Santa Paula Unified School District

Mental Health Matters

January 2026

Mental Health and Exercise

Exercise and Mental Health

Regular physical activity is consistently linked to improved mental well-being. Moderate exercise supports mood regulation, reduces stress, and enhances cognitive functioning, which are factors that contribute to a healthy and productive work environment.

General Mental Health Benefits

Engaging in about 30 minutes of moderate activity, such as brisk walking three to five times per week can lead to:

- Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Improved sleep quality
- Increased energy and mental alertness
- Enhanced concentration
- Greater overall resilience
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Benefits of Exercise on Depression

Exercise can be as effective as medication for mild to moderate depression. It helps the brain by promoting neural growth, reducing inflammation, and releasing endorphins, while also providing a healthy mental break from negative thoughts. Maintaining a consistent routine can also reduce the risk of relapse.

Benefits of Exercise on Anxiety

Physical activity acts as a natural, nonpharmacological method of reducing anxiety. It helps relieve tension, improves physical and mental energy, and enhances overall well-being. Activities that involve mindful attention, such as noticing breathing patterns, bodily movement, or environmental sensations may provide additional benefit by interrupting cycles of worry.

Benefits of Exercise on Stress

Stress often presents with physical symptoms such as muscle tension, headaches, rapid heartbeat, or stomach discomfort.

OPTUM

Need Mental Health Support?

OPTUM EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) OFFERS **FREE CONFIDENTIAL HELP**

Call toll-free **888-444-8624** any time
OR
Go to **www.liveandworkwell.com** and browse as a guest using code **CSEBO**

mental health matters

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Effective Forms of Activity

Research identifies several beneficial activity types:

- Cycling
- Aerobic or gym-based exercise
- Yoga, tai chi, and other mindful movement
- Light activities such as walking or routine physical tasks

Selecting enjoyable, sustainable forms of movement is key to long-term consistency.

Practical Ways to Incorporate Movement

- Take brief walking or stretching breaks
- Begin with short 5–10 minute sessions
- Schedule activity during times of higher personal energy
- Choose comfortable clothing and environments
- Use small, non-food rewards to reinforce new habits

Regular, moderate physical activity supports in enhancing mental health. Whether used to manage symptoms of depression, anxiety, or stress or simply to support overall wellness, exercise is a practical, accessible component of daily self-care.

Full articles found at:
https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/the-link-between-exercise-and-mental-health
https://www.helpguide.org/wellness/fitness/the-mental-health-benefits-of-exercise

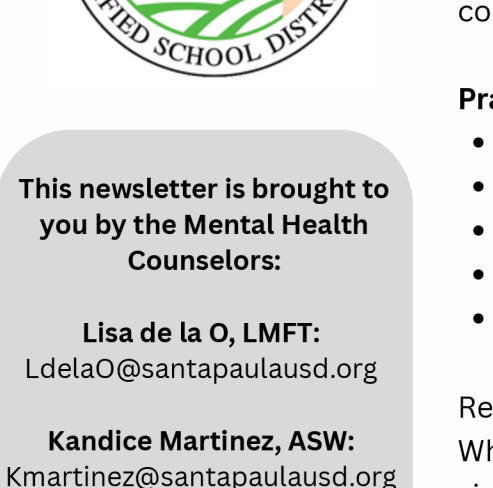
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Local and National Resources and Support

911 For Immediate Support
Ventura County Crisis Team (866) 998-2243 (24 hours)
Suicide Prevention Lines (24 Hours)

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** 988 or (800) 273-8255
- **Suicide Prevention Crisis Line** (877) 727-4747
- **National Hope line Network** (800) SUICIDE or (800) 784-2433
- **California Youth Crisis Line** (800) 843- 5200 –24 hours, bilingual
- **TEEN LINE** (310) 855-4673 or text TEEN to 839863 – a teen-to-teen hotline with community outreach services, from 6pm-10pm PST daily. Text, email, and message board also available, with limited hours—visit http://teenlineonline.org for more information.
- **The Trevor Project** (866) 488-7386 – a 24-hour crisis line that provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24. Text and chat also available, with limited hours—visit www.thetrevorproject.org for more information.

In case of an Emergency:

911 For Immediate Support
Ventura County Crisis Team
(866) 998-2243 (24hrs)