

Exercise

What are some of the possible benefits of exercise?

- Reduced symptoms of mental illness
- Reduced stress resulting from burning off stress chemicals such as adrenaline
- Release of endorphins -- chemicals that have a naturally relaxing and calming effect on the body
- Improved memory
- Increased energy
- Improved sleep
- Improved focus
- Better regulation of mood
- Weight loss
- Increased sense of accomplishment and self-esteem
- Distraction from negative thinking
- Additional opportunities to meet others with similar interests



The idea of exercising can be overwhelming, especially for someone dealing with depression or anxiety. It is important to remember that when it comes to physical activity, anything is better than nothing! Start with whatever seems manageable. Even a ten-minute walk can be helpful. You will likely be able to increase the amount and frequency of physical activity slowly as you start to feel better. Generally, doctors recommend about 20-30 minutes of exercise three to five times per week, but it can be a good idea to talk with your own healthcare provider to decide what's right for you. Don't try to make a huge change in your exercise routine all at once.

The most important thing to remember is to set a realistic and attainable goal. Keep it fun and simple!

Many students perceive barriers to exercising. Here are some tips for finding time to exercise.

- Incorporate physical activity into your daily activities. Walk to class instead of taking the bus, or take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- If structured exercise is more your style, plan regular times to exercise each week. After a while, exercise becomes a habit. Like brushing your teeth, it just becomes another part of your daily or weekly schedule.

- Review your current schedule to see if there are any activities that can be cut back or eliminated. Listing the pros and cons of each activity can be helpful in setting priorities and reducing stress.
- Plan out your weekly schedule in advance and make sure to set aside time for physical activities that you enjoy. Use a daily calendar or an online planner to get started.
- Set reminders on your phone calendar so you don't forget your scheduled exercise time.
- You can still be flexible with our time. There will be weeks when you might be able to get more or less physical activity depending on what else is going on. Since exercise can increase energy and decrease stress and anxiety, getting some physical activity during high-stress weeks is recommended.
- Sign up for a class. The commitment and accountability can be motivating.
- Ask a friend to join you so that you can also incorporate some socializing into the experience.



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