

## WEEKENDING

## Wellbeing

## Books

Why Meditate?  
Because it Works

Jillian Lavender



Maybe you've tried a meditation app but didn't stick with it, or done some meditation at the end of a yoga class and found your mind

wandering. Perhaps you're a regular meditator and want to deepen your practice. Whatever your experience *Why Meditate?* by Jillian Lavender, the co-founder of the London and New York Meditation Centres, can inspire you.

"Meditation has never been more popular, but its growth has led to confusion about what it is and what it can do for you," says Jill, whose aim is to clear up misconceptions and show how meditation can deliver real change.

Backed up with beautiful illustrations and real-life stories plus simple starter tips, Jill (below) explains the science behind meditation and outlines its benefits.

"Just 10 minutes" daily meditation can bring less stress, better health, slower ageing, improved sleep and greater mental clarity," she says.

"It works on a simple principle – more peaceful, calm and creative individuals create more peaceful, calm and creative communities. And the wonderful bonus is that these improvements and upgrades happen quickly – within days and weeks of starting to meditate you'll feel a positive difference."

How often does Jill meditate and what are the benefits? "Twice a day for about 20 minutes each time," she says. "My day is less hectic as a result of taking that time out. Because I am calmer, I feel more on top of things rather than feeling overwhelmed by everything on my to-do list." **Jane Garton**

*Why Meditate? Because it Works (Yellow Kite) is out now*

Getting fit  
in the great  
outdoors

*Farm Fitness is a new exercise concept that's gaining a lot of followers. Sarah Sellens took a trip to the Essex countryside to find out more*

You have to be fit for farming. Walking the fields, hauling feed, repairing machinery, pushing silage... a farmer's job is physically demanding, and it's this organic form of body conditioning that inspired Essex farmer's son Tom Kemp to create outdoor gym Farm Fitness.

Growing up on the family's farm in Great Dunmow, Essex, Tom was no stranger to a hard day's work. "I'd always been physically active on the farm – pushing wheelbarrows up and down the land, or shovelling things – and you get an inner strength from doing day-to-day chores," says Tom. "I was inspired to translate that into a gym concept that was in the fresh air and had a farm feel, using bits of old machinery and upscaling things such as tyres or chains."

Today, Farm Fitness is one of the fastest-growing names on the exercise scene, voted one of the best gyms in the world by *Men's Health UK* magazine. With a new urban concept on the horizon and Tom's vision to franchise the concept to locations across the country, Farm Fitness is going from strength to farmer-inspired strength. But what makes it so popular?

**What inspired you to start Farm Fitness?**

After leaving college, I did my personal trainer qualifications and got a job at a local gym before

setting Farm Fitness up in 2016. It initially started as an outdoor boot camp on a Saturday morning, using whatever we had on the farm – ropes, chains... we didn't have any professionally made equipment. From there, it escalated to more classes, more equipment and more people.

**Tell us about your family farm**

It's an arable farm of about 550 acres, mainly growing wheat this year but we're growing a few sunflowers as well. My dad runs it. I used to help out during harvest time but the busier the gym has got, the harder it's been – I still chuck my hand in when I can though. Previously, I was working at other gyms and I was never on the farm, so to have my business on the family farm and be able to dip in and dip out is nice.

**What does your dad think about having a gym on site?**

He loves it. It's a bit of farm diversification, and it's brought life to the farm. Farming can be quite a lonely profession, so having people around – and people in good spirits because they're training and getting fitter – is great to see.

**Did you envisage that Farm Fitness would be so popular?**

It started with me designing a strongman theme.



**PULL TOGETHER** A group in full flow (top); Sarah Sellens (above) works out



**FIT FARM**  
Tom Kemp (main) uses parts of old machinery to devise circuits (left)

**'It's great to see all age groups doing the same sort of workouts'**

I used to devise circuits using old pieces of kit, then post them on Instagram. I never thought: "I'm going to set up this gym on the farm, with loads of people doing these classes." That wasn't the goal when I first set out, but it's escalated. When we realised the demand and how popular it was, we expanded – and we're still expanding. This year, we're going for a Farm Fitness urban model, a big indoor space that's going to be a great addition, and hopefully one day we can roll out more Farm Fitness gyms to different locations.

**Why do you think it's so popular?**

You always feel 10 times better after a workout but it's an added bonus to be out in the fresh air. You're in a group environment as well, so it's got a sociable angle. This kind of training (functional fitness and team-based competitions) is completely different compared with how the industry was 10 years ago, where you'd go to a gym, put your earphones in and go on a cross trainer. It's expanding people's opportunities and how they can train – especially since going through lockdowns, as people value a social environment and getting fit in that environment.

**Tell us about the Farm Fitness community**

It's great to see all age groups doing the same sort of workouts. We've got a community that's about 60% female and 40% male. We have kids too – we take them from seven years old, but we also have members who are 60 plus.

**Are you passionate about British farming?**

From the start, I've done a lot with my agricultural roots. I've had a lot of young farm organisations down here for teambuilding sessions. Seeing what these guys do [on the farm], I know how good it is for social and mental health. We also work with *Farmers Weekly* and the Britain's Fittest Farmer competition, which I've seen develop from a smallish first year to its third year with more applicants. Anyone is happy to get involved – some don't even go to the gym, they're just naturally fit from being on their farms!



## 24 HOURS ON MY PLATE

## Eddy Grant

*The Guyanese-British singer-songwriter owns up to being an avid chewer and loving his veg*

"Waking up around 7.30am in my Bayleys Plantation home in Barbados, I had a glass of water – I drink plenty every single day, in every single way. Then it was out to my studio for an interview before breakfast – porridge made with oats and almond milk followed by a banana. I don't usually drink while I eat.

"I spent the morning going to Bridgetown to collect some medication for a friend before going on to visit another dear friend, my trainer Earl 'Mr Universe' Maynard. I shared a bottled malt drink with him. After a gentle drive past the sea, I arrived home at around 6pm for a plateful of seasonal vegetables prepared by my wife, Anne, including steamed broccoli and carrots, potatoes roasted in olive oil plus callaloo [a green veg a bit like spinach] and some avocado. Pudding was one fig plus several glasses of fresh fruit juice made with passion fruit and watermelon.

"I'm an avid chewer – so much so that I'm known as 'he who takes a long time to eat'. I watched TV and checked emails before bed at around midnight with another glass of water. My favourite food has to be vegetables. I used to eat a lot of rice but don't touch it these days. Same with flour – it wasn't doing me any good so I've stayed clear of it for the past two years.

"My food philosophy passed on to me by my 90-plus mother and to her by her mother is: 'Eat little, live long.' As for cooking, it would be considered an insult for me even to pick up a saucepan, as I am surrounded by great cooks – my wife and daughters. Lockdown didn't change much for me. I lead a peaceful life and prefer sitting under the gazebo to going out."

*Eddy's album Plaisance and his entire back catalogue are available at eddygrant.com. Interview: Jane Garton*



## VERDICT

**Dr Emma Williams, Partner & nutritionist, says**

"Oats make a healthy breakfast with cholesterol lowering oat beta-glucan. For more nutrition top with some nuts or seeds. Keep on loving your veg but give some more thought to your protein and other good carb options. For more plant-based protein, fibre and carb energy, mix in some good grains, beans, pulses, lentils and potatoes with the skins on. Sadly, no matter how much you drink, only one 150ml glass of fruit juice counts as one of your 5 a day (eat whole fruit)!" **3.5/5**