



WELLBEING
WITH KATIE BYRNE

Lateral thinking to deal with life's challenges

A slight shift of perspective works wonders,
writes **Katie Byrne**

I SPEND an inordinate amount of time on the internet reading about 'life hacks'. For those who are unfamiliar with the trend, life hacks are essentially household hints and tips for a modern age.

Examples include putting pancake mix into an empty ketchup bottle for perfect pouring; stacking clothes vertically so that you can see them all when you open a drawer and — the pièce de résistance — how to fold a fitted bed sheet. Sad, I know...

Life hacks are examples of armchair inventors shifting their perspective and thinking laterally to find solutions to everyday problems.

We can all do the same elsewhere. When life becomes challenging, sometimes we just need to look at the problem with a different mindset. Here are eight ways to shift your perspective and instantly boost your mood:

1 REFRAME THE SITUATION

Sometimes we'd like to be elsewhere: working for a different company; living in a different area; shopping in a department store instead of the deals section of Aldi... It takes time and persistence to change our circumstances, but we can change our mindset instantly.

The trick is to maximise the positives of your current situation in order to minimise the negatives. For instance, if finances are tight this month, don't focus on the luxuries you have to do without.

Instead, make the lack of takeaways and taxis work in your favour by embarking on a month-long health kick. As the saying goes: "Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out".

2 REDEFINE SUCCESS

Every so often it's important to remember that the milestones by which we measure success — buying a house, getting a promotion — don't even come close to fulfilling our emotional needs. Indeed, it's a fairly primi-

tive approach in the grand scheme of things. The next time you find yourself dwelling on your achievement and acquisitions, or lack thereof, be sure to consider other forms of success.

Have you pursued your passions? Have you been able to spend time with family and nourish your friendships? Have you made a difference in somebody else's life? Success is much more than just material.

3 REDIRECT YOUR ENERGY

A friend of mine who is writing a novel recently had a comically bad weekend. At first I sympathised when she told me how it unfolded. Next, I advised her to "put it on the page while the pain is still fresh".

Non-creatives can also learn to re-channel negative energy. Use fire in your belly to make plans; turn fear into fuel and transform disappointment into excitement. Alternatively, shift your focus to someone else. When you're having a bad day, take it upon yourself to make someone else's day. This one is especially effective.

4 RECOGNISE THE PITFALLS

Many of the hurdles that we encounter can be identified well in advance. The Monday commute. Sunday lunch with the in-laws. The last week before payday. Try to get into the habit of anticipating scenarios that cause you difficulty.

If it's the Monday morning commute, consider leaving your clothes out on Sunday evening. You could also try striking one item off your to-do list before bedtime so that you go into the new week with a sense of achievement.

If you're consistently short of money in the week before payday, ask a friend to mind some money

for you at the start of each month. Forward planning breaks negative patterns.

5 RE-ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES

We've all been worn down by people who ask for too much of our time, energy and resources. However, the tendency is to point the finger outwards rather than inwards. It's a two-way street.

Instead of asking why they push your limits, ask yourself why you give them permission to do so. This is an opportunity to re-establish healthy personal boundaries and learn to say no.

6 REWRITE YOUR WISH LIST

There is only one way to deal with the anti-climax of reaching a milestone or coming to a holiday's end: start planning the next one. Zen masters remind us to stay in the moment, but we should always be looking forward in this regard. Likewise, your weekly diary shouldn't just be a schedule of foreboding tasks and dreaded meetings. Lighten it up by writing down the fun things too.

7 REFLECT ON THE LESSON

We cultivate self-awareness when we learn to reflect on the lesson rather than dwell on the misfortune. It also gives us a sense of control in a seemingly uncontrollable situation.

Every setback has a lesson to teach us. It's during these times that we can better understand our behaviour, patterns and hidden motives, and prevent the same thing from happening again.

8 REMEMBER YOU HAVE A CHOICE

When did you recover from your last setback? The moment you started thinking about it in the past-tense. You can't change the circumstances, but you can change how you think about them. Even in the most helpless, out-of-control situations, we have a choice: sink or swim.

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