

Family Counseling Services: Summertime is the Right Time to Get Moving

By April Stevens

Q: I'm having some issues concentrating at work lately. I've just generally felt "blah." My doctor gave me a clean bill of health – but how can I boost my energy and get over this hump?

**Sincerely,
Need a Boost**

Dear Boost,

That "blah" feeling is no fun! Lack of concentration and energy are also drains on enjoying life and basic level of functioning. It's good you had a medical evaluation and have gotten a clean bill of health, that's always the best place to start. So, now what?

I'm sure that you've heard about the benefits of exercise, but there may be some specific ways it can help with your current slump that surprise you. Exercising doesn't have to be hours spent at the gym that you dread. It can be fun and socially stimulating as well.

Exercise has some very specific benefits, so much so that medical experts are now prescribing it as part of the treatment for many illnesses, especially for those who can't or don't want to take pills or medication. Research shows moderate exercise not only increases endorphins that give that good "runner's high" feeling, it also increases dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin levels which directly affect focus, attention, and mood. It also relaxes the muscles and relieves tension, allowing you to

relax. It's also been shown to help with stress reduction, sleep, symptoms of ADHD, PTSD, anxiety, depression, and it even helps improve insulin regulation... without the side effects of medication.

Choosing something you enjoy, or simply recognizing that everyday household chores are exercise, can help take the pressure off. Find an exercise partner, join a walking club, listen to music that gets you moving, set alarms on your phone... make exercise a priority for your mental and physical well-being, instead of a chore. Dancing, my personal favorite, is touted as one of the best exercises to help relieve stress and help the body re-establish healthy rhythm and movement of muscles. Swimming, or other water exercises, are also low-impact ways of taking the monotony out of your exercise routine. Check with your doctor for more ideas of what types of exercise may be best for your specific health needs.

Again, you don't have to kill yourself in the gym to get these benefits. Experts say 30 minutes of moderate exercise 3 to 5 days a week will give you the benefits you're seeking. Moderate exercise simply means raising your heart rate and increasing your breathing. Stay within the limits of being able to speak and feeling your body warm up, without getting overheated or sweaty. You can also break up your exercise into 10 or



15 minutes segments and still get the same benefits. Focusing on how your body feels as you exercise will help you increase concentration and make exercise meaningful, making it easier to continue.

We at Family Counseling Service can help you make exercise and other ways of coping become a part of improving your quality of life. Come see us. We're here ready and waiting to help!

Love and Peace,
April



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