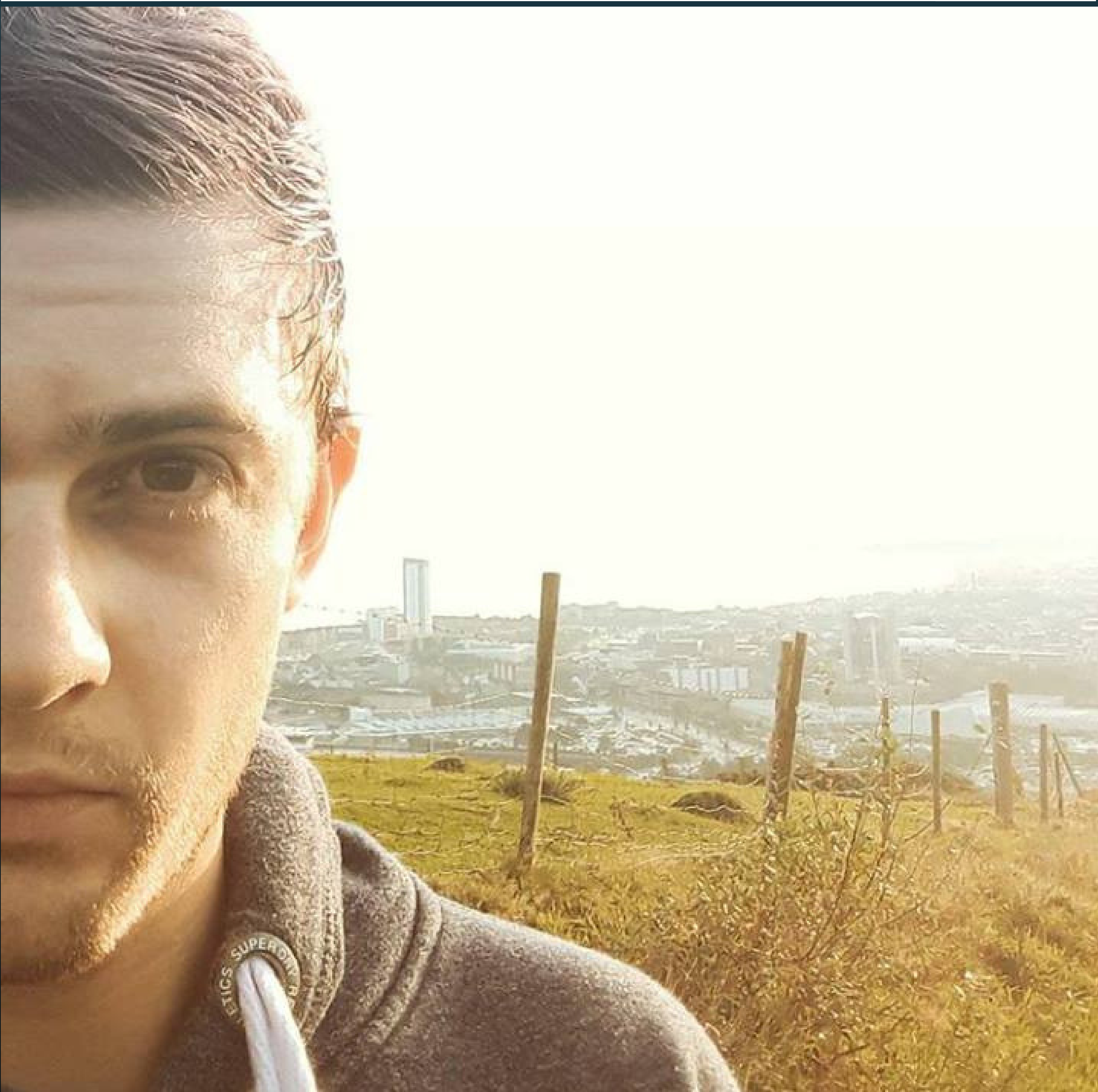


The Caveman Basics

For a Healthier and Happier Life



Written by Callum James

Disclaimer

I am not a doctor, qualified therapist or professional by any means, I can barely write coherently! Doctors, friends and family all failed me when I was in need, so these are a collection of ideas and exercises that I have used that I learned from books, online or from my own life habits. I have used every single exercise I have written and improved my life with them, I hope you can too!

So here we go...

The mind and body make up who we are so physical and Mental health should both be treated equally, because if either one suffers, then both do.

'*The Caveman Basics*' is my collective of ideas that are the bare bones of how to stay alive and be happy. Cavemen didn't have any of the social pressures or expectations we live by in modern society, the goal was only to survive!

Surviving by eating natural foods and drinking water, exercising was a part of being able to eat most of the time and they survived without gloves or central heating. I can't say for certain, but I'd put money on anxiety and depression not being so widespread back then!

We are dedicating so much of our precious time on earth to chase other people's dreams, whilst suffering ourselves. We spend the majority of our lives at work, away from loved ones, not making time for our family, friends, food or our future.

I've always tried to live a little differently and not be a 'sheep' and have found a calling in helping people who are struggling to find purpose. (Yes, I'm aware how incredibly pretentious that sounds!)

