Movement – A Tune-Up for Your Mind

Your body and mind may be connected in ways you don't even realize. Moods and feelings have a lot to do with how your body is functioning, and movement is a big part of that.

We know that a sedentary lifestyle is bad for physical health, and mental health suffers too when you don't move much. Sedentary lifestyles are linked to a greater risk for anxiety and depression, as well as low self-esteem. Movement and muscle strengthening creates positive changes to your body, and when those changes are passed along to the brain you feel a greater sense of happiness, confidence, and positivity. Simply, the strength you feel in your muscles, then unconsciously signaled to your brain, translates to a sense of strength and confidence in your daily life.

Dancing enhances the brain-body connection and improves emotional awareness. It allows you to take a break from work, family, and everyday stressors. When you dance, rigid emotional patterns can be broken, allowing you to find new ways of thinking, feeling, and coping. Dancing is a creative and fun activity, and you don't have time to obsess over negative things while you are dancing.

Maybe you are one who has never considered dancing due to self-consciousness. If you are self-conscious about dancing, you are not alone! Often, people are afraid they will look foolish. The fact is, most people are too focused on their own dancing and having a good time, rather than watching others. To ease into dancing, practice with a friend or take lessons. Be open to learning if dancing can improve both your physical and mental well-being.

Exercise, specifically resistance training and yoga, can even help with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The more physical activity you do, the more you tend to have a sense of control over your life. This is just one more example of how the brain, body, and mind work beautifully together.
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Week 6

Processsed Foods – The Good and Bad

Processed foods are everywhere. The term “processed” applies to food that has been altered from a natural state in any way. Minimally processed foods can have a place in healthy diets. Examples include low-fat milk, precut fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables and fruit, roasted nuts, and whole-grain or breads. Also, milk and juice that has been fortified with vitamin D and calcium, breakfast cereals with added fiber, canned vegetables, and canned fruits packed in water or natural juice can, and should be, part of a healthy diet, especially when fresh versions are not available or affordable.
Greek Green Beans

Makes 6 Servings

Ingredients:
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion halved and sliced thin
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. fresh tomatoes, diced
- 1 lb. fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Juice of one lemon
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill or 1 teaspoon dried dill

Directions:
1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Rinse produce by gently rubbing under cold running water; prepare produce as directed.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven. Sauté the onion in the oil over medium-high heat for about 5 minutes, until softened and starting to brown.
4. Add the garlic and sauté for another minute.
5. Add the tomatoes and stir together. Continue to cook for about 2 minutes, until the tomatoes soften.
6. Add the green beans, water, salt, and black pepper. Stir to distribute the ingredients. Turn the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes, or until green beans are tender to your liking. Stir occasionally.
7. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice and dill. Serve immediately and refrigerate any leftovers.

Notes: Frozen green beans can be used and require less cooking time. You can also substitute a 15-ounce can of diced tomatoes for fresh tomatoes. Add diced potatoes for a heartier dish or serve these green beans and juices over rice.

Nutrition Information per serving: 80 calories; 4.5 g fat (0.5 g saturated fat); 10 g carbohydrates; 2 g protein, 3 g fiber; 180 mg sodium; 5 g sugar.

Diets that are high in ultra-processed foods have been linked with higher risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, excess calorie intake, and weight gain. This is of great concern as nearly 60% of calories consumed in the U.S. are in the form of ultra-processed food.

Ultra-processed foods have gone through multiple processing, like heating, freezing, milling, dehydrating, and blanching. During these processes, the food's structure is changed and often other ingredients are added. You will find ultra-processed foods in every food category and these are appealing because they are ready to eat, affordable, and tasty. Examples of ultra-processed foods include: packaged snacks, crackers, chips, cookies, pastries, candies, cakes, soda, packaged breads/rolls, sweetened cereals, boxed pasta and rice dishes, deli meats, hot dogs, sausage, instant soup mixes, and frozen ready-to-eat foods like pizza, entrees, side dishes, and desserts.

In today's food environment, it is unrealistic to think you can avoid ultra-processed food entirely. Here are some helpful tips:

» Keep track of how much your diet is made up of these foods and then make a few healthier substitutions each week.

» When you go to the grocery store, shop the perimeter. The center isles are likely to contain ultra-processed foods.

» Prepare meals at home more often and use whole, unprocessed foods. Become an informed consumer and know what you are eating.

» Read the ingredient list on food labels and look for added sugar, fat, and salt; substances that are not typically found in a kitchen like hydrogenated oils, colors, emulsifiers, thickeners; and chemical-sounding names you can't pronounce. These are good indicators that the item is probably ultra-processed.

This recipe for Greek Green Beans could be a healthful substitution for the popular Green Bean Casserole made with ultra-processed ingredients. For comparison, the traditional Green Bean Casserole has twice the calories and fat, and almost four times as much sodium as the Greek Green Beans.