

A MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

April 2012

Volume 5 Number 4



Exercise Improves Your Mental Health

Exercise is a magic drug for many people with depression and anxiety disorders, and it should be more widely prescribed by mental health care providers, according to researchers who analyzed the results of numerous published studies.

--ScienceDaily (Apr. 5, 2010)

The effects of a long term exercise program on mental health can be dramatic and immediate. One study found that after twenty-five minutes of moderate exercise, their clients' mood improved, they were less stressed and they had more energy. Studies show that exercise is an effective treatment for mental health and is at least as effective as antidepressant medication and psychotherapy.

How Does Exercise Affect Your Mood?

Researchers studying the benefits of exercise on mental health explain these benefits through physiological, psychological, and social mechanisms.

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How Does Exercise Affect Your Mood?

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Physiological Mechanisms:

Thermogenic Hypothesis	A rise in the body core temperature leads to improved mood. Temperature rise in specific brain regions can lead to a feeling of relaxation and reduction in muscle tension.
Endorphin Hypothesis	Exercise increases release of endorphins promoting the sensation of calmness and improved mood.
Neurotransmitter Hypothesis	Exercise increases mood enhancing neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine and noradrenaline. Imbalances in these neurotransmitters can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems.
Stress Hormone Hypothesis	Imbalances in stress hormones such as cortisol and noradrenaline can cause anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. Exercise can reduce levels of stress hormones.
Anti-inflammatory Hypothesis	Anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia can be due to elevated levels of inflammation which can be reduced by exercise.

Psychological Mechanisms

Distraction Hypothesis	An improved mood is the result of the distraction exercise brings from worries and distressing thoughts.
Self-efficacy Hypothesis	Exercise is thought to increase confidence which can explain some of the mental benefits of exercise.

Social Mechanisms

Social Interaction Hypothesis	Regular physical exercise leads to increased social interaction which is considered to have antidepressant effects improving mood and reducing depression and anxiety.
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By Heather Frenette

References

Mental Benefits of Exercise.

<http://www.improve-mental-health.com/mental-benefits-of-exercise.html> .

Mental Health Providers Should Prescribe Exercise More Often for Depression, Anxiety, Research Suggests.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/04/100405122311.htm>



Endorphins and Mental Health

Endorphins are hormone-like substances that are created by the brain to produce the body's natural painkillers. They release adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine. Adrenaline gives more energy while serotonin and dopamine help create a feeling of well-being and reduce stress. While the role of endorphins in helping people with mental illness isn't fully understood, it is recognized that people who exercise regularly are less prone to depression.

Exercising regularly can ensure the body a steady supply of endorphins to combat pain and stress and give more energy. Since endorphins also help the immune system, they can keep the person strong and healthy and better prepared to combat mental illness.

Though thirty minutes of exercise daily was suggested, Health Canada recommends at least an hour of physical activity per day. For simple tips on how to do this, go to:

<http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/physactiv/index-eng.php>.

Those with chronic health issues should consult a doctor before starting any exercise regimen. Certain types of exercise can make problems worse. Your doctor should be able to give directions on how to do the exercise safely or suggest other of physical activities which give the same results.

By Melinda Cadarette

References:

"Exercise and Endorphins"

http://www.naturaltherapypages.com.au/article/Exercise_Endorphins



"I'm going out to get some endorphins."

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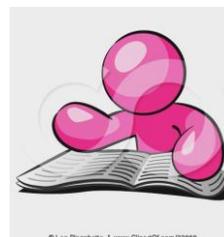
A Mental Health Perspective

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Annual General Meeting

**Canadian Mental Health
Association
Kings County Branch**

**Will be holding an AGM
On June 5th, 2012
At 7:00 pm**

**St. James Anglican Church
Lower Hall
18 Prospect Ave
Kentville, NS**

**Everyone is welcome to attend
Membership is \$5.00**

Exercise Therapy: A Viable Treatment for Mental Illness

Evidence shows that exercise is beneficial in treating mental illness. It should be used in conjunction with medication and psychosocial treatments and can be useful in treating depression, schizophrenia, and alcohol dependence. In 1998, Craft & Landers did research on various studies conducted to show the connection between exercise and depression. Thirty studies have indicated that those who engage in regular exercise reduced their depressive symptoms as compared to those who did not exercise.

In 1991, Pelham & Campagna did research on how exercise can affect the physiological, psychological, and social aspects of outpatients with schizophrenia. It was discovered that regular exercise “reduced depression, increased general well-being, and improved aerobic fitness” in people with schizophrenia. In 1999, Faulkner & Sparks’ study showed that regular exercise decreased the incidence of auditory hallucinations, raised self-esteem and improved sleeping patterns and overall behaviour.

Other studies indicate exercise can improve the mental health of people with alcohol dependence. In 1972, Gary & Guthrie discovered that, after a 4 week jogging program, the participants' self-esteem improved as well as their overall fitness. Other researchers, such as Palmer et al, 1988, and Preedy & Peters, 1990, discovered that anxiety and depression was greatly reduced as a result of exercise. They also found that aerobic exercise gives people the ability to better cope with stress.

Although the research community is beginning to recognize the importance of exercise in treating mental illness, programs that incorporate physical fitness into their treatment regime are very few. In 2001, Faulkner & Biddle stated there are three barriers to combining physical fitness and mental health treatment:

1. Mental health professionals are not familiar with the therapeutic benefits of exercise.
2. The perceived simplicity of these programs.
3. An incompatibility between exercise programs and traditional treatments.

At an Alberta workshop on “Mental Health and Physical Activity” (Berry, 2006) more challenges have been determined by those who work in the Mental Health field. To make progress, three things must be recognized when dealing with mental health:

1. The overall quality of life of consumers is very important.
2. Normalization of the disease (many consumers are not cured but rather live with their mental illness)
3. Recognition of mental illness as a chronic problem.

Researchers and practitioners should be united and work as a team to provide a treatment regime that includes exercise therapy.

By Tony Legere

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<http://apt.rcpsych.org/content/8/4/262.full>

Bingham, Paula, B. “Physical Activity and Mental Health Literature Review.” *Minding Our Bodies*. March 2009.

http://www.mindingourbodies.ca/about_the_project/literature_reviews/physical_activity_and_mental_health

A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

Donations to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made to CMHA Kings County, Suite 3, 11 Opportunity Lane, Coldbrook, P.O. Box 894, Kentville, NS, B4N 4H8. (Cheque or money order will be accepted).

Staff & Volunteers

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