

# THE WELLNESS HUB

## MOVEMENT

Mental wellness every day



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There is a deliberate focus on movement because it includes a variety of activities but ultimately refers to the increase of heart rate. This can include but is not limited to traditional exercise, yoga, walking or dancing. It can even include cleaning your house or doing star jumps in your living room. They all release serotonin. The sense of achievement we experience after is dopamine driving us to regularly participate, and when practised enough, it creates a habit.

What are the mental health benefits in addition to the physical ones? (1)

- improves sleep
- sharper memories
- relaxed and positive about ourselves and our lives
- boosts overall mood
- reduces fatigue
- prevents the development of mental health conditions
- helps to manage existing symptoms

And you don't have to be a fitness fanatic to reap the benefits. Research indicates a modest amount of exercise can make a difference. Fifteen minutes a day or walking for an hour reduces the risk of major depression by 26%. In addition to relieving depression symptoms, research also shows that maintaining an exercise schedule can prevent you from relapsing (2). Even a short burst of 10 minutes' brisk walking increases our mental alertness, energy and positive mood (3). Furthermore, movement breaks the cycle of negative thoughts as you focus on the present. It releases endorphins which make us feel good about ourselves. Physical movement can relieve tension in muscles.

Below is a worksheet to assess your current activity, your gains and should you wish to, this can be linked to the new habits worksheet. Given that we spend a significant amount of time at work hunched at our desks, there are also mild yoga stretches that you can do while at work- helping to alleviate tension and release serotonin, endorphins and dopamine.

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## *Increasing movement*

- *Water*

Our bodies are approximately made up of 60% water, and our brain is almost 70% water. Dehydration decreases the brain's ability to function properly. Habitually, consumption of water over the day reduces fatigue and increases alertness and concentration (4,5). Drinking cold water also stimulates the vagus nerve.

- *Do Joy*

Find an activity YOU enjoy- joining a gym is futile if you hate it. Attempt to schedule 20-30 minutes of moderate exercise approximately 5 times a week, but be realistic (6). If you have never run a marathon you will not succeed without the training and will become discouraged. Remember- small incremental goals. Equally, dancing, walking, cleaning your home (7) and other movement counts. The more you move, the more you benefit. Humans were not designed to be sedentary.

- *Timing*

High cardio activities that substantially increase adrenaline (spinning/running etc) are more beneficial earlier in the day, owing to the increased dopamine and endorphins. Such high-intensity exercises in the evening may affect sleep. There are some drawbacks too (8). However, any exercise is better than none.

- *Relaxation is essential*

Walking, yoga, ti-chi and relaxation/ deep-breathing type activities are suited to the evening as they produce serotonin and stimulate the vagus nerve for a better night's sleep (9).



# WORKSHEET - MOVEMENT

If there is a new habit you would like to create, take a moment and consider what you felt before the activity and after. Take the time to use all your senses - sight/sound/smell/taste/touch where possible. This increases dopamine and supports the development of a new positive neural pathway.

## ✓ ACTIVITY 1

before the activity I felt...

after the activity I felt ...

small actions to embed change and sustain my preferred habits.

## ✓ ACTIVITY 2

before the activity I felt...

after the activity I felt ...

small actions to embed change and sustain my preferred habits.

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Below are some simple stretches that you can do while at work, sitting at your desk. They are based on yoga positions and will help to boost your attention and alleviate both physical and mental fatigue (10). Please note it is your responsibility to ensure you are able to undertake these stretches without causing any injury. Ensure the immediate space surrounding you is clear to minimise the risk of items falling or hitting you or your colleagues (although this may be intended - you have been warned!). Aim to hold the stretch for 7-10 seconds and regulate your breathing.



# YOGA *from* OFFICE SYNDROME



Sun salutations *with twists*



Assisted neck stretches



High altar side leans



Sun salutations *arms*



Eagle *arms*



Backbend *arch*

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*Chair pose*



*Sun salutations arms*



*Forward Bend with Arm Extended Forward*

YOGA  
*when*  
WORK  
FROM HOME 2



*Forward Bend with Clasped Elbows*



*Forward Bend with Arm Extended Forward*



*Sun salutations arms*

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## References

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