

# VitalTime

---

FEELING ALIVE  
AND LIVING THREE  
YEARS LONGER



Jim van den Beuken



# HIGHS AND LOWS

**We are living in extraordinary times. Covid-19 has hit each of us and the world really hard. What was unimaginable just a few months ago is now routine. Working from home on a screen, hardly any contact, worry about getting ill, financial insecurity.**

Things we used to take for granted are changing, whether we like it or not. Partly because our environment demands new priorities. This can lead to highs, but also uncharted lows and mood swings. Being able to cope well with setbacks and stress is vitally important. Today is a good time to take another look at what really counts for you. And how that works every day. This booklet aims to make you feel calm and energised more often, rather than hassled, lonely or tired. That means looking at yourself and trying something new if the old way doesn't work. That's Part I. Part II takes you to Vital Zones. You'll get inspiration and tips on how sprightly 100-year-olds manage to being alive and kicking.



**EVERY DAY IS SPECIAL.** YOU JUST DON'T KNOW HOW YET.





**HERE WE GO.** JUMP INTO THE DEEP END.

# HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Circle the option that applies more.

1. Do you feel **more** or **less** stressed due to Corona?  
E.g. due to working from home, doing more online, trouble balancing work and family, social relationships.
2. Are you **looking forward** to things or **not**?  
E.g. bouncing out of bed, doing more of what makes you happy, (not) making plans, taking on a challenge with others.
3. Are you getting **more** or **less** exercise?  
E.g. due to playing sports, gardening, hiking, cycling or walking to the shops.
4. Have you put on Corona **kilos** or reached a **healthier weight**?  
E.g. due to eating more or less healthily, snacking behaviour, drinking alcohol, exercising consciously.
5. Are you feeling **tense and insecure** or full of **confidence** about your work and income?  
E.g. due to lost orders, new opportunities, job losses, high demand for staff.
6. Has your life become **lonelier or duller** or **richer with plenty of contact**?  
E.g. due to less contact at parties, eating out, festivals, work, local area, or is contact actually more intense, caring, less superficial.
7. Are your surroundings **greener and fresh** or **greyer and unhealthy**?  
E.g. due to home improvements, solar panels, gardening, drainage, more time in nature or surrounded by concrete or cooped up in small rooms.
8. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?  
*Rating on a scale from 1 to 10. 1 means you are "completely dissatisfied" and 10 means you are "completely satisfied"*



## RESULT

### RED ZONE OR VITAL TIME?

How many times did you circle the colours?

red

blue

What is your rating for question 8?

What's your conclusion? I am happy with:

I want to change this:

Wondering how fit, engaged  
100-year-olds do and  
what you can learn from that?



Compare your result with  
other cities around the world.



## HOW HAPPY ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE?



**1 in 8**  
depressed or anxious



**1 x per month**  
contact 200,000  
elderly



**1 in 5 deaths by  
smoking in US**  
shortens life by 10 years



**4,2 million (2,9 year  
shorter living)**  
premature deaths per year  
due to outdoor air pollution



**300% rise since 1975,  
1,9 billion adults worldwide**  
adults overweight

**+12% or 2,000**  
deaths rise by 12% in  
Netherlands during heat  
waves. 20% exposed to noise  
pollution: affects > 100,000,000  
people in Europe alone



**422 million, 1,6 million deaths**  
people worldwide have diabetes



**1 in 2**  
people have chronic conditions  
Stress is #1 occupational disease

**1 in 5**  
has money problems



**1 in 6**  
young workers experience burn-out

**1 in 2**  
not enough exercise < 2.5h/wk

Sources: WHO, RIVM, CBS, EEA. Similar statistics in many developed countries.

# RED ZONES

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GET RID OF?

**You can create vital time by doing more of what you enjoy.  
But also by getting rid of the things that bother you.**

Which 2 things would you like to do more often?



What would you like to stop?



Take a minute to experience  
the effects of a feeling of  
relaxation or tension.



# IN DER BESCHRÄNKUNG ZEIGT SICH ERST DER MEISTER. - GOETHE





## EXERCISE A

### ABOUT LIMITS

Where do you reach your limits?

How can you use these limits to help you accept something or as extra motivation?

**MAKE YOUR LIMITS PRODUCTIVE.** USE THEM AS MOTIVATION.

# IN THE RED ZONE OR VITAL ZONE?

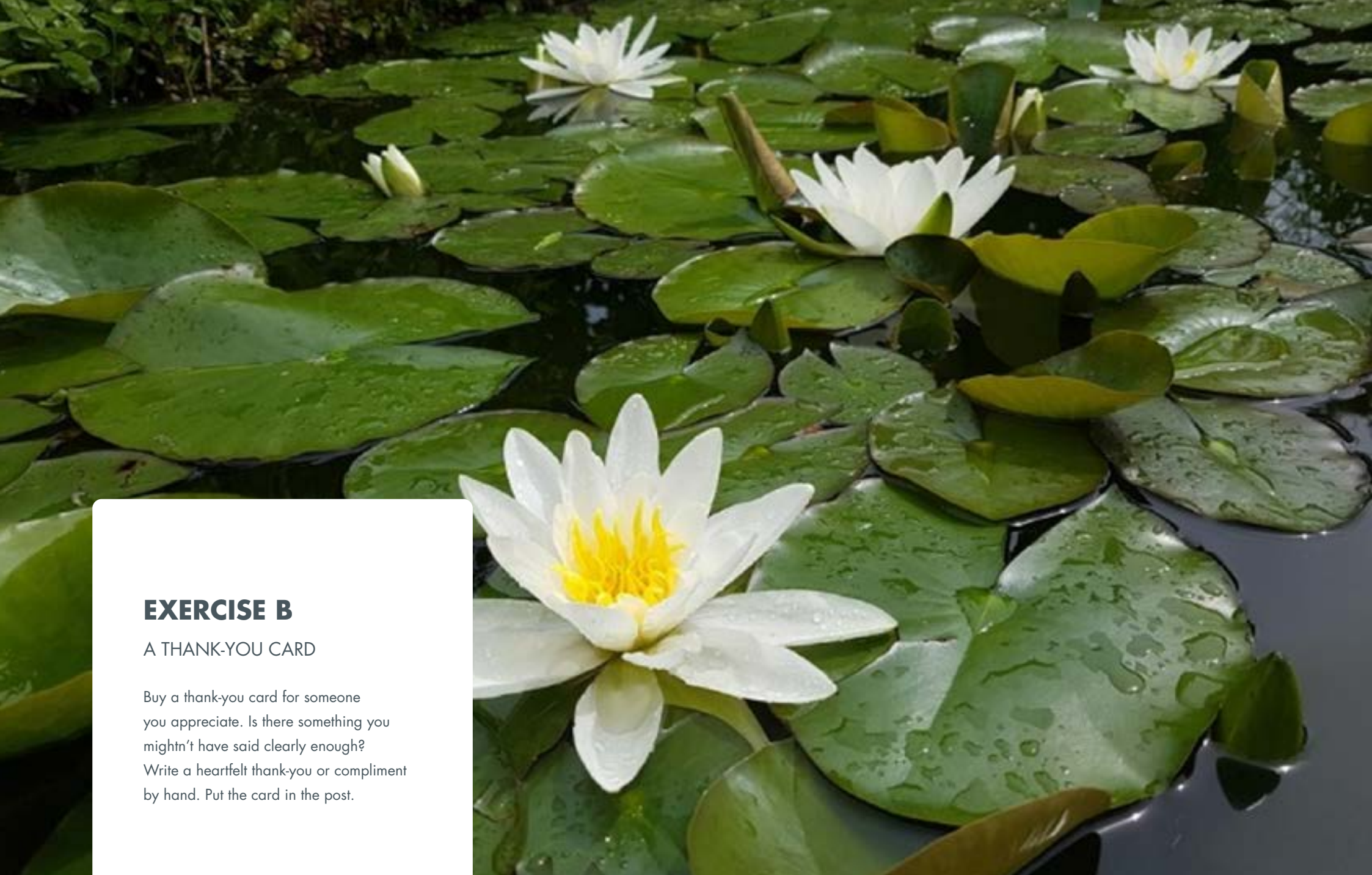
**Vital stands for happy, relaxed, content. Red stands for tense, bored, powerless. Do more of what makes your life more vital or less red. That counts. That's how you get energy, carry on and cope well with setbacks.**

