



HANDBOOK

1 SEPTEMBER - 16 OCTOBER 2026



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WELCOME TO THE 2026

Healthy Lifestyle Challenge!

Congratulations on taking the first step towards a healthier, happier you. Whether your goal is to become more active, improve your eating habits, sleep better, reduce stress or simply feel more energised, we're excited to support you over the next seven weeks.

This year's Healthy Lifestyle Challenge is about much more than losing weight or completing another wellness programme. It's about building healthy habits that become part of your everyday life. Lasting change doesn't happen overnight, but by making small, consistent choices each day, you can create habits that continue long after the challenge has ended.

Throughout the Challenge, we'll be sharing exercise ideas, healthy recipes and practical tips to keep you motivated each week. We encourage you to try something new, celebrate your progress and support those around you along the way.

Most importantly, remember that healthy living isn't about being perfect. There will be good days and challenging days, and that's completely normal. Every positive choice you make is a step in the right direction.

We'd love to follow your journey! Share your progress, favourite healthy meals, exercise achievements or inspiring moments with us at HLC@dbbs.co.za. We will feature some of these stories throughout the Challenge to celebrate our participants and inspire others.

Together, let's make these seven weeks the start of healthier habits that last a lifetime.

Good luck—we're cheering you on every step of the way!

Build habits that last

WITH THE 7-WEEK HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHALLENGE

Healthy habits don't develop overnight. Research shows that lasting behaviour change comes from practising small, consistent actions over time. Seven weeks gives you the opportunity to repeat healthy behaviours until they begin to feel more natural and become part of your daily routine.

Rather than focusing on quick fixes or dramatic changes, this Challenge is about building habits you can continue long after the Healthy Lifestyle Challenge has ended.

Remember

- Small actions repeated consistently lead to lasting results.
- Progress is more important than perfection.
- Every healthy choice is another step towards a healthier you.



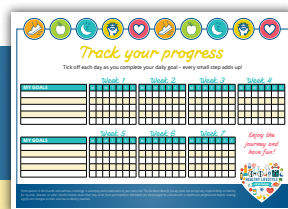
The key elements of a HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



A healthy lifestyle isn't about quick fixes or perfection - it's about balance, consistency and making choices that support your wellbeing every day. By focusing on these key elements - movement, nutrition, rest, mental wellbeing and community - you can create habits that boost your energy, strengthen your body and mind and help you thrive.

These five pillars form the foundation for lasting health and with small, consistent steps, they can seamlessly become part of your daily routine.

Please use our Progress Tracker on page 14 to keep track of how you're doing.



Before starting any new exercise plan, it is important to seek professional advice to ensure the programme is safe, effective and tailored to your individual needs. A doctor or qualified fitness professional can help identify any health risks, underlying conditions or physical limitations. Set realistic goals and design a programme that works for you. This guidance not only reduces the chance of injury, but also sets you up for long-term success, helping you stay motivated, consistent and healthy for years to come.



1. Physical Activity & Exercise

Movement is one of the best ways to stay healthy and feel good for the long run. Regular physical activity not only strengthens muscles and bones but also supports heart health, manages your weight, improves mood and reduces the risk of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. The key is consistency over intensity - movement built into daily routines is more sustainable than short bursts of extreme effort.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GETTING ACTIVE:

- **Start small:** Aim for at least 20 to 30 minutes of moderate activity (like brisk walking) five days a week. If that feels daunting, break it into 10-minute sessions.
- **Mix it up:** Combine cardio exercise (walking, cycling, swimming) with strength training (bodyweight exercises, resistance bands, weights) and flexibility work (yoga, stretching).
- **Build it in:** Take the stairs, park further away or do walking meetings to add movement to your day.
- **Do what you love:** Exercise should feel rewarding. Dance, play sport or garden - if it gets you moving and smiling, it counts.
- **Buddy up:** Exercising with a colleague, friend or family member adds accountability and fun.
- **Track your wins:** Use the HLC progress tracker, journal or phone app to celebrate milestones.
- **Listen to your body:** Rest and recover when needed to avoid injury and burnout.

Remember, staying active doesn't need to mean "training hard"; it means creating a rhythm of movement that keeps you energised, confident and resilient.





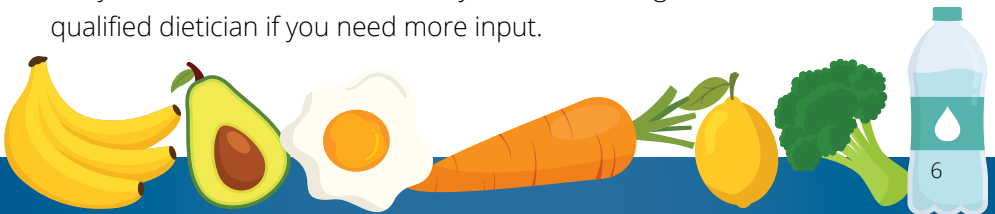
2. Nutrition & Healthy Eating

A healthy diet is the foundation of wellbeing. The food we eat fuels both our bodies and minds, impacts our energy levels, supports immune function and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. The goal isn't strict restriction or following fad diets, but developing balanced, sustainable habits that nourish rather than deprive.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR HEALTHIER EATING:

