

Increase your productivity

Using an effective altruist approach

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Why productivity matters

Impact is our goal

This document is intended for people who want to do the most good with the limited resources we have – independent of the path they have chosen for doing so. The following tips aim to increase your productivity in terms of being more productive per unit of time, having more time, spending less money, improving your health, and increasing your happiness. Unfortunately, it is easy to get lost in productivity advice and hard to effectively optimize your productivity. Therefore, this document focuses on the most impactful tips.

Money is our currency

When talking about our limited resources, we usually refer to time and money. Both of these resources are valuable and convertible into one another. If you do earning-to-give, your hourly wage is often a good approximation for how much one of your hours is worth. Taking this into account as part of the costs of a potential action and comparing it to its benefits can simplify your decision-making.

Happiness keeps us going

To keep up our work over an extended period of time, it is important to take care of ourselves physically and mentally. When thinking about our well-being, we should distinguish between happiness and desire. The latter is defined as strongly wishing for or wanting something – but oftentimes the desired things don't make us very happy. While we should optimize for happiness, we should pay close attention to not optimize for desire. Also, one should differentiate between [in-the-moment happiness and remembered happiness](#). Intuitively, people think they remember their in-the-moment happiness, but their remembered happiness is surprisingly different. While ideally, we would only need to optimize for in-the-moment happiness, remembered happiness is often similarly or even more important to us. Nobel Prize laureate Daniel Kahneman [explains](#) it as follows: “People don't want to be happy the way I've defined the term – what I experience here and now. In my view, it's much more important for them to be satisfied, to experience life satisfaction, from the perspective of ‘What I remember,’ of the story they tell about their lives.”

Research backs us up

The title of a scientific [publication](#) summarizes the relationship between money and happiness: “If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right.” Based on empirical research, the authors propose eight principles to help consumers get more happiness for their money:

1. *buy more experiences and fewer material goods*
→ The distinction between experiences and material goods is quite vague (e.g. buying hiking shoes or the possibility to hike safely). Therefore, the researchers asked participants about purchases the consumers were able to easily put into one of the two

categories. When looking at the results, it was pretty clear that their happiness increased more when buying experiential instead of material purchases¹.

2. *use your money to benefit others rather than yourself*
3. *buy many small pleasures rather than fewer large ones*
4. *avoid extended warranties and other forms of overpriced insurance*
→ *While a warranty is pretty much always net-negative in expected value (because the company providing the warranty needs to make a profit), it seems that for items that are important to get your work done the productivity lost from broken items is much larger than the cost of the warranty. Having a warranty not only means it often gets fixed more quickly but also that the time investment required to get it fixed is much smaller. So for laptops and similar items, a warranty can be worth it. For items whose main purpose is happiness, a warranty is most likely not worth it.*
5. *delay consumption (profit from the benefit of anticipation and more)* → described [here](#) (h/t Ben)
6. *consider how peripheral features of your purchases may affect your day-to-day life (think about a typical day in your life instead of expecting a purchase to have a lasting impact on your happiness)*
7. *beware of comparison shopping (focus on the attributes of a product that will be important for your happiness instead of attributes that distinguish the available options)*
8. *pay close attention to the happiness of others (predict your enjoyment by looking at reviews).*

How to be more effective per unit of time

Have a productivity system in place

1. Find your methodological match: There's no one-size-fits-all productivity system, so we encourage you to try different approaches. Don't be afraid to adjust popular approaches in case they don't work for you. Some methodologies and setups we liked:
 - a. [Deep work](#): Focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task.
 - b. [Time blocking](#): Plan out every moment of your day in advance and dedicate specific time "blocks" for certain tasks and responsibilities.
 - c. [Pomodoros](#): Break your work down into short, timed intervals (called "Pomodoros") that are spaced out by short breaks.
 - d. [Getting Things Done](#): Keep track of what you need to do, should do, or should consider to do.
 - e. [Personal Kanban](#): Manage your to-dos while avoiding to take on too much at once, and always having a visual, at-a-glance look at your work.
 - f. [How I Am Productive by Peter Hurford](#).
2. Free mental capacity: Write everything down including tasks (also recurring ones), notes, events, and deadlines. Eliminate as many distractions as you can, including notifications, pop-ups, and clutter.