You learn every day. Sometimes you keep repeating or trying even though it's not working for you. That's when you need to unlearn habits. Leave it and do something else. Maybe find out what you need to learn and what will solve the problem. So your starting point can be a need or a problem. These usually feel compelling and urgent. You can also listen and act based on an opportunity or target. This can be a vague or a specific ambition or just an idea that makes you happy. Because these demand less attention, they consciously deserve time and space. We take a practical approach and go a bit deeper, so you're not constantly weeding and clearing up mess, but tackling the source. This means solving it on a different level from where it appears every day.



YOU DON'T **UNDERSTAND** UNTIL YOU PRACTISE.





## EXERCISE B

### A THANK-YOU CARD

Buy a thank-you card for someone you appreciate. Is there something you mightn't have said clearly enough? Write a heartfelt thank-you or compliment by hand. Put the card in the post.

GIVE COMPLIMENTS **MORE OFTEN.**



# IN A SPLIT: OF COURSE IT HURTS

**Maybe you're wondering why your emotions are all over the place or where your energy leaks away to. You fill one hole and already there's another one there. Why isn't every day quality time?**

This is because conflicting interests lead to tension. Persistent tensions are not singular but plural. Here are three of them.

## **Split 1**

you've got lots to do, but can't get anything (meaningful) done.

## **Split 2**

you know what you should do, but don't do it.

## **Split 3**

you're doing your absolute best, working hard. But don't really know why you're doing it. And it never seems enough.

Everyone has their own favourite way of doing the splits. It hurts if you just jump into it. But it's not that bad if you're trained and flexible. If you bring suppleness and strength to bear. You do this by accepting the tension, reducing it or making it productive. You achieve this by listening differently. Moving differently. And looking afresh at what counts. And we could all use a little help with that. We'll start with yourself.



**THE SHORTEST WAY TO SOLVE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM IS A DETOUR.**



## EXERCISE C

### THOUGHTS

Which habits or thoughts often make you feel worse afterwards?

Stop them.

**STOP THINKING THOUGHTS** THAT DON'T LEAD ANYWHERE.



# STOPPING YOUR PIRATE PRANKS

**Like everyone else, you have feelings, thoughts, habits and situations that you want to get rid of. Some of them were useful once, but not any more. These are “pirate pranks”. They’re emotional, draining, they undermine your relationships and weaken your performance.**

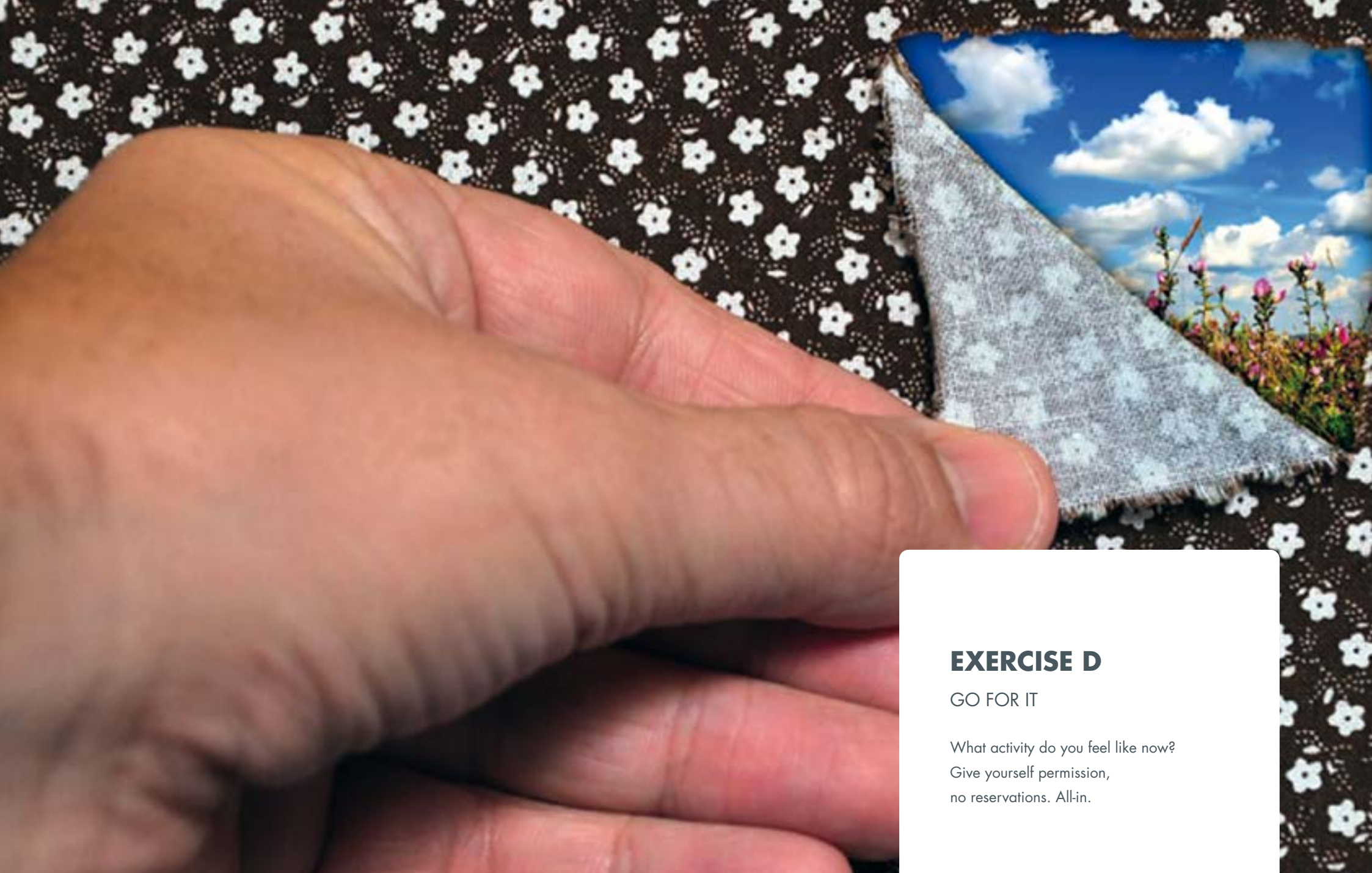
## **How do you recognise Pirate Pranks?**

Identifying them is a two-step process:

- a) Something keeps repeating and takes a lot of energy.
- b) You have a good story to explain why it still makes sense to keep doing exactly the same thing. There’s often a reward there, or a deep underlying conviction. And bam!, you repeat a) and work even harder and you’re still not happy. That’s how you stay doing a painful split. What’s gnawing at you, what don’t you want to see? The right move is: don’t run, listen first. What’s the pattern? What are my made-up reasons for allowing it? And then choose something else and give it a try. It doesn’t usually work out straight away! So repeat, and get support until it feels better. Your emotions will change too when you break these patterns.



**NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF DENIAL. RICKY FITTS, AMERICAN BEAUTY.**



## **EXERCISE D**

### **GO FOR IT**

What activity do you feel like now?  
Give yourself permission,  
no reservations. All-in.

**GO ALL-IN.**



# ATTENTION IS KING

**Hundreds of thousands of things try to grab your attention. Social media, scrums, online meetings, deadlines, clients, adverts, kids, money worries. Many of these attention-grabbers take much more energy than they give. You are king of your own life if you can influence your own attention.**

So attention is the key. Acceptance brings relaxation. If things clamour for your attention, let them pass. Then you don't need to move. Recognise that this is how it is. Don't fight. Just listen. This brings peace.

Attention consists of a direction (of perspective) and an emotion. For example, the sound of an incoming message can make you restless or curious. Shifting attention gives you freedom to choose. So you're not ruled by other people's agendas. And strengthen rather than undermine yourself. And fully enjoy the possibilities that this life offers you. Listening, moving and observing with attention. That determines what you do, how you feel and who you are with.



**TREAT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED.**

A landscape photograph showing a sandy path leading through tall, golden-brown grass. A single, leafy tree stands on the right side of the path. The sky is a soft, hazy blue, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

## EXERCISE E

### SIT STILL

Find a place in nature where you are welcome and won't be disturbed. Sit still for a whole hour. Listen to the sounds, feel the temperature, see your surroundings, hear your thoughts, notice your breathing. You don't have to do anything.

### HAPPY PLACE?

Take a picture of a place that makes you happy. Send it to [info@vitalzone.eu](mailto:info@vitalzone.eu). We'll share them later on our website or via LinkedIn.

N. Hendriks-Buysse

# WHERE'S THAT PARTY?



# TAKE CONTROL

## LISTENING, MOVING AND IMPACT

**A good process works wonders. That's how you get reliable cars and sound decisions. A good process gives something to go by. And helps to spend your time, attention and money well.**

**I listen.** You look for insight, not for a debate or who's right. You find out what's important, who or what is needed. You receive and assess information, hear different opinions, understand problems, wishes, viewpoints, facts. You don't have to do or say anything. You just stand still for a moment. Receive. Recognise what you hear.

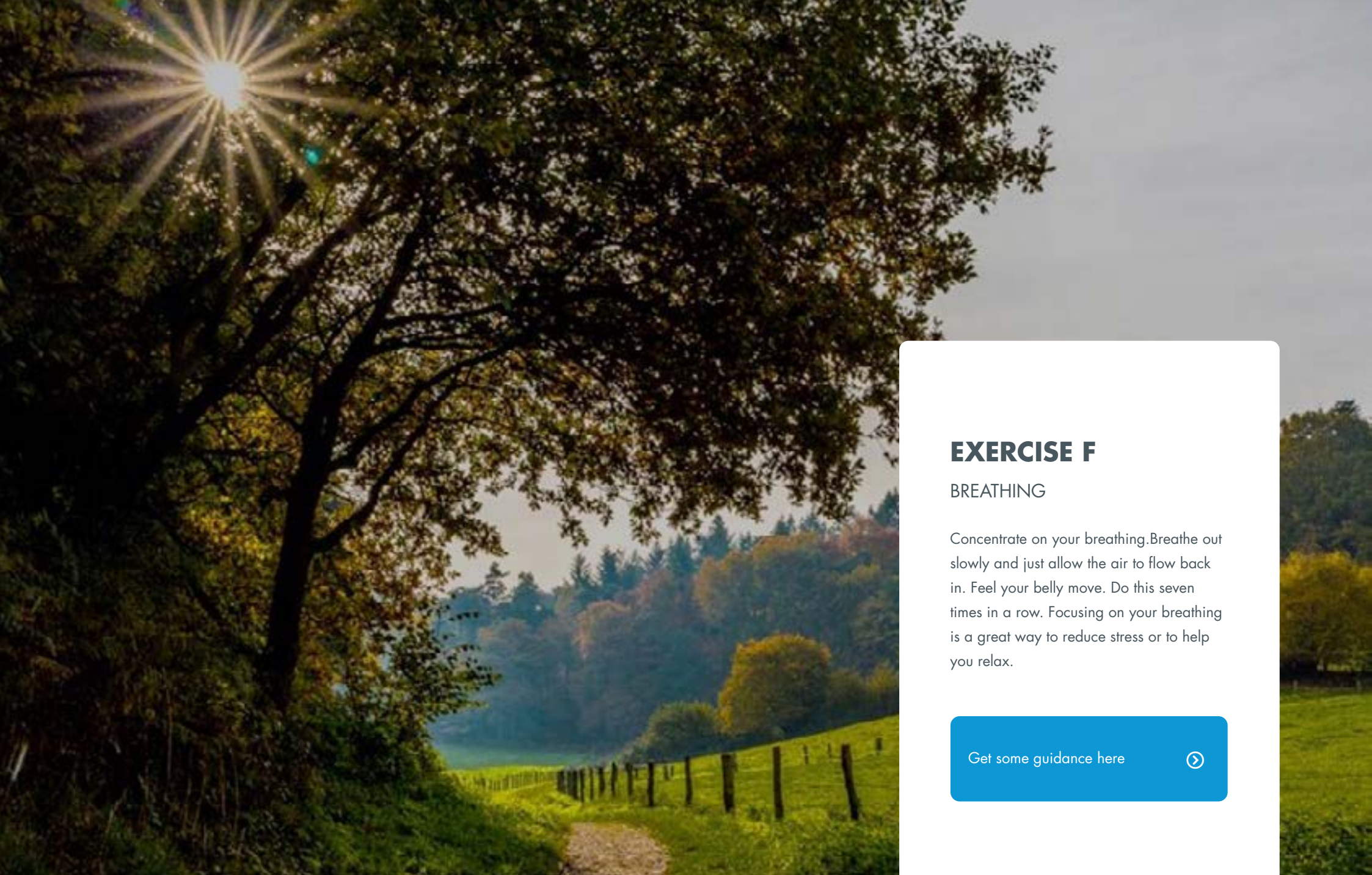
**I move.** You come up with solutions, take decisions, make proposals, take control, invite others, take the next step, get off to a quick start, learn by doing, finish strong. And as footballers say, you play the ball forwards.

**I have impact.** You get reactions. Some good, some bad, some indifferent. How are your ideas received? How do you support others' proposals and dreams? What works (or doesn't)? What wants to happen? What will get bigger? What will get smaller? What will stop?

Impact is a consequence of thousands of conscious and unconscious decisions taken by both yourself and others. Listen, move and see what really matters. Feel calm, present and free while you listen and move.



**LET THE OTHER MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON YOU.**



## EXERCISE F

### BREATHING

Concentrate on your breathing. Breathe out slowly and just allow the air to flow back in. Feel your belly move. Do this seven times in a row. Focusing on your breathing is a great way to reduce stress or to help you relax.