I have set out to write a basic guide for helping anyone to pull themselves out of depression and states of anxiety, but **also to help anyone with becoming a generally happier and healthier person.**

Please don't read this with the mind-set of "This doesn't apply to me", because even if you're on top of the world, you can learn how to help others get there too.

This is not a quick fix guide, **you will have to really want to change** otherwise these words will be meaningless to you. For certain things I advise, you must remember that it will not come straight away in most cases, you must practice.

'A master has failed more times than a beginner has even tried' - Wise people

I do not claim to be good at writing or even talking for that matter, I almost failed English in school, I won't be doing referencing, but I will encourage you to do further research.

There's an online 'How to' guide for everything conceivable, get on Youtube!

But I will write what I can for now, I honestly think if this helps just one person then it's worth doing, so I'll try and write as coherently as possible.

I aim to release this completely free of charge as I don't believe that you should charge people for happiness.

If everybody is healthy and happy then the world will be a much better place, and since I live here too I have a vested interest.

I am fed up of seeing unhappy people being taken advantage of, myself included.

So no fees, mailing lists or credit card details here, just advice that helped pull me from my daily suicidal thoughts into having ridiculous ambitions and being a proud weirdo.

ABOUT ME

I've been on a journey of self-discovery in the last few years whilst in the throes of some pretty severe depression on top of my anxiety and I wanted to share some thoughts that will hopefully benefit some of you.

I would like to say that I believe my struggles with depression are coming to an end. I don't believe I will ever be 'cured' but I now know how to help myself when the bad times do come back around. The last few years of my life have been one massive unhappy blur of battling suicidal thoughts every single morning and most nights, with a fair amount of crying in between but the air is clearing and I am remembering the person I used to be and want to become. I now realise which thoughts I'm having are my own and which are the illness twisting everything into a negative. There's always a positive spin, guys!

I was always the shy kid in school, terrified to raise my hand in class and found it very difficult to make any friends. Anxiety has been with me for all of my life it would seem, with a few panic attacks thrown in for good measure (I actually went to hospital twice for separate panic attacks thinking I was genuinely dying, but I was told I had muscle damage as the Doctors couldn't understand my symptoms and I'd never even heard of panic attacks). They are no joke, I hope to never go through that again or anyone else.

This was initially a long-winded Facebook post but I kept adding to it and ran out of space, so I've turned it into a booklet/online file thing, I don't even know.

My previous massive posts were therapy for me as I verbalised a lot of my thoughts and gave advice and was honestly shocked getting such great feedback and shares on what I pretty much thought was a rant. The 18-year-old Cal would have had a boner over that many shares and likes (Something we'll come onto later (The social media addiction, not the boner)).

I have had so many amazing messages of friends and strangers as well as real life conversations which blew me away as I was not expecting to reach so many people! It also made me realise that not only did I enjoy helping people, that quite possibly I was a bit good at it, so I persevered.

So I started developing a plan to combat these bad thoughts and to 'strive for sanity' and collated them into what I am calling 'The Caveman Basics'.

OBVIOUSLY THESE ARE NOT ALL MY OWN IDEAS

They are a collective of what I have found, learned and put together in a kind of checklist sort of way, so that when you are having a tough time, you can do simple tasks that will improve your mood and mental state. Whether it is a 30 second burst of sadness, a panic attack or just general depression.

The most important thing I'd like you to remember reading on, is that these ideas will all work but you **MUST TRY THEM**. I have a really bad habit of overthinking and talking myself out of something before even trying it because I think I know better. And that's just silly. Enjoy!

EATING

'Have I eaten properly today?'

Of course you haven't, nobody does. Well maybe those Instagram celebrities getting paid to do it and The Rock.

Eating healthily can totally change your mood and general health, there's a reason there is such a massive focus on it these days.

If you compromise, then you've only got yourself to blame.

Your body, when malnourished is basically screaming out to you and you'll find that you are irritable, fidgety, nauseous and emotionally unstable.

I for one, really struggle with concentration on an empty stomach.

This is your only life; treat your body with respect.

I'm not going to give you a meal plan or anything, you can find them online, just please put real time and effort into finding something that works for you and for the love of god DO NOT DIET.

65% of dieters actually end up exactly the same weight again, with most even gaining more weight.

You need to change your entire lifestyle and eating habit for good if you want to change weight, temporarily starving yourself won't help.

DRINKING

Have I hydrated properly today?(6-8 glasses of WATER a day)

No chance, I guarantee you haven't. It's hard to do because it's boring and some of will use the excuse of not liking the taste. Mix it with squash and get it down you.

Benefits of water include; not having that dark orange wee, hydrated and generally better skin, better digestion (Takes more nutrition from the food you eat) energy, staying alive etc.

One of the best decisions I ever made was getting a Brita filter, not necessarily because of the purified taste but the fact it's a reminder to drink more, fill it up in the morning and keep it in sight. Mine lives on my coffee table!

If you're one of the many people who tell others you cannot function without your morning coffee, ask yourself why. **Caffeine is a drug** and you're showing signs of an addiction problem and passing it off as just being a part of you. Wake up and smell the coffee...

If you can gather the mental strength to just try giving it up for a week or so, you'll be astounded by the benefits. **Research it online, try it and then brag to your pals.**

If you are not taking these first two steps seriously and are still miserable and wondering why, take a good hard look in the mirror.

Wake up, you're sabotaging your own life.

