

# Managing Stress with Exercise



One of the best cures for stress is also the simplest: Get moving! Exercise impacts your mental health and overall wellbeing in a multitude of ways:

- ▶ **Brain chemistry.** Exercise causes the brain to release endorphins. These hormones ease pain and promote a sense of comfort and euphoria. Other effects on the brain include the release of chemicals which function as natural antidepressants. Serotonin in particular helps to stabilize mood and decrease negative feelings.
- ▶ **Mental health.** Moderate exercise interrupts the cyclic thinking process associated with depression, and may help dispel worry and anxiety.
- ▶ **Emotional control.** Exercise provides an outlet for negative emotions, such as frustration, anger, and irritability. The result? A more positive mood and outlook.
- ▶ **Overall wellbeing.** Research indicates that exercise:
  - Improves the ability to relax and sleep
  - Promotes self-esteem
  - Enhances energy, concentration, and memory
- ▶ **Self-care.** When you exercise, you are setting aside time to focus on your own wellbeing.

While most forms of physical activity will result in stress relief, you are more likely to stay on a regular exercise schedule if you are doing something you enjoy. Consider if you prefer:

- ▶ Solitary activities that incorporate some level of meditation
- ▶ Partner or group activities
- ▶ Competitive activities, such as sports

In addition, research suggests that a regular exercise routine is more beneficial than sporadic exercise. Try to engage in 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

For more information on how exercise can enhance your stress management efforts, contact LifeMatters. Help is available 24/7/365.

Source: The StayWell Company, LLC

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