

How to look after your body for positive mental health

Tictrac | Nov 16, 2021



Taking care of our bodies isn't just beneficial physically but has multiple mental health benefits too. When we take the time to nurture ourselves, we are partaking in an important act of self-care that not only keeps us feeling active and healthy, but also helps to boost our self-esteem.

We can often find ourselves pulled in different directions when it comes to work and family life but taking time to make ourselves a priority will keep us thriving and in turn, will positively impact those around us too.

Food for thought

A simple way to keep ourselves healthy and active as well as feeling fantastic, is to consider our diet. If we eat healthy, nutritious, and filling foods, we are much less likely to experience negative symptoms such as feeling jittery, weak, lethargic, or even moody [1]. As well as eating lots of fruit and vegetables, peppering your diet with healthy fats such as nuts and seeds, and snacking on fiber-filled foods like lentils will boost energy levels and keep you looking and feeling both healthy and strong [2].

There is a notable pattern when it comes to diet, exercise, and sleep. If you eat nourishing food and take plenty of exercise (even if it is just a brisk walk), then chances are you will sleep better. If you sleep better, you will feel healthier, rested and more likely to want to exercise and eat well. By keeping this cycle going and finding a routine that works, you will be giving your body the best chance at performing to the best of your abilities.

We know sleep is important to fight fatigue, but it also helps to keep your mental health flourishing too. Getting good quality rest can improve mood and emotional reactivity as well as potentially helping to fight mental health issues such as anxiety and depression [3].

Keeping active

Starting some sort of physical activity has been shown to boost our mental health. As well as improving sleep it also contributes to happier moods and a release of feel-good hormones that boost your self-confidence and energy. It can also help to quell racing and anxious thoughts and it releases cortisol which helps us tackle stress.

You can partake in a single person sport such as running, which is great for hitting goals and boosting self-worth as well as all the aforementioned physical and mental benefits. However, a group activity is also a great way to keep fit and happy while socialising, meeting new people and making friends [4].

If you aren't a fan of intense physical activity, the good news is that little and often works wonders for our mental health too. As little as 15 minutes a day of high-power exercise like running, or an hour of lower intensity activities like walking (or even housework) can help with low mood and depression. Fundamentally if you make the effort to intentionally move your body in more gentle ways throughout the day via strolls, taking the stairs or stretching, this can really boost your overall levels of happiness [5].

Mindful movement

A great way to link mindfulness with movement is through gentle activities like yoga. This can really help to nourish both mind and body for an overall hit of mood-boosting serotonin. Physically, doing yoga has been linked with incredible health benefits such as reduced inflammation, improved heart health, and a decrease in stress. It also has numerous mental health benefits too such as decreasing symptoms of anxiety by allowing you to feel present and even tackling feelings of depression due to its reduction of cortisol (a stress hormone) in the body [6].

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1. [Why you should take care of your body and health](#). Very Well Mind, February 13, 2020.
 2. [What are the most healthful foods?](#) Medical News Today, January 27, 2020.
 3. [Mental health and sleep](#). Sleep Foundation, September 18, 2020.
 4. [Physical activity and your mental health](#). Mind, March 2019.
 5. [More evidence that exercise can boost mood](#). Harvard Health, May 1, 2019.
 6. [13 benefits of yoga that are supported by science](#). Healthline, August 30, 2017.