

# Mental Health Matters



January 2022

## Exercise Plays Key Role in Mental Health & Well-being

### Exercise and Mental Health

This review found statistically significant and beneficial links between several types of physical activity and depression, general anxiety, mood, general mental health, quality of life, stress, and well-being.

The strongest associations across the board were for depression. A review cited in the report and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, including 39 trials, found that exercise was associated with reduced depression symptoms when compared with no treatment and placebo and active control groups. Additional studies found that the effects of exercise were not different from psychotherapy or antidepressants.

Research also suggests exercise is beneficial for anxiety. Meta-analyses of studies have shown that exercise is more effective in treating anxiety than control group settings. Exercise improved anxiety symptoms in people with an anxiety diagnosis or other stress-related disorder and those with “clinically raised” anxiety. A growing body of evidence suggests physical activity can provide immediate anxiety relief following a session. The evidence shows that exercise can be a long-term solution and also a potential immediate coping mechanism for people with anxiety.

The evidence thus far suggests an effective exercise regimen for depression and anxiety includes both aerobic and resistance training across four to five 30-45 minute sessions each week. Exercise should also be supervised by a trained fitness professional and be mindful of participants’ enjoyment, community, and culture to maximize adherence. People with anxiety also benefit from adding more mindful forms of exercise like yoga, Tai Chi, and Qigong one or two times per week.

### Exercise and Mental Illness

While exercise cannot cure mental illness, it can still provide important benefits to overall well-being.

For example, the report highlights evidence suggesting aerobic exercise can lower psychiatric symptoms and improve cognition in people with schizophrenia type disorders. A study including 39 trials found that physical activity interventions had a significant effect on lower depression symptoms and schizophrenia symptoms. Interventions also improved quality of life in people with mental illness.

The report also points to a 19 study meta-analysis, which found that yoga was better for depressive symptoms in contrast to no treatment or treatment as usual for people with: depression, post-traumatic stress, schizophrenia, anxiety, alcohol use, and bipolar disorder.

In this analysis, the authors noted a link between a higher frequency of yoga and a greater reduction in symptoms.

Full article can be found at <https://www.ihrsa.org/improve-your-club/new-report-exercise-plays-key-role-in-mental-health-well-being/>

## 25 Healthy New Year's

### Resolutions to Make in 2022

#### 1. Take Time to Reflect on Past

##### Resolutions

Before thinking about what resolutions you want to accomplish, take stock of your resolutions in the past. What goals did you successfully accomplish? What resolutions were harder to work on? What made them difficult? Be honest with yourself, and be kind as well—knowing how and why you could or couldn't keep a resolution is how you succeed the next time.

Additionally, consider what kinds of goals you're setting. Were they huge, lofty, and vague ideas with no concrete plan? Were they actionable? Did you genuinely enjoy doing them?

Breaking up large goals like “I want to lose weight” into “I want to exercise three times a week” sets you up for success that's within reach and reasonable. – Melissa Boudin, PsyD

#### 2. Spend 15 minutes in Nature Every Day

“Being in the same environment for a long time can perpetuate feelings of social isolation and leave you feeling worse. Being in nature has proven to help improve mental functioning, memory, and improve mood.” – Silvi Saxena, MBA, MSW, LSW, CCTP, OSW-C

Full article found at <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/new-years-resolutions/>



**Mental Health Counselors:**

**Lisa de la O, AMFT:**  
805.746.6891

Ldelao@santapaulausd.org

**Rachael Forbes, LMFT:**  
805.760.6782

RForbes@santapaulausd.org

**Deborah Ujfalusy, LCSW:**  
805.933.8883

Dujfalusy@santapaulausd.org

**In case of an Emergency:**

- 911 For Immediate Support
- Ventura County Crisis Team  
(866) 998-2243 – (24 hours)

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#ENDTHESTIGMA

## How Does Anxiety Affect Kids in School?

Sometimes anxiety is easy to identify — like when a child is feeling nervous before a test at school. Other times anxiety in the classroom can look like something else entirely — an upset stomach, disruptive or angry behavior, ADHD, or even a learning disorder.

There are many different kinds of anxiety, which is one of the reasons it can be hard to detect in the classroom. What they all have in common, says neurologist and former teacher Ken Schuster, PsyD, is that anxiety “tends to lock up the brain,” making school hard for anxious kids.

Children can struggle with:

- Separation anxiety: When children are worried about being separated from caregivers. These kids can have a hard time at school drop-offs and throughout the day.
- Social anxiety: When children are excessively self-conscious, making it difficult for them to participate in class and socialize with peers.
- Selective mutism: When children have a hard time speaking in some settings, like at school around the teacher.
- Generalized anxiety: When children worry about a wide variety of everyday things. Kids with generalized anxiety often worry particularly about school performance and can struggle with perfectionism.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder: When children’s minds are filled with unwanted and stressful thoughts. Kids with OCD try to alleviate their anxiety by performing compulsive rituals like counting or washing their hands.
- Specific phobias: When children have an excessive and irrational fear of particular things, like being afraid of animals or storms.

Here are some tips for recognizing anxiety in kids at school, and what might be causing it.

### Inattention and restlessness

When a child is squirming in his seat and not paying attention, we tend to think of ADHD, but anxiety could also be the cause. When kids are anxious in the classroom, they might have a hard time focusing on the lesson and ignoring the worried thoughts overtaking their brains. “Some kids might appear really ‘on’ at one point but then they can suddenly drift away, depending on what they’re feeling anxious about,” says Dr. Schuster. “That looks like inattention, and it is, but it’s triggered by anxiety.”

### Attendance problems and clingy kids

It might look like truancy, but for kids for whom school is a big source of anxiety, refusing to go to school is also pretty common. School refusal rates tend to be higher after vacations or sick days, because kids have a harder time coming back after a few days away.

Going to school can also be a problem for kids who have trouble separating from their parents. Some amount of separation anxiety is normal, but when kids don’t adjust to separation over time and their anxiety makes going to school difficult or even impossible, it becomes a real problem. Kids with separation anxiety may also feel compelled to use their phones throughout the day to check in with their parents.

Full article can be found at <https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/>