[Get some guidance here](#)



**REDUCING STRESS** BY BREATHING.



# VITAL TIME STARTS WITH LISTENING DIFFERENTLY

**Sometimes you get stuck in a rut. Like a hamster in a wheel. You hear the same thing and react the same way. You're stuck in a relationship or perspective. This causes stress and holds you back. Questions and views that you keep repeating have a powerful effect on your well-being. Questions with a strong judgment have intense repercussions.**

A different answer starts with the question. Questions that give you energy are more interesting in your life than standard questions that numb you. The questions you ask in your mind or put to other people divide your attention and energy.

You can listen to what someone wants or listen to actions. The best is when you do what you want to do. It's not always possible, but more often than you think. On the next page is the WilDoe matrix. It helps you to sort out your thoughts and your actions. And offers four ways to listen and move. And so get more vital time in your life and work.

Fill it in and discuss it with your family, colleagues or department. Discuss what has priority for you and why. And how you can support each other.



## PLAYING

### WITH QUESTIONS

Which question or statement irritates you:  
A, B, C, all three of them, or none of them?

**A** Can I do this?

Someone else can do it much better.

**B** Why doesn't the other person just  
do what they have to do?

**C** I think the manager/customer is unhappy.

Which question has a positive effect, brings  
creative tension or peace: A, B, C, D, E, or  
none of them?

**A** What went well today?

**B** How did my colleague impress me again  
today?

**C** What do I propose?

**D** What do I learn from this failure?

**E** What am I going to stop?





Dominant questions and statements lie behind  
your splits. Ask yourself interesting questions  
more often.

**WHAT IS A MIND FOR IF YOU CAN NOT CHANGE IT? - EDWARD DE BONO**

# WILDOE:

## CLARITY BRINGS PEACE OF MIND

**Wanting something and not doing it, or doing something you don't want, takes a lot of energy. You can help to resolve this with the WilDoe®. What do you want and what do you do? Fill in the WilDoe.**

-  What seems like a mountain to you? What do you want to stop? What do you hate? Make a list of activities and thoughts. Be honest with yourself. Really feel it.
-  What's going well? What boosts your energy? What results do you achieve with little effort? What do you enjoy?
-  What would you like to contribute? Who do you want to make a difference for? If you had all the time and money in the world, what would you do?
-  What do you worry about? What do you protect yourself against? What do you keep saying no to? What temptation don't you give in to?

Download a form here or listen  
to a podcast that will help you  
to fill in and apply the WilDoe.



# WHAT DO YOU WANT AND WHAT DO YOU DO?



# EXAMPLE



Going to bed late or sleeping badly  
 Too many online meetings in a row  
 Too much Netflix, TikTok and screen time  
 Getting annoyed at colleagues who don't do their job  
 Having little influence over my work  
 Feeling very tired every day  
 Unhealthy weight BMI = 27  
 Covid-19 Lockdown

Don't want & doing it



Hiking or playing sports 3 times a week  
 Earning enough money to live on  
 Taking care of my family  
 Supporting colleagues  
 Eating a varied diet  
 Being there for sick family members  
 Coaching  
 Little travel time

Want & do already



Little social activity in Covid peak  
 Losing job/going bankrupt  
 High excess for health insurance  
 Buying new car  
 Pollute

Don't want & not doing it



Want & don't do (yet)

Writing a book or doing a vlog  
 Going on holiday abroad  
 Setting off fireworks  
 Changing jobs  
 Having more time for the kids  
 Visiting festivals  
 Good workstation, wifi and office chair  
 Starting a new business

  = first

SET LIMITS **LOVINGLY.**



**KEEP MOVING.**



# PRIORITISING BRINGS CHANGE

## 1% DIFFERENT PER WEEK IS ENOUGH

### 4 types of action for feeling alive and doing well



#### Make it important

What would make a big difference if you could change it?

#### Choose

Choose one thing you'd like to change (yes, just one). You will give this special attention. What's your decision? Decide firmly (not half-heartedly). Circle the thing that you're going to give special attention. The thing you're going to do or drop. In two weeks' time, listen to how you've moved. Put it in your diary now.

#### Do

- How are you going to tackle it? Do you need someone's help?
- What small steps can you take right now?
- Get support from 2 or 3 people. Make it easy or reward yourself after small steps. Do what works for you.

#### Successes and lessons

Show yourself and others where you've succeeded each week.

**YOU HAVE TIME** TO DO THE THINGS YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT AND DO THEM WELL.



**DO WHAT COUNTS** BY SAYING YES AND NO.



# DECISIVE POWER

## THE RIGHT MOVE WITH THE EXCELERATOR

**People spend a lot of time on naming their problems. It makes sense not to get stuck in repeating and confirming why something isn't good now. It really does pay off to use your energy and intelligence to listen differently and move forward. The Excelerator helps you to make smart progress on a vague feeling, big ambition or impossible situation. Moving informs and creates opportunities.**

What's on your mind? What would you like to see achieved? Make the move that suits your situation until it works or you choose a different goal.

To make more possible, you need to find out where you stand and how you are moving. What move is needed here and now? Can you make it? Can you ask loved ones or managers to help you with this? Explain where you really are so others can move with you.

1. What you want is already done. It's noticeable for yourself and others tell you it's been a success. No move is needed. Celebrate. You're on level 1 of the Excelerator. Choose a new ambition tomorrow.

2. You have made a clear decision and know what you need to do. You also (still) have or can gather suitable resources. You're on level 2 of the Excelerator. Your move is: do the right action and leave the rest.

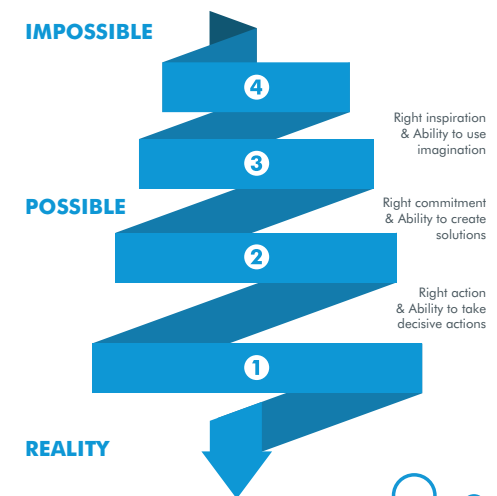
3. You see various possibilities and you feel enthusiastic. You're on level 3 of the Excelerator. Your move is: make the right decision. Wanting and being able. Ask support. Implement the right solution that suits your talents and abilities.

4. You consider something important, but it seems impossible. You hope it's possible but it feels alarming, daunting, too big or too heavy. You're on level 4 of the Excelerator. Your move is: find the right inspiration. Don't make (new) promises!



### EXCELERATOR

The right focus from idea to reality



[www.vitalzone.eu](http://www.vitalzone.eu)

**VITALZONE**

\*) The Excelerator was developed by Jim van den Beuken and described in The Putting Patients First Field Guide: Global Lessons in Designing and Implementing Patient-Centered Care (Wiley, 2013)

**YOU CAN'T SKIP A STEP.**

# EXAMPLE EXCELERATOR: MORE PURPOSE IN WORK.

## What am I looking for?

I feel less and less fit and have too much work on my plate. I don't have the drive to find a new job or different tasks. And Covid-19 is making everything very uncertain.

## Where am I on the Excelerator?

I'm nearly always positive in fact. But if I'm honest, I'm on level 4 of the Excelerator just now. And I'm not happy about it, but don't think I can change it at the moment. I hardly ever see my manager and colleagues. I can imagine a plan, but it's against my better judgment. I'm bad at getting exercise or saying no. But I'm not doing anything about it. My self-diagnosis: I'm going to look for inspiration, no strict new goals, no projects.