¹ [E.W. Dunn et al. \(2011\)](#), p. 116: "Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) defined experiential purchases as those "made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or series of events that one lives through," while defining *material purchases* as those "made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good: a tangible object that is kept in one's possession" (p. 1194)."

3. Minimize switching costs due to multitasking and changing between contexts: Instead, try to batch similar tasks like answering emails or making phone calls.
4. Take advantage of switching benefits to keep your focus over a longer period of time: There's a saying that a change is as good as a rest. While taking real breaks is important, you can switch between different kinds of work like writing, coding, reading, or thinking to remain productive for very large proportions of a given day/week/year. All of these things can be very productive and the change in scenery can help to reduce the need for real breaks (h/t Ben).
5. Know your capacity: Make sure to be familiar with how much work you can reasonably get done – without risking a burn-out. Re-evaluate your current commitments and be critical when it comes to accepting additional ones. Most people underestimate the time they spend on tasks and projects. Therefore, it is very helpful to better understand your capacity. Tracking how much time you expect and use for individual tasks improves your estimates over time.
6. Plan for unexpected tasks: Scheduling your tasks is part of most productivity methods. Nevertheless, during the week, additional and sometimes important as well as urgent tasks will end up in your inbox. Therefore, it helps to allocate some time to unexpected tasks. The amount of time depends on your work. For example, for people with lots of firefighting tasks like project managers, not scheduling tasks on Fridays can make sense.
7. Review your work weekly (and quarterly): Conducting [weekly reviews](#) is one of the most important steps you can take to a) assess your productivity, b) improve your productivity, and c) ensure that your tasks contribute to your goals. Most [checklists](#) for weekly reviews include the following steps:
 - a. Pull out all loose papers, receipts, post-its, etc., and put them in your inbox.
 - b. Process your inbox.
 - c. Process your notes.
 - d. Review previous and upcoming calendar data.
 - e. Empty your head of everything not already in the system.
 - f. Process your mind dump as you would your inbox.
 - g. Review your to-dos.
 - h. Review your goals.
8. Try impact meditations: Ask yourself what you are doing and why you are doing it. This is an effort to prime yourself cognitively and emotionally for what you're trying to do (h/t Ben).

Optimize your workplace environment

1. Use (noise-canceling or sound-isolating) headphones: Depending on your environment and sensory sensitivity, high-quality noise-canceling headphones like the [Sony WH-1000XM3](#) or [Bose QuietComfort 35 wireless headphones II](#) can be worth the money considering the increased productivity.
2. Use a noise generator: [MyNoise](#) has [white noise](#) and [rain](#) with special speech blocker settings in the menu on the right-hand side.
3. Use virtual coworking: [Focusmate](#) (h/t Misha, who used it for 550+ hours) allows you to schedule 50 min one-on-one coworking sessions for \$5/month and offers an

experimental [EA Focusmate group](#) to work with EAs from around the globe. [Ultraworking](#) (h/t Misha, who used it for hundreds of hours) provides a moderated coworking in Zoom (30 min work | 10 min break) and a methodology to have much better [sessions](#) for \$50/month. These virtual meetings can also be used for things other than desk work like exercise or routines.

4. Work earlier or later than your colleagues if that fits your sleep schedule.
5. Improve your video calls: Follow the blog post on [how to make video calls almost as good as face-to-face](#).
6. Make remote work: Follow the [remote playbook](#) from GitLab.

Which programs and methods we use and how to set them up

Take a look at [which programs and methods we use and how to set them up](#) on different operating systems.

Acquire or improve frequently used skills

1. Examples: writing in general, specific kinds of writing (academic, mass media, short-form, etc.), reading, quantitative abilities, Bayesian calculations, red-teaming/adversarial thinking, coding.
2. Use spaced repetition: This evidence-based learning technique is usually performed with flashcards. Newly introduced and more difficult flashcards are shown more frequently, while older and less difficult flashcards are shown less frequently to exploit the psychological spacing effect. Create a spaced repetition practice for crucial knowledge relevant to your work and interests (h/t Ben). [Anki](#) is a great free app for this.
3. Use knowledge organization systems like the [Memory Palace technique](#) or the [Zettelkasten](#) method.

