

# ✓ Vitality Wellness

December 2017

## Let exercise help you maintain your emotional health this December



Every holiday season, we celebrate the 4 F's: fun, friends, family, and food. However, we are often so caught up in our festivities that we forget about another important factor—exercise. Not only can exercise help our bodies maintain physical health as we eat holiday treats, but it can also promote mental and emotional health. These types of health are just as important, especially since the holiday season can become stressful due to cooking, cleaning, and family obligations. Here are just a few ways that regular exercise can help support your mental and emotional health this holiday season.

**Reducing stress.** Exercise can be an excellent stress reliever after a long day. Exercise increases levels of

a chemical called norepinephrine in the body, which impacts the brain's response to stress. Increasing levels of this chemical through exercise can help the brain more effectively handle stress and reduce mental pressure.

### **Reducing depression and anxiety.**

Exercise can also help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. By increasing levels of serotonin, endorphins, and other anti-depressive chemicals, exercise promotes feelings of calm and happiness. Studies have shown that exercise can reduce anxiety and depression in patients after about nine weeks of regular activity.

**Inspiring creativity.** Got writer's block? Try putting down your pencil and returning after a short brisk

walk. According to a study published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, exercise can boost creativity for up to two hours after your workout session. For an additional creative boost, exercise outdoors to allow yourself to connect to nature.

**Increasing self-esteem.** Feeling healthier physically can boost your confidence and cause you to feel better emotionally. By helping you sleep better, giving you more energy, and toning various muscles in your body, exercise can raise your alertness and your self-esteem. Additionally, exercise can make you focus more easily, helping you stay organized and concentrate on important aspects of your life.

### **Preventing cognitive decline.**

As you age, so does your brain. When diseases like Alzheimer's kill brain cells, the brain shrinks and loses several functions. However, exercise can help the brain fight this cognitive decline. Working out boosts chemicals in the brain that defend the brain's hippocampus against degeneration, protecting memory and learning.

Next time you find yourself in a rut or in need of a mood booster, get out and get active. Your body and mind will thank you for it later.

# December Word Search: Exercise for emotional health

- |            |           |           |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| BOOST      | FAMILY    | ORGANIZED |
| CALM       | FOCUS     | PRESSURE  |
| CHEMICAL   | HANDLE    | PROTECT   |
| CLEANING   | HAPPINESS | REDUCE    |
| COGNITIVE  | HOLIDAY   | RESPONSE  |
| COOKING    | INCREASE  | SEASON    |
| DEPRESSION | MEMORY    | STRESS    |
| ENERGY     | MENTAL    | SUPPORT   |
| EXERCISE   | MOOD      | TREATS    |



November Word Search Key



## Health spotlight

### Are you washing your hands properly?

December 2–8 marks National Hand Washing Week, and what better way to celebrate than to practice proper hand washing technique? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you should wet your hands before applying soap. Then, make sure to lather the backs of your hands and the spaces between your fingers and under your nails. Before rinsing your hands, scrub them together for at least 20 seconds. Don't forget to dry your hands! Follow these instructions when you wash your hands to prevent sickness during the winter.

