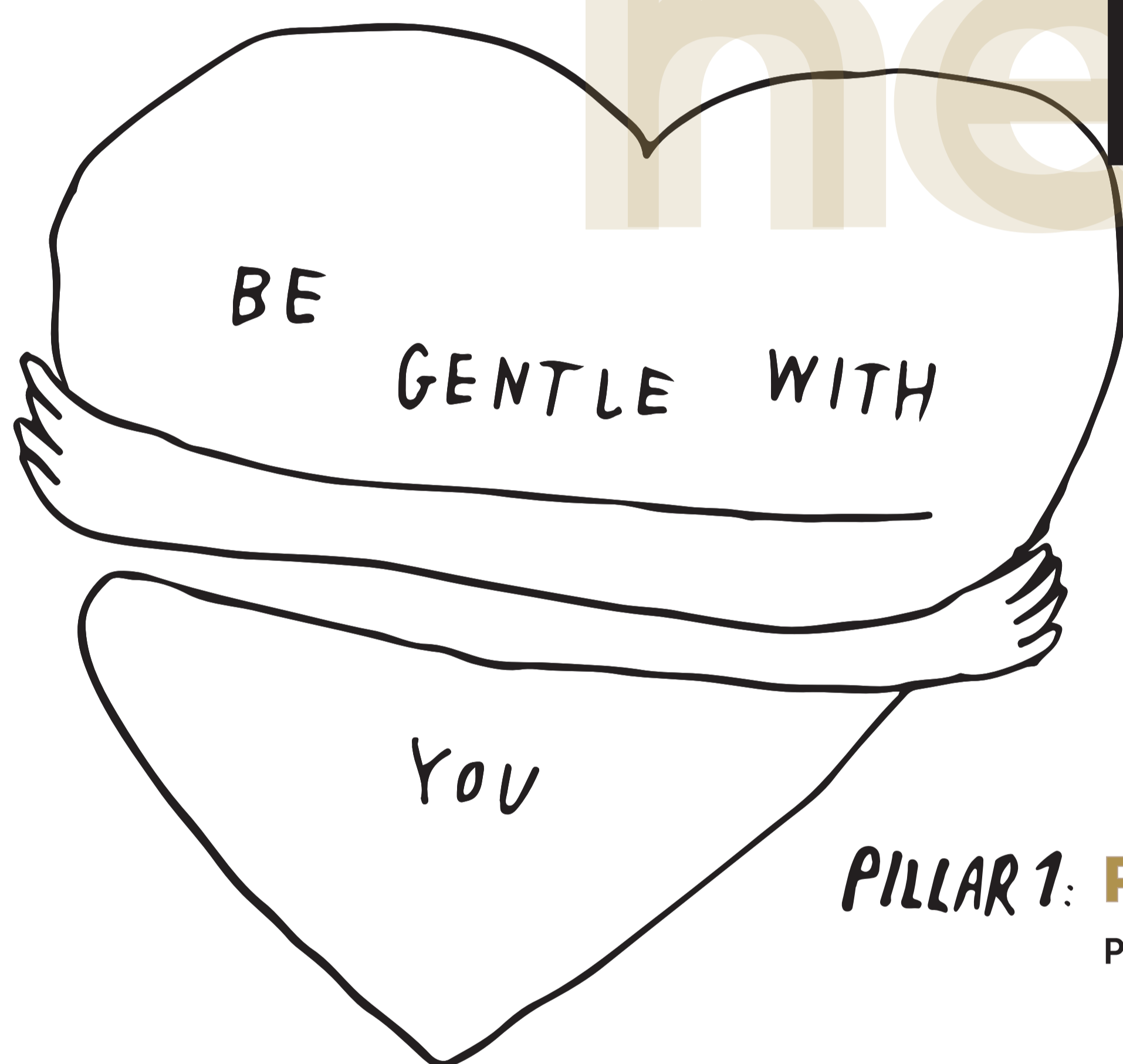


REMEMBER

# move.

# feel.

# heal.



## PILLAR 1: Physical Activity and Outdoor Sports

### Physical Activity and Its Benefits

### STOP SITTING SO MUCH

**And while you do, think about the following:** In general, most of our biological characteristics can be explained by adaptations of the human body to the features of our external and internal environments. **And humans spent 99.99% of their history in nature.** Hunting, scavenging, escaping from predators, or building shelters. Therefore different kinds of physical activity (PA) played a huge role in our survival.