How to have more time

1. Chores:
 - a. Outsource low-attention chores (e.g. do laundry) or combine them with productive or relaxing activities (e.g. listen to podcasts or watch TV shows).
 - b. Buy a (second-hand) dishwasher: It's a small investment compared to the time savings and in general, dishwashers are [more energy and water-efficient](#) than manual washing. [Switzerland] [Leibacher](#) offers second-hand dishwashers for ~350 CHF including delivery and assembly.
 - c. Order groceries to your doorstep: [Switzerland] [Migros Online](#) is usually cheaper than [coop@home](#). You can also save some money by signing up for [Cumulus](#), Migros' loyalty card, or [Supercard](#), Coop's loyalty card. Feel free to mention that we (tanjaruegg@gmail.com) recommended Migros Online to you in case they still ask about it during the registration process. :)
 - d. Buy a (second-hand) vacuum robot: Basic ones are good for smaller flats; fancier ones with an internal map are good for larger flats or complex layouts (h/t Lars).
2. Cooking (the following tips save time and money but the appliances can add clutter):

- a. Replace some meals with [Huel](#) (use the referral code “Tanja Rüegg” to get £10) or [Queal](#) (£1 per meal). Queal offers a [7% discount for effective altruists](#) and a special discount (~50%) for EA organizers and GWWC pledgers but you have to contact Queal for the latter (h/t Misha).
 - b. Cook big amounts of soups, curries, etc. and freeze most of it in small portions (h/t Imma). Some approaches like [Meal Prep Sunday](#) or Once a Month Meals focus on cooking only once a week or month, respectively (h/t Ben). But this needs a lot of freezer space and I only know a few people who have been sticking to it for a long time.
 - c. Buy a rice cooker and use it for entire meals: Add raw vegetables, canned beans, tofu, spices, and rapeseed oil before cooking. If you eat rice frequently (more than three servings per day), the arsenic contained in it can be a [concern](#) and it might make sense to soak the rice overnight before draining and cooking.
 - d. Buy Swiss Rösti as a cheap, healthy, and low-effort meal (the big Rösti that takes up the whole pan, not the small ones that are sold under the name Rösti internationally).
 - e. Buy a microwave to create quick and healthy meals like the ones from [Peter McIntyre](#).
 - f. Buy a stand mixer to blend protein shakes or power smoothies like the ones from [Holden Karnofsky](#).
- To make sure your cheap, healthy, and low-effort meals are not causing undue suffering to animals, please refer to the tips on [how to easily substitute animal products](#).
3. Writing: Use an automated proofreader like [Grammarly](#).
 4. General: Evaluate which actions (e.g. buying a dishwasher or taking an Uber ride) end up saving time as Joey Savoie did in this [spreadsheet](#). Refer to [wirecutter.com](#) for all sorts of product recommendations (h/t Misha).

How to spend less money

Minimize your recurring expenses

1. Rent and entertainment:
 - a. Rent a cheap apartment. But make sure to not I) risk your health (e.g. mold present), II) waste your time (e.g. dishwasher not permitted), III) reduce your happiness and productivity by commuting (home should be close or have good public transport connections to work).
 - b. Share your flat with other people in case the potential negative effect on your well-being is worth less than the money saved.
 - c. [Switzerland] Ask your landlord to seal your cable contract to pay less rent: Usually, you pay a basic tier subscription fee as part of your rent because your landlord has a business contract with a specific cable provider. Nowadays, most people don't need a cable contract anymore or they choose one themselves. Check your rental agreement or your auxiliary cost statement to see whether you pay ~40 CHF per month for it.

