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Exercise And Self-Esteem

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The human body is designed to move. Too often exercise is viewed as one part in a weight loss equation. In fact, exercise is an important part of being healthy.

We all know that exercise is healthy, yet a large number of people don't participate in regular physical activity. Is exercise just good for the way we look and our healthy weight, or is there something more important to it? Let's look at all the ways we, people, are impacted by physical movement, and you can then decide for yourself.

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Physical and Mental Health

Exercise decreases our risk of a range of physical and mental issues. Regular exercise reduces the chances of becoming sick from: type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke, some forms of cancer, depression and dementia. This is not an exhaustive list.

If you ask someone who regularly participates in physical activity why they do it, they will likely report that it increases their mood and decreases stress.

When we exercise, certain feel-good chemicals called endorphins are released, which diminish feelings of pain, while increasing our sense of well-being. Mother Nature designed a host of rewards for regular exercise, so it pays to try it. [Here](#) ^[1] you can find the World Health Organization recommendations for the amount of exercise you need. Note it varies slightly

depending on your age.

What About Your Budget?

As with diets, there are trends in the fitness industry. Gyms need to sell their memberships, which is one reason why you see new classes being advertised. One month Pilates might be the best thing going, and the next it's all about spinning.

A gym membership isn't necessary to reach a good state of physical fitness, and for many people joining a gym is too costly and intimidating of a process. Exercising regularly doesn't have to involve any kind of costly equipment or membership.

Instead, consider how you can incorporate more activity into your life. Perhaps you like dancing. In that case, join a dance class or find dance classes like Zumba on Youtube. Walking has been shown to have incredible benefits for the body and mind. Listen to your favorite music or podcasts as you go.

Yoga is an excellent way to reduce stress and befriend your body. If you are too shy to go to a class, again - look online. [This \[2\]](#) is one of several sites where you can learn a lot about different styles of yoga and its philosophy.

Include Cardiovascular Activity

Try to do some cardiovascular (otherwise known as 'aerobic') activity several times a week, in which you feel your heart beating faster and breathing increase. Add some strength training exercises, either using your body weight, dumb-bells, kettlebell or a medicine ball. [This website \[3\]](#), as many others, has plenty of workouts which you can follow at home, for free.

Plan Your Exercise

Make a plan for the next week on how you are going to increase your level of physical fitness, and stick to it. Remember, if you are not used to being physically active, go slowly at first. It is counterproductive to try to do an advanced workout, only to have sore muscles for the rest of the week.

The aim is to find some activities which you enjoy and want to repeat on a regular basis, so that exercise becomes part of your long-term life style.

A Word of Caution

For some people with very low self-esteem, exercise can become an addiction. If you find yourself becoming hooked on how you feel after a workout and the comments from others, which are often a source of external validation, it may be time to re-evaluate the role of exercise in your life.

If you feel a sense of withdrawal and tension when not exercising, this is a sign that you are dependent on exercise to feel good. Other signs are extending your workout and not feeling able to stop, organizing your life around fitness and cancelling other pursuits, as well as

having an injury but continuing to workout.

Exercise addiction often goes unnoticed, partly because our society sees working out as a positive thing to do and partly because most of us lead sedentary lifestyles where we sit all day in our jobs. However, it can be extremely isolating and physically dangerous.

Key Points

- Exercise is essential for our health
- Exercise has been shown to have a variety of physical and mental health benefits
- A gym membership is not necessary to stay active
- It's important to find activities which you enjoy and be consistent
- Too much exercise can be as unhealthy as too little.

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Links

[1] http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_recommendations/en/

[2] <http://www.yogadownload.com>

[3] <http://www.fitnessblender.com>