## Next step:

Make an appointment with my manager for next Thursday about reducing my workload. Tomorrow/on Wednesday I'll take the morning off and go for a walk in the woods or along the waterfront. Next week I'll call a friendly colleague at another organisation who's been through all this before. That's all. Then I'll see what the next step is.



4



3



2



1

**Position:** can't go on like this.

**Need:** right inspiration, relief, examples, relaxation, let go.

**Position:** nice ideas.

**Need:** right decision, free up resources, specify details, timing, get permission

**Position:** good plan.

**Need:** right action, smart plan, learn while doing, no to distraction, energy from interaction.

**YOUR NEXT STEP MATTERS.**



## EXERCISE G

### FIND YOUR STARTING POINT

Arrange the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 in a line on the ground. Picture the ambition or problem in your mind. Go and stand on the number as it is now. It's quickest to be honest. What is your next step? What or who do you need for that? Make the move. Take the step. Listen on the way. Enjoy the road.

Discuss the Excelerator with a loved one or colleague. Where are they? Where is the first need, inspiration, commitment or action? What can you do to help each other?





## EXERCISE H

WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO BE?

WHO DO YOU LIKE TO BE WITH?

Seek them out more often.

Tidy up your work room. Put on some music. How you can brighten things up?  
e.g. flowers, artworks, good chair, lick of paint, bigger screen, etc.

Annemieke Wiercx, Goirle

**SEEK OUT NICE PLACES MORE OFTEN.**



# TRAINING TALENT AND STRENGTH

It's useful to actively train your power to move, like a muscle. Then you can walk, run or jump further on the Excelerator. You develop your strength, precision, intensity, with less effort.

## From 4 to 3: train your imagination.

Change the questions you ask yourself. Play with them. Think about how you feel. Defer your judgment. Do gratitude exercises. Identify at least two different solutions to each question. Find out how someone else or nature has solved a similar problem. How does something usually happen? Break that pattern.

## From 3 to 2: train your problem-solving.

From 3 to 2: train your problem-solving. Make a suggestion more often. Be sure to word it so precisely that you want it and can do it. Be aware of favourable conditions. Say Yes, Yes if, No unless or No. Commit to your goal and your people. Not vague. Not half-hearted.

## From 2 to 1: train your decisiveness.

Take a step right away, even if it's not perfect. Let go of anything that doesn't serve. Persevere. Downs are all part of it. Make a good impression. Ask for feedback and get really good at the job.

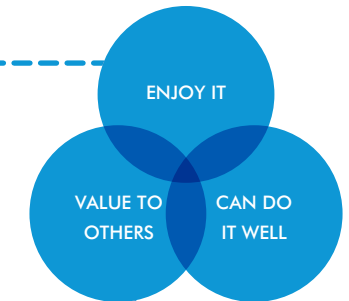


### YES. MOTIVATES.

*Out of enthusiasm, not forced or hurried.*

Think, say and do what really matters to you. Invest.  
Be open to new opportunities. Choose a constructive environment.

YES, WORTH IT

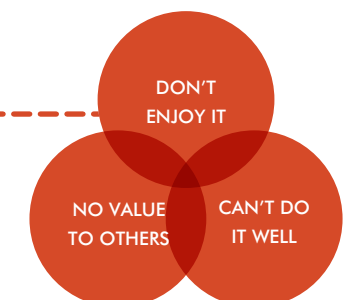


### NO. PROTECTS.

*Out of kindness, without anxiety, anger or accusations.*

Think, say and do less of the things you don't want. Save.  
Say what you do want. Say goodbye to a negative environment.

NOT WORTH IT



**YES OPENS UP. NO SAVES ATTENTION, TIME AND MONEY.**

# YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Everyone likes to make a difference. It hurts to feel superfluous, unwelcome or ignored. Luckily, there is only one of us. With our energy and decisions, we influence others and the environment. And others influence us. And that is noticeable. We cause ripples. And yes, we leave an impact.

There are two kinds of results. The first is a point. You do something, make something or complete a project. The second result is space. You create atmosphere, clear the way or fertilise the soil to allow something to grow and flourish. The second type of result is often unseen. But oxygen in the air around us is vital for life even though it's invisible too. It's enough to listen well and make smart moves. And strengthen your team at home or outside.

It's good to be aware of influence. You have lots of influence within your five-metre zone. This is easy to see when you walk into a room, ring up a colleague or spend some cash. A decision makes an immediate difference. In a 500-metre zone around you, your influence is harder to see. And in a >10 km zone, you're surrounded by other people and organisations all running, braking or standing still.

## CAN YOU COUNT?

If you focus on things, they weigh heavier.

Train your observation every day and see what you notice. Count:

- hoe vaak je opstaat en zin in de dag hebt
- how often you get up looking forward to the day
- how often you smile in a day
- how often you let someone ahead of you in a queue
- how many times in a week you manage to meditate for 10 minutes
- how many steps you take on average
- how often you do someone else's job with satisfaction
- how often you listen at least 60% instead of talking in a meeting
- how often you have at least 2 hours a day of social contact
- how often you set your automatic email response between Friday 6pm and Monday 6am
- how many days you walked barefoot on the grass
- how many times you say yes, but...
- how often you criticise colleagues
- how many times you and your colleagues have cycled around the world (40,000 km)

So feel free to count what makes your red zones smaller, less frequent, less intense and your vital time zones easier, more frequent, freer. Maybe counting isn't the hobby for you. And even if it's not, what you count grows.



