

WELL & GOOD

The power of pedalling and game-changing psychology.

BY FIONA BARBER

Q&A

Niki Harré

ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR OF
PSYCHOLOGY, THE
UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND.



Dr Harré, whose focus is community and sustainability psychology, has released a new book The Infinite Game: How to Live Well Together. It follows Psychology for a Better World.

What compelled you to write the books?

I wrote *Psychology for a Better World* because I wanted to share the latest psychological research with people interested in sustainability. I felt frustrated with the emphasis on “behaviour change” in so many environmental initiatives. To me it’s about inspiring people to get involved, not telling them what to do. *The Infinite Game* suggests that the point of all these efforts is to keep what we value and invite others in.

In the book, playing is more important than winning. How hard is that to convey?

Most people recognise they are happiest when surrounded by warm relationships and can be themselves. At one level, then, people know generous, open-minded play is the name of the game – my book just reminds them of that.

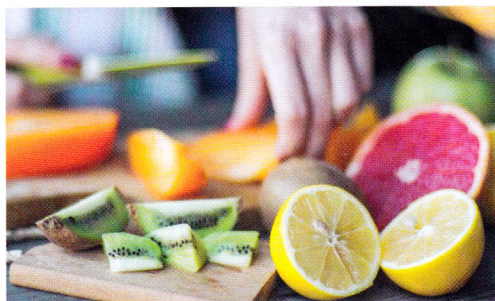
What are the outcomes when you take this approach? It makes you much more aware of your choices. For example, why am I trying to get promoted? Is it for the money and status, or will it help me express my talents? If society played the infinite game, we’d be asking similar questions on a larger scale. Why do we want economic growth? Is it to keep up with other countries and acquire flashy new consumer products? Or is it to ensure everyone has access to meaningful work, healthcare and education?

What are the downsides, if any? It can be disheartening if you feel surrounded by people playing a different game. You can’t lose the infinite game – you can lose the status-oriented games society tries to lure us all into.

The Infinite Game: How to Live Well Together, Auckland University Press, \$29.99.

Stay on yer bike

Exercise such as cycling preserves muscle mass and strength as we get older, but the advantages may extend well beyond those benefits. British researchers found that those who got on their bike regularly had stable levels of cholesterol and body fat, and in men, testosterone levels stayed high. But what surprised the researchers was that the immune systems of the cyclists appeared not to have aged. “Our findings debunk the assumption that ageing automatically makes us more frail,” says Professor Janet Lord, director of the University of Birmingham’s Institute of Inflammation and Ageing.



HEAR ME RAW

We know fruit and veges are good for us, but an Otago University study has concluded that they are better for our mental health in raw form, rather than cooked or processed. Lead author, psychology PhD student Kate Brookie, says public health campaigns such as 5+ A Day have focused on the amount of fruit and veges consumed. However, the Otago research, published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, suggested that for mental health in particular, how food is prepared may also be important. The top 10 raw foods linked to better mental health were: carrots, bananas, apples, dark leafy greens such as spinach, grapefruit, lettuce, citrus fruits, fresh berries, cucumber and kiwifruit.

BREATHE EASY

Auckland aromatherapist Annie Prince has come up with an antibacterial inhaler to help combat germs while travelling. The Travel Stick, \$39.95, contains naturally antiseptic organic essential oils, including lemon, eucalyptus, myrtle and black spruce. Pop it in your handbag for everyday use or into your carry-on luggage. annieprincearomatherapy.co.nz

