Can Resistance Exercise Reduce Anxiety?

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It’s proven that exercise is linked to physical and mental benefits. Now, findings published in the journal Sports Medicine suggest that resistance exercise, or weight training, helps lessen anxiety in individuals, reports Reuters.

For the study, researchers examined data from 16 previously published studies that included a total of 922 participants. These individuals were randomly chosen to perform resistance exercises two to five days each week for an average of 11 weeks or to remain inactive for the same time period.

Findings showed that researchers established a link between resistance exercise training (RET) and a reduction of anxiety in both healthy participants and those with a physical or mental illness. What’s more, the effects of strength training compared favorably with frontline treatments, such as drug therapy and psychoanalysis.

“RET is a low-cost behavior with minimal risk, and can be an effective tool to reduce anxiety for healthy and ill alike,” said Brett Gordon, MS, a physical education and sports researcher at the University of Limerick in Ireland, and the study’s lead author.

How does RET help ease anxiety? Investigators believe resistance workouts help to distract people from their feelings by giving them something else to focus on. In addition, strenuous exercise also boosts the belief in those with anxiety that they’ll be able to successfully perform specific tasks.

Scientist noted that the study’s results couldn’t tell whether RET is better or worse than other forms of exercise in diminishing symptoms of anxiety because the inquiry concentrated solely on resistance training.

Additionally, researchers weren’t able to determine the specific amount of activity needed to exert positive effects on mental health. Experts suggested that, in the meantime, for the most health benefits folks should engage in workouts they enjoyed or found easy to do.

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