#### AND WHAT DO WE DO NOW? WE SIT.

This very mismatch between our ancient physiology and our modern lifestyle underlies many so-called diseases of civilization. A change in our lifestyle might be an effective strategy to reduce certain health risks. And the one characteristic we can certainly adjust, as it was required to survive and live, is regular physical activity, which can be expressed in many ways.

#### ONE SINGLE BOUT OF PA:

- Reduces feelings of anxiety
- Decreases blood pressure
- Improves sleep (more important for your health, than you probably think it is)
- Enhances insulin sensitivity (which is a good thing)

#### REGULAR PA:

- Improves the ability to supply oxygen to the muscles (Cardiorespiratory fitness), increases and maintains muscular strength and has a cardioprotective effect.
- Lowers the risk for adverse health outcomes, including hypertension, several types of cancer, depression, dementia, cardiovascular mortality, and many more.
- Enhances our immune defense activity and metabolic health and therefore improves our immune system.
- Allows the body to accommodate and adjust to physiological needs through profound changes in the endocrine system (our hormone system).
- Improves brain function and prevents cognitive decline across the lifespan and is associated with better mental and emotional health.
- Improves cellular adaptations and gross physiologic changes that enhance your overall physiological performance.

#### SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

##### STOP SITTING SO MUCH.

Try to refrain from sitting as much as possible. If you must sit, break up the periods of prolonged sitting and go for a brief walk, get some coffee or do some stretches.

##### DO MORE.

For adults, the WHO guidelines recommend a combination of aerobic PA (e.g., running, riding a bike, or brisk walking for 150 to 300 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity), combined with muscle-strengthening activities at moderate or greater intensity that involve all major muscle groups on  $\geq 2$  days/week.

##### NO REALLY, DO MORE.

PA is dose dependent, so the effects of PA change as the dose of PA changes. Further increases of PA might yield even more health benefits for you.

##### EXERCISE SNACKS ADD UP.

Even very short duration PA (i.e., 1-2 minutes) yields potential benefits, especially if accumulated. The total duration of PA is what provides the health benefits. So try to move as much as possible even if it is just for a brief moment. Repeat that over and over again and reap the benefits. It's not all or nothing, it's whatever is possible.



Co-funded by  
the European Union



**OAC**  
outdooragainstcancer.com



## NOURISH TO FLOURISH

In times where there is an abundance in food and overeating and overconsumption being a bigger problem than malnourishment in western societies, there is a lot of noise surrounding "ideal" diets. Navigating through that can be very difficult and confusing and instead of being another voice dogmatically telling you what you have to do, we would rather love to provide some context and easy to follow principles that can help us steer towards a stress-free and healthy relationship with food through a better understanding.

### GOOD TO KNOW:

- Nutrition is highly individual and depending on genetics, lifestyle demands and available food sources (and their quality) has to be customized for the respective needs. You don't need to be dogmatic and stress yourself with restrictive behavior (if not clinically advised).
- What is "healthy" food in the first place? Nutrient-dense is the key word. The more efficiently your body is nourished with all the vital and necessary macro- and micronutrients the better the energy output and its capacity will be.
- A healthy diet is associated with better sleep quality and improved muscle recovery, thus will help us to feel more energized.
- What we eat heavily influences what "lives" in our gut. The gut-microbiome plays a huge factor in not just digestion, but also in the regulation of neurotransmitters like Dopamin, Serotonin & more. So improving the Gut-Brain-Axis is associated with better mental health on a chemical level as well. Fermented or probiotic food will improve the gut microbiome, while too much sugar, processed foods and substances like alcohol might inhibit a healthy gut flora.
- A healthy diet also improves recovery time from diseases (like Covid-19) and overall immune response, meaning your body will be more resilient to sickness.
- Not just longevity is associated with a better diet choice but also increasing the "healthspan", so it's not just about living longer, but with a higher quality too.

### SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

#### WHOLE FOODS.

We come from an omnivore history and evolved with nature. Eating from the whole (natural) food spectrum and ideally organic, is a good baseline to stick to. Additionally eating seasonal, buying local and high quality groceries as much as possible is recommended. Preparing and cooking more yourself can help you get more conscious about your food consumption as well.

#### HYDRATION.

With around 60% of our bodies being composed of water, a good level of hydration is key for many other bodily functions. Be aware of your water intake and daily demand (heat, training, etc.) and add electrolytes if necessary.

#### GET YOUR PROTEIN.

Protein is the main source for building our tissue, getting a good base is essential (1-2g/kg bodyweight is a good orientation mark). Having enough protein as a foundation can improve the overall body composition over time and has been shown to prevent binge eating.

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

can lead to changed eating behavior. The higher energetic demand will lead to the body potentially "demanding" healthier food choices to be able to perform.

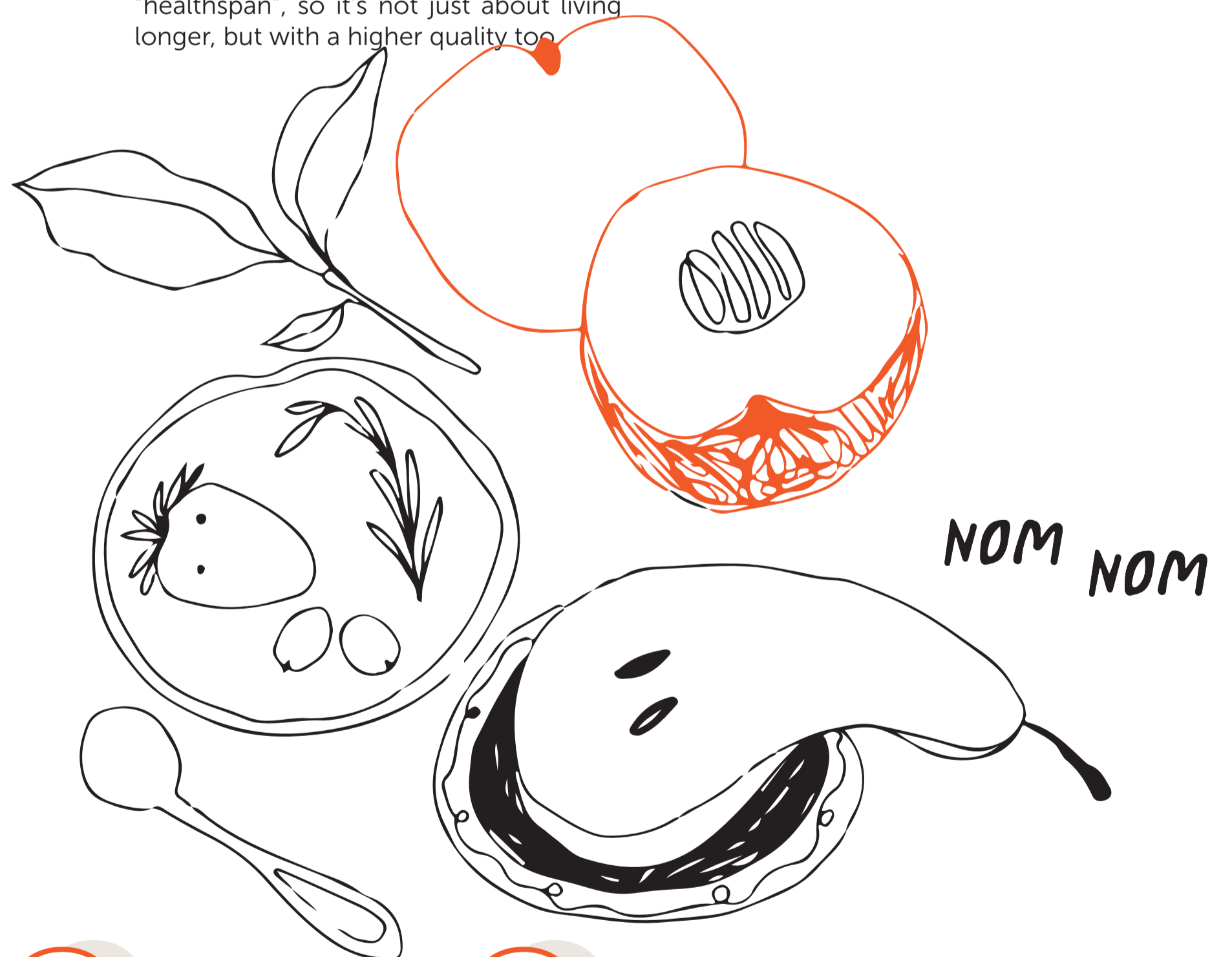
#### EAT CONSCIOUSLY.

