PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH
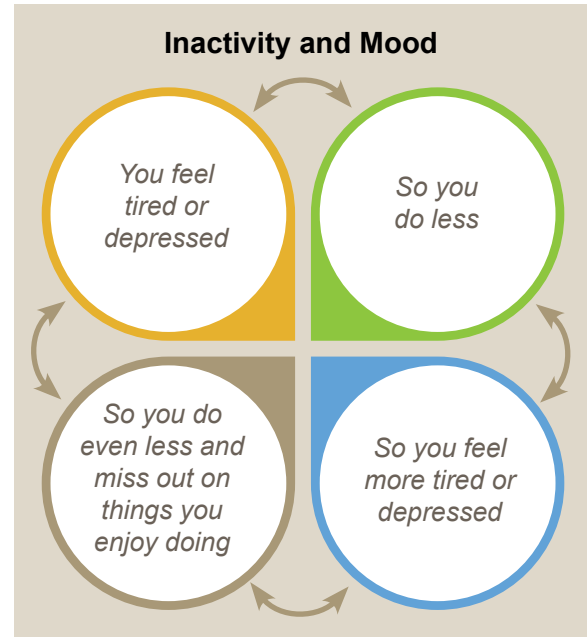
How is physical activity good for mental health?
Physical activity:
- Reduces depression, anxiety and tension.
- Helps you feel good about yourself.
- Allows you to concentrate and focus better.
- Helps you to sleep more soundly.
- Improves your ability to cope with cravings and withdrawal symptoms if you are trying to give up smoking, alcohol or drugs.

Why does physical activity work? Physical activity:
- Has a positive effect on brain chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, which improves your mood and thinking.
- Helps new brain cells grow and develop – which may result in fewer memory issues.
- Reduces harmful changes in the brain caused by stress.
- Can lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Inactivity and Mood

You feel tired or depressed

So you do less

So you do even less and miss out on things you enjoy doing

So you feel more tired or depressed

How much physical activity do I need?
- The recommendation is 150 minutes a week or 30 minutes most days of the week of moderate to vigorous activity, plus strength training two times a week.
- The activity can be broken up into several 10-minute segments during the day.

What counts?
- Household chores like sweeping, raking, cleaning and vacuuming.
- Activities such as walking, running, jogging, skiing, swimming, biking, or exercise classes.
- Sports such as basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball, softball, or similar games.

How do I start?
- Talk to your doctor first if you have any health concerns.
- Start slowly and build up to the recommended amount over time.
- Set goals and share them with others so they can support you.
- Join a group or get a buddy for accountability and to keep from getting bored.

Remember, any exercise is better than none!

Hennepin County
Public Health

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