



Approaching Procrastination with Self-Compassion

by Rosario Zavala, MSW, LCSW

Procrastination is often thought of as the art of making something into more than what it truly is, until it expands into more than what it needs to be. Procrastination can trigger recriminations, ruminations and negative self-evaluations about one's avoidance and failure to take action. Needless to say, it can lead one on a downward, negative spiral. To make matters worse, the common strategies to conquer procrastination, such as, "just take action and get started," often fall short of their intention.

If your
compassion does
not include yourself,
it is incomplete.

- Jack Kornfield

A more balanced approach to taking empowered action is learning to have self-compassion.

A recent study by Fuschia M. Sirois of Bishop's University in Canada examined whether self-compassion (kindness and understanding toward oneself in response to pain and failure) could be related to procrastination and the stress and suffering it causes. Her study of 750 participants found that individuals prone to procrastinate had lower levels of self-compassion and consequently experienced higher levels of stress. Sirois writes, "Negative self-judgments and feeling isolated by one's procrastinating can be a stressful experience that compromises the well-being of those who chronically procrastinate." Her study suggests that interventions aimed at promoting self-compassion would be beneficial for these individuals. Other related studies have found that individuals who are able to be self-forgiving often experience lesser degrees of procrastination.

Kristin Neff Ph.D., associate professor of human development at the University of Texas and pioneer researcher on self-compassion in her book titled "Self-Compassion" states that self-compassion is not a way of avoiding goals or becoming self-indulgent. Instead she explains, being able to have compassion for oneself alleviates one's suffering, and motivates one to heal, to thrive, and to be happy. Through her practice of Buddhism she found that with self-compassion, one can value oneself, not because one has judged oneself positively and others negatively, but because one is intrinsically deserving of care and concern like everyone else. Cultivating self-compassion allows us to maintain an inner sense of well-being while motivating individuals to risk failure and change our behavior.

The next time you find yourself becoming overly self-critical for delaying to take action on a project or problem, try these simple strategies to help you feel supported and able to manage the situation with self-compassion and grace.

Befriend yourself.

Stop and reflect on the negative self-evaluations. Would a supportive and compassionate friend berate and criticize your actions? What would a caring friend say to you right now?

Drop into a moment of self-awareness and self-acceptance.

Breathe deeply, to breathe in a sense of inner peace.

Be kind to yourself.

Use this, or a similar phrase:
May I feel safe and kind to myself in this moment.
May I accept myself just as I am. May I provide the compassion I need.

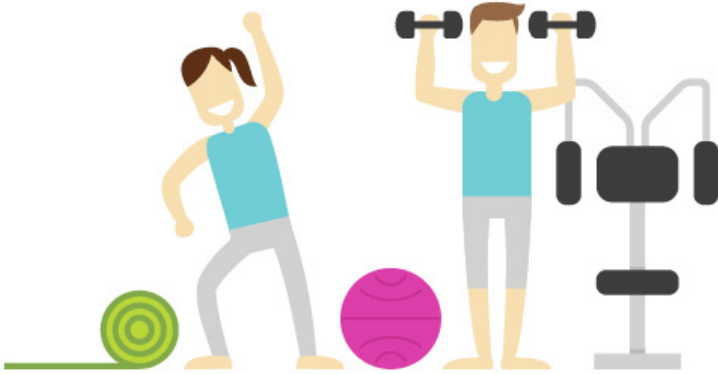


5 Ways Exercise Can Improve Your Mental Health

Are you tired, anxious, or feeling a bit down?

Consider exercising instead of turning on your favorite television show or delving into the latest book you bought. Over the past decade scientists have been studying the impact exercise can have on improving your mental health. Below are five ways that exercise may be able to help lift your mood:

ANXIETY REDUCTION
Researchers have found that individuals who are physically active have lower rates of anxiety and depression than those with a sedentary lifestyle. A brisk walk can deliver hours of relief.



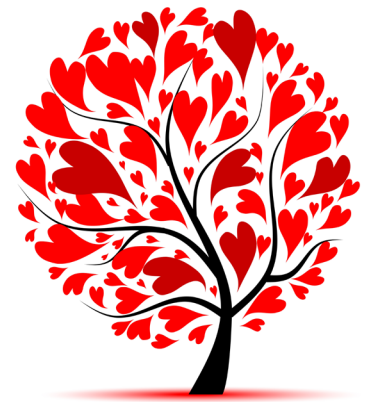
STRESS RELIEF
Exercise can reduce fatigue, improve alertness, and enhance overall cognitive functions.

ENDORPHIN RELEASE
Endorphins are the body's natural pain relievers. These neurotransmitters reduce pain and increase your feelings of euphoria and well-being.

ADDICTION CONTROL
Exercise sparks dopamine production in your brain, which improves mood, motivation, and feelings of wellness. It rebuilds toxic damage while reducing anxiety.

CREATIVITY INSPIRATION
One great workout can boost creativity for up to two full hours.

Source: SMH Screening for Mental Health <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/27/mental-health-benefits-exercise>



“A moment of self-compassion can change your entire day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.”

- Christopher K. Germer

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Facilitated by Professor Scott Rogers, director of the University of Miami's Mindfulness in Law Program and co-founder of the UMindfulness Research and Practice Initiative.

January 20, 22, 23

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