



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TRENDS IN EMERGING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TRENDS IN EMERGING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 3; Issue 5; 2025; Page No. 66-68

Received: 16-06-2025  
Accepted: 20-07-2025  
Published: 22-09-2025

## Exercise and Stress Management

**Dr. Vineta**

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Ismail National Mahila P.G. College, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17226039>

**Corresponding Author: Dr. Vineta**

### Abstract

In today's fast-paced world, stress has become a constant companion, impacting both our physical and mental health. Chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, heart disease, and more. Fortunately, exercise offers a natural, effective way to combat stress. Physical activity reduces stress hormones, boosts mood-enhancing chemicals, improves sleep, and strengthens both body and mind. From aerobic exercises like walking and cycling to mind-body practices like yoga, each form of exercise has unique benefits for stress management. By incorporating regular movement into daily life, even in small bursts, we can better cope with life's pressures and improve our overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Stress, Anxiety, Exercise, Management, natural

### Introduction

In the modern world, life often feels like it's moving at lightning speed. Deadlines, bills, notifications, and responsibilities can pile up before we even have our morning coffee. Stress has quietly become a regular part of our daily lives. While a little bit of stress can push us to work harder or meet challenges, too much of it—especially over a long period—can harm our physical and mental health. It can raise the risk of serious issues like heart disease, obesity, anxiety, depression, and more. The good news? There's a simple, natural, and almost magical way to fight stress: exercise. Moving our bodies not only keeps us fit and strong, it also clears our minds, lifts our mood, and makes us more resilient when life throws curveballs. In this essay, we'll explore how exercise and stress are connected, why physical activity works so well for mental well-being, what types of exercises are most effective, and how you can make movement a regular part of your life—even if you're busy.

### Understanding Stress

Stress is our body's built-in alarm system. When we sense a challenge or threat, our brain releases hormones like

adrenaline and cortisol. These chemicals speed up our heartbeat, sharpen our focus, and give us a burst of energy so we can deal with the situation—what's often called the “fight-or-flight” response.

This system is incredibly useful when facing real danger, but in our day-to-day lives, stress is often triggered by things like workload, exams, traffic jams, or even arguments. When these stress signals keep firing without enough rest in between, they can wear us down.

### Chronic stress can lead to

- **Mental effects:** Anxiety, depression, irritability, burnout.
- **Physical effects:** High blood pressure, poor immunity, digestive troubles.
- **Behavioral changes:** Trouble sleeping, unhealthy eating habits, avoiding people, or turning to alcohol or smoking.

### Why Exercise Helps Manage Stress?

Exercise is like a reset button for both body and mind. It tackles stress from three main angles:

### Physical Benefits

- **Lower stress hormones:** After a workout, levels of cortisol and adrenaline drop, leaving you calmer.
- **Feel-good chemicals:** Exercise triggers endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin-natural mood boosters.
- **Better sleep:** Physical activity helps you fall asleep faster and sleep more deeply.
- **Stronger body:** A healthier heart and better circulation make you more capable of handling physical and emotional strain.

### Mental Benefits

- **Confidence boost:** Reaching fitness goals makes you feel accomplished.
- **Mindfulness:** Exercises like yoga connect breath, body, and mind, helping you stay present.
- **Mental break:** Moving your body takes your focus away from worries and overthinking.

### Social Benefits

- Exercising with friends, joining a team, or even attending a group class creates a sense of belonging.
- Social support reduces feelings of isolation, which can worsen stress.

### Science Behind Exercise and Stress Relief

- Researchers have consistently found that people who exercise regularly tend to report lower stress levels.
- Aerobic exercise like brisk walking or cycling for 30 minutes can quickly reduce tension.
- Strength training doesn't just build muscle-it also improves mood and decreases anxiety over time.
- Mind-body practices such as yoga and tai chi combine movement, breathing, and meditation, making them especially powerful for relaxation.
- One study in *Frontiers in Psychology* showed that after 12 weeks of regular aerobic activity, participants had significantly lower stress and better emotional control than those who remained inactive.

### Best Types of Exercises for Stress Management

Different activities offer different benefits, so you can choose based on your mood, schedule, and preferences.

#### Aerobic Exercise

- **Examples:** Walking, jogging, swimming, dancing.
- **Benefits:** Boosts stamina, improves heart health, releases endorphins.
- **Great for:** Quick mood lifts and overall wellness.