Your body doesn't care for your lame excuses. You're only going to get one shot at this life, don't waste your prime years defending your bad choices.

Alcohol Consumption

One of the best choices I have made is giving up drinking. It may not be forever but it's really making a positive impact. Alcohol is a depressant, which is very important to know. If you are in a bad place and are turning to drink to help, then you will just continue to hurt yourself and possibly others too. Please read up on the benefits of renouncing drinking, even for a short while whilst you get your head in order. Don't feel pressured to fit in with everybody else, because you are the most important person in your life!

BREATHING

'Am I taking the time to breathe properly?'

I highly doubt it. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that a simple breathing exercise can be as powerful as taking some pretty hefty drugs.

I have always had problems with insomnia for as far back as I can remember and it can put a strain on your health, both physically and mentally, so please take action on it if you are the same. I was actually sent to the air cadets by my parents because I couldn't control my anger and I've found that just taking a moment to let go of everything and focus on breathing can blow away that anger and adapt a much calmer and intelligent response to whatever/whoever is riling you up.

Also great for anxiety, I found it can really help with something as simple as an awkward customer at work can leave you with a rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms etc.

Just take a moment to focus your breathing from most likely, short, shallow chest breaths, to getting some deep, stomach breaths in and getting that oxygen in your brain.

Again, **look it up online**. There's crazy science behind the way you breathe, the different chemicals that get released and how it affects you day to day!

Simple breathing exercises in the middle of a normal day can completely turn your day around, turn every stressful situation into an opportunity to learn!

The simplest one that I swear by is this, by one of my heroes, **Wim Hoff**.

1) [Get comfortable](#)

Sit in a meditation posture, whatever is most comfortable for you. Make sure you can expand your lungs freely without feeling any constriction. It is recommended to do this practice right after waking up since your stomach is still empty or before a meal.

2) [30 Power Breaths](#)

Imagine you're blowing up a balloon. Inhale through the nose or mouth and exhale through the mouth in short but powerful bursts. Keep a steady pace and use your midriff fully. Close your eyes and do this around 30 times. Symptoms could be light-headedness, tingling sensations in the body.

3) [The Hold, retention after exhalation](#)

After the 30 rapid successions of breath cycles, draw the breath in once more and fill the lungs to maximum capacity without using any force. Then let the air out and hold for as long as you can without force. Hold the breath until you experience the gasp reflex.

4) [Recovery Breath](#)

Inhale to full capacity. Feel your chest expanding. When you are at full capacity, hold the breath for around 10 seconds and this will be round one. The breathing exercise can be repeated 3 rounds after each other.

5) [After having completed the breathing exercise take your time to enjoy the feeling afterward](#).

This feeling will be more and more like a meditation

Sourced from - www.icemanwimhof.com/wim-hof-exercises

Definitely worth a visit if you want to enjoy your life more and become superhuman!

Bonus Tip - Sleep on your left side

I've always had an issue with eating breakfast because I used to wake up feeling very nauseous and often go to bed with the same feeling.

This can be a symptom of depression or a number of reasons why it could be the case but a simple solution is to sleep on your left side.

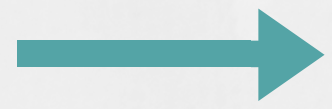
This is because you are not leaning on your stomach, causing that rubbish feeling to dissipate.

It also makes it easier for the heart to pump downhill, supports a healthy spleen function, encourages proper digestion and circulation back to the heart.

COLD SHOWERS

'Why god why?!?'

When researching **Wim Hoff**, (Holder of 23 World Records) it is clear that by utilising the cold he has attained superhuman abilities...



That man has made incredible scientific breakthroughs, climbed Everest in nothing but a pair of shorts, run a Sahara desert marathon without a drop of water, can maintain body temperature frozen in a block of ice and can activate his immune system at will.

The list goes on.

Using 3 simple ideas, meditation, breathing exercises and cold exposure.

The breathing exercise I mentioned above is derived from his teaching.

Cold exposure is one thing I have taken on and am reaping the rewards. The same as meditation, it is like working a muscle, which will get stronger over time.

In fact, when your body gets cold, your muscles around your veins and arteries restrict to retain core temperature, and relax once warm again.... Just like muscles used when exercising.

This means that by exposing yourself to the cold, over time you will become more and more at ease with it and the pain will dissipate. It's really that simple.

The benefits are massive, Wim makes a great point that when man was first evolved and there were no clothes, houses with central heating or even fires for that matter.

We have over the years become adapted to living in very warm conditions, fighting off the cold at every turn. Failing to see what the cold actually has to offer has meant our immune systems aren't as good as they could be, especially when it comes to fighting the common cold.

I always have a hot shower first to wash and then ease into the cold shower. Some people skip the warm part entirely. It's important not to fight the cold. If you tense up and get ready for pain, that's what you will receive. But if you approach it with the fact it's going to be good for you, breathe deeply and tell yourself internally or out loud that you are enjoying it, you will be surprised at just how pleasant it can be. (**The power of suggestion is real. Try it.**)

Aim for around 3 minutes for the effects to take effect, 10 minutes for when you are fully accustomed.

Make sure to let your body temperature warm up naturally, not with a hot shower or you will lose the benefits. Expect a tingly almost itchy feeling as your body warms back up! This will stop after a few times so don't be put off.

