



Exercise and Mental Health – What if I'm not an exercise person?

Well your not alone!

Depending on the question, exercise vs. activity, only 25% to 45% of people exercise on a daily basis.

“Exercise of 150 minutes per week or 30 minutes of activity, you choose. Either one is termed by an increase in heart and respiration rates.”

Social media, news outlets are pushing the message of exercise as “critical” to maintain mental health. This pertensity to push a particular method of maintaining mental health causes anxiety in people who don't like or can't participate.

*If I don't/can't exercise how can I maintain my mental health?
“Get your endorphins activated”.*

[Endorphins](#) are chemical messengers in your body, released by both your central nervous system and your pituitary gland.

While experts are still identifying all the ways they work in your body, [2010 research \(Trusted Source\)](#) suggests endorphins play an important part in your body's ability to manage pain and experience pleasure.

What is known is that when we exercise, we release 'natural chemicals' called endorphins.

When released, endorphins can help relieve pain, reduce [stress](#), and may cause a euphoric feeling. In short, they can make you feel pretty darn good.

The release of 'trigger' endorphins causes other 'happy' chemicals to be released such as dopamine and serotonin.

These are natural chemical's that are mimicked by synthetic drugs such as morphine. As the effects of COVID 19, lock downs, social isolation, financial pressures and so on continue, managing mental health can be challenging.

If your one of the 75%/55% who don't exercise don't stress. Here are some other ways of producing trigger endorphins without exercising while in 'lockdown'.

- Eat spicy food.
 - The tongue sends messages to the brain that are similar to pain signals, causing it to trigger the release of endorphins.
- Laugh out loud. ...
 - This is a great time to revisit funny movies, old radio stories (the Goon show), old television programs and books. Check out ones you have seen before, but have a good laugh. Share with family members.
- Chew on some chocolate. ...
 - Speaks for itself
- Get intimate.
 - Good exercise
- [Meditation](#)
 - Learn meditation techniques
- [Aromatherapy](#)
 - You can get these from most supermarkets/chemists. ([rosemary](#). Citrus fragrances such as orange, grapefruit, or bergamot, [frankincense](#)
- [Food and drink](#)
 - Cooking is a great activity but remember, **Alcohol** is classified as a Central Nervous System **depressant**, meaning that it slows down brain functioning and neural activity.
- [Kindness](#)
 - An act of kindness releases large amounts of endorphins.
- [Music](#)
 - Listen or even write music or lyrics
- [Sunlight](#)
 - A natural trigger of Happy chemicals
- [Massage](#)
 - Can be both pleasant or vigorous
- Baths
 - A natural place of peace.

There is a saying that goes “What is so, is...so what” (author unknown).

In other words, as it relates to COVID 19 effects, the restrictions in place we cannot change. Ruminating on the negatives will not change the outcome...so what else can you do during this time.

T.A.L.K is a good start.

“Use T.A.L.K, even it is talking to yourself.

Expand your field of ways to talking with others.

If you don’t exercise, that’s OK”.

There are many other ways to manage mental health using our body’s own happy chemicals.

He aroha whakatō, he aroha puta mai.

If kindness is sown then kindness you shall receive.

References:

- According to new data from the Centres for Disease Control, only about 23 percent of all U.S. adults get the recommended amount of exercise per week. That’s 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise, plus two bouts of muscle-strengthening
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