



Depression and Anxiety: Exercise Eases Symptoms

You have anxiety or depression — and exercise seems like the last thing you want to do. But once you get motivated, exercise can make a big difference.

Exercise helps prevent and improve a number of health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis. Research on anxiety, depression and exercise shows that the psychological and physical benefits of exercise can also help reduce anxiety and improve mood.

The links between anxiety, depression and exercise aren't entirely clear — but working out can definitely help you relax and make you feel better. Exercise may also help keep anxiety and depression from coming back once you're feeling better.

How does exercise help depression and anxiety? Exercise probably helps ease depression in a number of ways, which may include:

- ✓ **Releasing feel-good brain chemicals** that may ease depression (neurotransmitters and endorphins)
- ✓ **Reducing immune system chemicals** that can worsen depression
- ✓ **Increasing body temperature**, which may have calming effects

Exercise has many psychological and emotional benefits too. It can help you:

- ✓ **Gain confidence.** Meeting exercise goals or challenges, even small ones, can boost your self-confidence. Getting in shape can also make you feel better about your appearance.
- ✓ **Take your mind off worries.** Exercise is a distraction that can get you away from the cycle of negative thoughts that feed anxiety and depression.
- ✓ **Get more social interaction.** Exercise may give you the chance to meet or socialize with others. Just exchanging a friendly smile or greeting as you walk around your neighborhood can help your mood.
- ✓ **Cope in a healthy way.** Doing something positive to manage anxiety or depression is a healthy coping strategy. Trying to feel better by drinking alcohol, dwelling on how badly you feel, or hoping anxiety or depression will go away on their own can lead to worsening symptoms.

What kind of exercise is best?

The word "exercise" may make you think of running laps around the gym. But a wide range of activities that boost your activity level help you feel better. Fitness activities that get your heart pumping can help, but so can gardening, washing your car, or strolling around the block and other less intense activities. Anything that gets you off the couch and moving is exercise that can help improve your mood.

Life in the Future
Wed. April 27th at 2:30pm in Nelson Hall

Join Kim, Deb and Barb for a skit that introduces LifeBio, a reminiscing program that allows you to share your life story and permanently record it for future generations.

Save the Date
Color Your Plate
Nutrition presentation
 Thurs., Apr. 14th
 2:30pm in Christ Chapel

Fri., Apr. 29th
Train Your Brain
 10am & 1:30pm in Wellness Center
 Sign up in Wellness Apr. 18th

NO Exercise Classes

Friday, April 29th
 Elim Park's Rehabilitation Department will host an aquatic therapy workshop on Fri. and Sat., Apr. 29th and 30th, in the pool and aerobics room. Please join us in welcoming therapists from the region.



GOOD NEWS FOR YOUR BRAIN

With all the information that has become available in recent years regarding Alzheimer's disease and dementia, it's about time for some good news. Scientists are discovering new things about the human brain every day and this is changing the way people view healthy aging.

It used to be that the conventional thinking was that aging was a long, slow process of ever declining mental functioning. While there is some truth to this beyond middle age, most scientists now believe in a more complex view of brain aging. Recent studies have demonstrated that older brains actually become more adaptive. Tasks that younger brains accomplish with one part of the brain are often accomplished by several parts of the older brain. One theory is that the brain is much more flexible than previously thought and is rewiring its functioning in order to compensate for losses in some areas. This is a completely new concept! The notion that brains can continue to adapt, evolve, and even grow new neurons and pathways in people as old as 70 and beyond is not something that has been thought possible in the past.

The research also supports the "use it or lose it" notion of brain health. Those who engaged in regular cognitive activities (such as attending educational seminars, discussion groups or learning a new language) had higher levels of brain functioning and lower rates of Alzheimer's disease, dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment. **The brain is a muscle like any other and benefits from regular exercise.**

Older brains, it is true, are often less nimble making it harder to switch tasks, make quick decisions or assimilate complex information. Many older brains, however, appear to outperform younger brains in tasks that require a higher degree of integrated thinking-this is the "wisdom" that makes older brains comparatively better for activities such as coaching, editing, or practicing medicine. Overall, the ability to index and manage information and extract meaning increases with age. Scientists do not completely understand why this is, but they believe it may be the result of more complex pathways built up over years of collecting information.

Finally, older brains seem to mellow with age, resulting in increased calm and serenity. Brain imaging studies have shown less evidence of fear, anger and hatred in older brains and psychological studies have confirmed that, on average, older adults are less impulsive and less likely to dwell on negative emotions. Older brains seem to be more comfortable with ambiguity and less susceptible to frustration and irritability.

Don't accept the notion that aging brings an unavoidable mental decline. It doesn't have to be that way. Find something you enjoy that is mentally challenging and make it a regular part of your life. Your brain will thank you for it.

At Elim Park, there are many activities you can participate in which are fun and will stimulate your brain. Here are some suggestions:

- Join a Bridge or other type of card group
- Take Billiards lessons
- Take an art class or participate in our crafts class.
- Participate in a literary group.
- Participate in an exercise program.
- Join a dance class such as line dancing, tap, aerobic dancing or seated aerobic dancing.
- Take on a volunteer position.
- Participate in Wii bowling. (You can do this sitting down)
- Join the Genealogy group.
- Write your personal memoir or biography



NATIONAL COOKIE DAY

is celebrated annually on December 4th. Unfortunately this delicious holiday snuck by during the excitement of the holiday season so we decided to celebrate a bit later. On Monday April 4th and Tuesday April 5th, we will celebrate National Cookie Day.

The Wellness Center Staff will provide the cookies on Elim Park's National Cookie Day. All you need to do is come to class. Cookies will be served at the end of each class.