



It's Time to Relax

Week 3: YES – Exercise!

It is no secret that **physical activity** – whether it is a walk, 10 KM run, or yoga – does a body good. But, did you know that virtually any form of exercise can **decrease** the production of stress hormones and decrease the body's natural stress response?

How does exercise help you relax?



1. Physical activity pumps up your endorphins

Exercise helps to increase production of the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters (i.e., endorphins). A run outside or a brisk walk in the park can induce this effect. You will feel alert, happy, and energized as your stresses melt away.

2. Exercise is meditation in movement

After a fast-paced game of squash or some laps in the pool, you will often find that you have forgotten all the day's dilemmas and irritations. As you begin to regularly shed your tensions through exercise, by drawing your attention to something other than your stressors, you will have more energy and will remain calm and clear in everything you do.

3. 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 life

4. Overall health benefits

With regular exercise you experience many benefits that coincide with living a stress-free life. Physical activity decreases the risk of developing chronic diseases (e.g., heart disease, diabetes), enhances the body's immune system, helps prevent injury, and promotes restful sleep.



Do not think of exercise as just one more thing on your to-do list. Find an activity you enjoy – golf, yoga, walk in the park – and make it part of your regular routine. Any form of physical activity can help you unwind and will become an important part of your approach to easing stress.

Ways to sneak exercise into your day

1. **Find the time, it's there:** Monitor your daily routine for one week. The time is there, and it doesn't have to be all at once. Try this: nine ten-minute get-moving periods a week.
2. **Build physical activity into your daily routine:** Take the bus to work? Get off two stops early and walk the rest of the way. Taking your son/daughter to hockey practice? Walk laps around the rink.
3. **Leave the car at home:** Active transportation is better for you and the environment. Walk, jog, or bike your way to work and errands.
4. **Make active plans:** Plan time for physical activity as you would schedule an important appointment. Make sure your friends and family are aware of your commitment.
5. **After dinner, every night:** Leave the stress of the day behind and do something active every evening – even if just for 10 minutes (e.g., walk the dog, go for a swim).



Resource: <http://www.prevention.com>