

Exercise and Mental Health

Did you know physical exercise boosts brain functioning? The following are some mental benefits of exercise. Exercise...

- **Reduces stress** – Exercise helps manage both physical and mental stress. Exercise increases the production of norepinephrine, a chemical that can moderate the brain's response to stress.
- **Makes you feel happier** – Exercise reduces endorphins, which are natural brain chemicals that create feelings of happiness. Studies have found 30 minutes of exercise a few times a week to reduce symptoms of clinical depression.
- **Improves self-confidence** – Regardless of weight, size, gender or age, exercise has been found to quickly elevate a person's perception of his or her attractiveness and self-worth.
- **Prevents cognitive decline** – To be clear, working out cannot cure Alzheimer's or dementia, but it does boost the chemicals in the brain that support and prevent degeneration of the hippocampus, an important part of the brain for memory and learning.
- **Lessens anxiety** – The chemicals released in the brain during and after moderate/high intensity aerobic exercise can reduce anxiety sensitivity and help people manage anxiety.
- **Regulates sleep patterns** – Exercise can help people reboot circadian rhythms. Moving around five to six hours before bedtime raises the body's core temperature. When the body temp drops back to normal a few hours later, it signals the body that it's time to sleep.
- **Helps you accomplish more** – Research shows that people who take time for exercise on a regular basis are more productive and have more energy than more sedentary people.
- **Allows you to make friends** – A softball game, group class, or power walk with a friend are all ways to help you be more social. Plus, having a workout buddy can help hold you accountable and inspire you to push harder.



Genesis encourages you to copy and distribute this information for educational

purposes. Please help yourself and others 😊

References and resources to learn more about exercise and mental health:

- <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/exercise-stress.aspx>
- <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/12/exercise.aspx>
- <http://healthland.time.com/2012/10/23/exercise-trumps-brain-games-in-keeping-our-minds-intact/>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/27/mental-health-benefits-exercise_n_2956099.html



Free Exercise Apps:

- Workout Trainer (Android and iPhone)
- GymPact (Android and iPhone)
- Nexercise (Android and iPhone)

Thinking about beginning an exercise routine?

- If you haven't exercised for some time (or ever!), **consult with your medical doctor** before starting. This will insure that you are medically safe to begin, as exercise can be a shock to your body.
- Remember to **allow time for recovery**. Don't start out too long or too intensely. Plan time between workouts to let your body rest and recover.
- Switch it up! Consider **cross-training** or trying different activities. This will reduce your chances of injuring or overusing one specific muscle or joint. Try a variety of activities that emphasize different parts of your body, such as walking, swimming and strength training.
- Exercise does not have to be expensive. Check out affordable gyms such as *The Y* that offer scholarships and need-based rates. Also consider purchasing gently used exercise equipment.



Remember, exercise helps boost mental health but might not be enough to get you feeling better. Psychotherapy can help address mental health concerns. For more information on psychotherapy, please call

Genesis Therapy Center at (708) 535-7320 or check out <http://www.genesistherapy.org/>



At The Genesis Therapy Center we believe in a holistic approach to patient care – healing and growth taking place through body, mind and spirit. Genesis is founded on the principle of commitment to affordable, accessible, skilled and respectful service to all.