

7065 - Lower Stress with Exercise



It's no secret that physical activity – whether it is a relaxing walk, a 10K run or a yoga class - does a body good. But do you know that virtually any form of exercise can decrease the production of stress hormones and decrease the body's natural stress response? Exercises that help prevent disease and build muscle will also help you better manage your stress.

How does exercise reduce stress?

- **Physical activity pumps up your endorphins.** Exercise helps to increase the production of the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Anything from a run outside or on the treadmill to a brisk walk in the park can induce this effect. You will feel alert, happy, and energized as your stresses melt away.
- **Exercise is like meditation in movement.** After a fast-paced game of squash or some laps in the pool, you'll often find that you've forgotten all the day's dilemmas and irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements. As you begin to regularly shed your tensions through exercise, by bringing your focus onto something other than your problems, you will have more energy and will remain calm and clear in everything you do.
- **It improves your mood.** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence and lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. This can ease your stress levels and give you a sense of command over your body and your life.
- **Overall health benefits.** With regular exercise you experience many benefits that coincide with living a stress-free life. Physical activity decreases the risk for developing chronic diseases such as heart disease or diabetes, increases the body's immune system which will help fight off illness, helps prevent injury, and promotes restful sleep. With sufficient restful sleep and less illnesses and injuries, your life is surely going to be less stressful.



Whatever you do, don't think of exercise as just more thing on your to-do list. Find an activity you enjoy – whether it's an active game of golf or a meditative walk down to a local park and back – and make it part of your regular routine. Any form of physical activity can help you unwind and become an important part of your approach to easing stress.

