

MINDFUL MOMENTS

JULY: EXERCISE & MENTAL HEALTH

Introduction

We all know that exercise is good for our health. With research showing that people who exercise regularly have a lower risk of many long-term conditions including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers.

Though when we talk about the benefits of exercise, more often than not the conversation is framed around our physical health but today we are going to be exploring why exercise is so important for our mental health too.



How can exercise help my mental health?

According to the NHS, as well as being good for our physical health, exercise can also boost our self-esteem, energy levels and our sleep quality. Not only this but research also suggests that being active could reduce your risk of stress, depression, dementia and even Alzheimer's disease!

Exercise can also be a great mood booster because when our heart gets pumping it can cause the release of endorphins and serotonin (also known as happy hormones) which helps to improve our mood!

As well as improving our mood, exercise can act as a positive coping strategy during difficult times, with many people finding that it helps them to process their emotions in a healthy way.

Taking time to be active also gives us an opportunity to escape everyday distractions and technology for a short while. Forms of movement which focus on our breathing such as yoga, can be particularly good at helping us to de-stress and can even act as a form of mindfulness.

What exercise is recommended?

The government suggests adults should be doing 150 mins of moderate or 75 mins of vigorous exercise a week but remember, even 10 minutes of exercise is enough to get the endorphins flowing and to make us feel great.

Aim to take part in some form of aerobic activity each week such as brisk walking, dancing, tennis, cycling, or swimming.

Remember to also include muscle strengthening activities each week such as yoga, lifting weights or heavy gardening.

Support Available

NHS Live Well – www.nhs.uk/live-well: Resources including tips on being more active, exercise programmes and activity ideas. Includes information on finding classes and group exercises

Train Happy- For more information on learning to enjoy movement again, check out the [Train Happy podcast](#)

Activity Alliance – Supports disabled people to become more active and find inclusive programmes, click [here](#)

Tips to help you find joy in movement again

- Rediscover an activity you used to enjoy as a child or do something you have always wanted to try such as skipping or kayaking. If we find something we enjoy, we are more likely to want to keep it up
- Find a workout buddy, join a group class or a local club, exercise can be a great way to socialise, have fun and even make new friends
- Set yourself some realistic goals to keep you feeling motivated and inspired, whilst also acknowledging your progress
- If it feels too big of a step to exercise with others right away, why not build your confidence by exploring some YouTube workout videos at home first
- Question your beliefs around exercise. Do you tell yourself it has to be 1 hour in the gym, or it doesn't count? Any exercise you can fit in will have health and wellbeing benefits, setting ourselves unrealistic targets can leave us feeling more demotivated than ever

Don't forget you can contact Your ESS Nutrition and Wellbeing specialist: ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk