



DOES EXERCISE *actually* IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH?

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We all know that one of the best ways to improve our physical health is through exercise. Something that is not as widely talked about is that exercise can improve your mental health as well! Here are three of the main reasons exercise benefits your mental wellbeing:

1. EXERCISE CAN EASE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

According to Mayo Clinic, routine exercise may help those living with depression and anxiety. Physical activity releases natural “feel-good” endorphins and reduces stress hormones. By exercising, you are coping in a healthy way because it allows you to take your mind off what is currently worrying you or making you feel down.

2. EXERCISE CAN INCREASE YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE

You’ve probably heard the phrase “look good, feel good.” This common mantra holds true when it comes to exercising. The self-confidence that comes from exercise can be more than feeling better about your appearance. Having a routine and putting in effort to do the activity will give you a sense of accomplishment as well as the confidence of knowing that you are capable of taking care of yourself.

3. EXERCISE CAN HELP YOU SLEEP

Have you ever noticed that when you sleep better, you feel better? Studies done by the National Sleep Foundation have found that those who are physically active take less time to fall asleep and experience better sleeping quality. Regular exercise will also help you to feel more awake during the day. If your schedule doesn’t allow you to work out earlier in the day and you’re trying to get some movement in closer to bedtime, try a less strenuous exercise such as yoga or going for a walk.

The idea of routine exercise can sound daunting, and the thought alone may prevent some from getting into it. It is important to remember that exercise won’t look the same to you as it might to someone else! Going to the gym every day is not for everyone, and it’s not reasonable to expect that it will always fit into your schedule.

Exercise can be easy and fun. It is helpful to find an activity that you actually enjoy doing. Going for a leisurely stroll, bike riding, gardening, shopping, taking a dance/yoga class, and racing around your house to clean your windows or floors are all ways to get moving, which is the key! If you miss a day, don’t get discouraged! Do the best you can to move your body and notice the improvement it makes to your mental health.