

GET MOVING TO MANAGE STRESS

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We all know that exercise has a wide range of benefits, I bet you could list three off the top of your head right now. But how many were psychological benefits and what makes them so powerful?

Regular exercise not only improves our bodies physiologically, but it provides a variety of positive effects on our mental and emotional health. Exercise can be used as a tool to improve self-esteem, confidence, positive emotions, and general wellbeing.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE EXERCISE?

When we exercise, blood flow and blood volume increase, which means more oxygen is delivered to the working muscles, tissues, and organs including the brain. This in turn provides a variety of benefits on various systems in our body including the cardiovascular, pulmonary, and respiratory systems. As we know, this amazing process can aid in the prevention and management of some of the most common chronic illnesses we face; high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and even some cancers.

BRING ON THE ENDORPHINS

Endorphins are your body's natural pain relievers. These neurotransmitters, or chemical messengers in the brain, are also responsible for feelings of pleasure we can get after certain activities like hiking or running, eating chocolate, and laughing with friends. Your body's elevated endorphin levels during exercise give you a euphoric sensation, regulate your appetite, and strengthen your immune system, all of which have a positive impact on negative emotions, stress, or worry.



IMPROVING OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

The reduction of anxiety is just one happiness-boosting advantage of exercise. You can think more clearly and face challenges more optimistically after engaging in physical activity. Worry and anxious thoughts can be reduced by this improved mindset, increasing our overall wellbeing and happiness. Through repetition, we can even rewire the way we think about and respond to stress.

You will quickly realise that the benefits of any movement you do is that it really does enable you to 'switch off'. Personally, I've found that many times when I was anxious or worried about something, I either forgot about it entirely once I started moving or, when I sat down, I tackled it with confidence and experienced fewer whizzing thoughts! The day's inconveniences do seem to fade away as you exercise and alter your attention. You realise that this singular task focuses attention and together with the ensuing energy and optimism, can help you stay composed and clear-headed as you start to release your daily tensions through movement. It's true what they say, emotion is energy in motion!

HOW TO GET STARTED

Just a few simple steps get you moving in the right direction:



SET GOALS

Set small achievable goals to help give you direction and focus. Understand the **WHY** behind these goals and **HOW** it will make you feel when you achieve them. Writing it down can help you connect with these.



HAVE A PLAN

It doesn't need to be perfect. Less is more. Focus on doing a few things well rather than lots of things with very little focus. Explore activities that you know you enjoy rather than feel like you have to do. Because no good story ever starts with burpees...



GETTING STARTED...



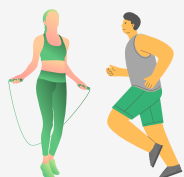
ASK FOR HELP

If you aren't sure on where to start, get extra support and some accountability!



EXERCISE IN INCREMENTS

Allow yourself to achieve long-term success. Don't rush, we get fitter and stronger over time, so be patient.



BUDDY UP

Knowing that someone is waiting for you to show up for a walk can be a powerful incentive. Walking with a friend or family member often brings a new level of motivation and commitment to your workouts.



Reference: Bender, D. (n.d.). ***The Physical and Happiness-Boosting Benefits of Working Out.*** [online] blog.nasm.org.

Available at: <https://blog.nasm.org/happiness-boosting-benefits-working-out>