



## David Fairlamb

# THE FIT FACTOR

### LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Change your reaction to things, teach yourself to stay calm in situations and avoid over-reacting. Positive thoughts will help boost your serotonin levels and improve your mood.

### FITNESS TIP

Exercise hugely boosts serotonin levels. If you feel anxious or low, do some exercise. It doesn't need to be for long and it doesn't need to be outside. Raising your heart rate will raise your mood.

Don't miss David's tips every Saturday in your Journal

**W**E are now into week three of lockdown and as we have seen this week with Boris Johnson, no one is immune to this illness. Seeing and feeling the effects of the pandemic can also have a profound effect on your mental health, therefore it's important to naturally boost your serotonin levels.

#### What is serotonin?

Serotonin is a chemical messenger in your brain that scientists attribute to feelings of happiness and wellbeing.

#### How to boost serotonin levels naturally

##### Sunlight

Exposure to sunlight increases the brain's release of serotonin, a few minutes of bright natural sunlight each morning can help elevate mood and re-energize you to face

the day.

#### B-Vitamins

Getting B-vitamins from your diet helps maintain healthy serotonin levels.

A well-balanced diet made up of healthy foods usually provides enough to support serotonin production. Everyday foods containing B-vitamins include:

- whole grains (brown rice, barley, millet)
- meat (red meat, poultry, fish)
- eggs and dairy products (milk, cheese)
- legumes (beans, lentils)
- Seeds and nuts (sunflower seeds, almonds)
- dark, leafy vegetables (broccoli, spinach, kale)
- fruits (citrus fruits, avocados, bananas)

Reducing refined sugar

After the initial high from consuming a large amount of processed sugar, your mood can suddenly drop and trigger feelings of worry, irritability, and sadness.

This can be a double whammy if you are also dealing with depression or anxiety. Sugar will also make you crave food which can then leave you tired and lethargic. The ingestion of a sugar-rich diet is linked to decreased serotonin metabolism.

#### Exercise

Exercise is proven to increase both serotonin production and release. Aerobic exercise such as running, cycling and bootcamps are the most likely to boost serotonin.

Also, training in groups has a real positive effect. Unfortunately, we have to rule groups out for now, but training with other members of your household will give you a positive boost together.

#### Positive Thinking

The way we think and act to situations is key to our moods. Try to take stock of the huge loss of life and knock-on effects of the current pan-



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demic in this country and around the world.

The smaller day-to-day things that we used to get frustrated over, should pale into insignificance.

Teach yourself to stay positive and upbeat, learn to laugh at situations rather than get angry.

These calmer more level-headed

reactions and thoughts will make you feel better and more positive every day.

When positive thoughts are generated, the stress hormone cortisol decreases and the brain produces serotonin, creating a feeling of wellbeing, calmness and emotional stability.

*You will never know how strong you are until strong becomes your only choice*

**Motivational quote of the day**