

Exercise and Physical Activity

Most people have been told, “you need to exercise more” or “If you did some sort of physical activity, you would probably feel better”? *Exercise and physical activity of any kind is healthy and can help increase positive mood and energy. It can also decrease weight, stress and blood pressure, increase alertness and motivation to accomplish other goals.* This isn't earth shattering news, as a matter of fact it is hard to find anyone who hasn't heard these things before. Yet, it still isn't enough to get people up and moving. So, if most people already know that physical activity and exercise have so many positive attributes, why is it that so many people don't engage in these activities? (especially when experiencing anxiety, depression or significant life stress)

When people feel down or depressed, stressed or nervous they tend to cut out healthy activities that normally bring value, meaning and enjoyment to their lives. Giving up healthy habits in the face of negative mood and life stress seems to be the path of least resistance for most, and the initiation of a cycle that is difficult to stop.

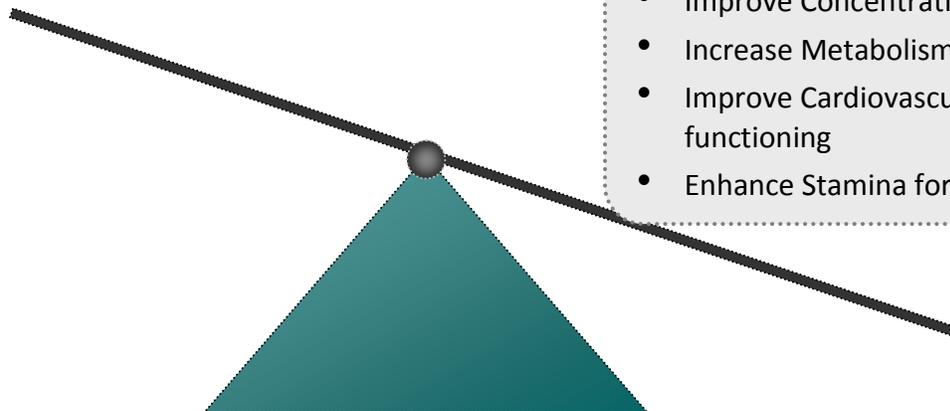
Finding reasons not to exercise isn't difficult, where most people get “stuck” is in problem solving and finding ways to overcome barriers to change. Sometimes, being able to weigh the reasons NOT to exercise against the reasons to DO exercise can help create the motivation and rationale to begin MOVING forward. Try using the scale below to “weigh” your options.....

REASONS NOT TO EXERCISE

- Feeling Sad
- Low Energy
- Exercise Goal is Unattainable
- Too Busy
- Too Hot or Cold
- Low Level of Interest
- Feeling Sick
- No Social Support
- Don't Have Proper Attire
- Too Tired
- Pain
- Intimidated by Gym People

REASONS TO EXERCISE

- Improve mood
- Increase Energy
- Weight Control
- Improve Sleep
- Stress Reduction
- Lower Blood Pressure
- Lower Cholesterol
- Increase Muscle Tone
- Decrease Chronic Pain
- Improve Concentration
- Increase Metabolism
- Improve Cardiovascular functioning
- Enhance Stamina for Daily



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List Top 3 Reasons to Exercise

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- My short term exercise goal is: _____
- My long term exercise goal is: _____
- When I REALLY don't feel like exercising I will: _____
- I will look to: _____ for support in my effort to exercise.
- I will reward myself with: _____

**Post this list in a place where you will see it several times each day!*

GETTING STARTED

- **Check with your doctor** - It is always a good idea to check in with your doctor before beginning a new fitness program. This is particularly true if you're over 40, if you smoke, or if you have a family history of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, diabetes, arthritis, or asthma.
- **Have fun** - Choose an activity you like or want to do. You're much more likely to stick with it. If you find your first choice doesn't suit you, switch to something else.
- **Start slowly and progress gradually** - You'll avoid becoming discouraged and reduce the risk of injury.
- **Set goals** - Maybe you want to lose a little weight, get in shape for a particular sport you enjoy, or reduce arthritis pain and increase joint mobility.
- **Keep track** - You may not notice that you're walking further in the same amount of time or that you're not as winded climbing the stairs. Keeping track helps you evaluate your progress and gives you a sense of accomplishment.
- **Reward yourself** - When you reach a goal, buy yourself a new T-shirt or tennis racket.
- **Find a partner** - It's more fun to share and you'll keep each other on track.

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- **Have a plan B** - If it's raining, walk around an indoor mall or do an exercise video.
- **Include variety** - You're less likely to become bored if you cross train. Include the three basic forms of exercise in your fitness program: aerobics, strength training, and stretching. Or if you prefer, alternate your activities, basketball one day, yoga another, and stacking wood on the third. The thing to remember is that ANY activity will help you burn calories!
- **Stick with it** - You have to exercise regularly for your fitness to improve. Fifteen to thirty minutes a day is all that is required to see improvement and you'll enjoy the same benefits if you find it easier to fit two 15 minute or two to three 10 minute sessions into your day.

