

Exercise, Schmekercise: Can You Manage Stress Without Working Out?

By Amy S. Grant

Millions of books and seminar tickets have been sold, promising to teach people to reduce and manage stress. Unfortunately, many people refuse to take the necessary action required to change their habits and reduce or eliminate stress. Most people prefer to “pick and choose” which tips and tricks they will adapt and implement, which creates only limited results. People with a high stress level are often reluctant to find a way to incorporate exercise into their daily routine, but the benefits are [overwhelmingly positive](#).

Although it may be difficult at first to establish a regular exercise routine, consistent follow-through allows most people to create a solid fitness regimen within four to six weeks. Once the foundation for a permanent habit is in place, minimal effort is required to maintain consistency from day to day. Establishing a routine can build confidence and reduce stress by creating predictability and order.

Exercise and periods of stress cause the brain to produce chemicals called endorphins. As these endorphins are released, the body is able to counterbalance the effects of stress. This is what is really taking place when a person says they get a “high” from working out or running. Triggering endorphins allows the body to deal with stress and keep systems running smoothly.

Regular exercise can increase metabolism, which makes the body operate more efficiently. Cardiovascular exercise burns calories and the body’s fat stores, which can result in weight loss if nutritional intake does not increase proportionately. Because lean muscle is more efficient than fat, muscle development can result in a higher metabolic rate. Exercise stimulates blood flow, resulting in improved circulation. The extensive health benefits of regular physical exercise (cardiovascular stimulation combined with strength training) are widely documented.

Of course, the personal benefits of regular exercise simply cannot be disputed. Personal fitness can improve self-image, build confidence and increase stamina. Many people report higher energy levels, better [mental clarity](#)/ability to concentrate and an overall better mood as a result of maintaining a regular exercise program. Anyone who is attempting to reduce negative stress patterns and manage stress levels deserves to create and implement a consistent exercise regimen.