

# Mental Wellbeing Guide: Exercise



Discover ways to optimize your fitness routine, manage physical activity, and achieve balanced physical, emotional health during your university journey

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# EXERCISE & THE BRAIN

Regular exercising is associated with many benefits for our physical and emotional health, as well as quality of life. Exercise or physical activity improves the brain's hippocampus, benefiting our memory and other cognitive functioning. Exercise also helps with sleep. Research shows people exercising at least 30 minutes per day have longer sleep duration than people who don't exercise.



## EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

Exercise. Working out. Moving your body. Getting sweaty! All of these are good for us. Regular physical activity is crucial for not just our physical health, but our mental and emotional well-being too. Exercise releases endorphins, often dubbed 'feel-good' hormones, which can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.

But, how does one feel motivated to exercise when they experience emotional challenges like depression? The trick is to start with simple activities like walking and running. Make yourself accountable to commit to the activities. For example, set a plan to walk or run with friends. You can also reward yourself with treats after finishing the activity. More tips...

# TIPS

- **Find Activities You Enjoy:** Exercise doesn't have to be a chore. Whether it's dancing, hiking, swimming, or yoga, choose activities that you look forward to.
- **Incorporate Variety:** Keep your routine interesting by mixing different types of exercise. This not only keeps boredom at bay but also ensures a well-rounded fitness regimen.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Aim for whatever amount you can realistically do.
  - It doesn't have to be a lot (e.g., 20 to 40 minutes of daily moderate exercise like walking)
  - More importantly, stay **CONSISTENT**
- **Listen to Your Body:** Rest is just as important as activity. Pay attention to what your body needs and don't push through pain or extreme fatigue.
  - Moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activities so that there is an accumulation of at least 150 minutes per week
  - Muscle strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least twice a week



# Summary

## Benefits of Exercise:

- Improves brain's hippocampus, boosting memory and cognitive functions.
- Aids in better sleep; 30 minutes of daily exercise increases sleep duration.

## Emotional Benefits:

- Releases endorphins, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Starting with simple activities (e.g., walking, running) can build motivation.
- Accountability and rewards can help maintain commitment.

## Tips:

- Find Enjoyable Activities: Choose activities like dancing, hiking, swimming, or yoga.
- Incorporate Variety: Mix different exercises to keep it interesting and ensure well-rounded fitness.
- Set Realistic Goals: Aim for manageable amounts (e.g., 21 to 42 minutes of moderate exercise daily).
- Stay Consistent: Consistency is key.
- Listen to Your Body: Balance activity with rest, avoid pushing through pain or extreme fatigue.
- Weekly Goals: Aim for 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activities and muscle strengthening twice a week.

## Additional resources



[REDS Recreation](#)



[Canada Exercise Guidelines](#)



[UNB Wellness Hub](#)