Take it slow, if it hurts, get out. Try again the next day. It's about building your tolerance to the cold, each day try for one second longer, or a minute, but don't try to do it all at once or you will do yourself damage. You won't do yourself any good with pneumonia.

It is a process, not a competition.

It is great for mental health, it wakes you up out of your haze, gives you a feel good sensation, like a little dose of happiness. Also coupled with the fact you are trying something difficult and succeeding, nothing better!

Your immune system will become better and work quicker. Warm showers open your pores for washing, cold showers close them so dirt can't get in as well.

Cold water tightens the skin (Cristiano Ronaldo always washes his face with cold water post game before an interview so his face looks good!).

Also, it gives your hair a great natural shine!

EXERCISE

'Why do I need to if I only want to work on my mental state?'

As a person who doesn't buy into the gym culture/movement I sometimes do need to exercise to pull myself out of a bad depression or anxiety spout.

You'll find those avocado eating, smoothie drinking Instagram posers are most of the time genuinely happy, partly down to the simple fact that human bodies are designed to move and you get a nice mental reward when you do and start to feel pretty crappy when you don't. (Chill, I'm just jealous of the motivation to work out)

It takes a lot of mental strength to start exercising, and there are a million reasons why you can't at that present moment or obviously if you have a physical issue, but if you do have a window of opportunity, even just 30 seconds a day is better than nothing.

The first day will always be the hardest, so prepare yourself for that and know it will get better from there. The easiest way to get in some exercise that isn't boring is obviously to join a sports team but most grown ups won't have as many opportunities so I'll talk to you about my favourites below.

In this modern world with most people relying on cars or public transport to get around, it's easy to forget the simple pleasure of walking and the many benefits it comes with.

Walking I find, is the easiest form of exercise because it comes with so many benefits, just allow yourself to find time to do it or extra time when travelling.

The world is a beautiful place and whilst you are doing some low cardio work just ambling about, the endorphins and dopamine in your brain get going and you can start feeling better, smell the air, look up at the sky and realise just how crazy it is that you live on this planet.

Take in some nature or even just people watch. I do this pretty much daily and I love it!

A great mental exercise to help with anxiety I found was to force yourself to walk with your head held high. It might seem normal to some but it was a massive struggle for myself after years of looking at the pavement in front, only looking up occasionally to check that I wasn't about to walk into something.

By keeping your head up, the world seems a totally different place, you exude confidence and people will move out of your way.

Trust me on this and make sure to **try it**.

As I've always lived in very working class areas, I've often been intimidated walking past some unsavoury characters and would shuffle away as fast as I could.

But I learned a fun game I like to play whilst walking (Other than racing people that didn't know we were racing). It's a game of chicken!

Rainy Walks - Get Wet

I personally love to walk in the rain with my headphones on and my favourite music playing.

Most people are too scared of the rain so the streets can be empty. Due to my cold exposure my immune system prevents me from getting ill this way (See Cold Shower section).

I imagine all my problems being washed away as I immerse myself in the music (Good music taste helps here, not just songs from the charts or repetitive Drum and Bass...). Also it feels good, the rain can wake you up and make you grateful you're alive!

You know the game you see people do in cars in the movies? Try that with someone who is walking towards you and make it so that you two are going to collide unless one of you moves out of the way or changes course. Walk with your head held high, don't try and make eye contact, as that's just unnecessary and weird.

9/10 times the other person will move out of your way, but if you have a renegade you can use my signature move to ensure you get the win.

When its getting pretty close, just turn your gaze completely to the side, pretending to look at something so the other person has to act or walk into someone who isn't looking where they are going.

Chances are you're going to win this little mind duel and you're going to have a little wave of endorphins from it. Have a little smile to yourself to really drive home that dopamine and good feeling.

Congratulations, you now appear to have self-confidence!

Strangers don't know how much you overthink stuff so just ***fake it 'til you make it!***

Another great form of exercise that changed my life is skateboarding.

You may immediately feel the need to say it's not for you, which is fine. But hear me out.

First off, it's a great cardio workout. Burns that fat right off your abdomen and strengthens your core muscles, also the fact it's incredibly fun does seem to help.

It has a great effect on your mental health due to a few reasons;

It's a risk, you may fall off. There's an excitement element to it!

When you do inevitably fall off, you have to get back up.

You remember that classic song, *"I get knocked down, but I get up again, you're never going to keep me down"* ?

It's a great physical representation of picking yourself back up after something puts you down and it builds your mental strength each time you can do it. Always make sure you get back up with a smile on your face because what's the point in getting upset or angry?

It's a solo sport, it comes down to you and how much practice you put in. The same as life.

You can skate the way you want to skate, everybody's style is different to the next person.

There are no rules, you can skate on your knees if you like, **as long as you're having fun.**

I personally struggle learning tricks but thoroughly enjoy just skating around, with the wind in my hair and appreciating the surroundings.

Bonus point, skaters look damn cool. IMO People will always look at you enviously... once you get out of the awkward balance stance.

I find that skateboarding resembles a lot of life within itself, bare with me while I try and make this point..

Life is a test with no rules, you have to try your best to achieve what you want out of it. There is plenty of pain that will come your way, but you define yourself by how you deal with it and keep moving forward.

