

# How to schedule the perfect weekend

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Amy Molloy

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Relax: a perfect weekend needs a perfect mindset.

Certain hobbies are proven to have mood-enhancing benefits, such as gentle exercise and being amid nature. Helping a good cause might be another fast track to contentment.

In Australia, about 4.4 million volunteers, from lifesavers to care workers, contribute more than 700 million hours of their time each year. And, according to studies cited by the Australian Health Promotion Association, 61 per cent of people who volunteer just five times a year say it helps them feel less stressed.

But experts warn that even charitable acts must be done for the right reasons.

"A lot of people seek external validation when undertaking activities," says Nadine Cameron, founder of wellbeing consultancy Body Map.

"They attend a party to be seen or shop for clothes they hope will impress people. The problem is it's impossible to guarantee others will be impressed and it creates great anxiety if you act from a place of ego."

As adults, we have responsibilities and not every weekend can be led by whims but Cameron says mindfulness is the key.

"Even brunch with your friends can be a miserable experience if you spend the time comparing yourself to others at the table. Focus on the texture of the food and the rhythm of conversation and it can be wonderful. Likewise, that pile of dishes you've been dreading washing up can be enjoyable to take care of if you focus on the relaxing temperature of the water.

"There is no formula for a perfect weekend, only a perfect mindset - positivity and acceptance."

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