

mental health and exercise



by
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Mental Health & EXERCISE

Exercise is good for you right?

Yep! You already know that, but did you know that exercise was also an effective way to deal with depression, anxiety or stress and, in some cases, it can help slow or halt cognitive decline?

Regular exercise can provide a sense of well-being and satisfaction, help you sleep better and give you more energy - its powerful stuff and doesn't come in a tablet!

70.9 million antidepressant prescriptions in 2018, a 5% increase on the previous year (NHS Digital 2019)

Doesn't matter what your age or levels of fitness are, modest exercise, can provide a better alternative for some, than antidepressant drugs.

There's also the added 'social' aspect of joint exercise either on a one-to-one basis or as part of a class. Anyone can exercise even with limited mobility there is always an option available.



Depression and exercise

A recent study by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health based in Boston USA, found that 15 minutes running a day or even an hours walk reduces the risk of major depression by 26%.

So why is exercise so good - how does it work?

It's all to do with the chemical processes in the brain. Neural growth and patterns created by exercise foster good feelings and a sense of achievement.

When stress affects the brain, the body feels the impact as well

Exercise and anxiety

Exercise is natural, our ancestors exercised without any pre-determination. They hunted, they farmed, they gathered. That need to exercise as part of their existence and survival no longer exists - **but the need to exercise remains!**

In fact, one could argue that the need to exercise now, is even greater and that it is still *essential* to our survival.

Exercise can help relieve tension, stress, anger, fear, panic - in fact *anything* that gets you moving can help manage and alleviate anxiety disorders. Of course, some people may still require medication, but exercise can work in tandem and in many cases has lowered the complete dependency on drugs.



You don't need expensive equipment, or employ a fitness coach or join a gym, you just need the motivation to get up and move!

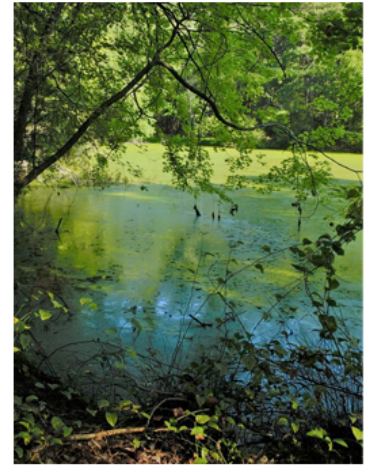
Rhythms, focus and intent

Life involves rhythms and beats. Your heart, your breathing, your need for nutrition. Some of these rhythms operate on automatic subconscious level, others like your cravings, desires and, most importantly, your anxieties, operate on a level that you are only too aware of; failure to control them breaks your patterns, disrupts your rhythms and creates a spiral that undermines your ability to feel good about yourself.

Exercise helps re-establish control. Many people experience eureka moments of creative inspiration while walking the dog, or jogging. By encouraging your mind to focus on the rhythm of your breathing while exercising or the impact of your foot while running or walking your mindset gathers a new **intent** a new **focus**.

This is a gradual process. Like meditation you have to apply yourself to the principles and eventually you'll gain the rewards.

Your physical fitness will improve and you'll replace the flow of negative influences in your mind with a new found heightened awareness of what your body is doing (increased heart rate, quicker breathing) and with this new found **focus** and **intent** you'll start to create an alternative improved narrative in your head.



Create new rhythms and patterns through good habits intent and focus - healthy mind healthy body

Exercise and ADHD

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a behavioral disorder that includes symptoms such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Medication is often prescribed for those with acute ADHD tenancies.

We know that exercise exerts a powerful effect on brain function and structure, and provides neural and cognitive development. Endorphin levels: Dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin increase during exercise and these help with focus and attention. Ritalin and Adderall prescribed for ADHD, work in a similar way.

So how much activity is required to reap the benefits.

Five, 30 minute moderate exercise sessions per week is highly recommended. This too much? Then go for two to three, 15 minute or 10 minute exercise sessions per week.

Truth is, a even just 5 minutes is way better than no minutes! Start slow and build so eventually you can increase 5 mins to 10. The key is **intent** and **focus**. Make it a habit. The more you exercise the more energy you'll have and the better you will feel. And if your schedule is that demanding that you can't find those precious daily minutes, a recent study in the UK found that those people who squeezed in 2 exercise routines at the weekend got to enjoy almost as many health benefits as those who opted for the daily routine.

1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England (Mind for better mental health website)

So what is the best type of exercise for YOU?

Quite simply, the best exercise is the one that gets you moving, keeps you moving and that you enjoy. If you have mobility issues then simple things like walking to the shops, up and down stairs and gardening provide basic exercise needs. For the more adventurous you need to look at elevating your heart and breathing rate slightly, so that might mean a brisker walk or a walk with a weighted rucksack, ankle weights or even a mixture of brisk and slow walking. You don't need a gym or an exercise class - **BUT ...**

An exercise class, with a fitness instructor may provide you with the additional motivation you need to get going, exceed your expectations and provide a social element missing when exercising in isolation. And sometimes it's good to hear that you are not alone and have a friendly 'raised voice' encouraging you.

a short burst of 10 minutes' brisk walking increases mental alertness, energy and positive mood

Other mental benefits of exercise

Sharper memory and thinking

The same endorphins that make you feel better also help you concentrate. Exercise also stimulates the growth of new brain cells and helps prevent age-related decline.

Higher self-esteem

When exercise becomes a habit, it can improve your sense of self-worth and make you feel strong and powerful.

Improved sleep

Short bursts of daytime exercise can help regulate sleep patterns, while relaxing exercises such as yoga are ideal to use at night to help promote sleep.

Increased energy

Increasing your heart rate several times a week will provide you with more get-up-and-go. Start slow and steady and increase the intensity and time as your fitness steadily improves.

Stronger resilience

Exercise can help you cope when faced with mental and emotional challenges. In addition regular exercise can also help boost your immune system while reducing the impact of stress.

Certificate of attendance



David Brown

has attended an Adult Mental Health Aware Half Day course and is now Mental Health Aware. This course provides an introduction to mental health and the factors that can affect people's wellbeing.

Date of attendance
29 November 2022

Instructor Member
Tracy Attard

MHFA England is a social enterprise with a vision to improve the mental health of the nation. Through our training, campaigning, and reinvesting, we equip people with the skills to support their own and others' wellbeing.

We believe in zero stigma around mental health. We want mental health to be openly discussed and supported. Together, let's create a society where everyone can thrive.

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Some useful resources:

Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you have been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 03444 775 774

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Bipolar UK

Charity helping people living with manic depression or bipolar disorder.

Website: www.bipolaruk.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation

Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: 0300 123 3393

Website: www.mind.org.uk

No Panic

Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Offers a course to help overcome your phobia or OCD.

Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

OCD UK

A charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news and treatments.

Phone: 0333 212 7890

Website: www.ocduk.org

SANE

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers.

Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it most:

www.sane.org.uk/textcare

Peer support forum:

www.sane.org.uk/supportforum

Website: www.sane.org.uk/support

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk



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