

An illustration of a hand holding a hammer. The hand is orange with a red sleeve cuff. The hammer has a dark blue head and a yellow handle. In the background, a dark blue nail is shown horizontally. The background is a teal color.

# Struggling to ‘nail’ your wellbeing?

Don't worry, you're not alone...

**D**oes it sometimes feel like everyone around you is smashing their wellbeing routine, while your attempt at self-care just leaves you feeling even more frazzled? We may have all the tools for healthy living at our fingertips, but having the time and energy to use them correctly and enjoy the benefits is another matter entirely.

Why is this, though? It's well known that women can struggle to prioritise their own self-care – one study, for example, found that the average mother has just 17 minutes to herself a day – and when you think about the never-ending to-do list flying around your mind, it's obvious how that can get in the way. But there are more factors at play than this and, interestingly, a number of them relate to our attitude to wellbeing.

For holistic life and leadership coach Heidi Hauer ([heidihauer.com](http://heidihauer.com)), problems can arise when we become too caught up in a constructed notion of wellbeing, rather than the true sense of what it actually is. “I don't believe there is ever such a thing as ‘nailing it’ when it comes to wellbeing,” she says. “It's not about perfection, but about progress and balance.”

So, why do we find it hard to accept this idea of progress and balance? We've asked the experts for their insights...



## We forget what wellbeing means for us

“Sometimes we can fixate on the idea that wellbeing has to look a certain way – like having to meditate in the morning, drink a green juice, do yoga and take an Epsom salt bath at night,” says Heidi. But this isn’t the case for everyone – and what makes someone else feel good, won’t necessarily make you feel good.

### THE SOLUTION: GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU

“In my view, wellbeing can’t be achieved by following a checklist of activities you are ‘supposed’ to do. It’s a daily commitment to tuning into your body and following your innate wisdom.” Heidi explains. “It can even mean something new to you every day. You ‘get it right’ when you are in touch with yourself in a compassionate, gentle and supportive way.”

As Heidi says, the key thing is to listen to your body and be flexible on a daily basis. “For example, if you are on your period, the right thing to do might be to cuddle up at home with a cup of herbal tea and turn inwards, rather than pushing yourself to make it to your usual spinning class,” she says.

## We want to try it all

It can be tempting to try every single wellbeing trend that’s trending on Instagram when you’re looking to improve your physical and emotional health, but that’s not necessarily the right approach. “I see it with new clients all the time,” says Puja McClymont, a qualified life and business coach and the producer of the *Self-Care 101* podcast ([pujamcclymont.com](http://pujamcclymont.com)). “They tell me what they do for self-care as if it’s a tick-box exercise but at the same time they complain that they can’t stick to their regimes. The problem here is that they’re almost doing too much and not looking at the core of what self-care means.”

### THE SOLUTION: KEEP IT SIMPLE

In Puja’s opinion, it’s important to go back to basics. “When it comes to self-care, I work with the seven principles of Ayurveda to help my clients find some balance in their wellbeing,” she says. “These are: eat a colourful, flavourful diet, sleep soundly at night, engage in regular exercise that enhances flexibility and strength, take time daily to quiet your mind, cultivate loving relationships, end what does not serve you, and awaken your passion. From this example, you can see the simplicity of what self-care actually means.”

## We give ourselves too many high expectations

In an ideal situation, we might be able to dedicate an hour a day to exercise, meditate every morning and cook an elaborate nutrient-packed dinner from scratch every night, but the true nature of life doesn’t always allow that to happen. And this is when we can berate ourselves for ‘failing’ at wellbeing and give our inner critic’s voice a platform.

“Many women tend to be unforgiving with themselves when they haven’t met their own expectations – which are often unrealistically high,” says Heidi. “It’s no wonder then that the idea of wellbeing can make us feel under pressure if we allow ourselves so little room for failure or mistakes.”

### THE SOLUTION: REMEMBER SELF-COMPASSION

For chartered psychologist Dr Meg Arroll, who works with supplement brand Healthspan ([healthspan.co.uk](http://healthspan.co.uk)), the important thing is to treat yourself with kindness. “Always start with compassion,” she says. “If you didn’t manage your yoga class, meditation session or walk outdoors and your inner voice is giving you a hard time about it, think what you’d say to your best friend if they were feeling guilty about missing a so-called ‘self-care’ session. It’s very likely to be something a great deal kinder and more compassionate than your initial self-recrimination.”



## We compare ourselves to others

Ah...comparison. Our age-old nemesis. We all know that constantly comparing ourselves to others (especially a shiny, rose-tinted Instagrammable version of others) can give our self-esteem a knock, yet we still do it. And this can have a big impact on the way we approach our own wellbeing journey. If we're constantly being shown a healthy success story that looks very different from ours, we can feel like we're 'failing' in our own efforts. But this isn't the case.

### THE SOLUTION: MAKE YOUR OWN PLAN

"You have to first establish that each one of us is different," Puja says. "Try to set your own goals for your wellbeing and strive to achieve those no matter how big or small. If you get distracted by another person's journey, keep coming back to your plan, your goals and especially your achievements."

Puja also recommends taking a break from social media once in a while and being aware of who you spend time with. "Who we spend time with is a massive factor in how we feel," she adds. "Do they lift you up and support you and your achievements or do they project and bring you down? Be mindful of this and make new friends, or make sure you spend more time with your uplifting friends and family."



*"Wellbeing can't be achieved by following a checklist of activities you're 'supposed' to do"*

## We get pulled into the hype

For Meg, the nature of the wellbeing industry itself may be partly to blame for the fact we can feel like we're not doing enough. "Wellbeing is now a booming industry – and a very lucrative one at that – in 2017 its estimated global worth was \$4.2 trillion," she says. "For the industry to maintain this turnover, a substantial amount of time and money is spent to ensure we come back for more. The strategies used to do this are often the classic psychological tactics that make us feel we are rather lacking in our health and wellbeing – this includes images of others who seem to have 'nailed it', a never-ending conveyor belt of new, wonder techniques and a promise of the unattainable."

### THE SOLUTION: FIND YOUR OWN WAY

As Dr Meg suggests, don't follow the pack. "Do try different things and find out what works for you, but if you feel a nagging pressure to constantly try new things, take a step back," she advises. "We know from a wealth of research and evidence that the things that really improve wellbeing are simple and free – they include connection with others, physical movement, sleep/rest and having a personally meaningful purpose in life."

## We're not getting to the root of the problem

Sometimes we use the idea of wellbeing like a plaster – convincing ourselves that a single yoga class will make us feel better after a major life event, or a warm bowl of nourishing soup will heal a broken heart, when really it may be something more we need.

### THE SOLUTION: CONNECT WITH WHAT YOU REALLY NEED

"Wellbeing is definitely not about pretending everything is rosy all the time," says Heidi. "It is about connecting with who you are and what you need. That can mean changing your wellness routine to respond to your emotions and really letting yourself work through what's happening in your mind and body."

For Heidi, it's important to let go every so often too. "Make a ritual of letting go because if you don't do that, the wounds layer on top of each other and it becomes even more difficult to get to the heart of what's going on," she explains.

In this way, it's also essential to recognise when you might need more help and support, and when you could benefit from speaking to a therapist or healthcare professional. Looking after your mental and physical wellbeing takes many forms and it's useful to be open to all the different options.