



MENTAL HEALTH & EXERCISE.

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OCTOBER IS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH! WE RECENTLY ALSO CELEBRATED WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY AT BEYOND ON OCTOBER THE 10TH. THE MONTH IS AIMED AT RAISING AWARENESS OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND ALSO REMOVING SOME OF THE STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH TALKING ABOUT IT OPENLY.

Regular exercise has been shown to have a number of benefits for many different types of mental illnesses. Its estimated that 45 percent of Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. In one year, 1 million Australians will have depression, whilst 2 million will have anxiety.

The results for exercise as a treatment for Anxiety and Depression have been very positive. A systematic review of exercise for patients with anxiety, found a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms compared to no treatments. (*Arch Intern Med, 2010*). The largest improvements were seen in exercise sessions of at least 30mins.

In terms of depression and exercise, a recent meta analysis study found exercise to have a large and significant antidepressant effect, when compared to non active controls. The analysis found that aerobic exercise was more effective than resistance and that moderate to vigorous exercise was more effective than light. The study also supported supervised exercise as being more effective, with a larger benefit if supervised by a qualified health professional. (*Rosenbaum, Journal Psychiatric Research 2016*)

Finally, the role of our fitness has now been looked at in terms of preventing depression. A review of studies involving at least a million people, found that people of a low level of fitness (when compared to their classification of high) had 75% more likely to have a diagnosis of depression (Schuch 2016 Preventative Medicine).

This is all the scientific data, here some practical tips to take home:

- › In general, outdoor exercise has been more beneficial for our mood. Even just an hour of exercise a week has shown to protect against depression
- › Exercise helps increase serotonin, which helps your brain regulate mood, sleep and appetite
- › Exercise also increases your level of endorphins, which naturally lift our mood
- › As shown in the study above, exercise is more effective for our mood with someone else! Grab a friend or family member to train with, or find a suitable trainer or EP for you