



Move your Body to Improve your Mind

MEDIA RELEASE: For Immediate Release – Monday 14 October 2013

FROM: The New Zealand Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)

While the benefit of exercise on our bodies is well known, exercise is also one of the best things we can do for our minds and our mental health.

Exercising improves mood and an overall sense of wellbeing in everyone, but for those suffering from depression or who have mental health concerns, the benefits of regular exercise as part of managing their condition plays a significant role in improving their state of mind.

In New Zealand more than half a million adults (16%) have been diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder and/or anxiety disorder in their lifetime. This included 14% of adults who have ever been diagnosed with depression, 6% with anxiety disorder and 1% with bipolar disorder.

Little or no physical exercise can increase the risk of depression, and a poor diet can decrease your sense of wellbeing, so taking care of yourself needs to be part of any wellness or mental health plan.

There is a good reason why exercise is recommended for improving mood. It's those endorphins; the chemicals our body releases when we get moving that contribute to a feeling of wellness post exercise. Endorphins are released most effectively during long, continuous workouts of moderate to high intensity.

The New Zealand Mental Health Foundation tells us there are 3 main ways exercise and physical activity positively contributes to our mental health:

- Biochemically through endorphins.
- Physiologically by improving muscle strength and heart function, increasing blood flow to the brain improving your sleep.
- Psychologically by improving self-esteem and giving you a sense of positive achievement.

It's often hard to get motivated to exercise and be active when you are feeling low, but the benefits far outweigh the effort,

Take these steps to make getting active easier:

- Exercise with a friend
- Try a group fitness class. You can *disappear* into the group and share the energy of those around you
- Talk to a REPs Registered Exercise Professional who will be able to give you the right advice about how to fit exercise into your life. You can find them at www.reps.org.nz
- Plan ahead and set up a routine so you know what you are going to do each day, even if it's just a walk around the block.
- Start gradually and build up as you start to feel the benefits on your mood and physical fitness.
- Do activities you enjoy. This is important as there are so many exercise options, so you will be able to find one that suits you.

If you are looking at using exercise to improve your mental health, it is important to use only a REPs Registered Exercise Professional, as they have the education and experience to keep you safe, and will be able to give you the encouragement to keep you going.

References:

<http://www.depression.org.nz>

<https://www.ranzcp.org>

This fact sheet supports using a gym

http://www.depression.org.nz/ContentFiles/Media/PDF/Getting_active.pdf

Ministry of Health - Guide to Going to the Gym <http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-and-physical-activity/physical-activity/activity-guides/going-gym>

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Who is the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)?

REPs is an independent non profit organisation administrating the New Zealand exercise professionals register to ensure that the public receive safe and effective exercise advice.

Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "Warrant of Fitness Check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and international standards to deliver exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 70,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org.