#### Strength Training

- **Examples:** Lifting weights, using resistance bands, push-ups, squats.
- **Benefits:** Builds strength, improves metabolism, enhances confidence.
- **Great for:** Feeling strong and capable.

#### Mind-Body Exercises

- **Examples:** Yoga, Pilates, tai chi.
- **Benefits:** Improve flexibility, posture, and mental calmness.
- **Great for:** Reducing anxiety and staying centered.

### Outdoor Activities

- **Examples:** Hiking, gardening, nature walks.
- **Benefits:** Exposure to sunlight and fresh air improves mood and vitamin D levels.
- **Great for:** Combining exercise with nature therapy.

### Recreational Sports

- **Examples:** Badminton, football, basketball.
- **Benefits:** Add fun, competition, and teamwork.
- **Great for:** Socializing while staying active.

### How Exercise Works to Reduce Stress

- **Balances brain chemistry:** Regulates serotonin and norepinephrine for a better mood.
- **Encourages brain growth:** Stimulates new neurons in the hippocampus, which helps with memory and emotion control.
- **Relaxes the body:** Releases muscle tension caused by stress.
- **Restores balance:** Strengthens the parasympathetic system (rest-and-digest) so it's easier to calm down after stress.

### Creating Your Stress-Busting Exercise Plan

The FITT principle helps guide your routine

1. **Frequency:** Most days of the week.
2. **Intensity:** Moderate-you can talk, but singing would be hard.
3. **Time:** 20–60 minutes per session.
4. **Type:** Activities you genuinely enjoy.

#### Example weekly routine

1. 3 days: brisk walking, swimming, or cycling.
2. 2 days: strength training.
3. 2 days: yoga or stretching.

#### Fitting exercise into a busy life

- Break it into mini-sessions-three 10-minute walks work as well as one 30-minute walk.
- Walk or cycle to work.
- Take the stairs.
- Use your lunch break for movement.
- Treat workouts like important appointments.
- Keep simple equipment (yoga mat, resistance bands) at home.

### Common Barriers-and How to Beat Them

- No time? Try high-intensity short workouts or active commuting.
- Low motivation? Start small and track your progress.
- Physical limits? Opt for low-impact options like swimming.
- No budget? Use free online videos or public parks.

### Conclusion

Stress may be unavoidable, but letting it control our lives is not. Exercise is one of the simplest and most effective tools we have to keep it in check. It doesn't require fancy gear, gym memberships, or hours of free time-just the willingness to move.

Whether it's a morning jog, an evening yoga session, or a weekend game with friends, regular physical activity helps

calm the mind, strengthen the body, and prepare us to face challenges with confidence. In a world that never slows down, making time for movement is not a luxury-it's a necessity for a balanced, happy life.

## References

1. Craft LL, Perna FM. The benefits of exercise for the clinically depressed. *Primary Care Companion to the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. 2004;6(3):104-11. doi:10.4088/pcc.v06n0301.
2. Premalata Sharma and Dr. Pritee Dixit. Exploring the psychological impact: Analysing stress, anxiety, and depression among caregivers of individuals with psychiatric disorders. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Advance Research*. 2023;1(1):249-253.  
<https://multiresearchjournal.theviews.in/uploads/articles/2-2-53.1.pdf>
3. Shinde Shruti Sahebrao and Dr. Santosh B Walke. A correlational study on peer pressure, stress, and sleep quality among adolescents. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Advance Research*. 2025;3(2):89-91.  
<https://multiresearchjournal.theviews.in/uploads/articles/3-2-44.1.pdf>
4. Salmon P. Effects of physical exercise on anxiety, depression, and sensitivity to stress: a unifying theory. *Clinical Psychology Review*. 2001;21(1):33-61. doi:10.1016/S0272-7358(99)00032-X.
5. Sharma A, Kumar R. Physical activity and mental well-being: an interdisciplinary approach. Cham: Springer; 2022.
6. Tendulkar Kalyani Avinash, Dr. Santosh B Walke. Effect of social media addiction and selfitis behaviour on depression, anxiety, stress in young adults. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Advance Research*. 2025;3(2):78-81.  
<https://multiresearchjournal.theviews.in/uploads/articles/3-2-41.1.pdf>
7. Zschucke E, Gaudlitz K, Ströhle A. Exercise and physical activity in mental disorders: clinical and experimental evidence. *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health*. 2013;46(Suppl 1):S12-21. doi:10.3961/jpmph.2013.46.S.S12.

## Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.