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HOW EXERCISE SUPPORTS MENTAL FITNESS

The research

Researchers at the University of Basel in Switzerland and their colleagues at the University of Tsukuba in Japan analysed 80 individual studies on exercise and cognitive performance to help identify what type of sporting activity (including the duration and the frequency of the activity), can help improve cognitive performance.

The findings

The studies showed that although exercise and sporting activities can bring about long-term improvement in cognitive performance across all age groups, not all activities deliver the same results, nor do they affect men and women in the same way. Although endurance training, strength

training or a combination of both, improve cognitive performance, coordinated sports with complex movement patterns and with other players involved are more effective. Also, a longer activity session over a long period of time gets best results.

What this means

The good news is that whether you are training clients who are in the cognitive development phase (kids) or in the cognitive degradation phase (older adults), fundamentally, the activities don't need to be too different. Male clients will benefit more from a hard workout with a gradual increase in intensity over a longer period of time, whereas, female clients should perform low to medium intensity activities ensuring that the intensity isn't increased too quickly. ♦

THE STUDY

THE SOURCE

THE MATERIAL

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REGULAR EXERCISE BENEFITS IMMUNITY

The research

A study from the Department of Health at the University of Bath in the UK analysed studies investigating exercise and immune function. Researchers looked at the immune system and whether it can change in a negative or positive way after exercise, and whether athletes (due to the high volume of training) are more susceptible to infections than those who do moderate exercise.

The findings

The research established that regular exercise plays an important role in helping to maintain a healthy immune system rather than suppressing it, with little evidence found to suggest that exercise increases the risk of individuals becoming susceptible to viruses. It also found that

exercise could help the body deal with pathogens, and in the long-term, slow the changes that occur with ageing. So rather than exercise being the culprit, researchers suggest that infections are more likely to be linked to poor diet and sleep, stress and exposure to pathogens.

What this means

With the recent closure of the fitness industry, our immune systems need all the help they can get, and regular moderate intensity exercise is one way. On the flipside, if you train too hard and too often, it can suppress immune function, increasing the risk of catching a virus. With the recent coronavirus crisis event still fresh in our minds, we know that staying fit, active and healthy has a positive effect on health and wellbeing. ♦



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