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# Exercise for wellbeing


Applying Sport and Exercise Psychology

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**Plenty of evidence for exercise effects on mental health**

Exercise has antidepressant effects and can ward off the physical and psychological impact of stress ( for a review see Salmon, 2001)

NHS Benefits of exercise  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits/>



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## Mood

Evidence that mood improves following exercise (Salmon 2001)  
 However, this is mainly true when exertion rates are within 'normal' range for the individuals  
 Very strenuous exercise can lower mood  
 Csikszentmihályi (1990)  
 'Flow' or feeling 'in the zone' great for happiness. Need something challenging enough for your skill level (this is true of other activities, such as games), but not so hard that its frustrating.  
 Think about realistic goals, these can help you stick to an exercise plan..

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## Goals

Different types; outcome goals (Run 5k in 30 mins), process goals,(keep heart rate at 140 beats per minute for 20).  
 Wilson and Brookfield (2009) found that those who set process goals experienced less tension/stress than those who set outcome goals.  
 Those who set outcome goals reported higher enjoyment but lower sense of control than those setting process goals.  
 In comparison to groups who did not set goals, both types of goal setting resulted in lower drop out rate.  
 Consider what your goals are

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## What type of exercise?

Kalak et al (2012) found 3 weeks of regular running in a group of adolescence (18 yrs) improved their sleep, mood and concentration.

Rocha et al (2012) 6 months of yoga improved memory, lowered stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms in health adults.

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## What type of exercise?

Both aerobic and anaerobic exercise has positive effects on well-being and stress reduction but greater effects from aerobic exercise (Norris, Caroll & Cochrane, 1990).

Miller et al (2020) compared the impact of different types of exercise (mind-body, vs resistance vs aerobic) on people over 65 with depression. All three reduced the symptoms of depression- no real difference across activity type

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### Self determination theory (Ryan and Deci 2000)

We need to feel a sense of autonomy, relatedness and competence in what we are doing. This increases motivation and mental wellbeing.

This applies to exercise

Hear Edward Deci explain the basics of this theory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6fm1gt5YAM>

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### Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence

Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000)

You need to feel you have freely chosen the activity to get the best outcome for wellness.

Something you feel you can do competently

Relatedness- this can be tricky in social isolation- consider online classes

It helps intrinsic **motivation** and that can help us stick to our plan and achieve goals.

Enjoyment and satisfaction

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### Potential Activities

Plenty available freely online; consider if you want to use a pre-defined plan (with process goals) like a couch to 5 K:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/>

Or a daily routine like 30 days of yoga with Adriene (different each day)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLui6Eyny-UzwbWCWDb1zEwsZnnROBTIL>

Or consider a short daily challenge (like the plank challenge)

Alternatively you might use online exercises to inspire your own routine and develop your own:

Jo Wickes body coach channel contains a lot of choice. He also runs PE lessons for children.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1>

Seated exercises

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>

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### Developing your own plan

You may prefer to adapt your own to combine a variety of activities and goals

Goal to exercise 4 x a week, (yoga, run, HITT and walk)

Goal to increase repetitions each week?

Goal to run ...k after 1 month (intersperse some process goals?)

Goal to lift ....lbs after 1 month

Goal weight loss?

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### Weight loss as a motivator

Whilst weight loss may be a motivator for some people we may want to consider the implications this has.

Obesity stigma/anti-fat attitudes are a problem in society (Puhl & Heuer 2010)

Anti-fat attitudes and fear of fat are related to body dissatisfaction and body shame. Body shame has a negative effect on wellbeing, (Tylka et al, 2014)

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### How can we avoid this in a fat oppressive society?

Need to be weight inclusive rather than weight normative (Tylka et al, 2014)

Self-compassion- Inspired by Buddhism, we can counteract shame by practicing self-compassion, reconsider our 'flaws and inadequacies,' practice kindness to self and mindful equanimity, (Neff, 2003)

Self-compassion found to protect against body shame, (Webb, Fiery & Jafari, 2016)

Self-compassion can lead to better wellbeing effects of exercise (Magnus, Kowalski and McHugh, 2010)\*

\* Only tested on women



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### Consider exercise, activity and exertion

Can we extend the idea of self-compassion during the challenge of the lockdown?

Goals are good but flaws are human

Most research on the benefits of exercise studies formal, dedicated exercise sessions but we may wish to broaden this

Consider the energy you use looking after children, gardening, walking to the shops- this is where a Fitbit (or similar) can be useful.

Do you enjoy and want to go it?

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