

Get Active to Beat the Blues, Says IACP

Now that the evenings are getting longer and the temperatures are slowly rising, the Irish Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (IACP) has said that even a small amount of exercise is also beneficial to mental well-being as well as providing considerable physical health benefits.

A 2012 study carried out on over 7,000 respondents in Holland showed that people who participated in exercise were at lower risk of mental health problems.*

Calling on the public to lace up their runners and get active, Shane Kelly, Services Manager at The Irish Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (IACP), said: "Brighter days and longer evenings make it the ideal time to get active. Regular exercise is proven to improve mental health by releasing endorphins, the feel-good chemicals, in your brain. Exercise is also free. You don't need to join a gym or to buy equipment. The great outdoors provides us with everything we need to access those feel-good chemicals and to keep active.

Apart from releasing endorphins, the IACP say that the other mental health benefits of regular exercise include better self-confidence and the alleviation of stress and anxiety. Mr Kelly also said that even a short amount of physical exercise can increase energy levels, improve sleep and relaxation and crucially help to control addiction issues.

Mr Kelly added that members of the IACP note significant changes in their clients' general moods once the hour changed and the days and evenings became brighter.

"Exercise in any form is guaranteed to lift your mood and make you feel better about yourself and your mental wellbeing. This is something the IACP counsellors and psychotherapists are very aware of and, if relevant, encourage in their clients' journey to recovery," Mr Kelly said.

"It doesn't need to be a 10km run. Exercising can be as simple as 30 minutes of gardening or just taking a lunchtime stroll. The key is to get out and active to your ability level on a regular basis. You will be aware of the changes to your mental health immediately. Regular exercise will absolutely improve your mood and make you feel happier," he added.

ENDS

* Study carried out by Karin Monshouwer of the Trimbos Institute in the Netherlands and VU University Medical Center, published in *Clinical Psychological Science*

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