People might say that you look stupid but you can just cruise past them and leave them in the past behind you. If you don't pay attention to the small things you can fall pretty hard and there will be launch ramps at certain points, you can fly... but only if you commit to the risk.

AMBITION

‘If people are not laughing at your goals, your goals are too small’ – Azim Premji

Many people who I’ve spoken with that have some form of mental health issue usually don’t know where their life is headed as there is no real direction.

Relax, that’s totally normal, especially in this current period of time.

Kids growing up these days are almost melded with their phones and are bombarded with celebrity culture with everybody sharing pictures, videos and updates on their life.

But the life that is shown is how they want it to be presented, not how it actually is in reality.

I have been down this road, subconsciously craving attention and checking my phone relentlessly to see if my selfie had gotten any likes, or if there were any new matches on dating sites just to feel valued or wanted in some way. It's desperately sad when you think about it.

Placing other people's opinions over our own perceptions of ourselves.

This can lead to becoming depressed that your life is not as good by comparison, leading to a lack of self worth and as is often the case, doing exactly the same and editing your life to appeal to others in order for some recognition to make you feel good.

There is a small amount of dopamine released in your brain when somebody ‘likes’ something you have done online and this can become an addiction without you even realising. I myself have been addicted to this without even realising and since temporarily deleting all my social media apps on my phone, my life is much more stress free.

You then realise just how often you pick up your phone and swipe without thinking, it's embarrassing.

There is a big focus on putting down your phone and living in the real world for a reason, you don’t need to constantly seek approval, just live the life you want to lead and you will find that your troubles will soon lessen.

I am a firm believer in following your dreams, I have had the childhood dream of being a world famous musician, even a comedian, actor, model and public speaker. They all seem unreachable but I still chase those dreams and I will continue to do so until I die

Make your dreams as big as you can imagine, because why the hell not?

If you tell yourself it can’t be done, then you have resigned to failure and are destined to seek out the negative aspects of what comes your way in life.

‘Dare to dream’. ‘Anything is possible’. ‘Impossible is nothing’.

There are a multitude of reasons why those slogans are so popular, the main one being they are all true.

The main contribution to my severe depression was rooted in the fact my band broke up, I was left doubting that I would ever 'make it' and was resigned to working dead end jobs forever for no reason. Realising that actually, a lifetime is a very long time and many successful people had gone through rejection, failure and mental health problems too made me realise that it all comes down to drive and ambition.

If you want something go and get it, nothing worth doing is easy.

***Look up inspirational people such as Oprah, Tom Hardy and JK Rowling about how they overcame the odds to achieve their goals.**

And if at this current moment in time you are not sure, that’s totally fine. There are millions of people just like you. It will come in time, just keep a positive outlook and you will find what you are looking for eventually or it will find you. Look forward.

In a meantime, as we live in a reality where holding down a job is paramount for the most part, unless you're from a very privileged background. Try to be the best employee you can be, make everyday special, look out for other people and help others in need. You don't have to believe in karma to understand that good things happen to good people, not necessarily straight away but you can be assured that over time it will work out that way.

If you spend your time complaining about your current situation or about minor things that happen in your work environment, then you will miss out on any positives that may occur. If you don't like your job, then ask yourself is it because it's not right for you or are you doing enough to make it as good as it could be?

Obviously some elements are out of your control, but you will find your day to day life will become a lot easier knowing that you have worked hard and are striving to make the world and yourself better each day.

There's nothing wrong with looking for another job whilst still employed too, there's not much point in working a job you are unhappy with because you're hurting yourself and will not be delivering the service to the company that pays you for it.

A great tip for anyone struggling with realising their dreams is the **visualisation technique**, imagine yourself in your dream scenario. Believe it. Then just start filling in the blanks in reality, you have your goal in mind so go and work for it.

Again, research it online (Jim Carrey talks about it a lot) and give it a shot.

BONUS TIP - GET MUSICAL/CREATIVE

My saving grace has always been music, when life gets too much I can strum out some minor chords and sing some sad songs or create something uplifting and emphatic that makes me feel something.

Being in and running a band for 6 years was very hard work with many member changes and setbacks, playing to 10 people each show. But it was the happiest I had ever been and I miss it more than anything.

Being able to express your own thoughts, play your own music to people who appreciate it is almost like a drug.

Pick up an instrument or a microphone, give it a go.

What's the worst that could happen?

The release you get from putting your emotion on paper, as either lyrics, poetry or art, even just ranting about how annoying everything is can be beneficial. I once wrote 5 A4 pages of why I thought my life was so bad and I've never read what I wrote back.

I don't know the science but somehow I managed to instantly stop obsessing about the negatives once I'd written the down.

Sometimes you need to just get it out of your system so you can focus on the real, calm you, underneath all those negative thoughts.

FINDING YOURSELF

'Just what the hell does that mean?'

The biggest change in my life happened in the winter of 2016/2017 where I decided to take my life into my own hands and start assessing what I could do to be 'happy'.

Wrestling with severe depression, suicidal thoughts, relentless anxiety and insomnia was incredibly difficult but I knew that my journey was far from over.

The biggest question I had to ask of myself was, *"Am I doing enough?"*

I found it to be the hardest question, mainly because nobody likes to be criticised. It's a natural reaction to pretty much dismiss any criticism, as it's an attack on you.

