

# *“Kritha Hiking Club”*

## *7 Mental Health Benefits of Hiking*

We all like getting close to nature in our unique little ways. Like they say, "In every walk-in nature, you receive more than you seek." That little quote holds has never been more accurate than in this context. You don't get adequate exercise by going for a hike. It also refreshes your mind and soul. The impact on your mental health, though rarely mentioned, is immense.

Here are some mental health benefits you get from a little walk in nature.

### *Better your mood*

At least 10 percent of adults will experience a mood disorder at some point in their life. When you are always cranky and everything (or everyone) feels annoying for some reason, what you need is a walk in the park. Spending at least 90 minutes outdoors walking with the fresh air and breeze blowing across your face, you can feel relaxed, at peace, and even happier. Plus, it can reduce rumination and neural activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex, as a recent study shows.

### *Better sleep quality*

Do you wonder why your neighbor enjoys evening walks? Or takes a hiking trip every chance they get? Well, who wouldn't if it makes them sleep more soundly at night? A recent study shows that all you need to get a night of better sleep at night is taking more steps during the day. Hiking can help you with that. Plus, if you have any clinical sleep disorders (like numerous studies suggest), you can also improve your sleep with exercises like walking and hiking.

### *Put your brain in a meditative state.*

A study shows that a walk-through Mother Nature's green space can make you feel relaxed and put you in a meditative state. Walking allows you to quieten your mind, increase awareness and reflection. If you are having issues concentrating, the walk to 'clear your head' would often help. Plus, research shows an increase of at least 20 percent in attention and memory by merely walking.

### *Reduce fatigue*

It's just physical fatigue but also mental fatigue that you can reduce by taking regular walks. A study shows that cancer patients can reduce fatigue by taking 20 minutes walks. After at least three months of taking this walking exercise, they reported decreased pain and fatigue levels. Also, a group of healthy people who took part in a different study had a 65 percent reduction in fatigue and a 25 percent boost in energy after taking routine walking exercises.

## *Hiking for depression*

Study shows that anyone physically active has a 30 percent reduced chance of getting depression. But that's not all. A 2019 article from NAMI (national alliance on mental illness) tells a story of someone who fell into depression and took up hiking as a suggestion from his therapist. Sure therapy is essential for your well-being. But hiking in a natural setting can help lower your risks of depression as it did for him. Here is how;

- A walk-in nature can help you get rid of negative and obsessive thoughts.
- Reduces immune system chemicals that can make you more depressed
- Improves self-perception
- Helps you build up your self-esteem
- Gives you a different, more positive perspective of life.

## *Cope with stress and anxiety*

Starting a walking and hiking routine can help you deal with the day to day stresses of life. You increase the production of endorphins, which can help reduce stress hormones and relieve you of depression. Plus, doing it with friends and family can improve your stress resilience and reduce stress releasing hormone cortisol. This can prove even more beneficial for kids and teenagers. You do not need to start a marathon for you to enjoy these benefits. All you need is to take regular walks and take part in hikes every so often.

## *Increases serotonin*

Serotonin is a hormone that can help regulate your mood, appetite, sleep and help you deal with chronic depression. Hiking, like any good exercise, can help increase its production. This increase can make you happier, less moody, and even help you sleep better at night.

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A hike is often a welcome idea, but only a few know how beneficial to their mental health this exercise is. From reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress to increasing your energy, attention span, and memory,

.....hiking is an activity you should consider doing more often..

“So, lace up and take a hike”

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