

FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50 +

The Mind Issue: Exercise and Mindfulness

Introduction

Everyone has heard that exercise is good for the heart, muscles and bones, but what about the mind? Is it the closest thing we have to our mental fountain of youth? Mindfulness, being aware, to focus your attention on what is taking place right now, is less well known and understood but research indicates that it can have a significant impact on your mental health as well. This newsletter will examine both exercise and mindfulness and their effects on your brain so you can have a better understanding of the impact they can have on the your health and quality of life.

Exercise and the Mind

Current research overwhelming endorses exercise as a way of improving mental (emotional and intellectual) and cognitive (awareness and judgement) abilities. As well, research indicates that exercise can improve concentration, learning, focus, memory and can even help prevent and treat mental illness.

Physiologically, exercise improves brain function three ways;

1. It reduces stress levels and helps your body deal with the hormones that are released when you are under stress.
2. It stimulates the release of endorphins that lead to feelings of euphoria and happiness (often referred to as the “high” experienced after exercise).
3. It increases the blood and oxygen flow to the brain and promotes the production of new cells and neural connections.

In his book, “Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain”, psychiatrist Dr. John Ratey states, “ Physical activity sparks biological changes that encourage brain cells to bind to one another...it provides an unparalleled stimulus and creates an environment in which the brain is ready, willing and able to learn.”

How much Exercise is Needed and is it Too Late for a Sedentary Older Adult to Benefit ?

Interestingly, exercise does not have to be strenuous or done everyday to produce beneficial results. In a 6 year study involving 1,700 people age 65 or older who did low intensity aerobic and muscle strengthening exercises only 3 times a week, a 32 % lower risk of dementia was observed. In another study, only 20 minutes of yoga improved ones ability to learn, remember and process information more quickly.

Summary

The key to achieving benefits from exercise is in the doing. Even a little exercise at low intensity can have powerful life changing mental effects.

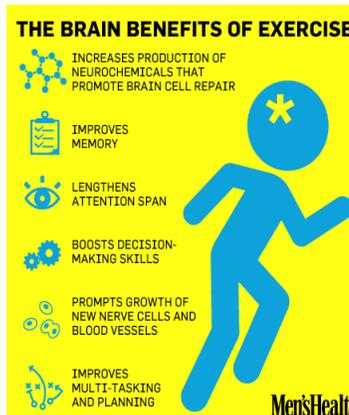


Did You Know

Other Ways of Exercising the Mind

Physical exercise is great for keeping the Brain fit and healthy but there are other “exercises “ you can do to help prevent mental and cognitive decline;

1. **Do daily crosswords and puzzles.** - They are easy to fit into your day.
2. **Read as much as you can** -The more challenging the text the more of a workout your brain will get.
3. **Talk with people** - Talk about politics, religion, and other challenging topics but have real discussions not arguments.
4. **Write something** - Writing requires loads of thinking. Start a journal.
5. **Turn off the television** — Television puts your brain on autopilot. Choose to watch educational programs or ones with complex plot lines.
6. **Learn something new** - This could be a new language, hobby or skill. Learning requires concentration and stimulates your ability to remember and problem solve.
7. **Eat well and exercise** - Eat a healthy diet rich in protein and omega 3 fatty acids to keep your brain physically fed.
8. **Sleep** - While you sleep, your body cleans toxins out of your brain in addition to making repairs.
9. **Change up your routine**- by constantly changing the way you do your everyday activities you avoid monotony and you stimulate the brain to adapt to new ways of doing the same old thing
10. **Problem solve** - This improves creativity .



Mindfulness

Editors Note: For a more detailed explanation of mindfulness, its physiological and emotional benefits and how to properly practice it I would encourage you to click on the following links to the Forever Active web site;

1. [June 2013 Newsletter– Mindfulness-](http://forever-active.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/17-June-2013-Mindfulness.pdf) http://forever-active.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/17-June-2013-Mindfulness.pdf .
2. [Introduction into Mindfulness-](http://forever-active.com/introduction-to-mindfulness,introduction-to-mindfulness#more-1084) http://forever-active.com/introduction-to-mindfulness,introduction-to-mindfulness#more-1084
3. [The Foundation of Mindfulness Practice-](http://forever-active.com/the-foundation-of-mindfulness-practice-2,the-foundation-of-mindfulness-practice-2#more-1071) http://forever-active.com/the-foundation-of-mindfulness-practice-2,the-foundation-of-mindfulness-practice-2#more-1071
4. [Micro Mindfulness Meditation-](http://forever-active.com/micro-mindfulness-meditation,micro-mindfulness-meditation#) http://forever-active.com/micro-mindfulness-meditation,micro-mindfulness-meditation#

What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness means **being aware**, fully and completely, **from moment to moment**. It means to **live in the moment**, not to judge the moment but to see each moment as a new beginning, a new opportunity to start over, to tune in, and to reconnect.

Practicing mindfulness involves stopping all the “doing” in your life and relax into the present without trying to fill it up with anything.

The goal is to purposefully allow your body and mind to come to rest in the moment,

no matter what is “on” your mind or how your body feels. This means allowing yourself to **be in the moment with things exactly as they are, without trying to change anything.**

You need to practise mindfulness in order to reap its benefits The more systematically and regularly you practice, the more the power of mindfulness will grow and the more its benefits will be experienced.



The Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness improves well being

- Being mindful makes it easier to savor the pleasures in life as they occur, helps you become fully engaged in activities, and creates a greater capacity to deal with adverse events.
- By focusing on the here and now, many people who practice mindfulness find that they are less likely to get caught up in worries about the future or regrets over the past, are less preoccupied with concerns about success and self-esteem, and are better able to form deep connections with others.

Mindfulness improves mental health

Psychotherapists have turned to mindfulness meditation as an important element in the treatment of a number of problems, including:

- depression
- substance abuse
- eating disorders
- couples’ conflicts
- anxiety disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder

Meditation

One of the ways you practise mindfulness is through meditation. Meditation is really about paying attention to the present moment.

Steps;

1. Close your eyes, sit so your back is straight but not stiff. Become aware of your breathing.
2. Don’t try to control your breathing. Just let it happen and be aware of it, witnesses it as it flows in and out. Try being with your breath in this way for 3 to 5 minutes.
3. If your mind wanders from your breath note that your mind has done this and then simply let go of whatever your mind is now thinking and bring your attention back to your breathing. Repeat this process each time you find your mind wandering.

