

#HEALTH & FITNESS

BOOST YOUR MENTAL HEALTH with just 10 minutes of exercise

Did you know that physical exercise can actually improve your mental health by changing your brain chemistry and making you more resilient to negative emotions? This correlation between physical movement and mental well-being goes far deeper than most people realise. You have probably heard that exercise is good for mental health, but understanding the how and the why can motivate you to give it a higher priority — even when you don't feel like it.

Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to spend hours at the gym or marathon training to see results. Since the goal is your mental well-being, it's better to start small and build up gradually than to overdo it and burn out. Even a ten-minute walk or some light stretching in the morning can make a difference.

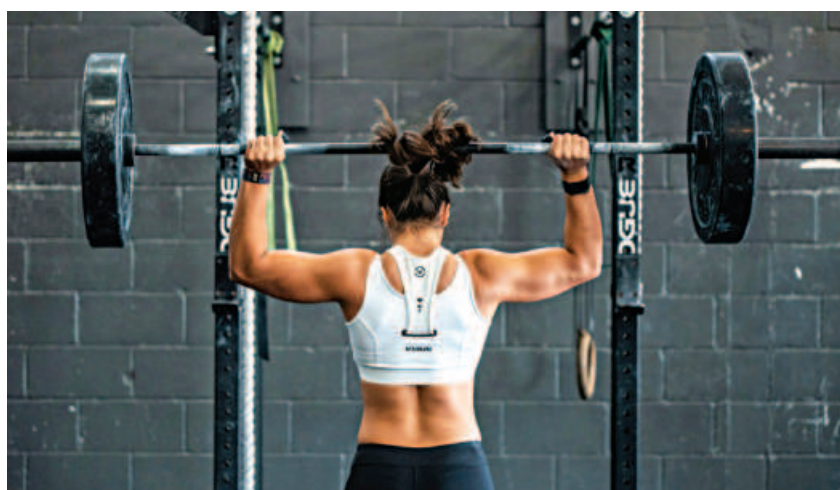
Here is how — Sharpen your focus

Exercise may have immediate effects on your brain's focus. Even a single workout session can sharpen your attention and help you stay focused for at least two hours. It also enhances your reflexes, allowing you to respond more quickly and efficiently to your surroundings.

Neurologically speaking, within just a few hours, a brief exercise boosts blood flow to the brain, increases oxygen delivery to brain cells, and causes a temporary rise in BDNF — a protein that plays a key part in brain growth.

When you stick with a certain course of exercise for a few weeks, it makes a lasting change in your brain by starting to make new neurons, strengthening existing ones,

and building more blood vessels. The changes brought by a consistent exercise routine can strengthen the prefrontal cortex — your brain's control centre responsible for planning and decision-making. Eventually, you gain better concentration, more self-control, and improved emotional balance, thanks to a consistent and non-negotiable routine for exercise.



Manage depression and stress

Studies have shown that depression, a common phenomenon found among young adults today, is associated with a shrinking hippocampus, an integral part of your brain that supports the core of who you are: your memory and learning.

A study by Harvard Health found that exercise can actually help counteract this shrinkage by stimulating new neuron growth, keeping your brain sharper and more resilient. Additionally, exercise can

reduce levels of stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, and stimulate the production of endorphins, which are natural mood elevators.

Due to your routine exercise, the increased blood flow also improves communication between two very important regions of your brain — the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala —

responsible for your brain's control and fight-or-flight response, respectively. This allows you stronger emotional control and stress management.

Besides, there's that feeling we all know — the euphoria after a good workout caused by a spike in endorphins, hormones that naturally relieve stress.

Another study by Harvard Health found that serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine are the key brain chemicals that are targeted in our body by

antidepressant drugs that are designed to relieve us from depression.

Interestingly, exercise happens to boost that same set of chemicals in our body, meaning it helps fight depression, elevating our mood. Simply put, you can seek control of relieving your depression by getting quick and easy exercises such as the plank, squat, or push-up. However, it is always recommended to consult with an expert psychologist or a doctor for severe cases of depression.

Supercharge your mind and confidence

Morning workouts can set you up with energy and focus for the day, while midday movement can help reset stress and rejuvenate your brain. If you exercise every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of your day. It will give you a sense of pride and fulfilment, making you want to cross off the next task on your to-do list.

On the other hand, even a single workout can instantly elevate your mood by increasing neurotransmitters in your body, i.e., dopamine, serotonin, and noradrenaline, the very chemicals that make you feel happier and more motivated.

As a highly effective person, you should focus on the things within your purview and let go of the rest. Allocating just 10 or 20 minutes for exercise as you start your day should be your priority. Also, a highly effective person would start their day with the end in mind. It is a simple yet powerful way to improve both our self-esteem and overall mental well-being.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Collected

#PERSPECTIVE

Why are we hurting the cats that need us most?

Imagine a cat sleeping peacefully on one quiet corner by your staircase and the very next moment, someone chases and starts to kick it? Yes, these are the day-to-day life stories of the cats whom you think live a very peaceful life, meowing all day.

The craze about cats of foreign breed is similar to the amount of disgust some feel about strays. In the past, according to stories from my grandmother, they and their friends fondly took care of stray cats, fed them and spent time with them, and considered these stray animals to be their friends.

But recently, the amount of animal cruelty prevalent in our so-called "religious" society is inhumane. Every now and then, there comes an Instagram story which shows a picture of a cat in horrible condition, either beaten or severely injured by other means. You will see people who

express their disgust about the litter of stray cats, but then fawning over the wagging tail of a Persian cat.

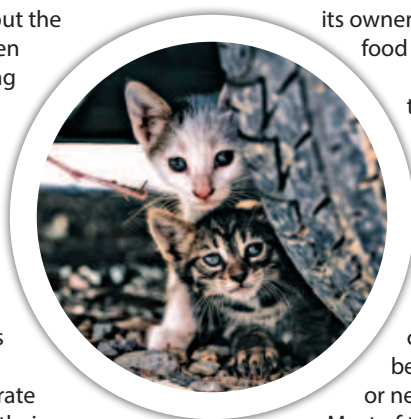
The story does not end here. Coming back to what stories loom in our neighbourhoods, I have heard people spreading salt (salt is toxic to cats) on their doormats to prevent cats from coming. Nowadays, people cannot even tolerate a stray cat sitting beside their doors; they start taking a broom or a stick and start chasing after the cat. And the heart-breaking fact is that these cats tend to behave like this is when it needs help — maybe it is pregnant and needs some special care — or maybe it got stranded by

its owner and is struggling to find food or any safe shelter.

The most vulnerable of these stray cats are those who are left stranded by their owners

Owners who abandon their cats do not do so on their own. It's either a family pressure, inability to care for the cat, or even because their houseowners or neighbours do not like it.

Most of them might have tried through different Facebook groups to give these cats for adoption, but things don't always work out, mostly because people would rather have fancy foreign breeds than adopting cats that desperately need a home.



There are some people who cannot always adopt strays due to personal problems, but still try their best to help them by providing them food and really caring for these cats.

These stray cats when in danger consider your building to be a safe zone, a shelter they can always rely upon, but given the merciless attitude of some people, lives of stray cats are becoming a tough battle for survival. There are many organisations in Bangladesh that work for animal welfare, but the majority of the population still remains ignorant, so progress is hard. We can only hope that the Bangladeshi mindset sees a dramatic change, so we can embrace every animal as something precious.

By Labiba Tasnim
Photo: Collected