- **Prioritise whole foods:** Base your meals on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins (fish, chicken, legumes) and healthy fats (olive oil, nuts, seeds).
- **Balance your plate:** A simple guide is half vegetables, a quarter protein and a quarter whole grains or starch.
- **Stay hydrated:** Aim for 6–8 glasses of water daily. Herbal teas and infused water can make it more enjoyable.
- **Mind portions:** Use smaller plates or portion food in advance to avoid overeating.
- **Plan ahead:** Meal prep reduces reliance on takeaways and ensures healthier choices during busy weeks.
- **Cut back on sugar and alcohol:** Limit sugary drinks, processed snacks and keep alcohol to a moderate level.
- **Practice mindful eating:** Slow down, chew thoroughly and pay attention to hunger and fullness cues.

Instead of chasing “perfect eating,” aim for consistency - small improvements like swapping refined carbs for whole grains or replacing sugary snacks with fruit make a big difference over time. A healthy diet not only fuels your body but also boosts mental clarity, mood and long-term health. Consult a qualified dietician if you need more input.





3. Sleep & Rest

Sleep is often undervalued, yet it is essential for physical recovery, mental clarity and emotional balance. Poor sleep can affect memory, focus, mood, weight and increase risk for conditions like heart disease and diabetes. Quality rest doesn't just mean hours in bed but establishing a restorative routine.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP:

- **Aim for 7–9 hours:** Most adults need this range for optimal function.
- **Set a routine:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time daily - even on weekends.
- **Create a sleep-friendly environment:** Keep your room cool, dark and quiet.
- **Limit screentime before bed:** Blue light disrupts melatonin production. Aim to unplug at least an hour before you go to sleep.
- **Wind down:** Try calming activities such as reading, light stretching or journalling before bed.
- **Watch caffeine and alcohol:** Both can interfere with deep sleep if consumed late in the day.
- **Nap wisely:** Short naps (20–30 minutes) can boost energy but avoid long or late naps that disrupt your nighttime sleep.

Rest also means downtime. Incorporate breaks into your day - deep breathing, stretching or simply stepping away from your desk can reduce stress and boost productivity. By making sleep and rest a priority rather than an afterthought, you set the stage for sharper focus, improved mood and sustained energy.





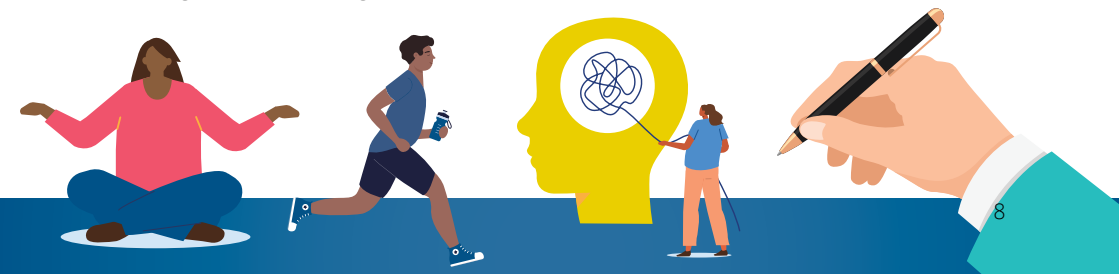
4. Mental & Emotional Wellbeing

Mental health is as important as physical health in maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Stress, anxiety and burnout are increasingly common, but with proactive habits, it's possible to strengthen resilience and protect your emotional wellbeing. Caring for the mind helps with clarity, focus, relationships and overall quality of life.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING:

- **Practice mindfulness:** Daily meditation/reflection, breathing exercises or simply being present helps calm the nervous system.
- **Stay active:** Exercise releases endorphins that combat stress and lift mood.
- **Manage stress:** Break tasks into smaller steps, delegate when possible and avoid overcommitting.
- **Keep a journal:** Writing down thoughts can help you to process emotions and reduce mental clutter.
- **Seek support:** Talk to a friend, family member or professional when needed - don't bottle it up.
- **Digital detox:** Reduce social media use, especially before bed, to protect mental clarity.
- **Gratitude practice:** Listing three things you're grateful for daily shifts focus from stress to positivity.

Mental and emotional wellbeing also means being kind to yourself - acknowledge your progress instead of striving for perfection. Building small, consistent habits can create a buffer against stress and help maintain balance through life's challenges.





5. Social Connection & Community

Humans are wired for connection. Strong relationships and a sense of community play a vital role in health, reducing stress, boosting happiness and even extending lifespan. Belonging to a supportive network encourages accountability, provides encouragement and makes healthy living more enjoyable.

