How Exercising Helps with Anxiety and Panic Attacks

You probably already know that exercising is an amazing way to keep physically fit, manage your weight, improve your cardiovascular health, and give you energy. But the benefits of moving your body go far beyond physical. There are also many mental and emotional benefits of regular exercise, including helping with your mental health. This article will explore how exercising can help with anxiety and panic attacks.

**The Relationship Between Anxiety and Activity**

Though the connection is not entirely understood, a clear link exists between physical activity and a decrease in the likelihood of anxiety and its co-morbidities, including depression and panic attacks. These effects occur biologically, psychologically, and emotionally.

**Biological Benefits**

Physical exertion [releases endorphins, chemicals in the brain that function as natural painkillers](https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/related-illnesses/other-related-conditions/stress/physical-activity-reduces-st). Not only do endorphins stimulate positive feelings, they also improve sleep. Sleep, in turn, reduces stress and improves anxiety. Endorphins aside, exercise energizes the body, leaving you feeling good both during and after the activity. Better mood, better sleep, and better feelings reduce the physiological and psychological symptoms of anxiety.

**Psychological Benefits**

Anxiety can be all-consuming, and it is this overwhelming sense of worry or dread that leads to panic attacks. [Engaging in physical activity that you find both challenging and enjoyable distracts you from obsessive, harmful thinking](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/art-20046495). Your mind rests, in a sense, while your body works. It is important to find an activity that does present a challenge and an activity you're interested in participating for the greatest benefits in this regard.

Halfhearted participation in exercise that feels more a chore than a fun activity is not helpful, and it may lead to further stress and anxiety. This activity does not need to be hardcore exercise; a game of soccer with friends, a swim in the pool, gardening, or a simple walk will do the job. It's all about getting your heart pumping and your mind off worries.

**Emotional Benefits**

Giving yourself the goal of more physical activity and following through with it will leave you feeling accomplished. Pursuing and maintaining a healthier lifestyle, too, will grow your confidence. Self-contentment and confidence is incredibly beneficial in keeping anxiety at bay, since most anxiety is rooted in inner conflict. 

**Getting, and Remaining, Motivated**

The most difficult part about increasing your physical activity to reduce anxiety and the likelihood of panic attacks is getting started. It can feel impossible for an overburdened mind to find the time and energy to decide upon and pursue change, but it is not. A professional can help you develop a plan to get started on and stick to a new regimen of activity. The most important thing is to find activities you enjoy that you can, and want to, fit in to your life and schedule. As a supplement to psychotherapy and psychiatric care, physical activity is immensely beneficial in improving your mood.