

Happiness a lifestyle

Study highlights sleep

Katelin Cameron

An international study of almost 290,000 people has found the key to happiness could be as simple as a good night's sleep.

The major study, published in the Journal Nature Mental Health on Tuesday, found that between seven to nine hours of sleep every night helped to reduce the risk of depression by 22 per cent.

Also important was frequent social connection, which helped to reduce the risk by 18 per cent and was found to be the most protective against recurrent depressive disorder, researchers said.

They used data collected from the large group, which included 13,000 people with depression, and followed them for nine years, identifying seven key healthy lifestyle factors linked with a lower risk of depression.

These also included never smoking (20 per cent), moderate alcohol consumption (11 per cent), regular physical exercise

(14 per cent) and a healthy diet (6 per cent).

While there have been studies investigating genetic risk of depression, this is one of the first to link it to lifestyle factors.

The researchers, from Australia, the UK and China, studied a combination of factors including lifestyle, genetics, brain structure and immune and metabolic systems to identify the underlying mechanisms that might explain the link.

Author Barbara Sahakian, from the University of Cambridge Department of Psychiatry, said although our DNA could increase the risk of depression, this study showed that a healthy lifestyle was potentially more important.

"Some of these lifestyle factors are things we have a degree of control over, so trying to find ways to improve them, making sure we have a good night's sleep and getting out to see friends, for example, could make a real difference to people's lives," Professor Sahakian said.

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A new world of creative blocks

Alkina, 9, and Felix, 10 and (right) Lego Masters' Jackson Harvey and Alex Towler at the Relics exhibition. Pictures: Jason Edwards

Lego Minifigures have taken over Melbourne Museum with the opening of RELICS: A New World Rises.

Inspired by themes of sustainability and storytelling, RELICS showcases a dystopian future where Lego Minifigures have full reign.

The exhibition comes to Melbourne directly from

Perth and Adelaide after captivating audiences.

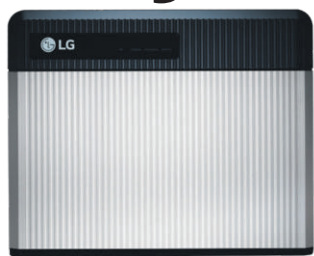
RELICS: A New World Rises is the brainchild of Lego Masters winners Jackson Harvey and Alex Towler, the pair using Lego to confront questions surrounding our future and challenge perceptions about our current reality.

Emily Dann



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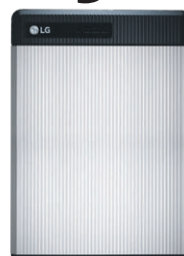
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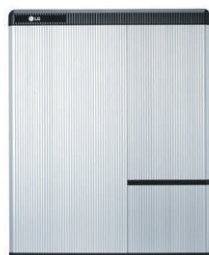
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