

Can Exercise Help Relieve Depression & Anxiety?

Often, the answer is yes. Although most Americans are aware that regular exercise benefits overall physical health and helps fight disease, many people do not realize that exercise can also provide significant psychological benefits. Research indicates that exercise can help relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as play a role in preventing relapse after treatment. Additionally, regular exercise can be an effective tool in stress management.

How Does Exercise Improve Symptoms?

The Mayo Clinic reports that exercise leads to changes in mind and body that can improve such symptoms as sadness, irritability, stress, fatigue, anger, self-doubt, and hopelessness. Currently, it is not fully understood how exercise is linked to a reduction in these feelings, although it is likely that exercise increases levels of mood-enhancing chemicals in the brain. In addition, exercise is thought to provide the following benefits.

- Elevates endorphins
- Relaxes tense muscles
- Improves sleep
- Reduces levels of stress hormones in the body



The Psychological Benefits of Exercise

Increasing exercise helps individuals experiencing depression and anxiety to take an active role in managing their symptoms rather than waiting for symptoms to lessen. Additionally, exercise provides the following emotional benefits.

- Gives a sense of accomplishment and boosts self-confidence
- Provides distraction from feelings of sadness and anxiety
- Provides opportunity for interaction with others
- Improves healthy coping skills

Professional Treatment

Exercise may help to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression; however, it is not intended as a substitute for professional medical treatment. If you experience symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress that interfere with your day-to-day life, consult a mental health professional.

Consult your physician before beginning any new exercise routine, particularly if you have a medical condition.

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Regular exercise promotes physical health and well-being and generates positive psychological benefits as well. By becoming moderately active on a regular basis, sedentary individuals can improve their mental health as well as reduce their risk of developing certain diseases. Research indicates that exercise can help to relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as contribute to a sense of well-being.

