

BEING GOOD TO YOUR BODY

Exercise benefits:

- reduced skeletal muscle tension
- more rapid metabolism of adrenalin, thyroxin, and endorphins (which can improve your mood)
- discharge of pent-up frustration (which can reduce anxiety)
- lower cholesterol levels
- decreased blood pressure
- increased subjective feelings of well-being
- reduced dependence on drugs and alcohol
- better sleep
- increased self-esteem
- improved concentration and memory

Symptoms of being out of shape:

- being out of breath when walking up a flight of stairs
- feeling exhausted after a short period of exertion
- muscle tension
- obesity
- general tiredness

Starting an exercise program:

- consult with a physician if you have any physical problems that could be exacerbated
- choose an exercise you think you'll like (ie. Jogging, brisk walking, swimming, weight lifting, tennis, racquetball, baseball, softball, basketball, bowling, dancing, roller skating, yoga)
- start easy on yourself (10 min. every other day for the first week; add 5 minutes each week until you reach 30)
- give yourself a one-month trial period
- keep a record of your daily exercise practice
- expect discomfort

- reward yourself
- warm up
- avoid exercising within 90 minutes of a meal

Ideal exercise:

- Aerobic
- 4-5 times per week
- 20-30 minutes per session

Common excuses:

- I don't have enough time (or not willing to make time)
- I feel too tired (start earlier in day to overcome fatigue)
- It's no fun (try something different)
- It's inconvenient (try something different)

Nutrition:

- Substances that are unhelpful:
 - Stimulants: caffeine (coffee, cola, chocolate- have max 1 cup coffee, 2 sodas/day), nicotine, Benzedrine, Dexedrine, Methedrine, Ritalin, cocaine,
 - Salt: depletes potassium, raises blood pressure
 - Preservatives
 - Hormones in meat-reduce consumption of red meat, pork and poultry-eat fish/veggies
- Stressful eating habits - eating too fast, too much, or on the run
- Avoid sugar, check for food allergies
- Drink the equivalent of at least 6 8-oz glasses of bottled spring water per day
- Include one fresh (not frozen or canned) cooked vegetable in your diet each day
- Supplements: Vitamin B-complex (50-100mg), Vitamin C-complex (1000-mg, time-release), with meals

Seasonal Affective Disorder:

- Expose yourself to light. - get outside, sit near windows, stay on a regular sleep/wake cycle, arrange outings for daytime hours, put lights on a timer to go on half an hour before you wake
- postpone major life changes until the Spring

- take a vacation if you can in the Winter in a warm, sunny climate.
- National Organization for Seasonal Affective Disorder, NOSAD, P.O. Box 40133, Washington, DC, 20016
- Norman Rosenthal - "Winter Blues- Seasonal Affective Disorder and How to Overcome It"

Regular Daily Relaxation:

- Benefits: decreased heart rate, decreased blood pressure, decreased tension, decrease in analytical thinking.
- What to do: Regular practice of deep relaxation for 20-30 minutes a day.
- This will generalize to the rest of your day and: reduce anxiety, prevent stress, increase energy, increase concentration and memory, reduce insomnia and fatigue, prevent headaches and muscle aches, increase self-confidence.

Abdominal Breathing

- Take slow, deep breaths.
- Breath from the diaphragm.
- Focus on your belly contracting and your chest staying mostly still as you inhale.
- Focus on your belly expanding and your chest staying mostly still as you exhale.
- If you want, count four seconds to inhale, four seconds to hold your breath, six seconds to exhale, and two seconds to pause before starting over.
- Say the word "relax" or "calm" as you exhale.
- Repeat this for 5-10 minutes.
- The more you practice the easier it gets to bring on quick relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Tense and then relax each muscle group in your body. First, tense a muscle group for about five seconds. Then relax and notice the difference.
- Start either with your toes and move up or with your head and move down.
- Typical muscle groups include: toes, ankles, calves, thighs, butt, stomach, shoulders, arms, fingers, face.
- When done, notice the relaxation.
- Do the whole process two times in a row.
- Think what parts of it you can do quickly without others noticing.

Body Scan

- Similar to progressive muscle relaxation, except that you will just relax each muscle group.
- Also you can imagine any tension residing in an area as resembling a "tense" shape.
- Then, in your mind switch it to a relaxing shape.
- Similarly, you can imagine a "tense" color for the tension, and in your mind change it to a relaxing color.
- Imagine calmness flowing into your body and tension flowing out.

The Peaceful Scene

- This is also called guided imagery.
- Imagine a place that is very relaxing and safe.
- It could be somewhere you have been or just a fantasy place.
- Get comfortable and imagine slowly that you are walking to it.
- When you get there, notice what each of your senses picks up: what you see, hear, smell, and feel.
- Enjoy being in this place.
- Stay there for five to ten minutes.
- At the end of this time, say goodbye for now to the place, realizing you can return anytime.

Meditation

- Focus on your breathing.
- Breath slow.
- Let any thoughts pass through your mind.
- Say a phrase over and over, You can use "I am calm and relaxed" if you want.

Common obstacles:

- I don't have time (so, what's the priority?)
- I don't have a place to relax (make one)
- These exercises are too slow (then you are too speeded up)
- I feel more anxious when I relax (use shorter periods of relaxation or progressive muscle relaxation).

Down Time and Time Management:

- Time for relaxation or free time: 1 hr per day, 1 day per week, 1 week every 4 months

- Rest time, recreation time, relationship time
- Prioritization
- Delegation
- Allowing Extra Time
- Letting Go of Perfectionism
- Overcoming Procrastination
- Saying No

Material adapted from The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Edmund J. Bourne, Jr. (1995).