



Exercise & Mental Health

Mental health problems are common. The World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts that Depression will be the second largest health issue in the Western World by the year 2020.

Mental health problems can result in significant levels of disability, often preventing people from being able to work, go to school, maintain relationships & attend to other daily responsibilities such as childcare. The need for effective treatments is paramount in order to reduce the high levels of distress that mental health problems cause as well as to restore a person's ability to function on a daily basis & to attain a satisfactory quality of life.

Exercise has been found to be an effective adjunctive treatment for mental health problems, especially depression & anxiety. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) concluded that *"for patients with depression, structured and supervised exercise can be an effective intervention that has a clinically significant impact on depressive symptoms."*

Many people are often confused when it is suggested that exercise can help to improve their mood, ability to cope and general psychological health. Furthermore people who are experiencing mental health problems state that they can barely find the motivation & energy to get out of bed let alone exercise.

There are many reasons why exercise seems to help in the treatment of emotional problems like anxiety and depression:

- Exercise is believed to increase the release of the brain chemicals that affect our mood and make us feel happier. E.g. endorphins and enkephalins.
- Exercise helps us to get active and meet new people. This stops us from feeling isolated and unsupported and possibly form new and healthy relationships.
- Exercise can give us new goals and a sense of purpose. We have something positive to focus on and aim for
- Exercise can boost our self-esteem – it can improve the way we look and how we feel about ourselves
- Exercise can help to distract us from the negative and anxiety inducing thoughts that often plague our mind when we are not actively doing something.
- Exercise can give us a sense of power and control over our mood and ability to cope.

In short getting active and exercising helps us to feel better – about ourselves, our body, our lives and our future.



Developing an exercise program to help improve your mental health requires consideration of a number of factors. These include:

- The establishment of a balanced exercise routine that incorporates the use of cardiovascular conditioning, resistance training & flexibility training
- Ensuring any exercise you do is suited to your current level of physical fitness
- Setting realistic & measurable goals so that you can see the rewards & stay enthusiastic & motivated
- Making the most of the use of incidental forms of activity for exercise

Further information on these points can be obtained by clicking on the following link: [Exercise & Mental Health: Getting Started](#)

The Marian Centre runs an Exercise & Lifestyle Management Program that aims to use exercise as part of a fully comprehensive & integrated approach to the treatment of mental health problems. The program incorporates the use of exercise, relaxation techniques & education topics on healthy living such as diet & sleep to enable participants to recover from their emotional problems & regain their zest for life.

This program has been running for sometime & has produced excellent outcomes.

Information on the Exercise & Lifestyle Program can be obtained by clicking on this link: [Brochure for Exercise & Lifestyle Management Program](#)

For further information, please contact The Marian Centre on (08) 9380 4999.