

ActiveWellness

It can be hard to feel good on dark days, but Joyologist Pat Armitstead says laughter can be a true healer!

Live in the 'now'!

I believe we are here to bring joy, not just into our own lives but the lives of others.

There are times when we cannot alter the circumstances around us; at these times, the only thing we can change is ourselves.

How can we find joy when our own health, or that of someone close to us, is a real and ongoing issue?

Even in our worst moments there is humour to be found, and what a joy it is to have the moment of relief that comes with laughter. Serotonin is released, producing the 'feel good effect'.

You don't have to be funny all the time to be good humoured. It is about being appropriately responsive, being present and in the moment, and not worrying about the past or projecting into the future.

Joy can be found in being still for a moment, looking at nature: a raindrop on a leaf, flowers opening to the sunshine.

Or, by finding at least five minutes to do what you love.

Perhaps the greatest way to stay positive comes from being grateful.

Try closing each day by writing three things in a lovely journal that you are thankful for or that brought you pleasure.

This simple exercise can help to balance all of life's moments: the difficult ones, and those that bring joy.



Pat's Joy Prescription!

10 tips to support your wellbeing

- 1 Laughter is healing. Get yourself a laughter icon, something that makes you laugh and drives others crazy! My first was a bucket and spade. I used it to tell people I was glad they had come to play in my sandpit.
- 2 Play and sing your favourite song on rising every day; mine is Celine Dion's *I Am Alive*.
- 3 Share beautiful quotes that inspire and enthuse.
- 4 Eat M&Ms or other favourite sweets slowly and call them your Grouch Control pills (make a jar for them)!
- 5 Keep moving: physical activity alongside compassion boosts energy.

6 Choose a virtue card each week and practice the virtue: www.virtuesproject.org

7 Humour in = humour out: seek out amusing TV shows, magazines, and other entertainment.

8 Pencil in a date with yourself at least once a week to do what you love for an hour.

9 Create a 'jester journal' filled with favourite jokes, cartoons and poems.

10 Wear a clown nose and sing *You Are My Sunshine*.

11 Share the most vulnerable parts of your experience with another.

12 Close the day with 3 expressions of gratitude that you write down.

Yes, I know that's 12 tips, not 10 ... that's humour for you!



Ten years ago, in a big 'aha!' moment, it came to me that we had Radiology, Pathology, Haematology ... but no Joyology! In that moment I declared myself the World's First Joyologist. I had been through a succession of losses which left me very depressed. My doctor wanted to medicate me but I refused, saying "help me deal with my grief". You might well be asking, "what does a Joyologist do?" I sometimes liken myself to a spiritual midwife, helping people out of the darkness. We all swing between grief and joy most of our lives as we respond to and deal with the life events that shape us. Laughter is the trigger for hope as we move through those times that test us!

Learn more about Pat at www.joyology.co.nz

Make Moments Count!

If we focus only on the 'bad' things, we can skip right past the good ones! Even the worst days have moments that are interesting or peaceful, amusing or uplifting. We have created this simple journal to help you close each day with at least three things you enjoyed, or are thankful for.



Moment2Moment

Meditation
Silence
Cat naps
Hugs
Time alone
Time together
Prayer
Family
Volunteering
Gardening
Nature
Music
Creating
Touching
Exercise
Friends
Remembering
Laughter
Cooking
Eating
Helping
Aromas
Hobbies
Photos
Reflecting
Giving
Watching
Listening
Smiling
Sharing
Accepting
Being

	GOOD MOMENTS	MINUTES
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		



Download Carers NZ's other free **My200 Planners** at www.carers.net.nz! Make copies of the *Time Out* and *Activity Planners*, and fill in the blanks each week. Keep your Planners handy to remind yourself to 'do your thing' day to day, aiming for about 200 minutes each week of time out to pursue your own interests, and/or to stay active and well. If you don't have a computer, you can order free printed copies of the Planners (*contact details, below*)!

Request our free 15 minute *Strength for Life* exercise programme! Developed by national bodybuilding champion Wayne Halkyard, the exercises (done regularly) can build strength fast! To request the programme, phone Carers NZ on 0800 777 797, or write to PO Box 133, Mangonui, Far North 0442.

Ellen's Advice? Aim for Daily Activity!

Exercise for everyone!

We all know that exercise is good for us, but plenty of things can get in the way of exercising regularly.

A busy life caring for others, or living with the effects of illness or disabilities, can be major obstacles if we allow them to be.

Exercise has great benefits for ANY body.

Our bodies adapt to the demands we put upon them. If we exercise our heart, lungs and muscles, they will respond and learn to function under greater stress.

Physical activity also increases circulation and our ability to fight infection and illness. It burns fat, helps to fight low mood and depression, and can help to prevent heart disease, to name just a few benefits.

Circulation and movement are vital to prevent pressure areas if you use a wheelchair.