I assessed myself as though I was assessing another. I took note of all the positives (Important to do first) in my life from decisions I had made, which made me feel great.

Then with that confidence, analysed what decisions I had made that were having a negative effect on me. Once its in black and white on paper, it becomes plainly obvious that you are kidding yourself by wondering why nothing is going your way, take pride in the fact you are comfortable enough to be able to find your flaws.

It's also important to remember, **only criticise things that you can change by choice.**

I started to read a lot and watch documentaries on inspirational people such as one of my now heroes, Wim Hoff (Google him), Russell Brand (Seriously) and how they had overcome tragedy to find inner peace and make a difference in the world.

Even the Notorious Conor McGregor is an inspiration to me as his drive is insane, he just kept insisting he was the best, worked **relentlessly** and achieved his dream.

It comes down to getting the basics right, the points I have listed and gone into detail with are the main points of focus to help you achieve a solid state of mind where clarity of your mind comes to fruition.

I delved deeper and looked at even more basic exercises and life choices that would help me find me inner peace.

The 2 main topics I'll speak of are yoga and meditation, which go hand in hand.

Now I, like many others I'm sure, have always dismissed them as being 'weird' and 'for hippies' but I never thought of why people actually bother with it.

It takes focus and the will to change to overcome the feeling of 'looking silly' but it will be the best decision you will make.

Stop caring what other people think, my favourite saying on that is as follows;

'Those who mind, don't matter and those who don't mind, matter.'

Toxic people will always try to bring you down, down to their level of negativity and criticism.

Think of the classic Star Wars analogy. For real!

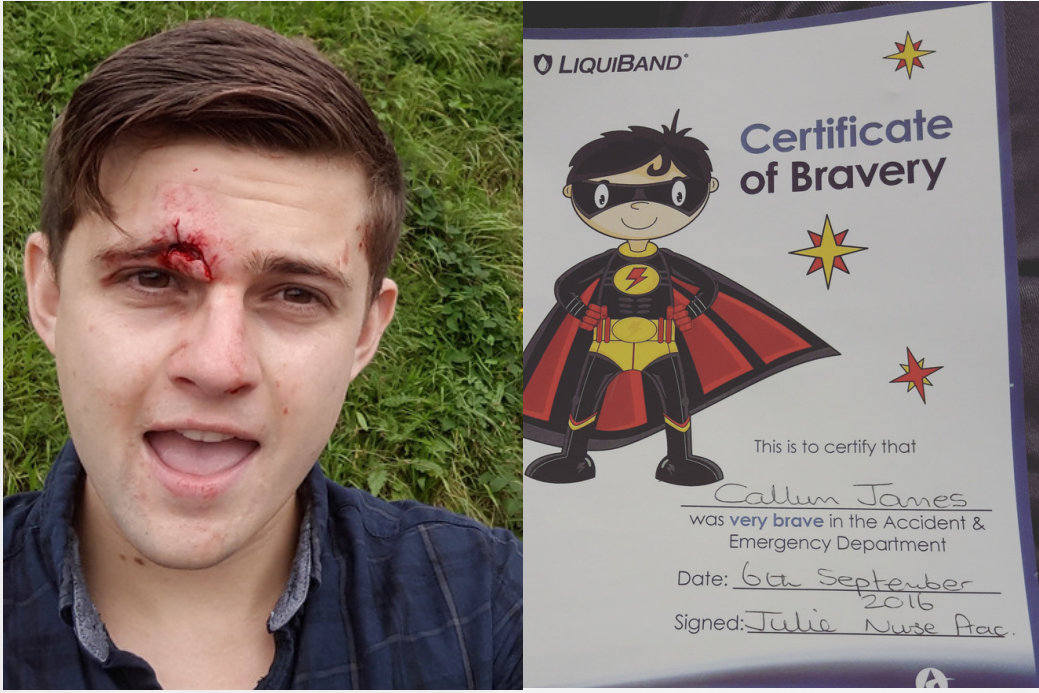
The Jedi's Force, using clarity of mind, channeling peace and harmony vs the evil destructive nature of The Sith's Dark Side, where anger, bitterness and fear reign supreme but ultimately leads to the demise of those who are consumed by it.

Well, that's my take on it anyway.

Goodies vs Baddies/Love vs Hate/Taking action vs Complaining

Also, have you ever seen a miserable monk? There seems to be no negative aspects to finding that inner peace!

Yoga for me, was a necessity when I had injured myself skating (pictured) and was rebuilding strength back up in my muscles. I hit a pebble while skating downhill real fast! I realised just how powerful it could be both on helping clear your mind as well as the many physical health benefits.



**I took a risk, it didnt pay off but it was worth it in the end.
(No lollipop or sitckers though..)**

Research the basic steps and get practicing, before bed or when you wake up, even just to try it out. There are lots of videos on many varieties of yoga online to help you. I'm still on beginner mode but trying my best!

Again, remember that nothing comes easy. and with practice you will get better, enjoy the ride. Meditation is the exercise I refused to do for years and can only regret not starting sooner. The effects are astounding! It's as simple as dedicating an appropriate amount of time (20 minutes average but less is totally fine) to sitting cross legged, back straight and eyes closed. There are many versions of mediation but I'll describe the two that have helped me. One-minute meditation. Spend 30 seconds, concentrating on 5 things you want to achieve in your life. Spend the next 30 thinking of how those achievements will help 5 people you know. Repeat this as often as you can, once a day is fine.

