

(Wellness Tips Ezine) Exercise helps depression and anxiety as much as drugs do



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Feeling down or anxious and want to feel better soon? Do some exercise.

Considering how good one can feel after exercise it is amazing how few of us do it. Besides strengthening and lubricating our bodies, exercise actually changes our brain chemistry.

Even mild exercise like a half-hour walk will increase the happy hormones like endorphins, adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine, and those hormones will stay elevated for a few hours post exercise. Not only do we feel happier after exercise, but also calmer, so exercise is also a great way to lower anxiety levels. We usually feel better even after one exercise session!

Research has shown that regular cardiovascular exercise seems to work as well as Zoloft, a commonly prescribed SSRI antidepressant, for reducing major depression in those over 50, without any of the negative side effects.

This particular study was concluded after 4 months, but when the groups were reassessed for depression again at 10 months, the exercise group was doing better than the medication group in terms of relapses.

Those that exercised on their own after the study was over had fewer depressive symptoms than those that did not. In addition to improved mood, the exercise group gained the other benefits that exercise offers, such as better stamina and a healthier circulatory system. Perhaps the first prescription a physician tries for depression should be exercise for 30 minutes, 3 times a week.

Besides the chemical changes in the brain that improve mood and lower feelings of anxiety, getting an exercise session done makes us feel better about ourselves simply due to the sense of accomplishment. We feel more confident, we feel we are doing something good for ourselves by getting into better shape, and perhaps we are socializing with friends, all of which can make us happier.

Over time we look better, which further improves our confidence. And exercise provides a healthy coping strategy as well as a distraction from the negative thought-patterns that feed anxiety and depression.

It is pretty tough for most of us to be motivated enough to exercise 3 to 4 days a week, but when one is feeling down it is even harder. And if one is clinically depressed, just getting out of bed can seem like the hardest thing in the world.

So, how do you move from knowing it might be helpful to actually heading out the door for a walk, or into the gym for a work out?

1. Your goal is to exercise regularly for the long haul - not to give it up in a couple of months. So what activity do you like to do and can see yourself doing for years to come? Something you can integrate into your life like your daily shower? Do you like badminton? Bike riding? Yoga? Walking?
2. Ask a friend to join you each time for your walk, work-out or exercise class. Or hire a trainer. Simply knowing you have committed to meet someone will get you out the door even if you don't feel like going. And the social aspect will help a lot too.
3. Commit to at least going to the gym and changing into your exercise gear. Most likely once you are there, you will be able to do at least a few minutes of exercise. Or even easier, commit to putting on your walking shoes, walk out the door and keep walking for 7.5 minutes, then turn around and come back. That's it. Then do it every day.
4. For most people, exercise is something that is scheduled around all the other stuff that must get done in a day. Everything else is the priority and exercising only happens if there is time. Change that around and schedule everything else around your exercise sessions.

Do you want to feel
20 years younger?

The Anti-Aging EXERCISE SOLUTION

Stay young, functional and pain-free!

Are movement restrictions impacting your life?

What can't you do now that you would like to be able to do again?

Are you blaming your age for these limitations?

Yet many people your age are moving well, so is that belief really true?

If age were the reason, everyone would have the same movement problems at the same age.

Is pain the reason for the lack of ability or is lack of ability the reason for pain?

Often pain is due to being too tight or too weak.

Our muscles have tightened up so we can't bend our knees, reach our arms or twist as far as we used to.

We lose strength because we are not using full range of motion anymore.

The expression "If you don't use it you will lose it" is true.

But so is its opposite. "If you use it again you will regain it."

The miracle of our bodies is that function can be restored and maintained.

The Anti-Aging Exercise Solution DVD is designed to address common movement and postural problems.

Start at your current ability.

There are 3 work-out levels, for novice to advanced exercisers

Be consistent - practice daily being mindful of your limits.

Regain your function at home or at

The people around you will soon realize that you are not available at particular times because you are exercising, so they will stop bothering you during those times. This is kind of like the "pay yourself first" idea when it comes to money management.

4. Get a dog. Dogs need to be walked a couple of times a day, so this will get you out walking regularly. Furthermore you will discover a whole new community of friendly people in your neighbourhood that you probably did not even know existed.

5. Measure your mood before and after your exercise on a scale of 1 to 10, and see how you do over time. Seeing results can often help you continue.

6. Realize that lack of motivation is not the problem. The problem is not being good at managing your behaviour. You may not be motivated to clean up after yourself but you do because you're wife's boss is coming for dinner tonight. In this case you choose to do something different than what you "feel like doing" because helping her out is the right thing to do.

So with respect to exercise, you may not be motivated, but recognize that you are able to do it and are choosing not to. Then change your choice.

7. Treat exercise like a professional athlete does. It is their job to stay in shape in order to play their sport. And even though most of us don't get paid the big bucks to stay in shape, we can try to view exercise in the same light. It is our job to stay in shape to keep our brain and bodies working well so we can fully enjoy doing the activities we want to do.

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