

SLEEP WELL
EAT SMART
MOVE MORE
CHILL OUT

Stay at the top of your game
this Self Assessment season

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FOUR SMALL CHANGES. ONE BIG DIFFERENCE TO YOUR WELL-BEING

Do you dread the Self Assessment season knowing you're going to be on your knees by the end of January, feeling totally burnt out?

What if this year was different and you made a few simple lifestyle tweaks that made a massive difference to your energy and focus?

TaxCalc has teamed up with healthy lifestyle expert Rachel McGuinness from Zest Lifestyle to help you boost your energy through January.

This guide is divided into four parts:

1. **Sleep Well**
2. **Eat Smart**
3. **Move More**
4. **Chill Out**

Just as TaxCalc software makes life easier during this busy time, these four guides will help reduce your stress and stay at the top of your game.

To find out more about TaxCalc's range of innovative tax and accounting solutions, visit our website at www.taxcalc.com

GOOD LUCK AND STAY HEALTHY THIS SELF-ASSESSMENT SEASON!



Rachel McGuinness is a health coach specialising in working with busy professionals. Her four principles: eat smart, sleep well, move more and chill out helps them have loads more energy, so that they are more focused at work and in life; and helps them feel incredible and look amazing. Everything she teaches her clients she does herself as she believes in walking her talk; as 16 years ago she swapped her self-destructive unhealthy lifestyle for a much healthier one.

SLEEP WELL

Getting enough quality sleep is important so that you're firing on all cylinders during the stresses and strains of January.

We sleep in ninety minutes cycles where we go through four different stages of sleep. The first is light sleep where we're just dropping off. Then we go into true sleep where blood pressure and body temperature begin to drop, muscles begin to relax and breathing begins to slow down. Next we go into deep sleep which is about twenty percent of our night's sleep, this is when the brain detoxes and gets rid of waste and dead cells; free radicals (cells that cause damage – the bad guys) are cleaned up; and blood pressure, hormone levels and metabolism are all regulated to keep us happy and healthy. Finally we go into REM sleep (our dream sleep), when memories are consolidated from short term storage to long term storage. As you can see a lot is happening in your brain and body when we sleep.

How can you make sure you get good quality Zzzzzeds in during January?

- 1. Get into a bedtime routine.** If possible get to bed earlier so that you get up earlier. If you're a night owl, shift your usual bedtime to an earlier one by fifteen minutes every day (*in four days you will be hitting the hay an hour earlier!*). If you're up earlier you're going to be more focused and productive. Keep to your new bedtime at weekends as well – if you can, so that you don't succumb to social jetlag on Monday morning.
- 2. Keep your bedroom like a cave.** Cool, dark and well-ventilated. The ideal temperature for your night time slumbers is around sixteen to eighteen degrees centigrade; use black out blinds or curtains to make sure your bedroom has no light pollution.
- 3. Have a tech amnesty around sixty to ninety minutes before lights out.** That means no phone, tablets or laptops in bed (sorry!). Screens emit blue light which wake you up when you should be feeling sleepy, your brain gets confused and starts secreting the waking up hormone (serotonin) instead of the sleeping one (melatonin).
- 4. Don't get jacked up on caffeine during January.** Caffeine can seriously disrupt your sleep, so think about having your last coffee at lunch time, so that the caffeine has enough time to get out of your system before bedtime. Energy drinks are even worse than coffee, not only will they disrupt your sleep, they come with some serious health risks (they are banned in some countries) and are loaded with enough sugar to keep you wired for three days!

EAT SMART

Eating healthily during the Self Assessment season will help give your energy a massive boost, plus if you've over indulged during the festive period, you might lose those few extra pounds at the same time! We're not talking about going into 'diet extremes' such as eating raw, detoxing or living on green juices or smoothies. We're merely talking about a few tweaks you can make that can make a difference to your concentration and stamina.

