



Exercise for resilience.

While we all know that regular exercise is good for our physical health, studies show that being active has a positive impact on our mental wellbeing too. As well as being an excellent “stress buster”, exercise improves our mood, relieves pressure and boosts our self-esteem.



How exercise relieves stress and improves resilience.

Physically, exercise dissipates the build-up of the hormone adrenaline that is produced when we feel stressed. Adrenaline acts as a stimulant preparing the body for fight or flight when you perceive something as a threat. The problem today is that stressful situations don't always allow you to physically run away or fight what you perceive as a threat, therefore our adrenaline levels build up and we increasingly feel "all wound up with nowhere to go".

Take an exercise break. A 15 minute brisk walk at lunch time will help you to unwind and relax after the stresses of the morning. It provides you with that all important escape and recovery time to allow you to empty your mind and think about things more clearly. The same is true at the end of the day when you finish work.

Psychologically, exercise enhances your mood. When we exercise the brain releases endorphins - our "feel good" hormones - and we know that people with enhanced mood levels generally tend to cope better with pressure.

Taking time out to exercise regularly helps enhance feelings of wellbeing. People who are more physically active tend to:

- Feel better about themselves
- Have higher levels of confidence
- Have a higher perceived ability to cope with the pressures of everyday life

Create regular "me time" by exercising more.

One of the most common criticisms people have of modern living is that they don't have enough time for themselves during the week. A lot of people who regularly exercise quote "me time" as one of the top benefits of following a regular exercise programme.

What about 30 minutes in the gym; perhaps a gentle jog; or why not a brisk walk? Whatever the activity, they all provide you with that illusive time to yourself each day – time to think things through, or perhaps not think about anything at all.

Pick a time to exercise which suits you – exercising first thing in the morning will help boost your energy levels and set you up for the day ahead. Exercising after work can help relieve the pressures of the day before going home - a positive impact on your work life balance!

Schedule time for Exercise.

The NHS recommends that adults aim to get around 150 minutes of exercise a week. While making time for exercise can be tricky when our lives are so busy, there are very simple changes we can incorporate into our everyday working lives that will help put us on the path to fitness and boost our mood and resilience.

- Avoid eating lunch at your desk. Go for a brisk walk and take your lunch with you. A bit of fresh air before going back to work will leave you feeling refreshed and reinvigorated for the afternoon. Wearable activity trackers may help motivate you to keep up those steps!
- Where possible, walk or cycle to work occasionally, otherwise get off a stop earlier on the bus or train or park your car further from work. Active travel has been shown to improve concentration, ability to make decisions and reduce the feeling of being constantly under strain.
- Take the stairs where you can instead of the lift. This simple activity can be a mood-booster in itself and has multiple physical benefits: researchers in Switzerland found that the weight, body fat and waist measurements of previously sedentary study participants decreased when they swapped the lifts for the stairs in their workplace. When we feel good about our physical health, our self-esteem and confidence improves, which can only be of benefit to our wellbeing!
- Instead of sitting down to discussions with colleagues, why not have walk-and-talk meetings? A change of scene may help with the flow of creative ideas and studies show that our short term memory improves when we're on the move.
- Lots of simple stretches, exercises and even seated yoga can be done discretely from the comfort of your own desk. Why not take a look on the NHS website and give it a go?



Research has shown that people who exercise feel more content, more awake and calmer after being physically active compared to after periods of inactivity.