**TODAY IS A GOOD START.** AT LEAST ONE LITTLE PARTY IN YOUR MIND EVERY DAY.







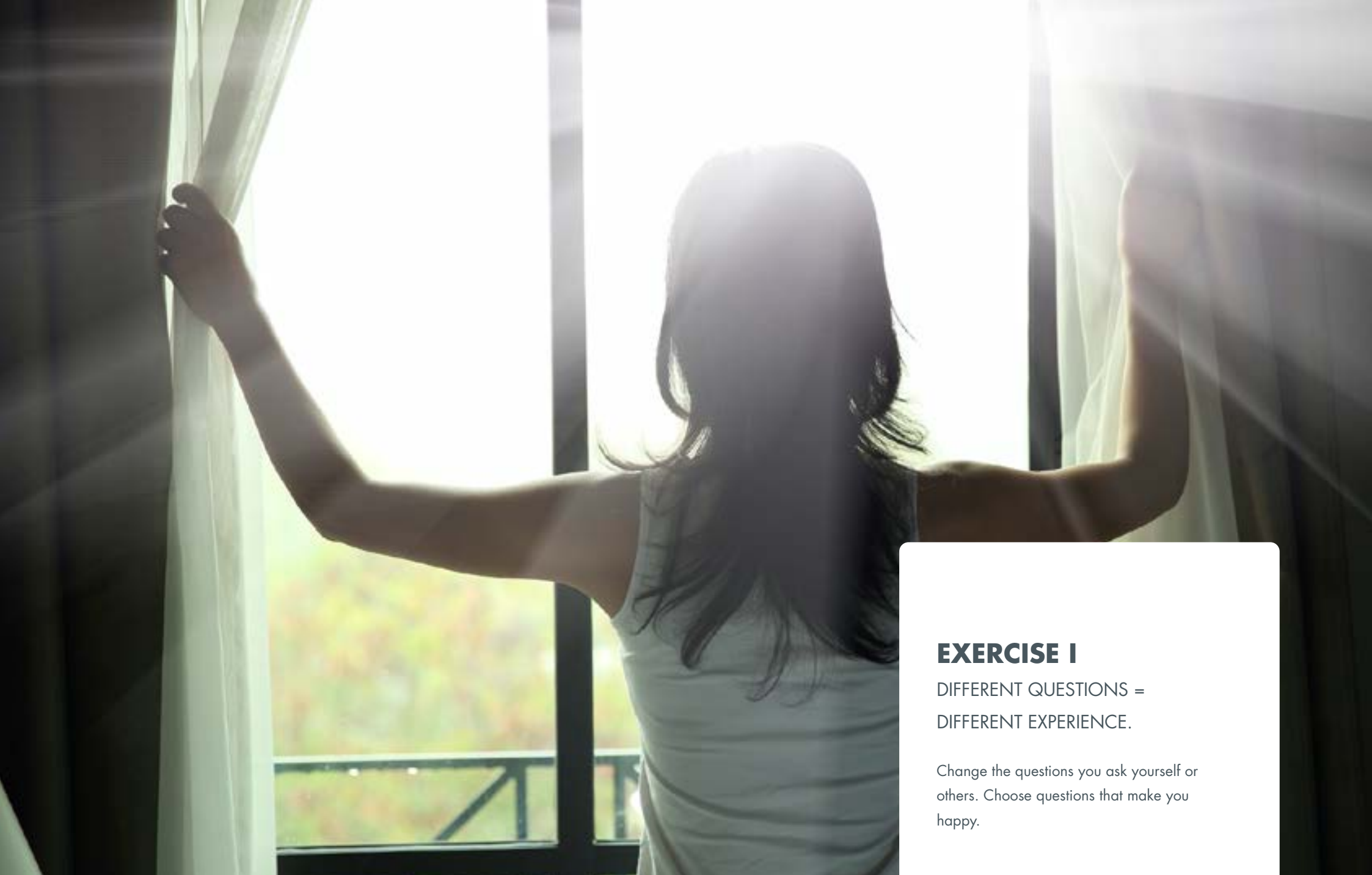
# DEVELOP YOUR OWN VITAL ZONES

**Blue or vital zones are areas where people live, work, play and grow old in a happy, healthy environment.**

You can do something for yourself or your loved ones (5m), your living and working environment (500 m) or for your city, region or the world (>10 km). Six pillars to build on.







## **EXERCISE I**

DIFFERENT QUESTIONS =  
DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE.

Change the questions you ask yourself or others. Choose questions that make you happy.

**ASK QUESTIONS** THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY.

# PURPOSE

A reason to get up, feeling the energy flowing in your veins, looking forward to seeing people, feeling passionate about working on a project. That gives life colour. In places where lots of energetic 100-year-olds live, you see everyone taking part and contributing, engaging actively in work and play, taking care of those who need it, enjoying a drink, having plenty of social contact and being able to put setbacks into perspective.

 "The purpose of things is to give purpose to them."

Gloominess, excessive stress, too little sleep, burn-out and meaningless work are directly related to health and vitality. Purpose is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

There's a lot you can do yourself or together with others. Choose what brings purpose. Volunteering, learning new things, less screen time, meditation, getting enough exercise, being in nature, using your talents, silence, spending time on interests such as music, sport or art, finding allies, helping others, laughing with neighbours, family or friends, sharing worries and grief, taking control of meaningful work, having attention and time for family and loved ones, being present, not worrying too much.



A man in a black t-shirt, dark jeans, and a blue helmet is performing a stunt on a BMX bike. He is riding up a vertical white pole that has several black and red rings attached to it. A yellow and black striped safety cable is also visible, attached to the pole. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

## EXERCISE J

MOVE EVERY DAY

Get 20 minutes of moderate exercise every day. Choose something you like to do.

**MOVING KEEPS BODY AND MIND FIT.**



# MOVEMENT

**Getting enough movement into your day is important for your health and happiness. In places where many fit and healthy people live, you see 100-year-olds cycling, gardening, walking to the shops and playing games with neighbours. They've done it all their lives.**

We all know that a sedentary lifestyle is associated with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, premature death and obesity. Exercise combined with eating good, tasty food in moderation often makes you feel more energetic. Movement is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

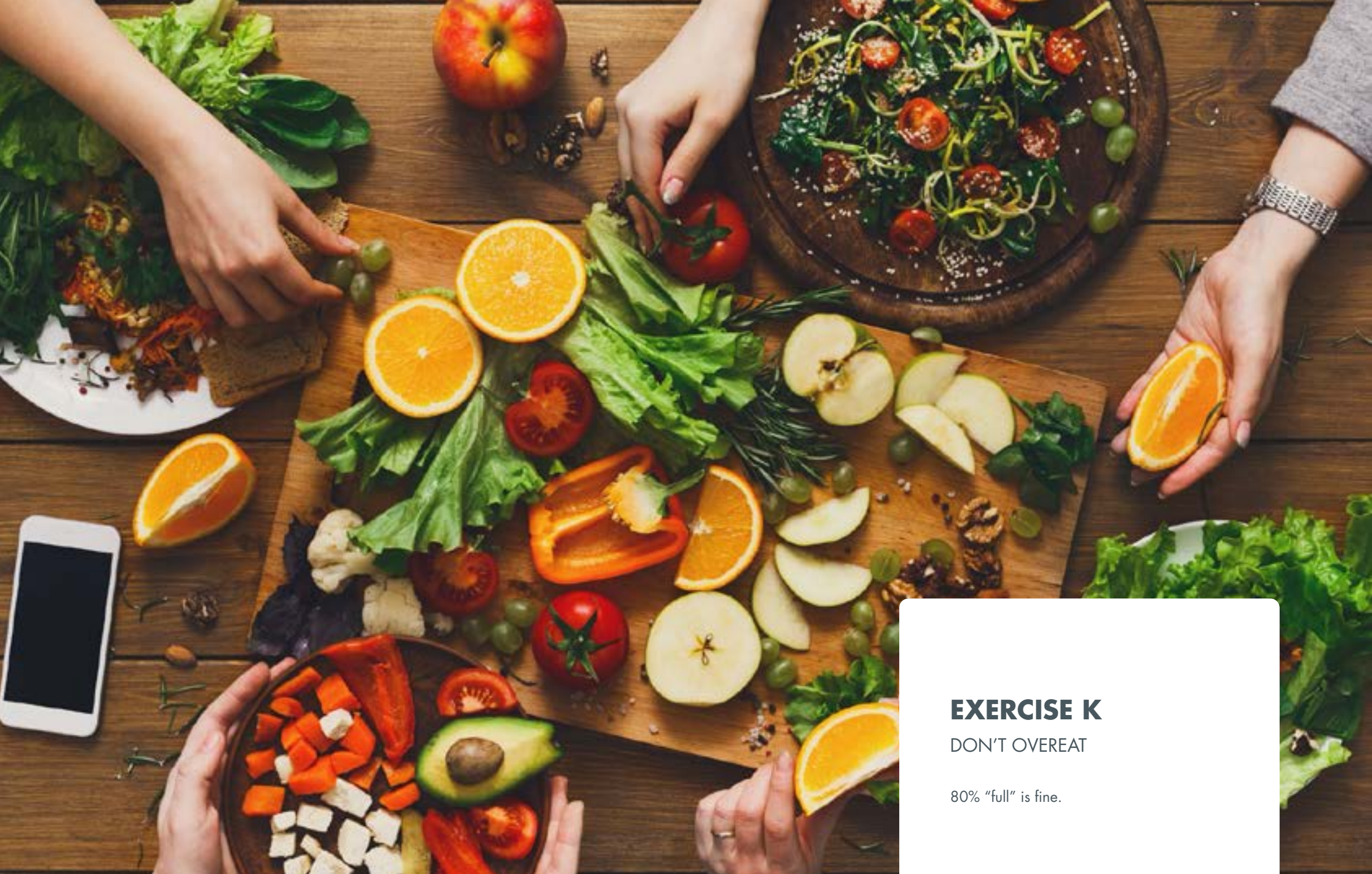
 "No need for more sport, just start with less sitting still."

