

Health and Happiness Practice #1

Get Moving

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Duration: 20 minutes

Frequency: Four times per week initially

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Overview: It may seem obvious that engaging in physical exercise would be good for our mental health and happiness, but recent research has shed light on just how widespread these benefits can be. As it turns out, exercise has been found to reduce stress and depression, while increasing happiness, across numerous studies. Best of all, significant benefits can come from as little as 20 minutes of aerobic exercise, several days per week. What constitutes aerobic exercise? The formula is simple:

- Anything that brings your heart rate up to 60-90% of your max heart rate
- Your max heart rate can be calculated by subtracting your age from 220

Despite the fact that we all know intuitively (and have heard it countless times) that exercise is good for our mental health, it is often one of the first things that we neglect when we become stressed or overwhelmed in life. Rather than wait until things settle down before we recommit to our exercise practice, it's imperative that we "put the cart before the horse," so to speak. In other words, prioritizing physical exercise can actually help significantly when it comes to feeling stressed and overwhelmed, not to mention the countless benefits it can offer to our physical and mental health.

In this practice, you're invited to begin experiencing first-hand the benefits of physical exercise to your well-being. Remember, don't worry about turning your life upside-down and spending countless hours at the gym. Feel free to start slow, and work your way up from there.

Instructions: Modest physical exercise has been associated with many benefits to both our physical and emotional health. Indeed, individuals who engage in regular exercise have lower rates of depression and anxiety, along with higher rates of happiness and well-being. Moreover, there are countless physical health benefits to exercise, impacting nearly every part of our body, including our brain health.

When you're considering starting an exercise regimen, remember to allow yourself to start small and make it sustainable. Consider the following when thinking about what sorts of physical activities you'd like to integrate into your life:

- What does your schedule look like? What time of day might be available for you to engage in exercise?
- What are your particular goals for fitness? Would you like to lose weight, gain strength, improve your cardiovascular fitness?
- Are you someone who likes to exercise in a more structured setting, like a gym? Or do you prefer to be outdoors?

With those questions in mind, list a few possible exercise ideas that might appeal to you:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Once you've come up with a few, use the upcoming week to experiment and try some of them out. Make it a priority, and carve out time in your schedule to engage in some sort of physical activity four or more days in the upcoming week. After each activity, make note of how you feel both physically and emotionally as a result of the activity. *Use the table to keep track of your progress:*

Date	Exercise I Engaged In (Activity, Duration, Etc.)	How I Felt Afterwards (Physically, Emotionally)

