

TimeOut

SHANGHAI

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Next stop: happiness

Take a deep breath and elbow your way onto the train
to a happy and fulfilling life in Shanghai

#1 TIME OUT SHANGHAI BESTSELLER

THE 7 HABITS OF VERY HAPPY PEOPLE

Time-tested Methods
to Improve Your Mood

From the
authors of
*Stress and
the City*

‘This book turned my frown upside down’
– That annoyingly happy guy on the metro

Written by chronic overworkers and overthinkers
for chronic overworkers and overthinkers

Illustrated by Jinna Kaneko

Happiness may not be a $1 + 2 = 3$ equation, but here's some food for thought to get you on your way!

BE POSITIVE

Learn how to keep your cool on Line 2. By *Cat Nelson*

I'M NOT A SAINT. Let's get that out of the way early. I'm from California and while I like to think of myself as an easy, laidback and chilled-out type, if you speak with some of my colleagues I'm sure another story might be told.

And Shanghai doesn't necessarily help the case – it's a full-on city, with passionate people working around the clock, perfectly primed for Type A's or anyone with a proclivity towards stress. Top that up with a healthy dose of 24 million other people, and it's the perfect storm. There's really nothing like a pulsing sea of humans to make you confront your existence. Have you ever been on Line 2?

So I talked to local Shanghai life coach Ans Hooft, who specialises in stress counselling, about how to cope with the city's physical crush of people and its emotional-mental beating that is the 24/7, WeChat-pace of life here.

'The thing that I work on with people is the way that you talk to yourself, because you usually are the one stressing yourself out,' says Hooft. 'You can give yourself a panic attack by thinking, "Oh my God, all these people. I can't breathe and I'm going to have a panic attack." If you become aware of that, that's step one and, then you can change those thoughts and talk to yourself in a more rational way.' She suggests trying to see the funny side of a situation. 'That is something that works immediately. Like: Isn't this hilarious? If I told this to people at home, people wouldn't believe me. And I'm witnessing it. I'm living here.'

Finding the humorous slant to someone standing and clipping their nails on the metro while somehow simultaneously, and unbeknowningly, jabbing me with the sharp end of an umbrella? I mean, I can try... 'In general, if we're trying to be a bit more friendly towards ourselves and towards the people that we see doing silly things or what we think is silly,' says Hooft, 'then we make our lives a little bit easier.' Just the reminder that what you might think is silly or inappropriate may not seem so to someone else goes a long way.

I decide to try to put her positive thinking pep talk into action. In the eye of the storm of People's Square station at rush hour, I remind



myself of how empty New York City felt when I went back for the first time after living in China for three years, and I smile. It feels like progress in the face of the usual mantra of cursing that tumbles through my head alongside the jostling. On the escalator, I take a deep breath when it's like everyone's feet (on both sides!) have been glued to the steps.

'You have to find out what works for you,' Hooft advises in speaking about de-stressing. 'And that can be different for everyone.' Stuck on the slowly moving escalator, I whip out my phone and start replying to WeChat messages for work. Hooft's other advice aside (unplug a bit, essentially), it helps me de-stress from the traffic jam at hand. Suddenly I nearly run straight into someone coming off the moving stairs, and now I'm that asshole stranger on the street banging around impolitely in the world. It's a good reality check in reminding me that everyone's just doing their best.

FIND YOUR INNER ZEN

Beat those nagging thoughts at these spaces that encourage you to unplug and unwind. By *Jeremy Mitchell*

OPENUP SPACE

Referring to itself as a 'warm and peaceful nest' OpenUp Space's guided meditation classes are targeted to anyone interested in developing greater self-awareness and deepening their spirituality in hopes of living a more harmonious life. It's a space to relax and recharge.

→ Find out more at openupspace.com.

THE LIVING ROOM BY OCTAVE

Octave was created to combat the overwhelming stress that the bustling world around us creates on a daily basis. The Living Room is its holistic wellbeing centre that offers a range of classes – including the likes of mindfulness and meditation yoga – to harmonise your mind and body.

→ Find out more at new.livingoctave.com.

YEJO CIRCLE

If you're looking to truly reconnect with your core being, get out of the city and devote a couple days to your spiritual self at one of YEJO Circle's meditation-centred weekends away in the countryside. Alternatively, try one of the Shanghai-based tai chi, praying mantis kungfu or healing workshops.

→ Find out more at yejocircle.com.