

Exercise and Your Mood

Exercise has great benefits for your physical health - it can strengthen your muscles, improve your cardiovascular system, and reduce your risk of diseases like stroke and diabetes. But, did you know that exercise can have benefits for your mental health too?

Why exercise lifts your mood

Exercise causes your brain to release chemicals including endorphins, adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine. These chemicals all work together to make you feel good. In addition to the chemical changes in your brain, exercising can lead to a feeling of accomplishment and relaxation of your muscles, also helping you feel good.

Exercise and depression

Exercise on its own is not a cure for depression, but research has shown it can be as effective as medication for mild to moderate depression. In fact, the most prescribed antidepressants are SSRI drugs, which work by increasing the amount of serotonin in your system. As mentioned above, exercise also increases the amount of serotonin in your system, so the effect on depression shouldn't be a surprise.

Make time for yourself

Many people believe they are "too busy" for exercise. Being "too busy" for something just means that you're prioritizing something else above it. By placing exercise high on your priority list, you're prioritizing yourself. This is a great way to help boost your mood and your confidence, because you're taking a portion of your day for yourself.

Choose physical activity you enjoy

While any physical activity will help release endorphins and serotonin, choosing something you enjoy can help boost your mood even further. In addition, by using physical activity that's fun for you, you'll be more likely to be consistent. Consistently exercising is important for getting the most benefit out of it.

But what if I can't do the physical activity I enjoy?

Social distancing, quarantine and closures of clubs and gyms impact our ability to participate in the physical activities we enjoy. But, with these restrictions comes the opportunity to try new physical activities. Online exercise classes both live and prerecorded, dancing and gardening; now is the time to try something new!