



Tips to keep you airborne!



High 5!
February 2026

What if there was a secret recipe that could bring health, wealth and success? A holy grail, if you will, with just 5 basic ingredients.

The good news is that it's actually no secret, and it's yours for free, provided you're prepared to gather the ingredients, do the culinary prep work, whip up the nutritious and delicious storm and then...savour the godly goods.

According to scientists at University College London (whose research was published in PNAS, a peer reviewed journal of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), a couple of years back), this wholesome 5-ingredient dish has a health star rating of yes, you guessed 5, leading to a happier healthier life for those who follow the recipe to the letter.

Including all 5 ingredients is preferable as it won't be quite the same without 'umami', if you get my drift, though if you drop just one ingredient, you'll still reap rewards.

So, what are these magical ingredients?



You're looking at mixing a dollop of determination, a handful of emotional stability, a chunk of control, a splash of optimism and a coating of conscientiousness, in the same way that you might look to balance the 5 primary tastes, right?



Caroline Crosbie
CONSULTING
Tapping into Personal and Professional Wellness

Caroline Crosbie Consulting
www.carolinecrosbie.com.au
info@carolinecrosbie.com.au
0416 154 259

People in their 50s and 60s who scored highly on at least 4 of the 5 attributes were on the whole healthier, wealthier, less depressed and had more friends.

And yes, you guessed, those who cut corners and threw 2 or fewer skills into the mix, were more likely to be broke, depressed, lonely and at risk of chronic diseases.

By the way if you come from a privileged background and you happen to be highly intelligent, it doesn't give you a free ticket to the table, as you may be lacking the necessary character strengths, such as reliability and "Discipline, 007" (for all you Goldfinger fans).

But, if you think you're less well-endowed in the naturally gifted/talented/skilled, quality department, and you cook up a high 5 ingredient storm, you will achieve your goals.

Now if you're wondering if one attribute is more important than the others, the short answer is no. It's more a matter of accumulating life skills.

And for your information, only 3% of people in this longitudinal study involving 8,000 participants over 11 years had symptoms of severe depression, compared with 22% who scored low on the life skill index. Impressive, yes?

So, what's the moral of the story?

Don't aim for Michelin star status, as its high stakes and high stress trajectory is rarely a guaranteed formula for a balanced life!

Instead, try to build each of these life skills through small, repeatable practices that reshape habits, thinking patterns, and nervous system responses over time.

Here's just one tip for each of the 5 categories to whet your appetite for more:

Determination - come up with one, clear, specific goal and the next tiny step, as in "I'm going to walk Billy around the block for 10 minutes after dinner, 3 times a week, starting tomorrow."

Emotional stability - create a kit of calming regulation tools such as 4-7-8 diaphragmatic breathing.



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Control – write a daily worries list. Work out what you can control and what you can do now. Either park or schedule what's not controllable.

Optimism – start a practice of writing down three things that went well during the day and why, focussing on your inputs.

Conscientiousness – start with one tiny “order” habit, e.g. “I’ll spend a couple of minutes clearing/tidying my desk at the end of each day.”

So, what do you reckon? Palatable and easy?

Maybe, if you don't bite off more than you can chew.

That said, here's to choosing mini morsels. And if you'd like some more ideas to add to your grazing platter, just drop me a line.

Till next time, here's to high 5s!

Caroline

PS – Consider having a coaching session with me if you're struggling to cope with emotional regulation. Hit the reply button to this email with “yes, more information please”.

PPS – If you know of anyone who might enjoy reading my newsletters, feel free to forward this to them and ask them to subscribe!



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