

## Not Exercising? Get Checked for Depression

Arthritis pain can increase depression, which can cause you to give up activities that help to decrease pain – a nasty cycle. If you've stopped going for walks, swimming or taking classes you used to enjoy, talk to your doctor. If you're diagnosed with depression, therapy or medications to treat depression may give you enough oomph to exercise, which may just help you improve further.

Many studies have shown that exercise combats depression by altering hormones and affecting the nervous system. In a study by researchers at Duke University in Durham, N.C., people who had the greatest improvement in their capacity to do aerobic exercises, like walking or cycling, had the greatest reduction in depression.

### OTHER SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- Feeling irritable, empty, hopeless or guilty
- Losing interest in sex or hobbies
- Feeling fatigued
- Having trouble concentrating, making decisions or remembering
- Experiencing insomnia, waking too early or oversleeping
- Losing or gaining weight
- Having physical symptoms, such as headaches, digestive problems and chronic pain that persist and do not respond to treatment



## Adopt the Exercise Habit

By Karen Danner

**O**F THREE TOP WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN MAKE LIFE BETTER – DECREASING STRESS, REDUCING PAIN AND SLEEPING BETTER – EXERCISE HELPS DO ALL THREE. When you are ready to improve the quality of your life, you'll want to make exercise part of your lifestyle. How? Remember that an exercise lifestyle is lived one moment at a time and that quality of life is revealed by each choice you make in each moment.

Simply know this: Your thoughts and feelings support your actions, your actions support your steps, your steps support your behavior and your repeated behavior becomes your lifestyle. Take a look at how the small choices lead to a lifestyle:

**Become aware of emotions you associate with the experience of exercise.** Tune into your well-being and joy when you are active. Choosing to be active is much easier when your mind says, "This is fun!" or "This feels good!"

**Visualize walking around the block to get your mail and playing with your kids or grandkids.** Let those thoughts inspire creativity, so you begin to think of other ways to fit in feel-good exercise.

**Live in the present, which is the only "place" where you can be active.** Actions happen now, not in the past or future. In-the-moment opportunities, such as walking up the ramp at the mall instead of taking the escalator, riding a bike instead of driving or taking a walk on your lunch break instead of gobbling fast food, provide ways for you to fit in fitness.

**Create your belief system, make your choices and take a step.** After experiencing the endorphin release caused by physical activity that can reduce pain, believe that exercise can make you feel better, and choose to be active over being still. Accumulated in-the-moment choices are the actions that become the steps that establish a lifestyle.

**Cultivate and engage.** Each day we engage in activities that care for our body, such as taking a shower, eating, sleeping and brushing our teeth. These actions have become a lifestyle and, more than likely, there are aspects of each one that you enjoy while you are engaged in it. The same can be said for exercise. As you cultivate a relationship with exercise, you create and live an exercise lifestyle, and your actions – and life – become extremely rewarding and enjoyable.

*Karen Danner is the author of Life Moves – Exercise for the Love of the Lifestyle (2005, Good Press).*