

“Stop treating yourself as an afterthought. Eat delicious food, walk in the sunshine, jump in the ocean. Say the truth you are carrying in your heart like a hidden treasure. Be silly, be kind, be weird. There is no time for anything else”
~ Richard Gere



How to Hygge yourself happy

Hygge is not the secret of personal happiness, nor is it the only reason the Danes are consistently ranked as one of the world's happiest nations. But while Hygge may not be a miracle cure for discontentment, it does have a really positive impact on the daily life of the people of Denmark and therefore probably has something to offer the rest of us too. What follows is simply a compilation of hygge inspired things that could add to your store of happiness. They are not authentically Danish, and I cannot promise they will make any difference to your sense of well-being. But as most of them require nothing more than a few small, pleasurable adjustments and a slight shift in thinking, there is little to be lost in giving the ideas a try.

1 Give yourself a break

Danish people 'raise the white flag' and take a break from the demands and disciplines of everyday life. It's about making time to let your soul catch up with your body. Practicing a little self-kindness and learning to cherish ourselves a little bit more. So having regular time out, in which we do something gentle and pleasant without feeling guilty about it. Here are some suggestions:

- **Go for a walk.** It could be your journey to the bus stop in the morning, or a walk around the block in your lunchbreak. It's not about exercise, but about taking 20 minutes to notice the landscape or the townscape, and tune in to all that's going on around you. Leave your phone behind. And if you go with someone else enjoy their company.
- **Wake up early and read before you get up.** Maybe 20 or 30 minutes, a few times a week (it doesn't have to be every day). It can feel like an indulgent lie in when you do get up. Instead of reading it could be listening to the radio, meditating or having a cup of tea. The point is to enjoy some time in bed awake before you get up and face the day.
- **Pour yourself a glass of wine and phone a friend.** Stop multi-tasking on the phone, really take time to listen and be part of the conversation. If it's warm, sit outside in the garden. By concentrating on the conversation you really feel like you have spent some time together with your friend.
- **Take a bath.** Make it a real sensory experience. You can read, put on music, light candles and add beautiful aromatherapy oil. Anything that adds to the sense of self care.

2. Notice your downtime

Hygging yourself is a conscious activity that is enjoyed for what it is. It's not slobbing out and then feeling guilty later. You should be fully engaged in the activity, however inactive it is. This definitely crosses over with mindfulness, and being fully present in the moment and it does require some conscious effort. Hygging yourself is important, so make it a part of your weekly routine

- If you are reading, go somewhere quiet and devote yourself to that
- If you are sitting with a glass of wine in front of the fire, concentrate on the taste of the wine and the flicker of the flames
- If you are walking in the woods notice the smell of the earth, the colours of the leaves.
- If you are in a café talking to a friend, focus on nothing but the conversation and listen as much as you speak.

3. Celebrate the simple

Hygge is not about the high life. Of course you don't have to eschew all things hedonistic. But for most of us life offers more opportunities to celebrate simplicity than to indulge in excess anyway. Try these ideas;

- **Make your morning tea or coffee a moment of stillness.** Don't try to multitask while the kettle boils, simply listen to the sound of the steam.
- **Drink it from a lovely cup** or mug, something that feels good in your hands and looks good to you. This can enhance the experience no end.
- **Light a fire.** If that's not possible create the same effect with a mass of candles.
- **Bake something.** The slow patience required requires mindful attention. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, flapjack or biscuits is fine. And enjoy what you have made.
- **Fill a jug with flowers.** Whether a few stems from the garden, or a simple bunch of daffodils in a milk bottle. They bring nature indoors, and the colour and scent can enliven your everyday making you smile every time they catch your eye.
- **Give yourself a sensory treat.** A daily dose of sensory pleasure feels good. Cook your favourite food, run a bath with delicious oils in, pour a glass of your favourite tippie, light a scented candle, wrap yourself in a bog woolly jumper or soft blanket or the duvet. Sensory overload is not Hygge, so focus on one sense at a time, and give yourself the pleasure of the moment.