

## Healthy Living 1200

### Portfolio assignment # 8: Exercise and Depression

**Depression and anxiety: Exercise eases symptoms: Depression symptoms often improve with exercise. Here are some realistic tips to help you get started and stay motivated.**

By Mayo Clinic staff

You have anxiety or depression — and exercise seems like the last thing you want to do. But once you get motivated, exercise can make a big difference. Exercise helps prevent and improve a number of health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis. Research on anxiety, depression and exercise shows that the psychological and physical benefits of exercise can also help reduce anxiety and improve mood. The links between anxiety, depression and exercise aren't entirely clear — but working out can definitely help you relax and make you feel better. Exercise may also help keep anxiety and depression from coming back once you're feeling better.

Exercise probably helps ease depression in a number of ways, which may include:

Releasing feel-good brain chemicals that may ease depression (neurotransmitters and endorphins)

- Reducing immune system chemicals that can worsen depression
- Increasing body temperature, which may have calming effects

Exercise has many psychological and emotional benefits too. It can help you:

- Gain confidence. Meeting exercise goals or challenges, even small ones, can boost your self-confidence. Getting in shape can also make you feel better about your appearance.
- Take your mind off worries. Exercise is a distraction that can get you away from the cycle of negative thoughts that feed anxiety and depression.
- Get more social interaction. Exercise may give you the chance to meet or socialize with others. Just exchanging a friendly smile or greeting as you walk around your neighbourhood can help your mood.
- Cope in a healthy way. Doing something positive to manage anxiety or depression is a healthy coping strategy. Trying to feel better by drinking alcohol, dwelling on how badly you feel, or hoping anxiety or depression will go away on their own can lead to worsening symptoms.

The word "exercise" may make you think of running laps around the gym. But a wide range of activities that boost your activity level help you feel better. Certainly running, lifting weights, playing basketball and other fitness activities that get your heart pumping can help. But so can gardening, washing your car, or strolling around the block and other less intense activities. Anything that gets you off the couch and moving is exercise that can help improve your mood.

You don't have to do all your exercise at once, either. Broaden how you think of exercise and find ways to fit activity into your routine. Add small amounts of physical activity throughout your day. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park a little farther away at work to fit in a short walk. Or, if you live close to your job, consider biking to work.

Doing 30 minutes or more of exercise a day, for three to five days a week can significantly improve depression symptoms. But smaller amounts of activity — as little as 10 to 15 minutes at a time — can make a difference. It may take less time exercising to improve your mood when you do more-vigorous activities such as running or bicycling.

## Questions:

1. How does exercise help depression and anxiety? Explain
  2. What kind of exercise is best? Give examples of exercises you would prefer doing for this purpose.
  3. How much exercise is enough to ease depression?
  4. Describe **three good** methods for getting this information out to the public? Which method would be the most effective? Why?