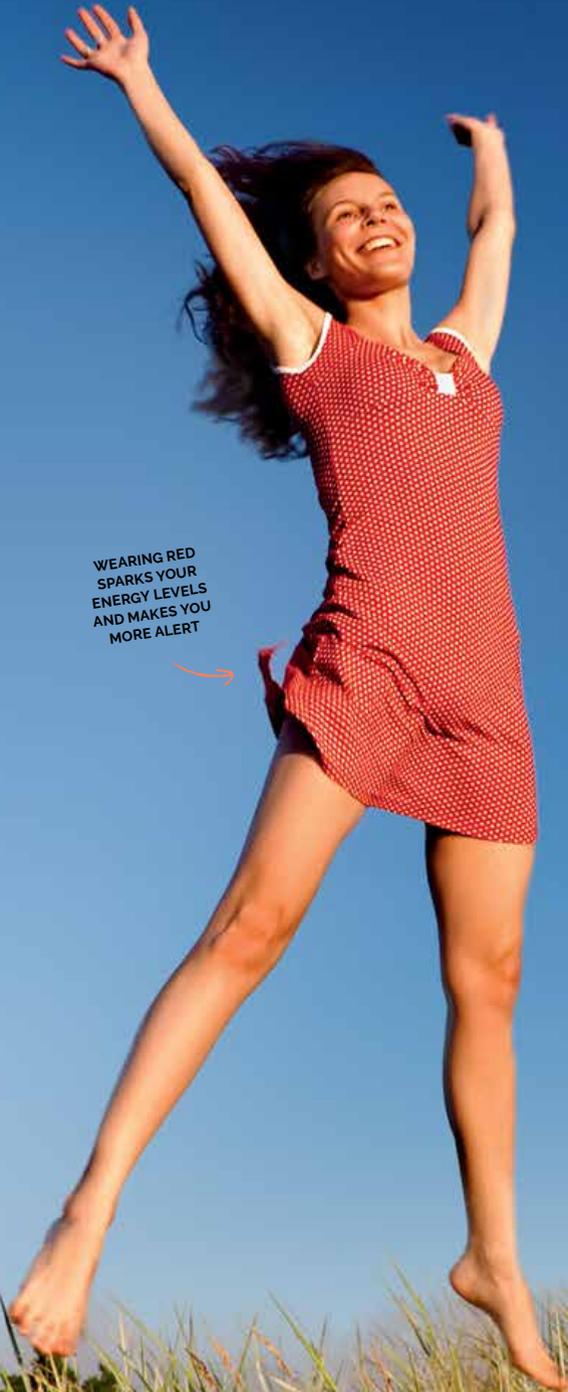




Ricardo Riskalla is one of Australia's leading Fitness and Health experts. Contacting Ricardo is the first step to living a healthy lifestyle.

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WEARING RED SPARKS YOUR ENERGY LEVELS AND MAKES YOU MORE ALERT

# 18

ways to

# CHANGE YOUR LIFE IN 2018

Switching the colour of your clothes or rearranging your office furniture could result in a new you. Tweaks like these may also leave you wealthier and happier

WORDS DILVIN YASA

**D**on't believe the naysayers: giving your life the makeover it deserves this year doesn't have to mean daily 10km runs or embracing an all-green diet.

In fact, it turns out there's plenty you can do to stick a rocket where it's most needed — whether it's your finances, general wellbeing or personal relationships — without too much effort. The key? The ability to think outside the box.

## OVERHAUL YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

### 1 TACK ON AN EXTRA 30 MINUTES OF SLEEP

Not only will doing so help regulate your body weight, but studies show this extra sleep could also give your immune system a healthy boost — particularly during the cooler months.

To help encourage rest, sleep medicine research scientist Carmel Harrington recommends a bedroom makeover by removing the TV, any laptops or tablets, bright lights and the clock radio.

"It's also a good idea to assess whether you have the right mattress and pillow suitable for your sleep style," Dr Harrington says.