PRACTICAL TIPS:

- **Prioritise relationships:** Schedule regular time with friends, family or colleagues outside of work.
- **Join group activities:** Walking clubs, fitness classes or community events combine movement with connection.
- **Buddy system:** Partner with a friend or colleague for exercise or wellness goals.
- **Give back:** Volunteering or mentoring strengthens community ties and boosts purpose.
- **Communicate openly:** Share struggles and wins with others; authenticity builds stronger connections.
- **Participate in workplace initiatives:** Challenges like the Healthy Lifestyle Challenge are opportunities to bond while improving your wellbeing.
- **Celebrate together:** Recognise each other's milestones, no matter how small.

In a digital age, face-to-face interactions matter more than ever. Even short conversations or shared meals help foster belonging. By embracing community, you create accountability, encouragement, and joy - essential ingredients for lasting wellbeing.



HOW TO STAY MOTIVATED

when working towards a goal

1. Set clear, realistic and achievable goals

A healthy lifestyle is easier to achieve when your goals are specific and manageable. Instead of saying “I want to be healthier,” try “I’ll drink eight glasses of water a day” or “I’ll walk 30 minutes, four times a week.” Small, defined goals give you direction and make progress measurable.



Practical tip: Break bigger goals into milestones. For example, if you want to run 5 km, begin by walking briskly for 20 minutes, then add short jogging intervals until you build up distance.

2. Understand your “why”

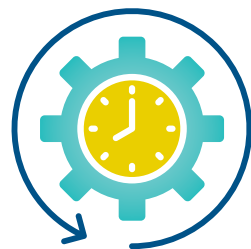
Lasting lifestyle changes are built on personal reasons that matter to you. Whether it’s having more energy, reducing stress or lowering your health risks, your “why” will keep you motivated.



Practical tip: Write down your reason - “I want to feel stronger and more confident,” or “I want to keep up with my kids without getting tired” - and revisit it when your motivation dips.

3. Focus on consistency over intensity

Quick fixes and extreme efforts usually don't last. Consistency is key: it's better to exercise moderately three times a week than to overexert yourself once and give up. Small, regular actions create lasting habits.



Practical tip: Commit to daily basics, like stretching in the morning, taking the stairs instead of the lift or adding one extra serving of vegetables to your plate.

4. Build accountability

Having support helps you stay committed. Tell a friend, join a walking group or participate in this health challenge at work. Shared goals boost motivation and make healthy living more fun.



Practical tip: Find a “wellness buddy” to check in with. Share progress, recipes or workout plans with each other, which will keep you both on track.

5. Stay flexible

Healthy living is a long-term journey and life will occasionally get in the way. Don't let one missed workout or a weekend indulgence derail your progress. Flexibility allows you to adapt without giving up.



Practical tip: Have back-up options. If you miss your gym session, go for a brisk walk after dinner. If you eat a heavy meal, balance it out with lighter choices the next day.

6. Track and celebrate progress

Seeing your progress builds confidence and motivation. Track your steps, water intake or hours of sleep to stay aware of how far you've come. Celebrate even the small wins - they add up.



Practical tip: Keep a health journal, complete our progress tracker (see page 14) or use an app to log your activities. Celebrate milestones with non-food rewards like a massage, new workout gear or a relaxing day off.

7. Build routines and habits

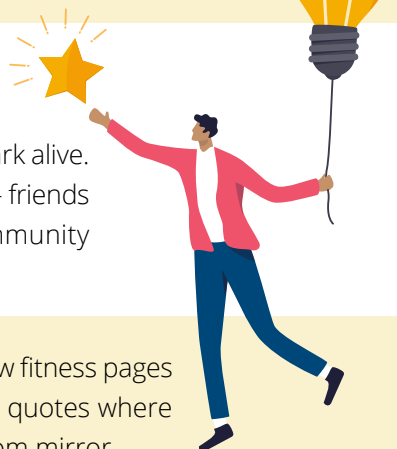
When healthy actions become part of your routine, they stop feeling like chores. A structured routine reduces decision fatigue and makes it easier to stick to your goals.



Practical tip: Attach habits to your daily schedule: prepare a healthy lunch while making breakfast or do a 10-minute yoga session before bed.

8. Keep inspiration alive

Motivation can fade, but inspiration keeps the spark alive. Surround yourself with positive health reminders - friends who share your goals, uplifting content or community challenges.



Practical tip: Listen to health podcasts, follow fitness pages that encourage balance or put motivational quotes where you'll see them, like on the fridge or bathroom mirror.

9. Be kind to yourself

Progress is rarely a straight line. Everyone slips up, but beating yourself up only makes it harder to continue. Self-compassion helps you recover quickly and get back on track.



Practical tip: When you miss a day or fall off plan, use the “next choice rule”- instead of waiting until Monday or next month to restart, simply make the next choice in line with your goal.



A healthier lifestyle is about balance, not perfection.

By setting realistic goals, remembering your “why,” celebrating small victories and treating yourself with compassion, you’ll create habits that last.

Stay consistent, stay flexible and enjoy the journey towards a stronger, healthier you!