

Exercise.

Relevant to: Depression:  Anxiety:  Irritability/Anger:  General emotional control: 

For anybody wanting to increase their mental capital, exercise is probably the simplest, easiest and quickest way of doing so. Its benefits are multiple and have been proved by research spanning decades. It is curious then, that only a relatively small number of people exercise regularly, especially as exercise can have social benefits too.

The benefits of exercise are amazing.

- Reduce the risk of premature death.
- Reduce the risk of developing and/or dying from heart disease.
- Reduce high blood pressure or the risk of developing high blood pressure.
- Reduce high cholesterol or the risk of developing high cholesterol.
- Reduce the risk of developing colon cancer and breast cancer.
- Reduce the risk of developing diabetes.
- Reduce or maintain body weight or body fat.
- Build and maintain healthy muscles, bones, and joints.
- Reduce depression and anxiety.
- Improve psychological well-being.
- Enhance work, recreation, and sport performance.

Source: the Department of Kinesiology and Health at Georgia State University.

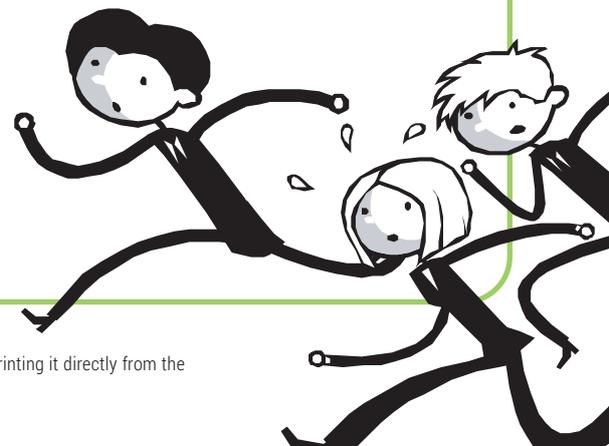
See also "Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General." (US)

It is important to find exercise that you enjoy.

Unless you find exercise that you enjoy, then the chances are that you will stop doing it once the initial enthusiasm has worn off. So what types of exercise are there? The main split is between aerobic exercise (exercising the heart and lungs) against anaerobic exercise (not exercising the heart and lungs, instead exercising arms, legs, stomach, etc). Emphasis has been put on aerobic exercise in recent years but in fact both sorts seem to be good for you.

There is no need to be fanatical about exercise.

Some people take up exercise with extreme enthusiasm, getting involved in competitive sports, moving up from ordinary walking through to "power walking", keeping a record of their times for specific circuits and constantly trying to improve on them, and so on. And there is nothing at all the matter with this. However, it is unnecessary from the point of view of getting the benefits in terms of mental capital. From that point of view, ordinary, good-paced walking for 20 minutes a day is perfectly ample.



Make it easy to Exercise.

Ben always goes for a 20 minute walk when he arrives home each evening. When he gets out of the car, even before going in the house, he takes himself for a 20 minute walk. Chris has the habit of going for a walk every day before lunch; he likes to think of himself as a hunter-gatherer as though he is going off in search of his lunch. Both Ben and Chris point out that now they are in the habit of doing this, it takes very little effort to do it. Alison likes to go cycling with her brother, they agree mutually convenient times, and off they go. Alison points out that once she has agreed to the time, it's very difficult to break that promise. Mona has a miniature trampoline that she can easily put in front of the television for when she is watching it. Rob has an exercise bike in his lounge for the same reason. Elaine does a lot of hoovering; her carpets are rather more spotless than they need to be. All of these strategies work really well.

Will on the other hand paid to join a nice gym 10 miles from where he lives and, after the initial enthusiasm, no longer goes. Likewise Ian likes to drive to the nearby paper shop to pick up his newspaper. Both of these strategies are clearly failing.

Some Exercise Options.

Swimming, water polo, hockey, walking, trampolining, cycling, running, jogging, joining a running club, joining a walking club, exercise videos, join a football club, join a rugby club, badminton, squash, tennis, Wii-fit games, sit ups, press ups, squats, rowing and rowing machines, gym equipment, golf (without the buggy!), dancing and dance-classes, yoga, pilates, gardening, housework, car washing, decorating, skipping, stretching.

In-session discussion.

What other excuses have you heard for people not exercising?
Which of the list of exercises have you tried - and which do you feel like trying?

What other forms of exercise are there apart from the ones listed?
What if anything do you do to make it easy for yourself to exercise?

Out of Session Project.

If you already take exercise, then you are doing well, so simply keep it up.

If you don't yet take exercise, make this week the week you start, and keep it up for ever more; it makes a huge difference.

Don't believe your own excuses.

The excuses that people give are many and various:

Excuse: I don't have time.

Rebuttal: You don't say that about eating, and exercise is just as important.

Excuse: I've never been sporty, not even at school.

Rebuttal: You don't have to do sports, just take some exercise.

Excuse: I was put off exercising at school.

Rebuttal: Well now it is down to you to find an exercise that you actually enjoy.

Excuse: I'm too tired.

Rebuttal: Exercise makes you feel more energetic rather than less.

Excuse: I've just eaten.

Rebuttal: So what?

Excuse: I'll do it tomorrow.

Rebuttal: Exercise is a regular daily thing, there is no such thing as doing today's exercise tomorrow.

Mythbuster:

Some people believe that exercise is over rated, and you don't really need to exercise. In fact the evidence is unequivocal; the benefits from exercise are many and substantial. From improved mood to living longer.