And slowly. Ideally you chew between 20-30 times (depending of the consistency of the food of course) This will help increase the surface area of the to be digested material so that enzymatic processes can function better.

#### LIMIT HARMFUL CONSUMPTION.

Alcohol, Caffeine, excess sugar, too much processed food - doing less bad means already doing better.

Let  
food  
be  
your  
medicine.





# PILLAR 4: Physical and Mental Well-Being

Understanding the Mind and How It's Made to Work



Co-funded by the European Union



## DO YOU MIND?

**Our brain evolved in harmony with nature and its demands over millions of years.**

With the urban fast paced environment we built, our lifestyles can be tasking and stressful for our "processing computer" = the brain. It's no wonder that mental health issues like burnout, depression, etc. are on the rise. There are systemic issues that can affect us and are difficult to change as individuals but we want to provide you with some knowledge and awareness that might help to support your mental well-being.

### WHAT'S ESSENTIAL FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

- Physical activity is one of the keys for an improved sense of mental well-being. It drives circulation, benefits the whole metabolism and even drives neuroplasticity (our ability to develop new neurons and "rewire"). If you need guidance regarding physical activity, we have provided an overview for that here.
- After moving, comes resting. Good sleep & recovery are essential for how "functional" we are or feel in general. Sleep loss is associated with compromises in affective functioning. Recovery is when tissue is built up and repaired in the body. That's where the actual "growth" happens.
- Hydration! The brain is 80-85% water, we need water for every transport or metabolic function within the body. No wonder science found that greater plain water drinking was associated with lower prevalence of smoking, anxiety, depression.
- Balanced nutrition. There's evidence in abundance how a healthy diet improves mental well-being. What we eat fuels our cells. If you want to dive in deeper on how to boost yourself with better nutrition, check out our fact sheet on that!
- Healthy relationships (to others, one's environment, oneself) is a crucial factor of mental health. They have immense effects on our perception and well-being. Reflect on them often and consider things like, balance, boundaries, open communication.

### SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

#### BASELINE CARE:

Physical Activity, improving Diet, focusing on rest. As established mental health has also many physical components, everything is intertwined and connected. We often overlook the simple things. Did you go outside? Drank enough? Moved your body? How did you sleep? How is your breathing right now? Did you take time for hygiene? Did you socialize? It sounds simple but it isn't always easy.

#### RELAX // RECOVER // NOURISH // ENJOY // FLOW

Take your time. Losing our sense of urgency and moving back to being present can help us a lot to calm our nervous system. There are many different practices like meditation in endless forms or breathing techniques, but there is no universal answer for that. Everything that helps you relax, makes you feel good just "being" or entering a kind of "flow" zone is valid.

#### NEUROPLASTICITY / EXPLORATION

It's not survival of the fittest, it's survival of the most adaptable. Our ability to change and learn is our biggest asset. Creating new perspectives and mindsets helps us to overcome difficulties. Experiences (not too far) out of the comfort zone can help to build resilience, so we can be more open and create space for new possibilities. Stay curious and don't be afraid to explore.