- d. Find a mobile phone subscription with a good value for money: [Switzerland] [Salt](#) offers great deals but has a very bad cell phone reception in the countryside. If you're almost always in big cities, you should wait for one of their temporary promotions where you can get unlimited mobile data, calls, and SMS for 30 CHF per month.
 - e. Find an internet subscription with a good value for money: [Switzerland] [Salt](#) offers 10Gbit/s up- and download for 49 CHF per month (or 39 CHF per month in case you have a Salt mobile phone subscription).
2. [Switzerland] Health insurance, medications, and dentists:
 - a. Find the cheapest health insurance each year using a comparison website like [Comparis](#). Choose the lowest deductible in case you go to the doctor often and/or have chronic medical issues (rule of thumb for adults: yearly health costs of more than 1900 CHF). Otherwise, choose the highest deductible.
 - b. Don't buy additional health insurance. They are usually not worth the money.
 - c. Buy generic instead of original medicines. Generics are not just generally cheaper, you also only have to pay a deductible of 10% instead of 20%.
 - d. Order your medicines from an online pharmacy like [zurRose](#). It is quicker and cheaper than buying from your pharmacy in-person.
 - e. Find a dentist with a dentist's tariff ("Taxpunktwert") below or equal to 1 like [Zahnfair](#) in Zurich (Zahnfair's dentist's tariff = 0.9). Unfortunately, basic health insurance doesn't cover dental expenses and dentists are very expensive. The dentist's tariff indicates the price level of the dentist because it is used as a multiplier to calculate the price of individual services.
 3. Groceries and food:
 - a. While ordering food can be worth it to get more work done, eating out for fun is usually one of the most expensive things in terms of how much value one gets out of it. Generally, it's more effective to cook at home, keep it simple, healthy, and don't spend too much time on it.
 - b. Buy tasty and cheap food from Asian shops. They usually have many plant-based options like tofu and seitan (e.g. [mock duck](#)). Seitan, lentils, and beans are useful to make sure you don't just rely on soy to get protein (there is a great deal of [controversy](#) surrounding soy foods, mostly due to their isoflavones which can bind to estrogen receptors and affect thyroid hormone). Make sure to buy the [Healthy Boy soy sauce](#) when at an Asian store, it makes everything taste great.
 - c. Make cheap Seitan yourself: Home-made seitan is about 90% cheaper than store-bought seitan (not corrected for time investment) and can be packaged and frozen in the desired form, preparation, and amount for a long time. [Switzerland] Most shops will sell the base (wheat gluten) pre-packaged for 8-16 CHF/kg. The most cost-effective version is asking a local bakery that is supplied by [PISTOR](#) for the 12.5kg bag and sharing it among some people. Since we're adding another ~50% water to it while preparing, this drops the price of the finished product down to ~2.60/kg, compared to ~20-25/kg for store-bought seitan. The finished version will have ~40-70g protein/100g, depending on water content, which is really good value (h/t Dominic).
 - d. Create no-bake [protein bars](#) instead of buying unhealthy, expensive snacks.

