



## The Psychological Benefits of Exercise

The psychological benefits of regular exercise can be as significant as the physical. Some, such as better self-esteem, come as an indirect result of exercise and are fairly subjective.

Others are a direct consequence of chemical activity triggered by physical exertion, and for this reason some doctors regularly recommend physical activity. Brain chemicals released during exercise, such as serotonin, and endorphins, are known to have strong effects on mood, helping reduce feelings of anxiety, stress and depression, while also helping to strengthen your immune system.

Endorphins secreted during exercise are proven to have a very powerful effect. Often referred to as 'runners high', the release of beta-endorphins reduces pain (the reason why running becomes easier after about 20 minutes) and stimulates feelings of euphoria - which is why so many people feel invigorated and enthusiastic after exercise.

Other psychological side effects of exercise include:

- Improved self-esteem and greater sense of self-reliance and self-confidence
- Improved mental alertness
- Increased perceptions of acceptance by others
- Decreased overall feelings of stress and tension
- Reduced frustration with daily problems, and a more constructive response to negative outcomes

The psychological benefits can be just as important as the more obvious physical ones. Many of us are lucky enough to be able to say that we exercise because simply put, we enjoy it. We enjoy the social aspect, the feeling of doing something good for our body and mind, and for that unforgettable adrenaline rush. Some people exercise because they are unhappy about something, whether it is to shift that extra pound or two, worries about general health, or simply being sick of feeling unfit and having no energy. Regardless of the reasons why, the beneficial outcome is the same.

If you are feeling like a couch potato, or you are finding stress and worry is becoming a problem, get out there and exercise! The hardest part by far is that initial step, when it can feel like exercise is the last thing in the world that will cheer you up. Just try to remember that exercise is one of the very best ways do do just that.

Further psychological benefits references.

<http://www.thefitmap.com/trainers/benefits/index.htm>

<http://www.bupa.co.uk/health>