



HOW TO EXERCISE FOR STRESS RELIEF

a guide for first responders
and families

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INTRODUCTION

Some people love it, some find it difficult to get motivated. Whatever your relationship with exercise is like, the truth is it's vital for both your physical and mental health.

Moving your body as often as possible helps to boost your mood, clear your head, and be in the moment.

Exercise is a great stress-buster. There are a few reasons for this: it's time away from your day-to-day tasks, it has a calming effect on the mind, and it reduces the body's production of stress hormones while increasing the levels of endorphins (a natural mood lifter).

There are lots of ways you can get these benefits from your exercise.





WHAT DOES EXERCISE HELP WITH?

Regular exercise is important for your physical health, helping you to sleep well, and reducing your risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers and unhealthy weight gain.

It's also closely linked with being mentally healthy.

Exercise helps with stress, as well as mental health challenges like depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

That's because exercise releases a bunch of happy hormones, and decreases the stress hormones that had been racing around your body.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE DO YOU NEED?

For adults between 18 and 64 years of age, it's recommended that you do something active on most (or all) days of the week.

The Australian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines say you should aim for:

- ▶ 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity every week, or
- ▶ 1.25 to 2.5 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity every week, and
- ▶ Muscle strengthening exercises at least two days each week

If you haven't been able to do much exercise lately, it's okay to start with small amounts and build up to doing more over time. Check with your doctor if you're unsure or have any concerns.

If you don't have time to do lots of exercise, a little is better for you than nothing.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO USE EXERCISE TO RELIEVE STRESS?

TAKE SMALL STEPS

When life is stressful or really busy, doing big chunks of exercise can feel a bit much. That's okay. Doing a little bit of exercise is still very effective in boosting your mental and physical wellbeing.

GET OUTSIDE

Fresh air is one of life's great stress relievers. As little as 20 minutes out in nature can lower your stress levels, so get outside as often as you can for a run or walk.

MAKE TIME TO EXERCISE

If life is busy at the moment, it can feel difficult to fit in some exercise. Do what you can, whether it's a little bit each day or a few times a week. You'll feel so much better that you'll be glad you made the time.

FIND THE THINGS YOU USED TO LOVE

If you're not feeling great, it's time to find some exercise that you find fun. You might be able to go back to the types of exercise you used to love, or try something new to see if it feels good.

GO ONLINE

Whether you want to do strength exercises, a HIIT workout, stick with a gym schedule, or take part in a gentler yoga or Pilates class, there's bound to be something online that's perfect for you. The best part of going online is that you can do these exercises at your own pace, and for a length of time that fits into your day.

EXERCISE WITH A FRIEND

Exercising is a great time to get social. Working out or going for a walk with a friend is fun, and it might just encourage you to push harder than you would by yourself. Having someone relying on you to turn up also helps you commit to doing the exercise.



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proactively look after their wellbeing and
mental fitness

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