- e. [Switzerland] In general, Lidl is the cheapest of the four largest supermarkets in Switzerland, followed by Aldi, Migros, and Coop. Lidl also offers cheap and tasty plant-based meat alternatives.
4. Subscriptions: Check your online banking account for regular payments you forgot to cancel or you don't need anymore.
5. Bank, credit card, and funds:
- a. [Switzerland] Choose the free mobile bank [neon](#) (use the referral code Y28CTN to get 20 CHF) from Hypothekarbank Lenzburg. It doesn't offer a debit card but a credit card that allows you to pay in various currencies with very low fees (similar to TransferWise*). The free mobile bank [Zak](#) from Bank Cler has a similar package that offers an additional discount but no low fees for other currencies. Unfortunately, I had very bad experiences with Zak's customer support (I ended up without any access to my money for 10 days while being abroad).
 - b. [Switzerland] Use the free American Express [Cashback Card](#) (use the referral code FC40XBP4B to get 40 CHF) with 1% cashback whenever possible and the free [Cumulus credit card](#)* with 0.33% cashback otherwise.
 - c. Convert money into various currencies and pay abroad with very low fees using [Revolut](#)* or [TransferWise](#)*.
 - d. Invest your money in exchange-traded funds (ETFs) like [VOO](#) or [VTI](#). Putanumonit has a relatively simple (US-centric) [guide to investment](#) and a great [explanation of the efficient market hypothesis](#) (h/t Miles). The cheapest options for Swiss investors are [Degiro](#) (for investments below USD 100'000) and [Interactive Brokers](#) (for investments above USD 100'000).
 - e. If you and your partner both have a credit card, ideally one should have a MasterCard and one should have a Visa. Sometimes only one of them will be accepted and sometimes the fees will be quite different.
- * These links contain a referral code so that we both get a thank you. :)
6. Hobbies:
- a. Invest in some sporting goods for your home or even a small home gym: The [Bowflex SelectTech 552 dumbbells](#) take little space and are designed very well for ~200 CHF (h/t Misha). Or instead of commuting to the gym, waiting until the squat rack is free (you should use free weights) and paying more than 400 CHF per year, lift at home if you have enough space in your flat. Buy a [power cage](#) (safety is very important), a [bench](#), a [barbell](#), and [weight plates](#) (~1000 CHF in total). It could be beneficial to try different machines (e.g. rowing machines can be very good value and exercise a lot of your body at once) by renting them or using a gym day pass to see whichever works best for you before making a rather expensive purchase (h/t Miles, Misha).
 - b. Buy your video games on [G2A](#): They are often permanently cheaper than Steam offers. The discount rate is extremely high in the gaming area. If you don't need the newest games to be happy and you can delay your gaming experiences by approximately two years, you'll probably save around 90% on game purchases. Also, with older games, you might be able to run everything without investing in hardware at all. If you need the newest games, don't game often, don't have a good computer and have a good internet connection, use cloud gaming instead of buying a gaming computer. We use [Shadow](#).

- c. This EA forum [post](#) written by Kat Woods offers a guide on how to maximize fun per dollar with limited resources.

[Switzerland] Don't neglect your pension

1. First pillar: OASI (Old Age and Survivors' Insurance; AHV)
 - a. Avoid a shortfall: Regardless of whether or not you are gainfully employed, you must pay contributions consistently to OASI and additional insurances, to be eligible for a full OASI pension when you come to retire. Employed persons must make contributions from 1 January following their 17th birthday until the standard retirement age, or until they leave their job, in case they work beyond the standard retirement age. Those who are not employed must make contributions from 1 January following their 20th birthday until the standard retirement age. Gaps in contributions result in a reduction in the OASI pension. If you miss a year's contribution, your pension will in principle be reduced by at least 2.3%. The contributions of persons who are not employed are deemed to be fully paid, provided their spouse or their registered partner is gainfully employed, and that his or her contributions – together with those of his or her employer – amount to at least twice the minimum contribution. To check if you have any gaps in contributions, order a free account statement [here](#). You can close gaps by paying the missing contributions. This is only possible, however, for gaps in periods during which you were insured in Switzerland and which occurred in the last five years. It is not possible to make up for missed payments from an earlier date.
 - b. Beware of the marriage penalty: While the marriage tax penalty is quite well-known (combination of incomes within a progressive income tax system), most people don't know about the marriage OASI penalty. When it comes to the pensions received by a married couple, they must not exceed 150% of the maximum pension for an individual. Thus, a married couple loses up to 14220 CHF per year based on the current laws. This [article](#) summarizes the financial pros and cons of getting married. A creative alternative is to organize a wedding ceremony without getting married legally (h/t Imma).
2. Second pillar: Occupational pension
 - a. Don't lose your work pension contribution when changing employers: If you change employers, you will need to transfer your existing contributions to the second pillar to the new pension fund. If you lose or quit your job, you will need to transfer the funds into a vested benefits account. This account will be locked until you get a new job (and a new pension fund) or you reach retirement age.
3. Third Pillar: Private pension
 - a. Invest your private pension in ETFs: In case you pay into the third pillar, invest in exchange-traded funds (ETFs) using a provider like [VIAC](#) or [finpension](#).
 - b. Reduce taxes by staggering pay-outs: In the third pillar, the withdrawal of pension assets is taxed. Since taxation is progressive, the percentage tax rate rises with increasing retirement capital. For this reason, it is worthwhile distributing your retirement assets among up to five accounts to enable a staggered withdrawal.

