



Manage 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 numerous 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. It may also help to dispel worry and anxiety.
- **Emotional control.** Exercise often 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. In addition, taking time for yourself may help you to be more mindful and present in other areas of your life.

Most forms of physical activity provide some level of stress relief. However, you are more likely to stay on a regular exercise schedule if you choose an activity 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. In addition, keep in mind that three 10-minute bursts of activity have the same benefits as one 30-minute session.

For more suggestions on how to manage stress and build resilience, contact LifeMatters. Help is available 24/7/365.

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