

[IMAGE]

Can Exercise Help Solve the Mental Health Crisis?

By Editorial Staff

Every time a mass shooting takes place, the subject of mental health comes up, and recent events certainly make this a great time to bring it up. While mental health may or may not be at the root of horrific acts of violence and terror, it's undeniable that people with mental health challenges do not always receive adequate or appropriate treatment. That's a big problem, particularly when evidence suggests even our children's mental health is in decline, with increasing rates of depression and suicidal thoughts; coupled with statistics suggesting many people may not be getting the help they need.

Could something as simple as exercise become a primary tool to help improve mental health? A recent study supports that notion, suggesting that physical activity "may be a helpful way to reduce mental health disorders in the context of inpatient psychiatry by targeting anxiety, depression, anger, psychomotor agitation, and muscle tension and addressing stressors and triggers and to develop a more balanced and integrated sense of self."

In the study, published in *Global Advance in Health & Medicine*, researchers provided 60-minute exercise sessions to psychiatric patients at an in-patient facility four times per week. Each session featured "a combination of cardiovascular training, resistance training, and flexibility development inclusive of (a) free-body exercises; (b) stretching and strengthening exercises; and (c) muscle activation-specific fitness equipment such as upright and recumbent bikes, ellipticals, standard rowers and water rowers, push-up bars and stands, [Bosu] balance trainers, exercise balls, handheld fitness balls, balance pods, and aerobic steps."

mental health - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Pre-exercise and post-exercise surveys assessed variables such as perceived mood and perceived body image. In fact, more than 93 percent of patients said exercise improved their mood, while 93 percent stated exercise made them feel better about their bodies. Nearly 100 percent of patients also indicated their interest in continuing a regular physical activity routine after the study's conclusion.

The potential reasons underlying why exercise may be an effective mental health boost in this inpatient population are the same reasons why anyone and everyone should participate in regular physical activity

from a mental health perspective: a positive environment away from home / your room, interaction with others, opportunity to socialize, improved sense of body image / self-worth, etc.

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