Exercise can be light, such as washing dishes, washing the car, going to the shops, cleaning the bathroom, taking a lunchtime stroll, going to see colleagues in person rather than messaging, playing darts, gentle swimming, tai chi, painting, gardening or slow walking. More intense exercise might be running, trampolining, running up stairs, fast walking, cycling, playing football or horse riding.

Wondering how movement counts?  
Check out the MET values.







## **EXERCISE K**

DON'T OVEREAT

80% "full" is fine.

**MAKE IT EASY FOR YOURSELF TO MAKE HEALTHY DECISIONS.**



# GOOD FOOD

Life begins with good food. Good, tasty food is important for your health and happiness. In places where many fit and healthy 100-year-olds live, you will see tables with lots of vegetables, fruits and nuts, water or tea (no soft drinks), legumes, local vegetables, more fish and oil (unsaturated fat).

We all know that bad eating patterns can cause obesity, poor sleep and disease. Good food combined with exercise often makes you feel better. Good food is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

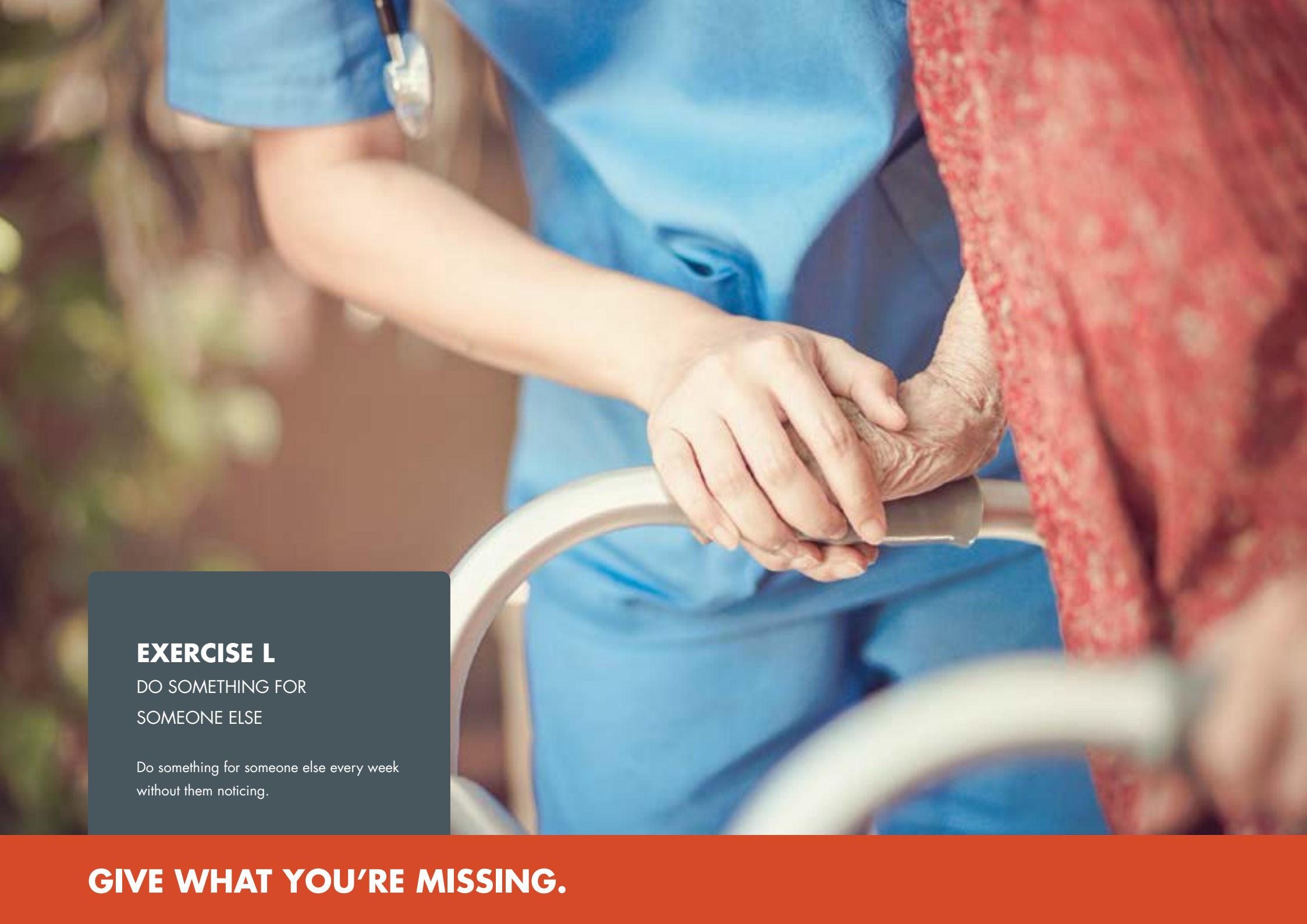


“Let food be your medicine, not medicine your food.”

The trick is to eat tasty and healthy food. Plenty of fruit and vegetables, wholemeal products, skimmed and semi-skimmed dairy products, with moderate alcohol intake, a handful of unsalted nuts per day, less salt, two meat-free days, no smoking, 5 glasses of tap water per day and less or no sugar in drinks, no yo-yo dieting. Make it easy for you to eat healthier. Eat a varied diet and stop eating when you’re no more than 80% full, go grocery shopping on a full stomach, put fruit out in plain sight, use smaller plates, teach children to enjoy fruit and vegetables as snacks at a young age. And see the dietary advice of the [Netherlands Nutrition Centre Foundation](#) or the [Heart Foundation](#).







## **EXERCISE L**

DO SOMETHING FOR  
SOMEONE ELSE

Do something for someone else every week  
without them noticing.