"And invest in block-out blinds, an eye mask and ear plugs if you can't change the circumstances of your environment." [sleepforhealth.net.au](http://sleepforhealth.net.au)

### 2 BUY SOME RED GARMENTS

Looking for more spring in your step? You can increase energy levels by wearing red, according to University of Rochester researchers.

They say merely looking at the colour makes you feel more alert, and also encourages your muscles to move quicker and with considerably more force.



### 3 AIM TO HAVE SEX ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK

Lock in a little between-the-sheets action with your partner once or twice a week and you could boost your immunity by up to 30 per cent, researchers at Pennsylvania's Wilkes University say.

They found our levels of the antibody immunoglobulin A spike immediately afterwards. What's interesting is that the same results were not recorded in those who have sex more or less frequently.

### 4 PLAY CLASSICAL MUSIC WHILE YOU EAT

Keen to lose a couple of kilos? It could be a simple case of turning off the TV during mealtime and playing some soft and slow background music instead.

Researchers at Cornell University say those who follow this approach tend to consume about 732kj less each meal.

Australian Music Therapy Association treasurer Jeanette Tamplin says the research is to be believed. "Music, particularly rhythm and tempo, can influence behaviour and physiological function," Dr Tamplin says.

"This is based on the principle of entrainment where rhythms synchronise together, for example, exercising to a fast beat can help you run faster or listening to slow music can reduce your heart rate." [austmta.org.au](http://austmta.org.au)

### 5 PERFECT THE ART OF SIT-UPS

A strong core creates perfect posture, mobility, and above all, quality of life, according to personal trainer Ricardo Riskalla, of RawFit.

To give your body that edge, start this year by doing 10 sit-ups a day and increasing those numbers little by little each day.

"When you become used to doing 10, it's easier to stretch it to 15 and so on so that by the end of the year, you can easily do up to 500," Ricardo says.

[rawfit.com.au](http://rawfit.com.au)

### 6 INTRODUCE FERMENTED FOODS INTO YOUR DIET

Give your mental health a boost by adding a spoonful or two of sauerkraut or kimchi to salads, or by serving them alongside mealtime favourites, Fermentanicals

nutritional health coach Jayta Szpitalak says.

"The fermentation process also redigests the foods and changes their nutrient profiles, so that essential vitamins and minerals are easier for your body to absorb," Jayta says.

[fermentanicals.com.au](http://fermentanicals.com.au)





**FORTIFY IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS**

**7 MAKE ONE NEW FRIEND**

Countless studies have been published in recent years extolling the benefits of having a few good friends. One of these studies, by Brigham Young University, found those with a small group of mates enjoyed a significantly higher life expectancy than loners. Not sure where to start? Consider:

- ✓ **Joining a book club or other hobby group**
- ✓ **Taking part in a speed friending event**
- ✓ **Posting a profile to find-a-friend sites**

**8 CREATE YOUR THIRD SPACE**

Make a positive impact by taking a moment to visualise how you want to act before you enter a space, says peak performance researcher Adam Fraser, who refers to this habit as the Third Space.

"The last thing you want to do is take your work stress home with you to negatively impact your family, for example, so before you open the front door, ask yourself, 'What sort of partner do I want to be? What sort of parent do I want to be?' Then it's a simple matter of following it through," Dr Fraser says. [dradamfraser.com](http://dradamfraser.com)

**9 CALL YOUR MUM**

Make a nightly appointment to talk to your mum and keep it. A University of Wisconsin-Madison study shows hearing your mother's voice boosts oxytocin levels and reduces stress hormones.



**BOOST YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

**10 LEARN TO BE PRESENT**

Don't let the days fly by in a blur; learn to anchor yourself in the present by training your mind to take in what's around you at any given moment.

To do this, experts swear by sitting quietly for a moment and identifying five things you can see and five you can hear. Then continue by identifying five tastes, smells and things you can touch.

