

Information Handout

Professional Version | US English

What Does Exercise Do For The Mind And Body?



Description

Exercise is an evidence-based treatment for depression and anxiety. There is evidence to suggest that in the treatment of depression exercise interventions lead to a treatment effect with a magnitude of effect similar to other established forms of treatment such as CBT and medication (Johnsen & Fribog, 2015; Kirsch et al, 2008; Kvam et al, 2016). Psychologists believe that exercise is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- Regular exercise can increase your energy levels, which can have knock-on effects upon how you engage in valued activities.
- It can help you to sleep better which is an important effect given the important role of poor sleep in the maintenance of mental health problems.
- It can lead to increases in self-esteem and resilience.
- It lowers your risk of death.
- It lowers your risk of ill health.
- It has a positive effect upon mental performance.

What Does Exercise Do For The Mind And Body? is an information handout presenting facts about the health benefits of exercise. It is designed as a guide for clients who are contemplating exercising, and there is evidence from multiple research studies that *“exercise prescription or motivational messages in printed form or by computer are more effective than face-to-face counselling alone”* (Richardson et al, 2005).

Instructions

This is a Psychology Tools information handout.

Suggested uses include:

- Client handout – a psychoeducation resource.
- Discussion point – to provoke a discussion and explore your client's beliefs.
- Therapist learning tool – to improve your familiarity with a psychological construct.
- Supervision tool – to develop formulations and knowledge.
- Teaching resource – a learning tool during training.

References

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Kirsch, I., Deacon, B. J., Huedo-Medina, T. B., Scoboria, A., Moore, T. J., & Johnson, B. T. (2008). Initial severity and antidepressant benefits: a meta-analysis of data submitted to the Food and Drug Administration. *PLoS medicine*, 5(2), e45.

Kvam, S., Kleppe, C. L., Nordhus, I. H., & Hovland, A. (2016). Exercise as a treatment for depression: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 202, 67-86.

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What Does Exercise Do For The Mind And Body?

Exercise leads to positive changes in physical and mental wellbeing. Here are six reasons to increase the amount of exercise that you get.



Exercise increases your energy levels

Increasing your physical activity will actually reduce feelings of low energy or fatigue. You can think of exercise as being like an elastic band in a child's toy: exercise 'winds up' the elastic band storing more energy in it.



Exercise leads to better sleep

Exercise has been shown to improve sleep quality. Exercise has even been suggested as an alternative or complimentary form of therapy for people who experience problems sleeping. Research suggests that doing exercise 4 to 8 hours before bedtime is likely optimal for improving sleep quality, although some exercise at any time of day seems to be beneficial.



Exercise increases self-esteem

People who take part in regular physical exercise tend to have a higher level of physical self-worth, improved body image, and a higher level of self-esteem. Physical exercise has been recommended as a treatment for adults with low self-esteem.



Exercise lowers your risk of death

Physical inactivity is estimated to cause 9% of all premature deaths. Research in the USA, suggests that women over 50 who change their physical activity status from inactive to active increase their life expectancy by between 1.5 and 3.5 years. For men the figure is 1.3 to 3.7 years.



Exercise lowers your risk of ill-health

Regular physical activity is strongly associated with a decreased risk of many serious health conditions including diabetes, stroke, and cancer. Often these health-related benefits occur in the absence of weight changes – so even if you don't lose weight you are still doing your health a favor!



Exercise improves your brain function

Exercise is shown to have a positive effect upon mental performance. Exercise has also been found to improve concentration, reduce levels of irritability, and may slow the deterioration in balance and mobility in patients with Alzheimer's disease.

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Resource details

Title: What Does Exercise Do For The Mind And Body?

Type: Information Handout

Language: English (US)

Translated title: What Does Exercise Do For The Mind And Body?

URL: <https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/what-does-exercise-do-for-the-mind-and-body>

Resource format: Professional

Version: 20230721

Last updated by: JP

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