Optimize your travel

General

1. Book sooner rather than later. In case you buy tickets where you can't get a full refund: Take the uncertainty of your plans into account and don't book too soon. While booking early is cheaper, the price difference between a year and six months generally wouldn't be that large (h/t Imma, Miles).
2. Check whether flying really is overall more productive than traveling by train or bus:
 - a. Make sure to compare the door to door price and time. The resources for pre and after transport as well as waiting times can change the price and duration of a journey drastically. Compare different flight prices using [skyscanner.com](https://www.skyscanner.com).
 - b. Take into account the possibility to work, read, and relax during the trip.
 - c. Expect some degree of sleep deficiency when you travel in the evening or night or have to get up early.
 - d. If you are concerned about carbon emissions, compensate or have a heuristic like "if traveling by train costs X more or takes Y longer than flying, I fly".
3. Book a seat on the train if you expect the journey to be long and/or the train to be full.
4. Make sure you have mobile internet on the way. Plan in advance what you want to do.

Switzerland

1. If you frequently travel by public transport within Switzerland, buy a [HalbTax](#). When booking a train connection, check if there is a discount for the Intercity part of your travel. E.g. when traveling from Zurich to a village near Bern, buying a ticket directly to your destination may be much more expensive than buying a discounted fare from Zurich HB to Bern plus local transport tickets for the other parts of your journey.
2. For international travel, check the websites of the neighboring country's train company as well. Their prices are different and often lower ([Germany](#), [Italy](#), [France](#), [Austria](#)).

Germany (h/t Lars, Imma)

1. Cheap train tickets are generally bound to a specific connection. However, if your overall arrival time via that connection is expected to be delayed by 20 or more minutes, you may deviate from that route. This even allows you to take a faster connection which would often be more expensive. Thus, you could technically arrive earlier than expected.
2. If your train connection is delayed by 1+ hour, you can ask back 25% of the fare (2+ hours: 50%) using [this form](#). You are supposed to send the form via post, but we always got our money back when sending a pdf version and some introductory words to fahrkartenservice@bahn.de.
3. German train tickets often cost the same for any destination in the region. You can use this strategically to get a free regional transport trip to a neighboring town.
4. International tickets can be interrupted for up to 3 days. If you want to travel to place A in Germany, stay for some time, then continue to place B, you may be able to book a connection directly to B, via place A.

5. A BahnCard 25 gives you a 25% discount on all prices and is easily worth the cost after a few rides per year. The 50% discount card doesn't give a 50% discount on regional tickets or saver tickets.
6. You can collect a bonus point for every starting Euro of a ticket, and 1000 bonus points (valid for 3 years) give you a free trip within Germany – which you can use for your otherwise most expensive trip on short notice. Be aware that the free *international* journey for 2000 bonus points can only be redeemed at a German ticket office (information as of 2019).

Netherlands (h/t Imma)

1. Get the subscription from the Dutch railways that fits your lifestyle. See the [NS Flex website](#) to find out what's best for you. An NS Flex subscription is worth it even if you are in the Netherlands only occasionally. You can change your subscription every month (set a reminder for it!). If you have a subscription, get a *samenreiskorting* – 40% discount outside peak hours for up to three people traveling with you.
2. [Rent a bike](#) to reach your final destination – more flexible than a bus.

Resist lifestyle inflation

Spending more as you earn more is called lifestyle inflation, and it's a common spending trap. You can save a lot of money by making sure not to adjust your lifestyle expectations upwards just because you have a higher income.

[Switzerland] Benefit from file sharing

In Switzerland, downloading or streaming (but not uploading) content made available online without the copyright-holder's consent for private use is legal.

