



BEAT STRESS AND BOOST YOUR HEALTH IN 15 MINUTES!

As we adjust to our new way of life, BBC1's Dr Rangan Chatterjee gives his top resilience-boosting tips for a daily dose of much-needed calm

Over the past few weeks, millions of us have been forced out of our regular routines and into a strange new life at home. Alongside worries over our health and finances, we're cooped up with our loved ones 24/7, often juggling family commitments, such as home-schooling, with work.

"We're living in incredibly challenging times," says Dr Rangan Chatterjee, who is a bestselling author and the resident doctor on BBC Breakfast.

"There's no man, woman or child who is unaffected, and our mental health is one of the main things to get hit. There's the anxiety over whether we'll get sick, then there's the additional worry that a lot of the things we usually do to manage our stress levels – like eating out or meeting up with friends – aren't feasible.

"It's particularly hard for women, because if both parents are working, it can often still fall to mum to care for the kids. We're also spending more time with our partners than we're used to, which can be problematic, and we're feeling isolated from family and friends. It's a cauldron of emotions that are being stirred up every day, and we have to be careful. It's more important than ever to look after ourselves."

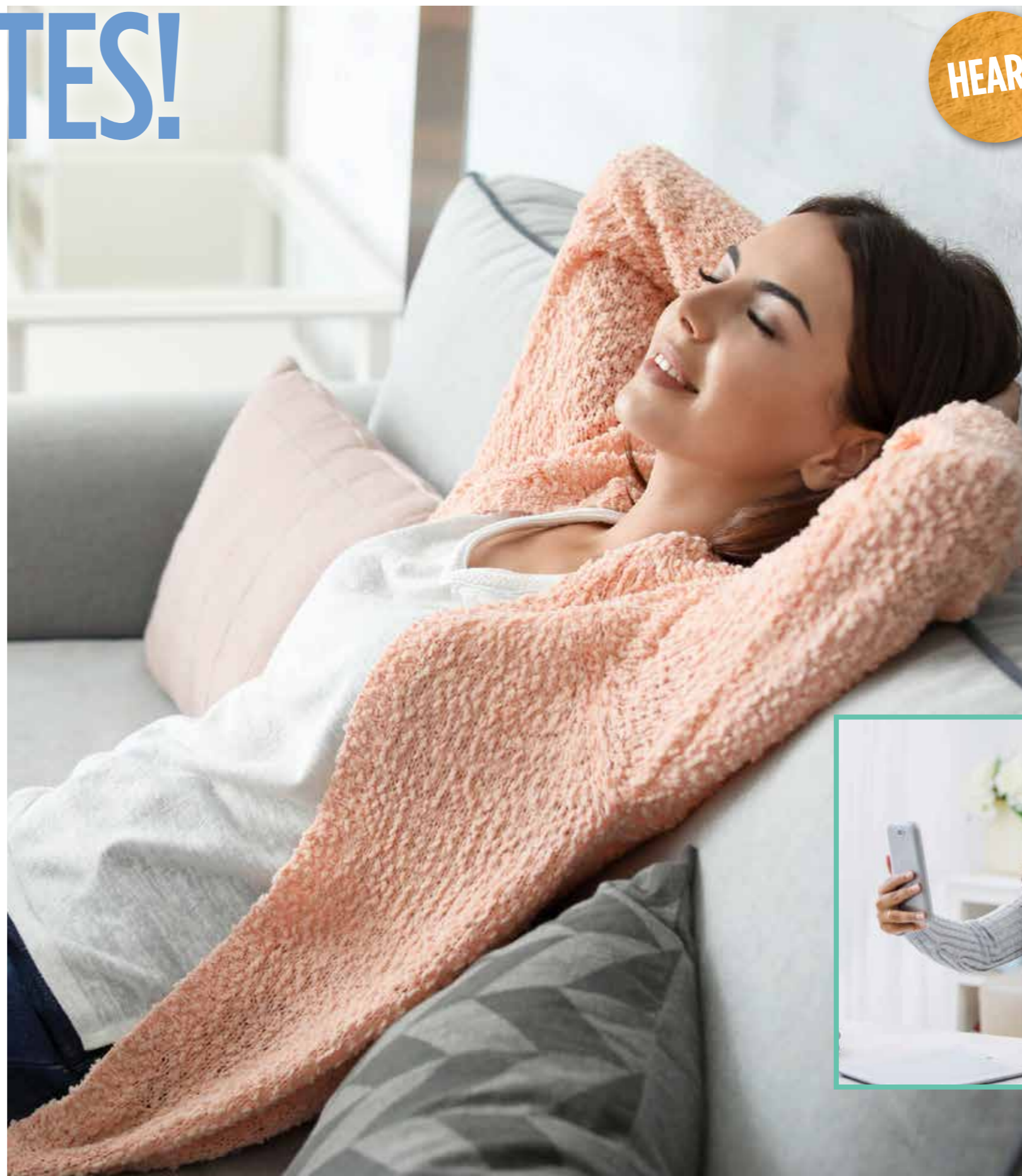
To manage stress and keep emotions on an even keel, Dr Chatterjee recommends sticking to a regular routine. "Write down what your day will look like," he says. "If you would normally have a shower and get changed before starting work, I'd encourage you to do the same thing. If you stay in your pyjamas and begin watching the news instead, you'll start the day feeling anxious. I'd also urge everyone not to watch