Honestly, it changes a lot and puts things into perspective for me. Proper meditation involves the same, but this time. The aim is to think of nothing. Which, trust me, is realllllllly difficult. In fact it's the most challenging thing I've ever attempted in my entire life, as a classic over thinker I viewed this as impossible. Again, *things come with time and practice.* Your aim is to be an empty vessel, aware and alert to your surroundings, just focusing on your breathing and nothing else. This will be difficult for most people right off the bat, as it was for me. My brain will scramble and constantly play scenarios through my mind, wonder what accent do I think in, why the 3 E's in Mercedes are pronounced differently and other important topics...

The important thing you must do is to realise you are not focused, ***let it go*** and return to your breathing. It is not a bad thing you have become distracted, only natural. The fact you have recognised this is a massive positive! You are working out your mind, like you would work out a bicep. Conditioning over time, each time it becomes easier. But it will take time. The after effects vary from finding out who you really are, being able to stop caring so much about issues that bother you, working through anger problems and letting go of any negative energy to name but a few. You won't know until you fully commit, it's definitely worth trying at the very least.

BE A BETTER FRIEND/COLLEAGUE/BOSS.

This section is for those of you who have friends who are suffering and you don't know the right way to help, I'll outline the most important steps you can take, but please remember that there is no easy quick fix solution and there are no guarantees. But so long as you are actively trying then you are doing the right thing.

Listening. Cannot emphasize that enough. But it's not as easy as you might immediately think.

Your friend in need will probably not know how to initiate talking about their feelings, as is often the case, they will probably even reject the idea of talking about anything, denying there is an issue etc.

You must not push them to spill their guts as this can make them bottle things up even more and even assert those negative emotions onto their opinion of you, this is often what I did when people would ask me what my problem was. Every person is different, their problems even more so. So long as that person knows you are readily available to listen to them talk then that's a massive weight lifted.

There is a balance you must find where you do remind them that they can rant (This word I like, everyone likes a good rant because they are often uninterrupted) to you whenever, even by text message (A preference to some), but to not be overbearing and constantly try to pull it out of them.

So your friend is now ready to talk, amazing. This is a moment they will have likely recited in the shower 1000 times already so make sure that YOU are ready.

Pay attention to how you look from their point of view. Is your body language open or do you look like you are rejecting their opinions, are you listening intently? *

These minor things will make a difference and you can bet your bottom dollar they won't go unnoticed. If you are tempted to butt in with a remark or opinion, I have one piece of advice... *DON'T.*

Your opinion can wait until the end if you really must put it across, but be wary because you could ruin everything just by justifying someone else's behavior or whatever it is you have to get off your chest. *THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU - SHUT UP AND LISTEN.*

BANTER/CRITICISMS

Banter is great for tearing down the fragile walls of awkwardness but it is important to be wary on using it with people who take things to heart.

Avoid criticising anything about a person that cannot be changed. Small comments that may seem innocuous at the time can manifest into stigmatism.

*Standing face to face and discussing something is not the best ideal, as it feels confrontational subconsciously. When you are side by side, you are looking in the same direction together rather than being in the way

Once said person has relived themselves of their burden, there might be a little awkward silence. Don't feel the need to fill it with remarks or opinions, try this instead. Ask them open questions, the bigger the better I find helps.

Ok, so what's the next step for you now?

What can I/we do to help?

Once this is resolved, where do you want to be?

This is important as it will be something they might not be prepared for, as a lot of people look to blame others and situations for the way they feel. Whilst both being valid excuses, there is often a lack of direction afterwards as the dark cloud can consume all thought.

By asking the big open questions after the long 'rant', the person is allowed the freedom to try and piece together their future. Something a lot of people rarely do, which can lead to mental health problems and the vicious cycle.

I'll leave it at that as there are no certainties when talking about this kind of thing and to many variables to tell you outright what you have to say, but so long as you are listening without interrupting, your body language is good and when the time is right, you ask big open questions about the future then everyone will be in a better place.

Also hugs are scientifically proven to boost dopamine levels, so try and get one in. A real one, not one of those light hugs, where you're tapping each other's backs.

My advice to anyone who is in a position of power such as a supervisor/manager would be to make these talks a regular occurrence in small doses whenever possible, just to check in with your staff. The staff will feel cared for and that they can tell you if there's something bothering them. Which means they will be able to work better and most likely will work harder for you. It's an element of trust, by all means talk about your own issues too, you're not an alien. The more open you can be then the better it will be for your relationships.

Too many managers try to create distance and a feeling of superiority over their staff, it might seem like a good business move and feeds their ego. But if you have unhappy staff, your business will suffer.

Lead by example.

Also I've found that little energizer activities work wonders pre shift if you can squeeze them in, get that blood pumping and sense of comradery up!

I personally swear a bit when I talk to someone about their problems, not in an aggressive way but to alleviate any tension and not to sound like those nicey nicey therapists you see, with soothing tones. I personally do not like to be talked to like that as it's impersonal and feels false. A swift curse word can cut through and improve the mood if done right, the same with jokes.

