

Happiness is ... exercise

Why you should get moving even (or especially!) when you don't feel like it

When you're feeling down, you might just find happiness in a pair of running shoes.

It's not only your body that benefits when you move more. Exercise can improve your mood, lower stress levels, and ward off depression.

That's because the body reacts to the stress of exercise by releasing chemicals that reduce pain and make you feel good.

These chemicals include endorphins, which are responsible for an energized feeling of euphoria and a positive outlook after a run or workout. They produce this effect because they bind to neuron receptors in the brain and block the body's perception of pain.

The way they react with the body is similar to the way a pain medication works, but they're not addictive.

Physical activity also helps wake up neurotransmitters, which send messages through the body. These include serotonin, which improves your mood.

While vigorous activity will bring the "runner's high," exercise does not have to be intense to have positive effects on your mood. Low-intensity exercise done over a period of time helps nerve cells grow and make new connections. This leads to improved brain function that makes a person feel better and may help relieve depression.

That's why it's important to find physical activities you enjoy and an exercise routine you can sustain over time. This makes it easier to talk yourself into taking the first steps of a five-minute walk, which can easily turn into a longer outing or even a jog, even when you don't feel like it.


Your Health and Wellness Awareness Program