#### REDUCE UNBALANCED OR TOO MUCH STRESS

This can have many facets and meanings, stressors can be of physical, mental, emotional or even spiritual nature (virtues, values, etc.). Be conscious of what might create internal (or external) pressure and prioritize what you want to tackle according to urgency and importance for you. We can build resilience when we're exposed to controlled amounts of stress that feel safe.

#### SURROUND YOURSELF WITH MOTHER NATURE.

We have another beautiful fact sheet just about the topic of nature and its effects on us humans. While we suggest to have a look at that, one quick tip here: every little "organic" or "natural" stimuli can help improve well-being. Just indoor plants can benefit the diastolic blood pressure and even academic achievement. Every little bit helps.

#### YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

You don't have to do it alone. Isolation can have detrimental effects on one's mental health. We're interdependent beings and our bodies are used to co-regulate and especially if you have the feeling of things getting too much, there is a lot of strength in being able to accept help. Or sometimes even just share and open up about what's lingering in the mind. Also never hesitate to seek out professional help if needed.



Cultivate  
your  
mind.

MENTAL  
HEALTH  
MATTERS



## PILLAR 3: Sustainability and Nature

Understanding Nature and Its Benefits



# Protect your origin.



### IF YOU EVER WONDER WHERE TO GO

**maybe it's time to look back from where we came from.** The belief that connecting with nature yields great benefits for our well-being has always been part of our history. Many people might even feel the benefits, but nature exposure still doesn't get the attention it deserves, maybe given the fact that people, on average, tend to underestimate the mood benefits of brief contact with nature.

So let us explain some of the physical and mental benefits waiting for you in the great outdoors.

#### REPORTED PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF (REPEATED) NATURE EXPOSURE:

- Reduced diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, salivary cortisol, incidence of type II diabetes and stroke, all-cause and cardiovascular mortality, as well as significant improvements in heart rate variability.
- Increased physical activity and therefore its plethora of benefits.
- Reduced environmental risk factors, like air and noise pollution, tobacco smoke, or extreme heat..
- Improved sleep.

#### REPORTED MENTAL BENEFITS OF (REPEATED) NATURE EXPOSURE:

- Improved emotional functioning and greater life satisfaction.
- Increased autonomy and the ability to freely choose one's actions.
- Reduced depressive mood, anxiety symptoms, and negative affect, and enhanced positive affect.
- Reduced depressive symptoms.
- Improved performance on working memory, cognitive flexibility, and attentional-control tasks.
- Increased feelings of vitality.
- Improved brain activity.

#### SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

##### **START AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.**

Nature-rich activities during childhood are related to having pro-environmental attitude and preference for and likelihood of visiting nature during adulthood and play a beneficial role in later-life mental health.

##### **IMPROVE THE LIVES OF YOUR CHILDREN.**

Improvement in cognitive function, especially attention and memory (working and long term), behavioral and mental health and physical activity have been reported in children and adolescents due to nature exposure.

##### **DO NOT ONLY SPEND TIME IN NATURE.**

Spend moments. Research suggests that nature connectedness ('an individual's subjective sense of their relationship with the natural world') and engaging with nature (actively noticing nature) are more important than time spent in nature for our mental health and wellbeing.

##### **SURROUND YOURSELF WITH MOTHER NATURE.**

Get immersed in nature at least once a week and try to connect with nature as much as possible. Even listening to the sounds of nature or watching nature programs can lead to better wellbeing and pro environmental behavior.

##### **DO IT FOR OUR PLANET.**

Research suggests that regular nature contact leads to greater nature-connectedness which improves pro-environmental behaviors. So, with regularly visiting nature you do not only get happier and healthier you might change your behavior for the better. Or should we say for the planet.

##### **DO IT LIKE WE ALWAYS DID IT.**

Solely the fact that us humans spent 99.99% of our history in nature should convince you to get outdoors. It's what we are made for.

GO, HUG  
A TREE

