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## 9 UNHEALTHY HABITS SABOTAGING YOUR LIFE'S POTENTIAL

**Sam Bailey**

3rd February 2016

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What unhealthy habits I hear you ask? You eat kale, exercise moderately and try to refrain from wine on a week day. That makes you fairly balanced, right?

Well, not quite. Yes they are healthy and #fitspirational, but there's also those less tangible ones – the unhealthy thoughts leaving a large portion of Australians age early 20s to mid-30s unsatisfied with their lives.

Between FOMO, social media, Netflix and family and friend pressures – being healthy across the board is no piece of raw, vegan cheesecake. So to reach life goals we need to hone in on any soul destroying habits. Read on and see if any of these ring true for you – and learn how to scrap them ASAP.

**1. Excessive social media**

We spend at least 8.5 hours a week on Facebook alone, says a Sensis study. While we take no shame in a scroll each morning, it's affecting us more than we know.

“Social media leads to comparisons with our own life. You may have a great night out but then you see posts from others appearing to have a better time and your perception of your own experience changes,” says clinical psychologist Jo Lamble.

This ‘FOMO’ state can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, loneliness, stress, depression, a low immune system and poor

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sleep.

"Choose a time of day to scroll but don't look at it continually. Also restrain going online if you're already feeling fragile – instead call a friend or go for a walk."

## 2. Neglecting books

A Norwegian university found when people read a novel on a Kindle, they were significantly worse at absorbing the plot and events versus those who read a tangible, paperback copy.

Not to mention reading books is proven to combat cognitive decline, according to Rush University Medical Centre.

Casey Beros, health coach at [Paper Tiger Wellness](#) says it's not just a great brain trainer – it can help our wellbeing significantly too.

"A page-turner is an incredible way to unwind. Reading for just a few minutes will help you switch off and de-stress – plus you'll learn a thing or two in the process."

## 3. Putting others first

Whether we pride ourselves on being a good friend, parent, daughter/son or grandchild, at some point we prioritise others – and this can be a catch 22.

"While it's better to give than receive – if we're always selfless we can begin to feel used," says Lamble. "Feelings of resentment build and others can start to lose respect for a doormat (i.e. you) and may begin to unconsciously walk all over you."

The solution? "If selfishness is up one end of the spectrum and selfless at the other, aim for the middle ground – the place where you think of others but remember you matter too," says Lamble.

## 4. Living in the past, not the present

Do you ever think about where things went wrong, what you could have done differently, what you hoped would happen that didn't?

Nikki Jankelowitz of [Centred Mediation](#) says while this is common it also is unhealthy. "We can't change the past, so reliving it only disappoints us. More often than not, the narratives we conjure up never eventuate, so we end up propagating our own suffering."

Instead, Jankelowitz suggests staying present. "Cultivate awareness by strengthening certain neural pathways in the brain using techniques such as meditation. By maintaining presence we can have the happily ever after we're searching for."

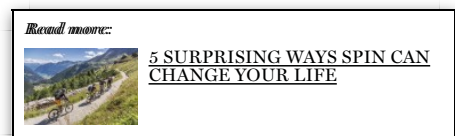
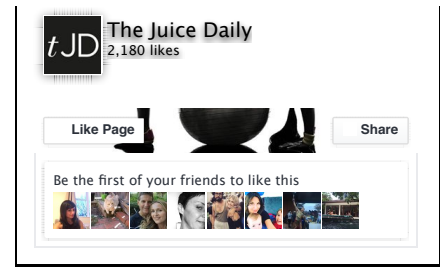
## 5. Becoming complacent

They say a change is as good as a holiday, but as creatures of habit it can be very easy to get stuck – and not even realise it's a bad thing.

"In theory, we may seem satisfied with how things are – but do you ever wish for a better job, more work/life balance or to fit in a smaller pair of jeans?" says Casey Beros.