1. Research papers: [Sci-Hub](#)
2. Research papers and some books: [libgen.me](#)
3. Books: [b-ok.org](#)

How to improve your health

Especially when it comes to improving your health, experimenting with what works for you is highly important. The advice below should offer a starting point but isn't exhaustive. If something doesn't work for you, continue to try evidence-based solutions!

Improve your sleep

1. Optimize your bedroom environment:
 - a. Test different temperatures to find out which is most comfortable for you. Around 16-18°C (60-65°F) is best for most people.
 - b. Try to use a sleeping mask and/or blackout curtains to minimize external light.
 - c. Try to use earplugs to minimize external noise because even if the noise doesn't wake you up, it can still disrupt sleep quality. If earplugs aren't enough, try noise-canceling headphones (in combination with earplugs). This is also an option for side sleepers if they use a memory foam neck pillow. One can prevent

- the headphones from turning themselves off by having quiet music or a group of [tracks of silence](#) playing on a loop on the lowest volume (h/t Miles).
2. Increase bright light exposure during the day and reduce blue light exposure in the evening (e.g. using Twilight on Android, f.lux on Windows, Redshift on Linux).
 3. Don't consume caffeine late in the day.
 4. Try to sleep and wake at consistent times.
 5. Try a [melatonin](#) supplement. The recommended dosage is 0.3 mg even though most supplements contain 10-30 times that amount (h/t Miles).
 6. Rule out a sleep disorder.
 7. Go through the program [40 Winks](#) from ClearerThinking (h/t Misha).

Move your body regularly

These are the key points from a [post](#) written by Severin Trösch, an EA exercise scientist, about evidence-based recommendations on physical exercise:

1. Why exercise?
 - a. Exercise can enhance productivity (and thus impact) of EAs in two ways:
 - i. *Acute* enhancement of cognitive performance.
 - ii. *Medium and long-term* improvement of physical and mental health.
2. How to exercise?
 - a. Moderate-intensity and/or vigorous-intensity cardio exercise for at least 20 minutes per day on at least 3 days per week is recommended.
 - b. Additionally, resistance exercise (~3 x 10 repetitions with high intensity) for each of the major muscle groups should be performed on 2-3 days per week (can be combined with cardio).
 - c. Implementation example: Daily active commuting (fast walking or riding a bicycle for a total of ~30 min per day) and a twice-per-week visit to the gym (resistance exercise with initial supervision by a fitness-professional).
 - d. Two more (guided) inspirations for exercise: The [StrongLifts 5x5](#) program and a [high-intensity circuit](#) workout.

Additionally, [How to Pick a Program](#) can help you to find a program you can stick to (h/t Misha).

Minimize getting sick

The only way you get sick is when you come into contact with a virus or bacteria. Cold and dry air may irritate your mucous membranes, which makes your body more receptive to a cold virus. But you still need to come in contact with the virus. Therefore, you should minimize the risk of catching the virus with the following tips:

1. Try to touch your mucous membranes (e.g. your eyes, mouth) as little as possible.
2. When it comes to getting sick, getting a good night's sleep is the best way to minimize the intensity.
3. Keep a disinfectant with you at any time. Make sure to disinfect your hands after touching surfaces like door handles or light switches other people touched before. Especially if there are sick people around. In case you work in an office, ask your employer to have a disinfectant available, e.g. in the bathroom or kitchen. While traveling, you should disinfect your hands and surfaces you use frequently. Especially

on planes, where the air is very dry, make sure to disinfect your folding table. Additionally, you shouldn't drink tea or coffee on planes because they use fairly low-quality water and it's not unlikely to get sick after drinking these kinds of drinks. Instead, choose bottled or canned drinks.

4. Zinc is pretty much the only supplement which was shown to reduce the intensity of colds. Make sure to start taking zinc as soon as you feel the first symptoms creeping up. You should take up to 70 mg of zinc daily but start with a lower dosage since you can already feel quite nauseous after ~30 mg.
5. [Switzerland] To ensure proper care in case of incapacitating medical emergencies, you can name someone to represent you using a [Vorsorge-Auftrag](#) (needs to be completely hand-written!). You can also transmit specific instructions using a Patientenverfügung (h/t Lars).

