EXERCISE SHOULD BE PART OF EVERYDAY – THE HEALTH BENEFITS (PHYSICAL AND MENTAL) ARE UNQUESTIONABLE!

Exercise creates a natural chemical 'high' by releasing endorphins (these are the 'feel-good' chemicals). It also helps the release or 'burn-off' of excess adrenaline, which contributes to a stressed or edgy feeling. Serotonin contributes to a range of functions including appetite, libido, sleep and mood. Research shows that regular exercise can alter serotonin levels resulting in improved mood, a sense of well-being and reduced levels of depression. Studies show that the effect of exercise is immediate and can last up to 12 hours. Best results are reported from exercise that takes place on a daily basis.

Exercise is an excellent form of distraction. Often we can get stuck in a cycle of worry and we keep thinking about our problems. The more we think about them the more anxious we stay. We can have a bad day at work and arrive home feeling that all our energy has evaporated. We can feel irritable and are ready to 'snap' at the 'drop of a hat'!! Removing yourself from your desk, a stressful home situation or from the cycle of continuous anxious thinking and going for a walk, swim or some other form of exercise can prove to be the ideal tonic! You will definitely feel much better afterwards. However don't bring your problems with you! If you have a tendency to brew and bubble on your worries it probably would be better to bring some company with you! Switch the channel and avoid discussion about any worries or problems that you may have. Don't spoil the potential benefits of the exercise by bringing anxiety with you!

Exercise protects against unhelpful anger. Even a thirty-minute brisk walk can have a robust protective effect against the build-up of anger. A study from the university of Stuttgart, published in the Journal of Exercise and Physiology suggested that if you are likely to be in an anger-producing situation some exercise beforehand would help. In effect you blow off some of the steam before the stressful situation. You are more likely to handle it better and be more objective, neutral and fair in your approach.

Surprisingly exercise on a regular basis leads to an increase in energy levels overall, due to an increase in cardiovascular fitness. Having some extra energy in storage will help you fight fatigue and boost motivation and lead to an improved sense of well-being.

Exercise can be fun and often can be a social outlet. If you are playing tennis or a member of a gym you will meet other people. Maybe you might join friends or family for exercise or become a member of a team. You may also join an exercise class. All of this can potentially have very positive psychological effects . You'll have more fun, enjoy some laughs, and hear 'new' news. People can be a great source of happiness, support and inspiration.

Exercise can help build confidence and self-esteem. As we feel fitter and stronger we will also feel more content- knowing that we are investing in our health. This produces a new confidence and a sense of satisfaction. Often people transform from being worried about their appearance, excess weight to celebrating feeling and looking better.

Exercise can produce a real 'sense of achievement'. Fitness is an excellent area to set targets and goals and to follow a path to achieving them. This is a good habit to form. Often we can get ourselves into a rut and start to believe that we can never get around to doing the things we really want to do! A daily walk would be one of the best habits you could ever start. Leaving the car at home and walking to the shop or work should be considered if it is a realistic option. It's all about forming a habit.

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