or read the news more than once or twice a day. That's all you need to stay updated. Watching breaking news all the time will stress out even the calmest person."

Most importantly, Dr Chatterjee recommends sticking to his 'Feel Better In 5' approach, which means incorporating three five-minute activities into your daily routine. One is targeted at calming your mind, one at nourishing your emotional wellbeing (or heart), and one at boosting your physical health. "We're currently being bombarded with ideas for things to do, like free garden workouts, but it can be overwhelming," he says. "My framework takes the pressure off. If you do just three simple things a day, you've won the day. Pay attention to those three key areas and it'll keep you calm, help your relationships with your partner and children and make you more resilient over the weeks ahead."

Here are some of Dr Chatterjee's favourite five-minute activities, which you can do with your children too. Find more in his book, *Feel Better In 5...*

By Sophie Barton



HEART

STAY CONNECTED

SCHEDULE IN A VIRTUAL CATCH-UP

We might be physically disconnected at the moment, but we can still connect emotionally. With free video chatting apps like Houseparty or Zoom, it's still possible to schedule in social time. "We need those relationships more than ever right now," says Dr Chatterjee. "Put it in the diary – you'll feel so much better after a rant with friends."

CARRY OUT AN ACT OF KINDNESS

Research proves that people who perform more acts of kindness are more resilient to stress, and have a more positive outlook on life. Kindness has a ripple effect, too – every time we are kind to someone, it makes them feel good and they are more likely to be kinder to others. "Kindness is contagious," says Dr Chatterjee. "Perhaps phone an elderly neighbour to check they're OK, or send a meaningful text to a friend or relative. I recently messaged a friend from secondary school and we reconnected."



SIMPLE TRICKS TO HELP YOU COPE

MIND

REFOCUS YOUR THOUGHTS

HAVE A BRAIN DUMP

When things get tough, we often rely on venting to friends over a coffee and a catch-up. That's not possible at the moment, so spend five minutes writing down your thoughts each morning to clear your mind and reduce anxiety.

"I think of downloading as my free daily session of therapy," says Dr Chatterjee. "Our minds are constantly brimming with thoughts, especially first thing in the morning when we have all the stresses and anxieties about the coming days swirling around inside us.

"Simply spending five minutes downloading them out of your brain can have a big impact on overall health. There's something so therapeutic about seeing all that worry contained as words on a page, which you just screw up and chuck in the bin."

GET OUTSIDE

Within public health guidelines, spend a few minutes outdoors each day, whether that's going for a walk or watching the birds with your morning coffee. Dr Chatterjee says, "Being outdoors lowers your levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which helps you sleep well, supports your immune system and makes you less emotionally volatile. If you don't have a garden, try

drinking your morning cup of tea by an open window. Don't drink it watching the news and hearing about how many people are suffering with the coronavirus."

LOSE YOURSELF IN THE MOMENT

Choose something you enjoy, such as listening to music, colouring, reading or even doing a jigsaw and immerse yourself in it for five minutes. It'll help quieten your mind, as you stop focusing on your worries and become fully present in the moment.

