

# Improving Total Health and Happiness

by Erica Colvin

David is a typical middle-class American. He wakes up at 6:00, gets to work by 9:00, and is lucky if he gets his full lunch break. By 6:00 in the evening David is exhausted as he wraps up his work and heads home. Depression, exhaustion, and an overall lack of motivation occupy his thoughts. "Will I ever get ahead," he asks himself every night as he looks forward to another day.

Is any of this sounding familiar to you? If you answered yes, then you are among millions of Americans who are fighting the extremely full, yet inactive lifestyle. Sounds like an oxymoron, right? We have all heard about the importance of daily exercise, but what are the facts, and why should you take more time out of your already exhausting day to do it?

## Physical

The health benefits of exercise are extensive. The obvious physical benefits include improved cardio vascular condition, weight loss, lower blood pressure, disease prevention and endurance. Exercising regularly can also help prevent and treat heart disease, hypertension, non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, and osteoporosis. Even relief from nicotine abstinence and menopause has been shown to improve. But another factor is just as prevalent: mood. Exercising can secure a better attitude on life, and help preserve our mental wellness too.

## Mental

If you find yourself feeling low, fighting depression, or unhappy with your personal appearance- getting active is what most physicians and psychologists would recommend. The general wellness that accompanies a regular workout schedule brings a fresh vitality to life. Self-esteem and satisfaction with your physical appearance are great benefits. Who doesn't want to feel younger, happier, and look better?

"Physical activity may protect against the development of depression. . . physical inactivity might be a risk factor for depression," A study published in 2005 from the Institute of Psychiatry, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil states.

Mental and physical problems are often handed down from generation to generation. It would be truly sobering if there were nothing to be done. Yet, according to many professionals there is something to be done. By taking good care of your body, your mind will doubtless be affected.

## Mood

After a single workout, depression, anxiety, and overall

attitude improves; sometimes for several hours up to even a day. The word "endorphins" is probably not a new word to many. But what are endorphins? When you exercise your brain releases endogenous opioids (endorphins) into your system. This is the sensation of calm that comes after a good workout. They function in the same way as an antidepressant would. Endorphins are also responsible for the improved mood and relief from irritability, restlessness, nervousness, and feelings of frustration. Doesn't that sound nice?

## Neighborhood Walks

Get together with other adults in your neighborhood. You can do it whenever it is most convenient for all of you: Saturday mornings, after or before work. Fitness is going to be easier when you have a support system making sure that you are there.

## Join a Class

Whether it is offered by your community or club- classes can be more specific to what you want to do. Some examples would be Yoga, Aerobics, Cycling, Kick boxing, even Hip Hop or dance classes.

## Personal Training

If you are serious about getting in shape, then I recommend this above all else. A trainer will personalize your workout and diet specific to what you need.

## Warning

But, of course, too much of a good thing isn't a good thing anymore. Over-exercising can also affect your physical health, mental health, and your mood. An exaggerated obsession with working out: working out too hard, too often is bad for you. For most people, a moderate and constant exercise schedule is best. A 30 minute workout 3-5 times a week is great. If you already workout on a regular basis then a more intense workout would be fine. Overall, if you want to be happy and live life to its fullest- you need to be exercising regularly. It is the shortcut to better health. Period. Decide today to get active and eat right. Your mind and body will thank you.



Erica Colvin is a Fitness and Nutrition Consultant for MOV Fitness, headquartered in Santa Barbara, CA. Erica is a freelance writer and editor for several national magazines. She also instructs ballroom and salsa dancing, and competes in her spare time. She can be reached at [erica@movfitness.com](mailto:erica@movfitness.com), or [www.movfitness.com](http://www.movfitness.com).