

SPRING CLEAN YOUR BODY AND MIND

Therapist, Dr Karen Ward, guides us through how to cleanse, physically and mentally.

In this latest lockdown level five, what can we do to keep body and soul together? I invite you to harness the spring energies of the season and the can-do attitude of Irish pre-Celtic Goddess and Matron Saint of Ireland, Brigid. Let's begin with our beautiful bodies and move on to our busy minds.



Exercise in the brighter days

This one is an obvious one you might think, 'yeah, yeah exercise, I know, I know'. Fine, but do you actually do it and do it mindfully? Years ago, I would force myself to go to the gym or whatever the fad of the day was and, of course, fall off the proverbial wagon after a few weeks. Frustrated, guilty and even, dare I say it, shamed. This ridiculous cycle was not helping me physically, mentally or emotionally. So, I stopped and had a good think about why I was reluctant to do something I knew was good for me – I have a body so I need to exercise it.

Let's have a look at this aspect of our lives another way. If you had a dog, you would want to bring him for his necessary walks and playtime. If you had a little one, they would need to run around a garden/green space not just for exercise but for fresh air and to commune with nature. So, why do we not include ourselves in this vital part of life? Often, if we are honest, it was all about priorities and leaving ourselves last. You know how it goes – 'I will do it in a minute, I'll just do this first'. Then, we become depleted and

lethargic, not fun to be around. What to do?

To start, have a good chat with your body – a fascinating conversation I can tell you! Personally, 'not impressed' were the words that come to mind. I realised that I love to walk and cycle so could I manage either every day or at least five times a week? Now, when I plan my day, I see what I have to do, and think could I walk or cycle to a meeting? Sorted! I have favourite routes, my River Liffey walk basic 20 minutes, or my Phoenix Park walk of 40 minutes/one hour. My cycles tend to be to town – 20 minutes or a fabulous circuit of the park for one hour. What springs to mind for you?

An important point, certainly here in Ireland, is to invest in good all-weather clothes. We don't call this the Emerald Isle for nothing! It doesn't matter how you move as long as you do. This is not a luxury but a necessity at any age. So, today, head on out to mother nature's glory and move. If you can't leave the house due to the pandemic restrictions then dance in your kitchen or find one of the many free fitness classes online.

Free your mind from rumination

Did you know that just because a thought pops into your head, it doesn't mean you have to continue thinking about it? Our magnificent brains work like a computer, random thoughts pop up as we receive external stimulus and internal promptings emerge, perhaps of things we need to look after but haven't as yet.

Our thoughts serve us very well, unless they are anxious, negative ones and we find ourselves ruminating about them constantly. You know how it goes – a restless sleep, rain, cold, late for a meeting and you begin to think about possible consequences then, in the blink of an eye, old negative thinking surfaces, 'I am useless', 'they must think I'm stupid/careless', blah blah to an onward spiral of depression.

We need to deal with the origins of the thought by having a good hard look at it from all angles. For example, 'am I always late?' 'Yes!'. Then ask yourself, 'Can I change that habit or wreck my head daily?' Stop, own the negative thought and either do something about it or let it go. Foster a new habit of being on time or ask your friends if it really matters if you are fashionably a few minutes late each time.

These two simple ways to spring clean your body and mind go a long way to ease us into the new season full of vim and vigour. Enjoy!



Dr Karen Ward combines her holistic therapies with her love of nature, Celtic Shamanism and academic studies for these articles and in her popular Mind Your Precious Self Instagram and Facebook posts (@drkarenwardtherapist). Find out more at www.drkarenwardtherapist.ie