"When was the last time you were so absorbed in a task that time seemed to just disappear?" says Dr Chatterjee. "Perhaps you were reading a book or got lost in a crossword. What happened to your mind? All the stress that was running inside it vanished. Psychologists call this state of mind 'flow.'"



BODY

STAY ACTIVE

BREAK A SWEAT

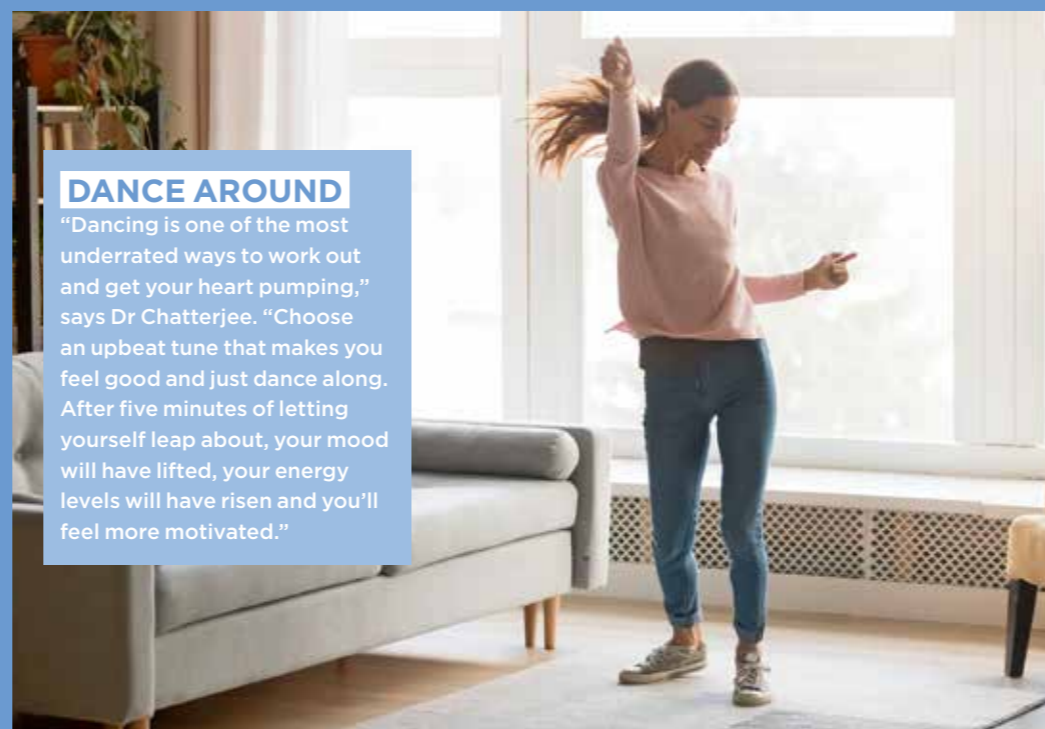
Pick one of the below exercises and push yourself as hard as you can for 20 seconds. Stop for 40 seconds and repeat five times. "This doesn't require much space, skill or time," says Dr Chatterjee. "It's simply a case of choosing one exercise that gets your heart pumping."

SITTING ARM PUNCH

Sit up on the ground with your knees bent in front of you and your feet flat on the floor. Lean back a little, until you feel your stomach muscles engage. Make sure you're feeling comfortable in this position. If it feels too hard, straighten up a little. From this position, punch alternate arms into the air.

DANCE AROUND

"Dancing is one of the most underrated ways to work out and get your heart pumping," says Dr Chatterjee. "Choose an upbeat tune that makes you feel good and just dance along. After five minutes of letting yourself leap about, your mood will have lifted, your energy levels will have risen and you'll feel more motivated."



SUMO SQUATS

Stand with your feet a bit wider than hip-width apart and turned out a little. Bend your knees and lower your body down as if sitting in a chair behind you. Feel your weight go into your heels. Keep going down as far as you can and stop if you manage to get your thighs parallel to the ground.



● *Feel Better in 5: Your Daily Plan To Feel Great For Life* by Dr Rangan Chatterjee is available now on Amazon (Penguin Life, £16.99)