state which leads to a restful sleep for those suffering from insomnia.
6. Take about 2 minutes to enjoy this exercise.
7. In your last exhale, slowly bring your palms back on your knees, keeping your eyes closed, taking a few deep breaths
8. Notice how the energy is flowing throughout the spine and give thanks to yourself and your body
9. End off by bringing your palms to your heart centre & slowly open your eyes
Yoga

1. Keeping your palms together, bring them up towards the sky as you inhale, really lengthening the spine and neck, stretching it out¹.

2. As you exhale, twist your body to the left, bringing your palms down (right palm on the left knee and left palm behind the body). Inhale to lengthen the spine and tilt your head up slightly².

3. Exhale to twist a little more to the left, looking over the left shoulder & breathe into this space, into your spine (which supports our movements everyday).

4. During this stretch, breathe into any tension, hold this position for a minute, afterwhich, exhale to slowly come back to centre.

5. Repeat the same stretch on your right side.

6. Inhale once more, bringing your palms up to the sky like you did before, lengthening your spine and neck, stretching it out before exhaling and twisting your body to the right this time, left palm on your right knee and right palm behind the body³.

7. Inhale to lengthen the spine as you tilt your head up and exhale, twisting to the right and looking over your right shoulder.

8. Intentionally directing your breath to the areas of tension, such as your back/hips/legs, allowing them to relax, tending to the body with full awareness. Afterwards, exhale to slowly return to centre.

9. Once more, bring your palms together in front of your heart centre and up to the sky, stretching upwards. But this time as you exhale, open both palms to the side, arms in a 90 degree angle, palms facing the front.

10. Next, close both elbows to touch, then our palms, rounding the back⁴.

11. Repeat this cycle about 4 times before ending the stretch.
Continuing from the previous stretch

1. Starting from your heart’s centre, bring your palms upwards, bring your left palm down to the floor, keeping your right hand up and exhale to open up the right shoulder. Stretch your right palm and fingertips to reach to the side, pointing through the fingertips and breathing to the side of your body.

2. Hold it there for 10 seconds

3. Come back to centre. Bringing both palms up, repeating the same action on your right side. Keep pulling to the right, giving your left side a deep stretch.

4. Exhale to come back to centre, keeping your palms together and head down

Janu Sirsasana - Head to Knee pose

1. Bring your legs forward, keep your legs hips apart, with a straight spine. Inhale to bring both hands up and exhale to bend forward where you reach for your feet.

2. You may bend your knees slightly and your head does not need to reach the floor. Simply allow your head to relax downwards.

3. Slowly shake your head side to side, relaxing your shoulders & breathing into the spine.

4. Keep this position for a minute or two, little by little lowering your knees down to the floor. *for those who are more flexible, you may try hugging your elbows under your knees to bring your belly closer to your thighs. Imagine folding your body into half. Relaxing the weight of your head to the ground. Breathing all throughout your body

5. Exhale to slowly come back to a straight spine and look forward as you sit up

6. Rotate your ankles sideways, drawing mini circles and scrunching your toes for a minute, giving them some movement

7. After that, shake out your legs for a bit before coming back to a crossed legged seat
Baddha Konasana - Butterfly pose

1. Bring the soles of your feet together to sit in a butterfly position, spine straight.
2. Start to flap your thighs up and down to shake them out for about 30 seconds.
3. Next, staying in a butterfly position, open up the soles of your feet like a book, spreading them out with your hands, keeping that straight spine with shoulders relaxed\(^1\).
4. As you inhale, look up and bring your body down as you exhale. Your body does not need to touch the ground, so long as you are in a folded position and relaxing your body weight down\(^2\). This is a restorative pose to relax your mind.
5. Keep this position for 2-3 minutes to relax into this pose and let gravity bring your body closer to the ground. Relax your facial and jaw muscles.
6. Keep breathing as you reach further in front into your stretch.
7. Slowly bring your head up with your chin to your chest and come back into a straight spine.
Wide Legged Forward Bend

1. Bring your legs apart (as much as you can). You may place cushions under your knee to avoid straining them.
2. Again, keeping a straight spine, bring both hands up to the sky, looking at your fingertips as you inhale.
3. Exhale as you bring your belly down to touch the floor (as far as you can), palms touching the floor, forehead down.
4. At your own time, try to stretch further to the front bit by bit. *if you are more flexible, try to go as close to the ground by walking your palms forward inch by inch.
5. Do take slow deep breaths as you are in this stretch.
6. You may relax the elbow down on the floor for more support.
7. Observe the body internally.
8. When you’re ready, press into your palm, to bring your head forward, and step by step coming back to a straight spine.
9. Slowly bringing both legs up then bending your knees to touch, pressing your palms behind you for support.
10. After which you’re going to open one knee to one side and move it to other.
11. Do this movement a few times, loosening any tension around the knee.
Ending off with a short savasana,

1. Find a space to lie down. Close your eyes, open your palms to face the ceiling, dropping your feet and legs open, hips wide.
2. Allow the weight of the body to grow heavy into the ground. Relaxing the shoulders, head, hips down, resting your body fully.
3. After that, bring your hands over your head for a big stretch.
4. Lying down, slowly bend your knees and come over to lie on your right side.
5. Stay in this position for a few moments.
6. When you’re ready, slowly push yourself up into a crossed legged seat, eyes closed, palms in heart centre.
7. Repeat your mantra as you end the session: ‘May I be healthy happy and at peace.’ Send yourself love by repeating this.
8. Bow your head and rub your hands together quickly to generate some heat
9. Cover your eyes with your palms for a few seconds to feel that warmth
10. Then bring your palms down and slowly open your eyes, looking into your palms and come back up.

- THANK YOU -
Women Unbounded (WU) is a volunteer-based community headquartered in Singapore, working for women’s empowerment through connections, mutual aid, ideas, and events. WU is proudly feminist; our approach to intersectional feminist activism is grounded in our beliefs in fairness, respect, and empiricism. One step at a time, we work to break down psychological, intellectual, socio-cultural, and economic barriers to gender equality.

WU’s Teams

**Connections**
Provide a safe space for mentorship and guidance

**Mutual Aid**
Empower women with knowledge and skills to excel

**Ideas**
Start conversations on what it means to be a woman and the norms that constrain us

**Events**
Host meaningful events to empower the individual and bond the community

Join Our Community!

[QR Codes for Our Website, @women.unbounded, Women Unbounded, Women Unbounded]

Feel free to reach out to us at hello@womenunbounded.com

Resource Booklet: Special Mentions

The ideas in this booklet were developed by the panelists from WU’s Finding Balance event held on 13th December 2020. The contents do not represent the views of any company or organization.

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