Physical fitness gets plenty of attention—and for good reason. A healthy body can prevent conditions like heart disease and diabetes, and help you maintain independence as you age. Mental fitness is just as important as physical health and shouldn’t be neglected. Incorporating mental dexterity exercises into your life can help you reap the benefits of a sharper mind and a healthier body for years to come. Mental fitness is exactly what it sounds like; keeping your brain and emotional health in tip-top shape. It doesn’t mean training for “brain Olympics” or acing an IQ test. Rather, it refers to a series of exercises that help you slow down, decompress and boost a flagging memory.

**Mind-Body Connection**

It’s no surprise that the more you help your body, the more you help your mind. Physical activity increases the flow of oxygen to your brain and increases the amount of endorphins, (feel-good chemicals) in the brain. For this reason, it’s not surprising that people who are in good physical shape also tend to enjoy a higher level of mental agility.

Engaging in a vigorous workout can help you battle depression and gain a more positive outlook on life and yourself. It’s also a great way to beat stress, which can harm you mentally and physically. While exercise is good for the brain and the body, so is meditation. **Meditation, in conjunction with other methods, is an alternative way to treat depression. Calming the mind allows you to calmly think through your problems.**

**Benefits of Mental Fitness**

When you finally get to bed after a long day on the go, your body begins to relax, but the mind doesn’t always follow. Achieve a sense of calm through imagery, the process of picturing a calming scene or location. This reduces tension in both your body and your mind by challenging neurons in the less-dominant area of your brain.

The less-dominant side of your brain is the area that controls feelings of self-confidence and optimism. Increasing activity in your brain’s neural structures by forcing yourself to think about something other than your daily worries through visualization, for example, boosts emotional well-being in addition to calming you down mentally.

**Become Mentally Fit**

Keeping your mind mentally fit isn’t as difficult as getting ready for a marathon, but it’s the best way to view it. You can simply add it to the many activities you already perform, such as reading, daydreaming, or finding humour in life.

- **Stop Multitasking**
  
  You may think that multitasking enables you to get many things done at once, but it actually creates more problems than it solves. Focusing on one task at a time will not only improve your concentration, but it will help you to see the bigger picture, and get you moving in the right direction.

- **Be Positive with Yourself**
  
  Positive affirmations are one avenue to increased mental proficiency. Affirmation—or the way you talk to yourself—involves strengthening neural pathways to bring your self-confidence, wellbeing, and satisfaction to a higher level. To start, make a list of your good qualities and remind yourself that you don’t have to be perfect. Set goals for what you want to improve, and start small to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

- **Try Something Different**
  
  New experiences can also set you on the path to mental fitness. Trying new foods, different ways of accomplishing routine tasks, and traveling to new places improves your memory and expands your horizons. Even taking a new way to work improves your brain.

According to the Franklin Institute, mental dexterity exercises help you see the world in a new way and strengthen your neural pathways. In essence, breaking out of your routine can help keep your brain young and healthy.

- **Play Games**
  
  Crossword puzzles, Sudoku, and other games that test reasoning and other portions of your brain are fun ways to keep your mind sharp. Any kind of game that employs the use of logic, reasoning, or trivia are great ways to build up your brain muscle.

- **Read More**
  
  Reading is great for your brain. Even as you’re reading this sentence, your brain is processing each word, recalling the meaning instantly. Beyond the mechanics, reading helps you visualize the subject you’re reading about, imagine what voices sound like in dialogue, and more. If you don’t think this works, find a picture of Morgan Freeman on the internet with a quote next to it and hear his voice in your head. It’s also a great relaxation technique as well.

- **Take the Time**
  
  Mental fitness does not have to take up a lot of your time. Just spending a few minutes every day visualizing, affirming, or relaxing can help you feel better and think more clearly. Schedule a mental fitness break into your calendar right next to your workout schedule. Your mind and your health are worth it.

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**If The CAP Fits!**