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[The Importance of Exercise](#)

Jul 31st, 2012 @ 08:00 am › Ros Johnson

It turns out that physical exercise isn't just about watching the Summer Olympics. It's also something just about everyone can and should do. Writing for [USA Today](#), Bruce Rosenstein clues us in to what scientist [John Medina](#) says about the first of his "[brain rules](#)":

Exercise boosts brain power. Humans adapted during evolution by constantly moving (both to get food and to avoid predators). Medina says we think better in motion. He suggests that people might be more productive if they spent some of the working day (separate from the gym) on treadmills. Another provocative idea: 'Board meetings might be conducted while people walked 2 miles per hour,' he writes.

Medina also states that symptoms of **depression and anxiety** can decrease via exercise. In fact, it's likely that a combination of therapy and exercise is equally as effective as a combination of antidepressant medication and therapy. According to one study, both combos are 80% successful. He recommends regular aerobic exercise two or three times a week for 30 minutes; and adding a strength training component can further boost cognitive functions.

There are scientific explanations for exercise positively affecting mood and anxiety levels, of course, one of which has something to do with increased blood flow to the brain and other body parts. Exercise can also stimulate BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor), a growth factor in the brain that aids in neuron health and development. [John J. Ratey](#), M.D., author of the 2008 book [Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain](#) calls BDNF "Miracle-Gro for the brain."

Below is a clip of Medina on this subject:

For more info that supports Medina's, investigate Dr. Ratey's book. Its description says it's "the first book to explore comprehensively the connection between exercise and the brain," and observes that Ratey shows that "exercise is truly our best defense against everything from depression to ADD to addiction to aggression to menopause to Alzheimer's."

In tomorrow's post, Medina's stress rule...

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