**GIVE WHAT YOU'RE MISSING.**

# MEANINGFUL WORK & INCOME



**Meaningful work is good for others and for yourself. Do what matters and leave the rest. Creating a society where everyone can take part and feel useful. Income that provides sufficient scope for education, good food, accommodation, healthcare, exercise, internet and mobility. Not causing damage or passing negative effects on to later generations or other regions. No greed. By authorities and businesses. Meaningful work and income is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.**

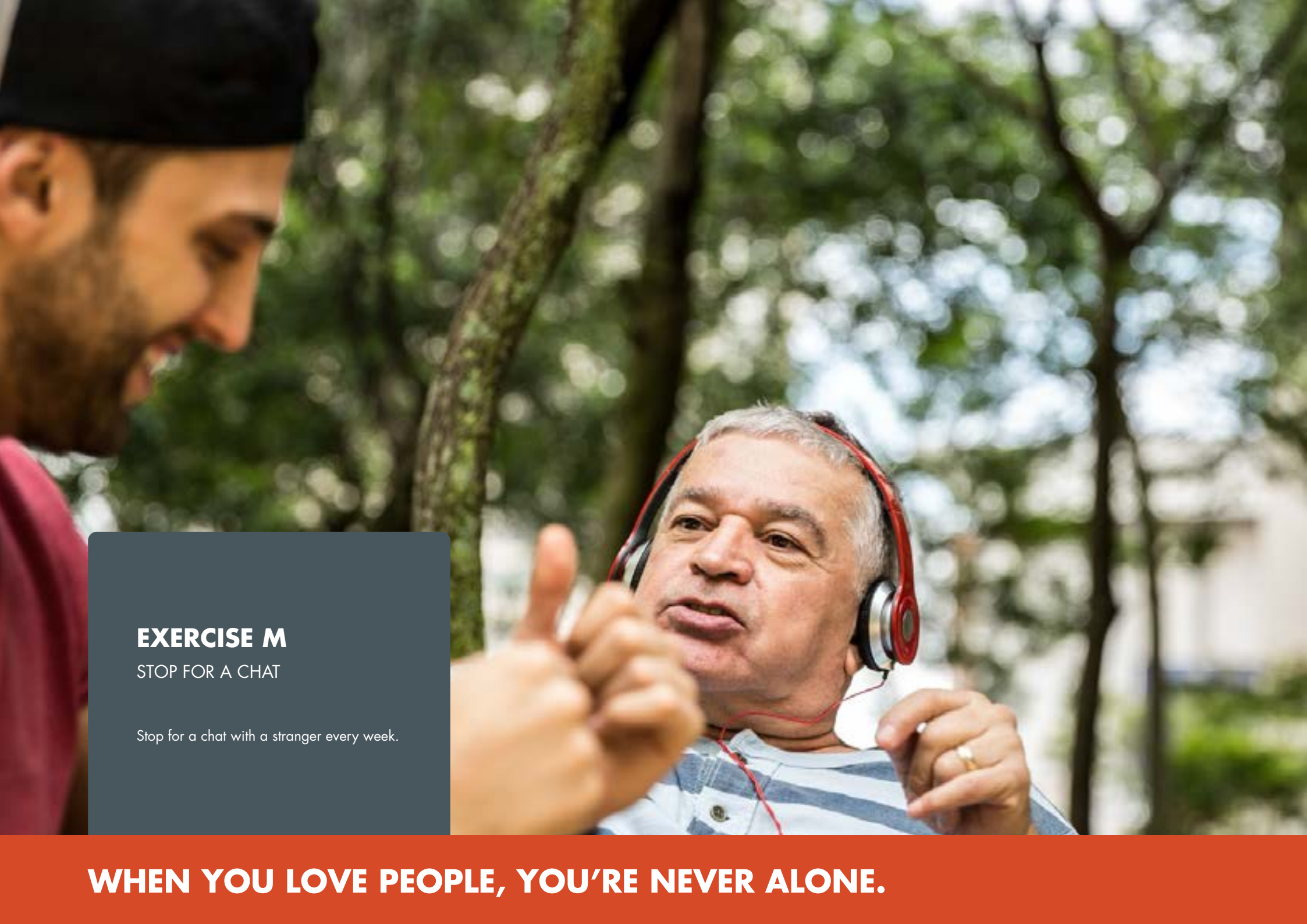


*"A wise man lives as much within the boundaries of his mind as his income."*

There are things you can do as an individual, an employer or an organisation. Choose your own work and employer, use your autonomy and talents for a healthier and greener whole, divide attention between meaningful work and acceptance that stress and rubbish is all just part of it (paperwork, meetings, etc.), be a good colleague, be helpful to customers or local residents and communities. Continue to enjoy using your talents and resources.

The Vital Zone Institute has developed a special designation for employers and neighbourhoods with concrete goals and noticeable progress. It also offers training, education and coaching.





## **EXERCISE M**

### STOP FOR A CHAT

Stop for a chat with a stranger every week.

**WHEN YOU LOVE PEOPLE, YOU'RE NEVER ALONE.**



# BELONGING

**We can't exist without others. A safe environment in which you belong. You count and are valued just by being there. In places where many fit and healthy 100-year-olds live, you see a neighbourhood where people know each other, greet each other and come together. Grandparents and kids playing together. Having time for each other. Trusting each other. Talking to each other.**

Being unwelcome and not being seen makes people feel sad, some of them angry. Loneliness is a massive problem, not just for the elderly but for young people too. Belonging is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

 **"A house becomes a home when it is shared with others."**

There are things you can do yourself or with others. Stopping for a chat in the street, not quarrelling over trees or gardens, finding out what someone can do and asking for it, join local initiatives like nextdoor, making a living room of the neighbourhood, setting up a local healthcare or energy cooperative, helping colleagues, listening for 50% of the time instead of talking, cleaning up the neighbourhood, maintaining your home, joining with others to support a good cause, as an organisation acknowledging people in the environment (nuisance, noise, light, emissions), being a good employer where employees and customers feel they belong.





A photograph of four children playing in a shallow stream surrounded by lush green trees. In the foreground, a young boy is splashing water, creating a large splash. Behind him, another boy is running towards the camera, and two more children are visible further back on a wooden bridge or platform in the stream. The scene is bright and sunny, with sunlight filtering through the trees.

## **EXERCISE N**

### **VOLUNTEER**

Volunteer in your local neighbourhood.

Kees van de Veen

**DON'T WASTE TIME, THINGS AND TALENT.**



# HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The environment has a major impact on your health and opportunities. Clean air, fresh water, a healthy soil and access to nature. Green is good for your physical and mental health, and for the world's climate. Air pollution such as particulate matter literally takes months off your life. A healthy living and working environment is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.



"A developed country allows all its citizens to enjoy a free and healthy life in a safe environment."

You can do something yourself, with your neighbourhood or an organisation. Planting trees and cycling instead of driving reduces particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and CO<sub>2</sub>. A healthy diet including local produce is also good for the environment. Buying less or sharing more. Getting together to clean up litter makes for a nicer neighbourhood. Solar panels and insulation are a step towards energy-neutral and help to cut costs. More greenery instead of paving creates a pleasant atmosphere, prevents heat stress and saves water. Healthy living prevents illness and medical expenses. Rivers and waterways stay cleaner with less pollution from agriculture and industry. We can only do this together.





## About Jim van den Beuken

Develops, leads and facilitates. Strengthens leadership. Simplifies complex tasks. Inspires creative tension. Director and co-founder of the Vital Zone Institute. Founder and former chairman of Planetree NL. Principal of Creative Power.

## About the Vital Zone Institute Foundation

Together with colleagues Annemieke Wiercx and Marlies Kampschreur and a tight-knit core of organisations, we help to create a healthier society. By bringing fresh perspectives, forging coalitions, providing training, acceleration teams and impact assessment, we act as a lever

## Want to dive deeper as a professional or as an organisation?

[Click here for the possibilities](#)



[Or send us an email with your inquiry \(info@vitalzone.eu\)](#)



# VitalTime

---

FEELING ALIVE  
AND LIVING THREE  
YEARS LONGER

✉ [info@vitalzone.eu](mailto:info@vitalzone.eu)

🌐 [www.vitalzone.eu](http://www.vitalzone.eu)

