

The Benefits of Exercise

By: Rachel Goldstein

When there is 'so much to do and so little time' for many of us making time for exercise is often hard to do. When you also have anxiety or depression, exercise is often the last thing you feel like doing. However, physical activity and exercise can make a big difference in alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression and leave you feeling a lot better. Engaging in regular exercise can help ease stress, anxiety and depression due to the increased release of chemicals in your body that make you feel good and the increase in body temperature that may result in a calming effect and reduction in muscle tension. Exercise and physical activity have been found to be very effective at improving the ability to sleep, reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and at enhancing overall cognitive function. Exercising and physical activity also have psychological benefits as they can give you a chance to be in a social setting, can boost your self-confidence and can help to distract your worrying mind.

To help alleviate symptoms of anxiety or depression you don't have to spend a lot of money or join a gym or sign up for a structured aerobics class. There are plenty of ways to add physical activity throughout your busy schedule that will help to improve mood and overall well-being. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator, park farther away when running errands to fit in a short walk or if you live close enough to your job, consider biking to work instead of driving. Determine what type of physical activity you would actually enjoy and when and where works best for you so that you're more likely to follow through.

Stress is an inevitable part of life and I have found that yoga works best to help me manage stress. After taking a yoga class I immediately feel more energized and I am in a better mood. The combination of exercise and meditation works wonders to help me focus on the present and takes my mind off any worries I may have. I would encourage anyone who has anxiety or depression or who needs help managing stress to try yoga. No matter what you decide, any physical activity that gets you up and moving can help improve your mood and the symptoms of anxiety and depression and should be incorporated as part of any treatment plan.