- 1. Reduce your carbs and eat more healthy protein.** We know it's so tempting to snaffle a packet of chocolate biccies or family pack of crisps as part reward and part sugar/carb fix while you're focused on getting the final accounts out for your clients, but large intakes of carb will leave you feeling sleepy and craving more sugar (not so good for your waistline). Up your healthy protein intake and make sure you're eating a variety of poultry, lean meat, fish, seafood, eggs, cheese, nuts, seeds and pulses. Protein will give you more energy, beat fatigue, help you concentrate and give your immune system a boost.
- 2. Keep it colourful.** Make sure you're eating a wide variety of veg and fruit so that you get all the correct nutrients into your body. Eat lots of leafy green veg for that added vitamin boost and only have three portions of fruit a day – "what!?" you're probably saying, "I thought fruit was good for me?" Yes it is, but we don't want you to overload your system with too much sugar.
- 3. Eat three meals a day.** Skipping breakfast is NOT an option; we know there are a few of you 'breakfast skippers' out there! A protein based option is better than a bowl of sugary cereal; opt for something like eggs or yoghurt with fruit or a trusty bowl of porridge with full fat milk. Go for veggies or salad with healthy protein for lunch and try and reduce the amount of bread, rice, pasta and potato you're eating to avoid the post lunch slump, and do the same for dinner.
- 4. Keep hydrated!** This is really important to avoid headaches, lack of energy and brain fog, which you definitely don't want. The best way to keep hydrated is of course to drink lots of water. To make water more appealing, add slices of lemon, orange, lime, strawberries or cucumber with fresh mint or ginger to your glass or jug. Drink herbal teas such as mint, ginger and lemon, camomile, red bush (rooibos) or green tea. Coconut water is good too. Unfortunately, coffee, normal tea or alcohol doesn't count as your water quota. How much should you be drinking? 35ml per kilo of body weight per day.

MOVE MORE

Keeping your activity levels up during the Self Assessment season is important. You are going to be sitting in front of your screen or staring at mountains of paperwork for hours on end. However, it is still possible to exercise, reap the benefits and even get through your increased workload without having to go to the gym. Here's how:

- 1. Keep it short and sweet.** High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is what you want to be doing. The thing with HIIT is that it works and you don't even have to go to the gym and it takes as little as seven to fifteen minutes to get a decent workout. There are loads of free HIIT workouts on YouTube from easy to challenging, most of them use own body weight and a yoga mat, so you don't even have to invest in any equipment.
- 2. S-t-r-e-e-e-t-c-h yourself.** Sitting hunched over a computer all day is not good for you as humans are designed to move. So it is important to stretch out that body of yours so that you avoid niggling aches and pains caused by long periods of sitting. Listen to your body and regularly get up from your desk and have a good old stretch. Try some slow and gentle yoga or Pilates desk stretches. Again, look online
- 3. When and how often?** For many it's first thing in the morning, roll out of bed into your fitness gear and get it done, or do one when you get home (if it's not too late). If you can do two to three HIIT workouts a week during January then you're doing well, plus they work! May be you could do two at the weekend and one during the week. Schedule your workouts in your diary so then you are more likely to do them.
- 4. Unchain yourself from your desk.** Getting outside in the fresh air for a brisk fifteen minute walk will give you benefits, such as a slight raise in heart rate, a change of scenery and a well-earned break.

CHILL OUT

You may be asking, is it possible to do this during the Self Assessment season? Yes it is. It's important to keep yourself recharged, re-energised and refreshed. We don't want your stress levels to sky rocket and then knock out your sleep, healthy eating habits and exercise routine and then for you to get sick.

- 1. Take regular breaks during the day.** People swear by the Pomodoro technique where you set a timer on your phone or computer for twenty five minutes and work distraction free. Take a short break of five minutes and then set the timer again. Every four lots of twenty five minutes take a longer break of twenty to thirty minutes. This is your opportunity to get up, move away from your desk get something to drink, stretch, get something to eat and go for a loo break.
- 2. Learn to meditate.** Meditation is a fantastic way of helping you de-stress and clear your head, you can reap the many benefits in as little as ten minutes. If the thought of sitting silently for ten minutes fills you with fear, go online and search for guided meditations. What's great is that you can get meditation apps for your phone or tablet, our favourites are: Headspace, Calm and Buddhify.
- 3. Download that busy brain.** During this time of year your brain is going to be in overdrive, so make sure you brain-dump to get everything out of your head and onto paper. You could use an app on your phone or tablet to do this, but please stop using your tech an hour or so before going to bed.
- 4. Have something to look forward to.** As you get sucked into the vacuum of Self Assessment season, book something you can look forward to in February. As that little light at the end of the 'January tunnel' will get closer as you tick off the days. Is it something you can do with the family or your friends, or just something for you as a special treat?