

The Science Behind Physical Resilience

Cass Coulston



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We all know that exercise is good for us when coupled with eating nutritious food and getting enough sleep. We also know that the mind and body are directly connected to one another - the condition of the mind affects the health of our physical body and vice versa. Yet, how many of

us truly live our lives consistently taking care of both?

The costs of not looking after our physical and mental resilience are real, with links to lower levels of productivity, reduced efficiency and less ability to focus on what really matters to us. When we are not taking care of our physical resilience, we can end the day

feeling exhausted and still not having achieved what we set out to achieve.

You may be agreeing to this fact, but if you are also thinking, 'I don't have the time' you should definitely reconsider managing your time. Try focussing on spending time in the day to maximise your energy, because your physical energy is your foundation for any other energy that you want to develop. So let's look at how you can combat the resistors of time and integrate new ways of supporting your physical resilience.

The Science Of Exercise

Exercise can help the mind in several ways, especially given the fact that the brain is a physical organ. When we're facing a challenge that's psychological, it can be easy to assume that the solution must start with a focus. Yet, sometimes, the most effective solution is to switch our focus to the physical and be more confident that a change of mind will follow.

It has been discovered that regular exercise stimulates a part of the brain called the hypothalamus, releasing calming neurons. This makes us better able to face challenges and to think of the best solutions. Exercise not only stimulates the production of endorphins, helping us to feel great, but also shortens the period needed for recovery from stress.

So, whereas people who exercise may be just as prone to stress as those who don't exercise, the difference is that those who do exercise are able to get rid of the stress induced hormone cortisol from their bodies more quickly and recover from stress far quicker, than those who don't exercise.

With exercise, we can also boost our brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) intake - a chemical that promotes new brain cell growth and protects the areas of our brain that are linked to a healthy mood.

Positive Steps

Creating a new habit means committing to doing something differently and sticking to it for several weeks.

Try creating an exercise log similar to the one given below over the next week and reflect on how you feel at the end of it.

DAY	Lifestyle Exercises (e.g. Walking, Climbing Stairs)	Aerobic Exercises (e.g. Dance, Running, Cycling)	Strength and Flexibility Training (e.g. Weights, Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi)	Inactivity (e.g. Watching TV, Spending Time At The Computer/ At The Desk)	Demands On 'Me' That Day	How I Felt
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

- ◆ Which forms of exercise do you do the most of? Which forms do you do the least of?
- ◆ How does different types of exercise/or lack of it affect your ability to be effective?
- ◆ Think of at least one way that you can build more regular physical activity into your life.
- ◆ How will you combat your exercise resistors? Who can you ask to support you and/or join you?



In fact, just spending 20 minutes walking outdoors has proved to lead to more expansive and flexible thinking, which are core attributes of a resilient mindset.

Find An Exercise Routine That Works For You

To create a new habit in your life that is sustainable, try to find physical activities that are connected to something you enjoy and at best, are passionate about! That way, you are much more likely to incorporate it into your lifestyle. But what is important is to vary the exercise you do regularly or on a weekly basis.

- ◆ Add some form of lifestyle exercise into your life every day. This could be a simple walk in the park, a walk to work or even taking the stairs instead of the elevators.
- ◆ Focus on strength and flexibility exercises once or twice a week.

This could include *yoga*, Pilates, stretching or weight based exercises.

- ◆ Make sure to do at least 150 minutes of aerobic exercise on a weekly basis.

Footnote

Did you know that the brain makes over 1,000,000,000,000,000 calculations per second?

That's a seriously heavy workload! We all know that physical exercise is directly linked to how well our brain functions. So, what's stopping you from taking some positive steps to increase your physical and mental resilience?



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