Jokes are a dangerous one though, because there is a temptation to joke about the victims problems to cut through the tension, but it could go so disasterously wrong and cause offense and inner turmoil, it's best not to unless you are very very close to that person and they trust you.

TALK ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS/GETWEIRD

For this final section I will share with you the major turning point in how I developed my personality and I discovered how letting out my inner weirdo was paramount to my own happiness and contentment.

Mental health issues and paranoia put me in the mind-set where I believed that everyone thought that I was weird and not 'one of them'. It used to make me feel so low, I was desperate to become like all my friends and would stop doing what I liked in order to fit in more... until I decided to embrace my uniqueness.

By that I mean, I decided that if everyone already thought that about me, why didn't I just accept that I was a bit different and make that into something I was proud of? (Who really wants to be like everybody else anyway?).

Another classic catchphrase which I constantly now repeat is that, *"You could get run over by a bus tomorrow"*.

It always puts everything in perspective; enjoy the life you have because it could end at any time. ***Be the person you wish you could be, there's nobody else in the world like you so lets see what you've got!***

I am not a 'typical' alpha male, I am decisive and direct and look after those I care about but I don't sacrifice anything for my ego. I believe many people have misidentified what an alpha male is and its manifested into meaning a loud and brash person who people fear. They need to prove themselves as true men by overcompensating in every aspect, leaving what I can only describe as a *'Dickhead Mentality'*.

I tend to speak in short and sweet doses, avoiding long-winded anecdotes and listening for the most part. I've always been a quiet person. If I have nothing to say on the matter, I won't speak up just to have an opinion for the sake of it.

Also I found that people who often talk about themselves at great length are generally worse people to have around in my opinion... (Yes I'm aware of the irony of using myself as an example) ***'An empty vessel makes the most noise'***

When I was going through really dark times and I had nobody to talk to, it was the most infuriating and sad feeling ever. I craved for somebody to ask me how I was, that really meant it but it never came. So I constructed the idea in my head that it never would happen, but what was I going to do with that information?

I just started telling people in a very casual way about how I had been suicidal the night before, or was just feeling numb etc. Without anyone actually asking me directly. I decided to take charge, which as an anxiety sufferer was alien to me. When people would ask me to do stuff or why I bailed on a plan I'd say I was having a 'depression day' and be as totally honest as I could just for my own sake of mind.

Also, I've never been a good liar so I've never bothered, and making excuses filled me with such mental and physical pain I could no longer go on pretending everything was fine.

Don't assume you're just dumping all your problems on your friend, most people are happy to help and hear what you have to say. Think of how many people talk about their issues to you, how much time you've spent listening to them, it's just your turn now.

It was when I started doing this I realized by the reactions I got back, that nobody knows how to react to this kind of thing, I got a lot of wide eyes, stuttering bosses and swift conversation changes. I was in charge. I scared people by talking about something real, that I wasn't 'fine' or as 'happy as Larry' (Who is Larry?!)

It might be considered a ‘Dick move’ to deliberately try and freak people out with these conversations, but it was helping my get that weight off my chest and that was far more important to me.

I started to realise that nobody is trained to deal with these awkward conversations so whoever has the real conversation has the power. I did it more often and learned that by talking as openly as possible about my mental state, I was relieving the pressure and starting to heal.

Also it enabled others to say, “You know what? I have been feeling the exact same, or I have a friend/family member who talks like that”

If you can muster the courage to just start rambling about your mental state, it will help you and could just help somebody else, which feels even better, Bonus!

The weirder I got, the better I felt. This was my world and I can be whoever I want to be. Nobody really cares that much about me, so I can be that person I dreamed I could be.

I started smiling more, I started making more jokes, joining in banter, expressing opinions in conversations I wouldn’t have dreamed of, I started pulling faces at people on the bus when it would drive by and I still do, daily! (Ok that might be a bit too much for some, but man do I feel good for just being weird and spontaneous).

I then started to realise that by helping others through their problems, I gained more knowledge in this field and saw my life wasn’t so bad. I chose to start eating healthier, reading more, learning, cutting out toxic things and toxic people from my life and dreaming even bigger. Everything I always thought was a pipe dream was now a feasible reality, I just had to **work** for it.

Impossible is nothing, go and make this your world.

Be the change you wish others would see you as.

Don’t emulate your heroes. Be better than them.

Believe in yourself because sometimes, nobody else will.

Be honest.

Love each other and yourselves.

I hope my words can be a help in some form to you or somebody you may know, please feel free to get in touch at www.FB.com/JallumCames or CavemanCal@Outlook.com

HONESTY ABOUT YOUR SITUATION

I fully believe that honesty is the only policy and lying/withholding information about anything will make a situation worse.

If it is the case that you are suicidal or have even taken action or tried self-harm, it is paramount that you tell somebody.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

The thought of telling a doctor can be daunting and will be naturally hard to tell the truth that makes you look crazy, but they have heard it many times before and can almost certainly help you in some way.

If this is a stressful scenario for you, use the internet to your advantage. There are many Facebook pages that pop up with key words like ‘suicide, anxiety, depression’ that are communities or fellow sufferers banding together to share advice and their own stories, where you can receive support from someone you might never physically meet who could save your life, or even vice versa. I’m a member of many.

Create a fake profile to spill your guts if you are too scared or paranoid that it could negatively effect you, just please reach out in some way.