

Exercise, Anxiety, and Panic

Physical Symptoms of Panic/Anxiety

- Shortness of breath & shallow breathing
- Burning in chest
- Fatigue
- Muscle tension
- Trembling & shakiness
- *Others?*

In some cases, individuals who have anxiety and panic may shy away from exercise and physical activity because the physical symptoms of exercise can mimic panic.

Sometimes people with anxiety and panic shy away from exercise because they feel like they will not be good enough to complete the activity, will look foolish trying a new class, feel like people are judging them, feel like they are not entitled to time away for themselves, “one more thing” can make someone incredibly overwhelmed, etc.

Discussion Point: Have you ever fallen into these categories? What have you told yourself? What has worked (if anything) to challenge these thoughts/beliefs/behaviors about physical activity? What would you tell a friend who is sharing this with you?

Types of Exercise

- You will want to decide on a physical activity plan that works for you.
 - **Aerobic:** there is sufficient oxygen intake needed to sustain the current level of activity over longer periods of time without using additional energy from another energy source (cardio, walking, biking, skiing, ballet/dance, swimming)
 - **Anaerobic:** made up of bursts of activity for short periods of time, such as sprinting, weight/strength training, HIIT, climbing. During anaerobic exercise, oxygen consumption is not sufficient to supply the energy demands being placed on your muscles. Therefore your muscles begin to break down sugars, resulting in higher lactic acid production.
 - **Flexibility:** Yoga, Pilates; stretching out muscles, improving range of motion, improve flexibility, slowing down on purpose, being intentional with movements and breathing. Note, exercises that focus on flexibility are not necessarily “easier” than other exercises!

Benefits of Exercise

- Improved mood in short term
- Building mastery toward a goal (small steps → one larger goal)
- Increase energy levels
- Promote quality sleep
- Can help ease symptoms (and negative effects) of medical issues like type II diabetes, obesity, IBS, headaches
- Can alleviate common symptoms associated with anxiety, depression, panic, like: tension, tightness, assists with endorphin production, confidence building, positive self-image, using your body in a healthy way, make better choices in terms of eating after exercise
- *Others?*

Barriers to Exercise

- Time component, in addition to other obligations
- “I don’t know what to do” “I won’t be good at it” “I am too fat/tired/overweight/overwhelmed/broke” to start; “I’ll start tomorrow” “It’s too cold”
- Previous injury
- Cost
- Fear
- “Start but don’t finish”
- *Others?*

Getting Started/Maintaining

- The most recent guidelines for adults is at least 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity physical activity, about 1 hour of vigorous intensity, or a combination of the two.

- This can feel overwhelming (“sure let me just fit that in”), so it may be helpful to assess where you are at, have an idea about a longer term goal that is meaningful, and work to fill in the gaps
- Do not overdo it. It can be easy to get injured when you are starting out or returning to a plan after a hiatus.
- Scheduling it like an appointment may help
- Quantity is not necessarily better than quality work (2 hours on treadmill but you are actually just taking selfies may not be as beneficial as a 20 minute walk/jog or walk/jog/sprint session)☺
- Prepare for the idea that your enthusiasm (and life) may change over the course of your relationship with physical activity and be gentle and flexible with yourself
- Find/try things that may not feel like traditional exercise (e.g., running on a treadmill), but are great for your mental and physical health! Walking on the beach, taking a spinning class, yoga, gardening, stretching throughout the day, hiking, skiing, sky zone/bounce houses with kids/friends, line dancing, training for a Spartan, Mud Run, Color Run, Tough Mudder, etc.
 - **Discussion: Other things that you have tried?**

Apps/Plans/Activities that May be Useful

- YouTube (Yoga with Adrienne, Cosmic Kids Yoga)
- Groupon can sometimes be a useful resource if you want to try a class like Zumba or Crossfit
- DVDs at the library
- C25K (Couch to 10K, Couch to ½ marathon, etc.).
- *Others?*

Final Thoughts

- “The best workout is not always the most extreme one. The best workout is the one you enjoy.”
- “I have to/must/need to work out → I get to work out” can be a helpful shift