**11 START A JOURNAL**

We all have our baggage, but it seems those who write (three to five times a week) about their feelings are far more likely to recover quickly from traumatic experiences than those who don't, according to University of Texas studies. Researchers put it down to having an opportunity to relive and process feelings, which also leads to a decrease in stress levels and depression. Go on, get writing!

**12 TAKE A DAILY NATURE WALK**

Whether it's introducing a morning stroll, or changing the cafe where you get your afternoon coffee, incorporate a pre-3pm walk among greenery into your daily routine.

Doing so has been proven to:

- ✓ **Decrease stress and anxiety levels**
- ✓ **Increase productivity**
- ✓ **Boost creativity levels by an average of 60 per cent, according to a study by Stanford University**



CONNECTING WITH NATURE REDUCES STRESS AND BOOSTS CREATIVITY

**IMPROVE YOUR GENERAL WELLBEING**

**13 PRACTISE BREATH OF FIRE**

Think more clearly and act more precisely by focusing on the way you breathe, advises brain trainer and Intrinsic Brilliance Institute founder Divya Darling. She says increased energy is linked to the breath of fire technique, which works to oxygenate the brain. "Take a deep breath in and then exhale quickly in short, sharp bursts until you can exhale no more," Divya says. "Then repeat for two full minutes." [intrinsicbrilliance.com.au](http://intrinsicbrilliance.com.au)



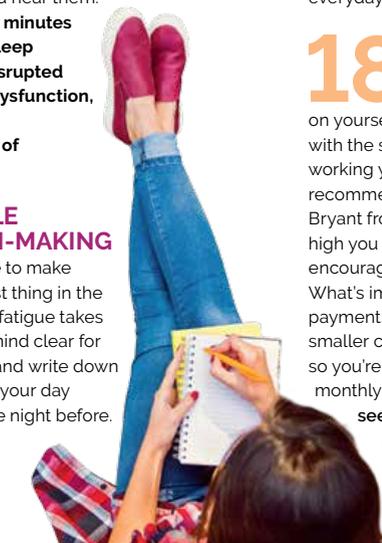
**14 REARRANGE YOUR OFFICE**

Claim the space under the nearest window and push your desk over to it immediately. Sure, the fresh air would be nice, but even if the windows don't open, Northwestern University researchers found those sitting at desks positioned near them:

- ✓ **Enjoy an additional 46 minutes more of uninterrupted sleep**
- ✓ **Are less likely to be disrupted by associated daytime dysfunction, such as poor focus**
- ✓ **Register higher levels of emotional wellbeing**

**15 SCHEDULE DECISION-MAKING**

The best time to make important decisions is first thing in the morning before decision fatigue takes over. To help keep your mind clear for the important stuff, plan and write down all trivial decisions about your day (such as what to wear) the night before.



**INVEST IN YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH**

**16 REFINANCE YOUR MORTGAGE**

Take five minutes to call your bank about refinancing options and you could save yourself thousands of dollars a year, financial planner Penny Collicot, of Edge Financial Planning, says. "If you can save just 0.5 per cent per year on a \$500,000 loan, that saves you \$2500 a year," Penny says. "It might only be just more than \$200 a month, but put that over a 25-year loan and suddenly it's more than \$60,000." [edgefp.com.au](http://edgefp.com.au)

**17 PAY YOURSELF FIRST**

Organise for a portion of your pay to be direct debited into a separate account the minute you get paid, so that wealth creation comes before everyday spending.

**18 CLEAR SMALL DEBTS**

Feeling overwhelmed by debt? Make things easier on yourself by tackling the credit cards with the smallest balance first and then working your way up to the highest, recommends financial planner Susan Bryant from Seeds of Advice. "The high you feel as you pay off debts will encourage you to keep going," Susan says. What's important is you then tack the payments you were making on the smaller cards on to the larger ones, so you're paying off a lot more than the monthly minimum.

[seedsofadvicewordpress.com](http://seedsofadvicewordpress.com)