

Economy Got You Down? Try These Stress-Busting Routines

With the challenging economy and all the associated stresses, many of us decide to spend more time at work while postponing our workouts or discontinuing them all together. However, this may not only have an impact on our ability to achieve our fitness goals, but this may also have health related consequences related to the increase in stress.

Did you know that stress results in many negative physiological effects and increased sympathetic nervous system activity? This impacts your body in the following way:

1. Release of fight-or-flight related hormones
2. Increased heart rate
3. Increased blood pressure
4. Increased respiratory rate
5. Increased blood flow and sweating
6. Suppressed immune system responses
7. White blood cell destruction
8. Decreased REM sleep
9. Poor eating habits

The long-term effects of stress and all of the above can result in hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes and many chronic diseases.

Proper nutrition and exercise alone is the **single best way** to offset many of these negative impacts of stress. So, if we have less time to spend in the gym, how do we keep on track with our exercise routines while keeping our interest peaked and blowing off some steam?

Try some of these stress busting exercise routines that take your routine to the next level while allowing you to blow off some steam:

1. **Zumba** - fuses hypnotic Latin rhythms and easy to follow moves to create a dynamic fitness program. The routines feature interval training sessions where fast and slow rhythms and resistance training are combined to tone and sculpt the body while burning fat. By coining the concept of “fitness-party” and making fitness fun, Zumba has become nothing short of a revolution over the past few years.
2. **Cardio Boxing** - is a great way to condition the whole body because it builds muscle strength, endurance, balance, agility and coordination all at the same time. Cardio-boxing has also been shown to promote well-being because it builds confidence and discipline. Most cardio-box programs consists of variable heart rate work and actual boxing technique with a combination of heavy bag movements, speed bag and drills with a partner.
3. **Cardio Kickboxing** - this workout borrows moves from the Thai sport of kickboxing to make participants work up a sweat. A typical hour-long class will take place in the center's aerobics studio. With everyone facing the mirror, a teacher leads the group through specific punches and kicks, usually to the beat of dance-club music. The moves are worked into swiftly executed combinations (for example: jab, cross punch, hook, uppercut, front kick). Some teachers mix in a few minutes of jumping rope (often as a warm-up) and conditioning drills reminiscent of high-school gym class (jumping jacks, sideways scooting steps).

4. **Spinning** - is an aerobic exercise that takes place on a specially designed stationary bicycle called (obviously enough) a spinning bike. As you pedal, motivating music plays and the instructor talks you through a visualization of an outdoor cycling workout. During the class you vary your pace -- sometimes pedaling as fast as you can, other times cranking up the tension and pedaling slowly from a standing position. This helps you to focus inwardly and work on your mind as well as your body.

So whether it is Cardio-boxing or Zumba, infusing some of these stress-busting routines into your workout will not only assist you in keeping on track with your fitness goals but also aid you in reducing some of the increased stresses associated with the economy and work.

Best of luck –

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