



May 3rd to 9th, 2021 is Metal Health Week in Canada. Recently, an area of research in mental health that has gained a lot of momentum is MOVEMENT. Recent studies show that the connection between your brain and your body is a “two-way street” which means movement can change your brain too!

Movement can have an impact on your mental health. Some movements include the following:

Aerobic exercise can reduce anxiety by making your brain’s “fight or flight” system less reactive. Though aerobic exercise people can develop tolerance for symptoms associated with the flight response, such as a rapid heart rate.

Regular exercise such as aerobics, fast walking, resistance, flexibility, and balance exercises can also reduce depressive symptoms. Regular exercise helps the body produce happy hormones that make people feel better. It can be a very effective treatment for minor depressive symptoms. It can also help those suffering from attention deficit disorder. One study showed that that a single 20-minute bout of moderate-intensity cycling briefly improved their symptoms.

Meditative movement is a type of movement in which you pay close attention to your bodily sensations, position in space, and gut feelings (such as subtle changes in heart rate or breathing) as you move. It is also very good for depression and post traumatic stress disorder. Changing your posture, breathing, and rhythm can all change your brain, thereby reducing stress, depression, and anxiety, and leading to a feeling of well-being.

Synchronizing movement – Moving in synchrony with someone else improves self-esteem. In 2014, psychologist Joanne Lumsden and her colleagues conducted a study that required participants to interact with another person via a video link. The person performed a standard exercise — arm curls — while the participants watched, and then performed the same movement. The results were interesting. When subjects intentionally synchronized their movement with the recording, they had higher self-esteem than when they did not. Movement therapies are often used as adjunctive treatments for depression and anxiety when mental effort, psychotherapy, or medication is not enough. This is good news as you can engage in several activities, such as dancing, walking, aerobics, running, and many others. Let us move for mental health!

