

# ACID *trips* And FITNESS *kicks*



From sexual wellness to polar challenges, **Jillian Bolger** predicts the feelgood trends of 2021

**W**hat a difference a year makes. Many of the values and beliefs we held pre-2020 changed significantly last year, as we were forced to live our lives in new and unexpected ways. Lockdown didn't just change our behaviour, it gave us an opportunity to re-evaluate our lifestyles and embrace new ideas.

Wellbeing moved further into the spotlight, as we sought new ways to adapt, introduce balance and manage our physical and mental health. Research suggests that we're not just more likely to seek out better wellness experiences in 2021, but also more open to trying out new innovations within the sector.

Of course, change doesn't come easily, and the pandemic caused new levels of uncertainty and stress, leading to a growth in anxiety. This will fuel big business in the coming year, as the health, food, travel, tech and beauty industries all seek to offer solutions. The rise in the use of wellbeing apps is a key signifier, demonstrating a growing appetite for self-care.

Mental coach, Meditopia, an app that offers meditation, mindfulness, stories and music, reported a surge in 2020 memberships from companies looking to support the wellbeing of their employees who now find themselves working remotely. With over 20 million users globally, their programmes address anxiety, build resilience and improve sleep.

Andrea Oliver, co-founder of Emjoy, an audio wellbeing app which trebled its subscriptions during



lockdown, anticipates experimenting with what self-care means to us. “As self-care continues to become more ingrained in our everyday life, wellness apps and tools will continue to rise in popularity. I believe that sexual wellness will become more important, mainstream, and a staple in people’s self-care routines, with this highly important act of self-love being seen in the same light as meditation or yoga.”

The focus on physical fitness during lockdown is set to continue too, with WeMakeGyms.com reporting an unexpected spike in business, as people invested in a safe, effective and private workout space in their homes. From the elaborate to the simple, elite athletes to fitness enthusiasts, they project continuing demand for cardio machines, fitness walls, yoga spaces, strength-training areas and bespoke fit-outs.

While Jillian Michaels, American personal trainer, author and television personality, agrees, she’s also witnessed a surge in people switching to fitness apps, including her top ranked Fitness by Jillian Michaels app, a trend she believes will continue. “They provide a tonne of variety, convenience, affordability and accessibility for at home, outdoors, or on the go workouts – with little to no equipment. In addition, many personal trainers are taking their business online, moving to personal training sessions with FaceTime.” The TV star envisages a return to gyms for the social aspect, but also expects us to continue with activities we enjoyed during the pandemic, like hiking, running, sea swimming and biking.

An increased interest in our immune system resulted in higher sales of supplements last year as we sought to boost our health during the pandemic. Vitamin D was top, a trend that will continue this year, alongside live gut health supplements and friendly bacteria in kombucha, foods and supplements. Plant-based remedies, including Haskapa, a new all-natural superberry powder with three times more antioxidants than blueberries, will gain traction alongside powerful turmeric, with its healing and anti-inflammatory properties.

You’ll find turmeric in Rejuvenation Water too, an intriguing new range of plant-based Immunity Health Pods that you pop in any Nespresso-compatible coffee machine. Designed to be consumed hot, in an espresso sized shot, the new Turmeric & Beetroot pods contain functional, plant-based ingredients to help support the immune system. Caffeine-free and completely natural, they come in plant-based compostable packaging.

CBD is set to continue as the fastest-growing sector of the wellness industry, partly

fuelled by the rise in anxiety. CBD, or cannabidiol, is a chemical constituent of the cannabis plant that doesn’t produce the same psychoactive effects as the recreational use of cannabis. Along with medical benefits, CBD is said to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and can be legally found as an oil in health shops and in newer forms, including foods and muscle balm.

Surprisingly, cannabis isn’t the only drug that’s on the wellbeing agenda this year. Psychedelic plant medicine retreats are going mainstream with Behold Retreats’ new bespoke wellness service in destinations such as Costa Rica and Peru, where entheogens – psychoactive substances such as ayahuasca, psilocybin, or the San Pedro cactus – are legal. A number of 3-10 day retreats focus around psychedelics that have been proven to improve mental wellbeing, heal trauma, facilitate self-exploration and enhance spiritual growth.

Travel, while still uncertain, promises to deliver that uplifting wellness boost we all love. Anticipating a change in how – and why – we holiday, the travel industry has created a portfolio of new experiences tailored to the increased wellbeing market.



A sample of new spa innovations includes posture-improving treatments at COMO Cocoa Island in the Maldives, in response to those of us working for months from home at inadequate tables or unsuitable desks. In Mexico, individuals coping with the breakdown of a long-term relationship can book into Chablé Hotel’s Healing Heartache Programme. A luxury wellness resort, the programme’s treatments and activities will focus on increasing self-worth, and guests will learn to put themselves first, treat themselves and experience new things.

Not all wellness travel relates to healing. Some seek escapism and life-affirming challenges. G Adventures reports a rise in Irish bookings on its once-in-a-lifetime achievement-style active holidays such as Everest Base Camp, Kilimanjaro and the Inca Trail. Driven by a combination of pent-up demand, improved daily fitness from lockdown and a desire to reconnect with nature, this *‘carpe diem’* attitude features strongly in early demand.

And should 2021 strike you as the year to go all out, with a mental and physical challenge like no other, you may be tempted to join a polar explorer on a snowbound experience in Norway. Hosting two trips, the five-day Shackleton Finse Polar Experience and the weeklong Shackleton Finse Polar Challenge, the former is for first-time ski-tourers, and includes

one night’s camping in sub-zero temperatures. Guided by record-breaking polar explorer Louis Rudd, we asked the former SAS soldier how the environment might challenge us. “You feel incredibly small and insignificant but it’s precisely this that is so compelling about the polar environment. The simplicity of living and surviving somewhere so harsh but so beautiful

“PSYCHEDELIC *plant medicine* RETREATS are going MAINSTREAM *with BESPOKE WELLNESS services in destinations like COSTA RICA and PERU*”

is something that stays with you forever. With the right expertise, the terrain becomes not forbidding, but awe-inspiring – it’s not a place that many people can access, so it still holds a unique quality that is hard to find in more everyday adventures.” Up for the ultimate challenge? The folks at Shackletonlondon.com look forward to your call. ●