A strong immune system will reduce the risk of hospital admissions, improve fat metabolism to keep weight off painful joints, plus you'll feel more energised!



You'll move more if you plan for physical activity!

Heart and vascular disease is still New Zealand's number one killer and, for a large part, is preventable through healthy diet and exercise.

It is beneficial for wheelchair users to work on upper body muscle strength and endurance. Not only will this allow you to do more for longer, but it also works to protect you and your supporters from injury. It is also wise to keep exercising muscles in your lower body if possible.

To get a cardiovascular workout, you need

to exercise large muscle groups to put sufficient strain on your heart and lungs.

Think of wheelchair sports (rugby, basketball), handcycling, swimming, throwing and catching, archery, and so on. Flexibility is still vitally important even if you are spending most of the day in a seated position.

It might seem logical to focus only on

your upper body and trunk, but you also need flexibility in your lower limbs. Maintaining a full range of motion in all joints is important for, but not limited to: dressing, transferring, prevention of pressure areas, and hygiene tasks.

Most large muscle groups can be found in the lower body, so if you have 'good legs' there are usually more

If you or someone in your family has a fall or is injured, get treatment as soon as possible. Don't wait until you feel better, as this can make an injury worse, and your recovery might take longer. Getting ACC cover is simple: your doctor, physiotherapist, or other treatment provider will submit an ACC claim for you.

To learn about making an ACC claim, visit www.acc.co.nz or phone 0800 101 996.

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"A strong immune system reduces the chance of hospital admission, improves fat metabolism to keep weight off painful joints, plus you'll feel more energised!"

Cardiovascular wellbeing

There are three types of exercise: cardiovascular (targeting heart, circulatory system and lungs), strength and muscle endurance (targeting muscles), and flexibility exercises (to keep or increase range of motion in our joints). All three types of exercise need to fulfil certain criteria to achieve results, like how often (frequency), how hard (intensity), how long (duration), and the number of times (repetitions) we do each exercise.

With cardio exercise, aim for a heart rate of 60-80% of your maximum heart rate. Your maximum heart rate is 220 minus your age. Example: if you are 76 your maximum heart rate is $220 - 76 = 144$. You should aim for a heart rate between 86 and 115 (target heart rate). Another way is the 'conversation rule' which states that you should still be able to have a conversation while you are exercising.

Frequency

Start with three times a week, which will be enough to give you results, then work towards cardio activity most days.

Duration

Aim to start with 20 minutes a day, and work towards 30-60 minutes a day. This can include several shorter sessions or one longer one.

Intensity

For cardiovascular exercise, work within your target heart rate. For muscle strength and endurance use the following rules: for endurance use lighter weights and perform eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise; to increase strength, choose heavier weights and do five to eight repetitions.



activities you can choose from to do your cardiovascular exercise.

Walking, cycling (perhaps on a stationary bike), aqua jogging, tramping, running, dancing, kicking and jumping are all ways to have a good cardio session.

If most of these are too strenuous for you, it is still possible to get an excellent workout in a standing or sitting position.

It can be especially challenging to find a suitable exercise regime if you have several physical conditions affecting more than one or two areas of your body, or if you have a systemic illness like one of the rheumatoid diseases.

Download our My200 Activity Planners at www.carers.net.nz!

Hydrotherapy (exercise in water) can be extremely useful in these cases, as it can target the heart, muscles and joints in a more comfortable way than is possible on land. But even if you have no access to a pool, it is still possible to achieve results by

following an individual exercise programme.

Physiotherapists are professionals who specialise in the areas of movement and health.

If you have serious doubts you could do anything to improve your condition, I promise that your physio could very well surprise you!

You should always consult a physiotherapist or physician (or both) if you are intending to start an exercise programme. Together, you and your physio can design a programme that takes into account your abilities, needs, wants and even your hobbies!

We are much more likely to remain active if we enjoy what we are doing and if we have a feeling of purpose.

Therefore, before you start, have a good think about what it is you would like to achieve. Is it being more independent from others? Feeling healthier? Losing weight? Distraction from pain?

Next, consider what you enjoy doing, what gives you energy, and how you can incorporate this into your regime. If you have been encouraged to exercise but feel less than inspired to do so, is there any sport or activity you love(d) to do? Could you add a 'twist' to achieve your fitness goals?

I hope you now feel a little more

knowledgeable and inspired to find the right exercise for you.

Please feel supported by passionate health professionals like me who love to work with people who want to improve their health and fitness.

If you need help, ask your GP to put you in contact with the right person.

Alternatively, the tips in this article might be enough to get you started.

I wish you all a wonderful summer full of sun, fun and fitness!



Ellen van Dijken is a public health physiotherapist and a regular ActiveWellness columnist.

Please let me know if there are any specific topics you would like me to talk about in the future. You can send me questions care of Family Care, PO Box 133, Mangonui Far North 0442, or email them to sara@carers.net.nz

Disclaimer: For individual advice about recovery from illness or injury, please consult your health professional.