

Exercise & Coping with Stress

Anthony Papathomas

Exercise & Physical Health

- ‘At least 30min moderate-vigorous physical activity, 5 days a week.’

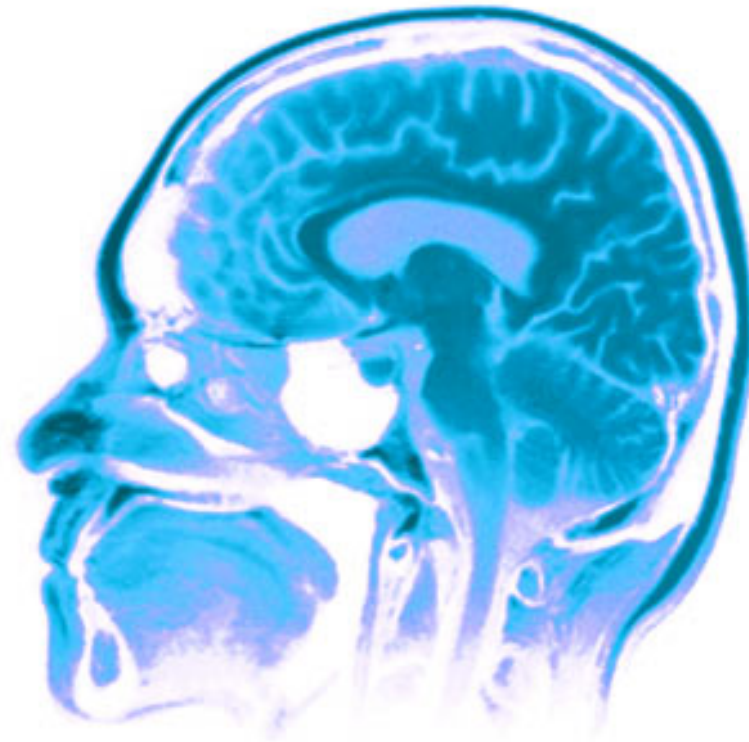
Government guidelines



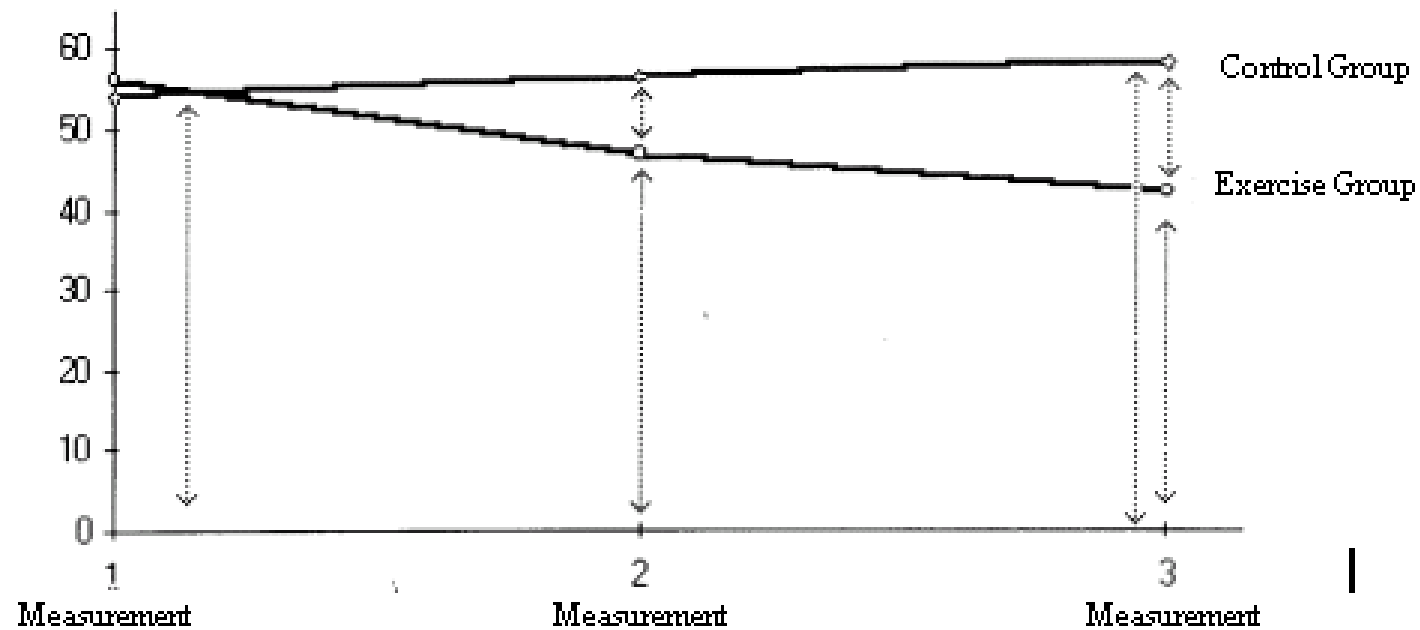
Exercise & Mental Health?

Research has found that exercise can...

- Elevate mood
- Reduce stress/anxiety
- Reduce depression



Stress-Exercise Relationship



Consensus Statements

- Single exercise sessions can reduce state anxiety
- A period of exercise training can reduce trait anxiety
- Anxiety-reducing effects of exercise can match other treatment methods (i.e. relaxation therapy).

What Type of Exercise Should I Do?

- Rhythmical, aerobic exercise has shown best results.
 - Jogging/Cycling/Rowing
- Anaerobic exercise is also effective.
 - Weight training/Circuits
- Importantly, do whatever you find enjoyable...



How Much Exercise Should I Do?

- Government guidelines a good starting point (30 min at least 5 times a week)
- Longer-term benefits after 10-12 weeks of an exercise programme
 - Exercise must continue if benefits are to be maintained
- Positive effects DO NOT rely on improving fitness levels

The Role of Sport

- Very little research
- Competitiveness may increase stress
- Losing can be demoralising



Physiological Explanations

- Endorphin hypothesis
- Serotonin hypothesis
- Muscle relaxation



Psychological Explanations

- Mastery
- Distraction
- Self-perceptions
- Social Interaction



...A Look on the Bright Side?

- Librarians have far greater stress levels than fire-fighters.
- Fire-fighters may face dangerous and emotional situations but librarians feel work is repetitive, unchallenging & unsatisfying.

Saddiq (2006)