If the answer is yes, Beros recommends setting goals. "Keep a list of how you want to feel (rather than what you want to achieve) then check in and keep moving the goal posts," says Beros. "Remember – you deserve an incredible life, not a mediocre one – if something's not working, change it."

## 6. Excessive dieting



So you've adopted paleo, quit sugar and weaned off dairy. While these clean changes can be considered healthy, in some cases it can be a form of extreme dieting.

Sydney-based dietitian Kara Landau ([The Travelling Dietitian](#)), believes the removal of food groups can affect us psychologically and physically.

"Excessive food restrictions can lead to self esteem issues – the emphasis gets placed on the ability to stick with specific dietary guidelines and when they're not followed, we feel disappointed," says Landau.

"Stress then can impact our hormones and can set off inflammatory pathways which negatively effect our mental health and risk of lifestyle diseases."

Most importantly, we also lose the nourishing aspects foods provide. "Carbohydrates give us antioxidants, vitamin A, vitamin E, B group vitamins and protein helps build muscles and keep us satisfied- when we restrict food, we miss out on these vital nutrients that help us perform," says Landau.

### *7. Skipping a workout in favour of the couch*

Three words – Netflix and chill. If the phrase sounds a little too familiar (and not in the sexy way), it might be time to get moving.

Currently Australians play less sport than ever says the Australian Bureau of Statistics and 80 per cent of kids don't get the minimum amount of exercise per day, an Active Healthy Kids Australia Report found.

Lee Sutherland, a Sydney-based PT and health coach from [Fitness In The City](#) says it's just as important health wise as it is fitness. "Skipping a workout is tempting, but if you sit at a desk then you need to move – human bodies aren't made to be sitting all day."

Sutherland says the more we sit, the more we welcome back/hip pains, weight gain, lack of energy and poor sleep.

"The recommended amount is only 30 minutes but if you're lacking motivation – get a PT. I find my clients thrive on being held accountable and know once their session is locked in – it's on!"

### *8. Caving into unhealthy temptations*

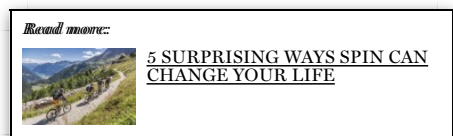
New year, new ... oh look, there's wine! That pick-me up booze or brownie might begin as a once off, but once you break the habit you're promising to start healthy again next Monday, right?

Dr Louisa Hoey, a clinical psychologist who specialises in weight loss and weight management says it's important to stick to our guns as early as possible.

"If you commit early it'll give you 'self efficacy' – the belief that you can do a certain thing (like reduce sugar consumption)."

Practice this by committing to the following:

- Making SMART health goals – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely.
- Be accountable – keep a diary and write down what you eat every day.
- Plan distraction strategies – walk, have a glass of water or call a



friend.

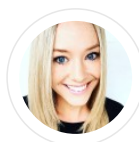
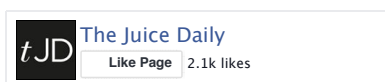
- Give yourself non-food rewards as you achieve each goal.

### *9. Building someone else's dream instead of your own*

It's a common tale. Your parents are doctors so you became one too. "It's so easy to build a loved one's dream. You love the person, so you want to support them," says Lamble.

"Being there for your loved one is essential but don't lose yourself in the process," says Lamble. "We need a sense of purpose, so share your hopes and dreams with those you love and keep everything on the agenda."

Remember, says Lamble: "a good relationship is between two whole people – it is possible to be there for someone and keep your eyes on your own prize."



#### The awesome person who wrote this...

Sam Bailey

Sam Bailey is a Sydney-based journalist whose passion for health and fitness and has seen her write across health titles including Womens Fitness, Womens Health, Body + Soul and Daily Mail Australia. In her down time you can find her sipping green smoothies, attempting complex yoga poses and soaking up vitamin D on Bondi beach.

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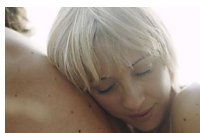
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