Top 10 Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

Lieutenant Commander Heath M. Clifford

21st Century Sailor – Physical Readiness Program
Command Fitness Leader Program Manager (N170B)

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#1: Reduces Stress

- Exercise increases concentrations of norepinephrine
- Moderates the brain’s response to stress
- Boost the body’s ability to deal with existing physical symptoms that stress and worrying creates.
#2: Alleviates Depression

- Exercise releases endorphins
  - Creates feelings of happiness and euphoria
    - Studies show that exercise can treat mild to moderate depression as effectively as antidepressant medication
  - Promotes: neural growth, reduced inflammation, feelings of calmness and well-being.
#3: Alleviates Anxiety

- Exercise is a natural and effective anti-anxiety treatment
  - Exercise releases endorphins
    - Relieves tension and stress
    - Boosts physical and mental energy
    - Enhances well-being

- Q&A: Bubble bath or 20 minute jog?
#4: Reduces Symptoms of ADHD

- Boosts brain’s norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin levels - all of which affect focus and attention
  - Improves: Concentration, Motivation, Memory & Mood
- Exercise works in much the same way as Ritalin and Adderall
#5: Reduces Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Body focus during exercise can help the nervous system become “unstuck” and begin to move out of the immobilization stress response
- Exercises that involve cross movement and engage both arms and legs are best choices
#6: Shaper Memory and Brainpower

- Exercise stimulates the growth of new brain cells (neurogenesis) and helps prevent age-related decline
  - Increases levels of a brain-derived protein (aka BDNF): helps with decision making and higher thinking, and learning.
  - Increases production of cells in hippocampus
#7: Higher Self-esteem

- Investment in your mind, body, and soul
  - Fosters sense of self-worth
  - Sense of empowerment
  - Positive self-image
  - Sense of achievement
#8: Improves Sleep

- Short burst of exercise can help regulate your sleep patterns
  - Exercise raises body’s core temperature
  - Return to normal temperature post-exercise signals the body that it’s time to sleep.
#9: Increased Energy & Productivity

- Research shows that regular exercise boosts energy level and increases work productivity.
#10: Stronger Resilience

- Boosts immune system and reduces the impact of stress
- Provides a health coping mechanism for mental or emotional life challenges
  - Dopamine “reward chemical” released in response to any foam of pleasure
    - Effectively distracts drug and alcohol addicts making them de-prioritize cravings (at least short term)
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- How Much Exercise?
  - 30 Minutes/5 X week: Moderate Exercise
    - Shorter sessions if necessary
  - OPNAV 6110.1J
    - “members should participate in moderate activity at least:
      (a) two hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) per week, i.e., 50 minutes three times per week or 75 minutes two times per week; plus
      (b) perform strength training exercises at least twice per week to work all major muscle groups.”
Questions
Physical Activity and Mental Health
http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/physicalactivity.aspx
Royal College of Psychiatrists

The Exercise Effect
American Psychological Association

Exercising to Relax
http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Havard_Mens_Health_Watch/exercising-to-relax
Harvard Medical School

Depression and Anxiety: Exercises Eases Symptoms
Mayo Clinic

For Depression, Prescribing Exercise Before Medication
The Atlantic

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