Optimize your eating habits

1. Gaining and losing weight: If you consume more calories than you burn, you will gain weight (and vice versa). In case you want to gain or lose weight, keep it simple. Adjust the amount of food you consume and the amount of exercise you do.
2. Take supplements: [Veganhealth.org](#) is a very good evidence-based resource on which supplements to take. While it is optimized for vegans, many of the supplement recommendations also apply to non-vegans. One important supplement that's missing on [veganhealth.org](#) (because it's not needed in the U.S.) is selenium. If you're in Europe, you should supplement selenium (or make sure you get foods from selenium-rich soils). Conveniently, [Veg1](#) contains selenium in addition to vitamin B12, vitamin D, and iodine. Thus, we only supplement Veg1 and omega-3 DHA from algae.
3. Consume greens: [Powdered greens](#) (£25 for 100 days) can help you to eat enough green vegetables (h/t Misha). This can be especially hard because of the relatively high costs and the low shelf-life of green vegetables. BulkPowders very often offer discounts, so it makes sense to wait for the products to be ~40% off.
4. Simple substitutions of animal products:
 - a. Whey protein powder:
 - i. Ideally, replace it with pea protein powder if you don't mind the taste
 - ii. Otherwise soy protein powder (but make sure you also get other protein (from seitan and beans) in your meals)
 - b. Cow's milk:
 - i. Soy milk is the cheapest. Use unsweetened soy milk for cooking and sweetened (vanilla) soy milk for direct consumption. Use sweetened soy milk for cappuccino as it's very good at foaming (it depends on the brand though). However, make sure to always add the coffee to the milk (not the other way around) and mix them at a similar temperature to prevent clotting.
 - ii. Some people prefer almond, rice, or oat milk taste-wise but are a bit more expensive.
 - c. Eggs: Replace one egg with half a banana when baking. Alternatively, buy a designated egg replacement (online or in health food stores).

- d. This [spreadsheet](#) created by Joey Savoie compares different brands of plant-based meat and dairy products with regard to similarity to the corresponding animal product, price, size, flavor, texture, smell, and looks. The comparison focuses on products from the US and the UK.
5. Use [MSG powder](#) (£4 for 200 meals) and [nutritional yeast](#) to increase the umami of average plant-based food. There is no good [evidence](#) that it has any negative health effects for an average person but it does make bland, unhealthy food taste great which in turn could lead to a less healthy diet (h/t Misha).

Increase your mental health

1. People with seasonal affective disorder (SAD) should consider buying a [30K lumen lamp](#) for \$100. This [blog post](#) further explains what to look for.
2. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be used without a therapist, e.g. [Feeling Good by David D. Burns](#) and/or [UpLift](#)

How to increase your happiness

Choose your hobbies wisely

Consider the trade-off of costs including overhead vs. happiness: Skiing probably needs 100 times more preparation than watching a film (and even more so for costs). Do you get 100 times more happiness from skiing? This EA forum [post](#) written by Kat Woods offers a guide on how to maximize fun per dollar with limited resources.

Have a happiness system in place

Unfortunately, everyone has different things which make her or him happy. Therefore, we encourage you to try different relaxation techniques and hobbies to see what appeals to you. Don't be afraid to say no to things other people expect you to find relaxing like social gatherings. Some approaches we liked:

1. Be aware of your spare time and try to maximize relaxation, e.g. don't just watch an okayish TV show.
2. Try meditation with different approaches and stick to it for a while. For example, there's the app [Headspace](#) which offers guided meditation and is well-liked. You can also try different options like eating or walking meditation.
3. Rate your happiness at the end of each day with [Daylio](#) to better understand what makes you happy.
4. Try gratitude journaling by writing down three things you're grateful for at the end of each day.

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Additional resources (alphabetically)

- [Clearer Thinking by Spencer Greenberg](#)
- [Evidence-based advice we found on how to be successful in any job by Benjamin Todd](#)
- [Productivity Guide from Jonas Vollmer](#)
- [Things I Use from Gavin Leech](#)
- [Tools for keeping focused by Ben Kuhn](#)