

# ***Top 10 Mental Health Benefits of Exercise***

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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.**



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## **■ #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.**



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## **■ #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?**



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- **#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**



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- **#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**



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- **#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**



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- **#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**





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- **#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.**



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- **#9: Increased Energy & Productivity**
  - **Research shows that regular exercise boosts energy level and increases work productivity.**



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## **■ #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 form 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.**



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# *Questions*



# Resources

## **Physical Activity and Mental Health**

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/physicalactivity.aspx>

Royal College of Psychiatrists

## **The Exercise Effect**

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/12/exercise.aspx>

American Psychological Association

## **Exercising to Relax**

[http://www.health.harvard.edu/newletters/Havard\\_Mens\\_Health\\_Watch/exercising-to-relax](http://www.health.harvard.edu/newletters/Havard_Mens_Health_Watch/exercising-to-relax)

Harvard Medical School

## **Depression and Anxiety: Exercises Eases Symptoms**

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sepression/in-depth-and-exercise/art-20046495>

Mayo Clinic

## **For Depression, Prescribing Exercise Before Medication**

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/03/for-depression-prescribing-exercise-before-medication/284587/>

The Atlantic

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