

## **EXERCISE**

### **AUArts Counselling**

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Only about a third of AUArts students get the minimum recommended weekly physical activity. Students are often unaware that they have access to SAIT's fitness facilities – and that simple daily choices can help reach daily activity goals.

Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active boosts endorphins and other neurochemicals involved in “feeling good.” It is also a healthy distraction from your daily worries. Finally, movement breaks and daily exercise can help the brain focus better.

If you have not exercised for some time or if you have any health concerns, you should consult a physician before embarking on any fitness regimen. Still, you do not need to be a world class athlete to engage in or benefit from regular exercise.

### **SAIT Health Services**

403.284.8666

Senator Burns Building R-41: SAIT CAMPUS

- Exercise does not need to involve working out at a gym and even small amounts of exercise do the body and brain good.
- Exercise can have a “meditative effect.” One of the benefits of meditation is the ability to focus on a singular task and remain calm despite the many stressors we all face. Finding a physical activity that you enjoy strengthens the ability to concentrate on just that activity. With regular practice, this skill can transfer to other areas (like schoolwork).
- Exercise has been shown to be an effective aide in the treatment of several mental health disorders including depression, anxiety, and AD/HD.
- Exercise (if not done too close to bedtime) can help with sleep.

Consider the following additional tips:

**Walk before you run.** It is important to build up your fitness gradually. Taking on too much too quickly can result in pain or injury, which will only turn you off from the idea of exercise.

**Set a reasonable goal.** Although the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity plus two days of muscle strengthening activity per week, it is important to set achievable goals that fit with schedule as well as your current level of physical fitness.

**Do something you enjoy.** You are highly unlikely to take time out of your busy life to do something completely voluntary that you don't enjoy.

**Schedule it.** You are equally unlikely to start something new or make time for something unless you set the time aside.

**Find a friend.** Exercising with someone can add a level of enjoyment and keep you accountable.

**Change up your routine from time to time.** The last thing you want is to get bored with exercise and start to view it as a chore. The body, too, can become used to activities and "plateau".

### **Set SMART Goals**

**Specific** – I will exercise for 180 minutes per week. This week, I plan to X for N minutes, Y for N minutes, etc.

**Measurable** – goals are more likely to be followed if you can keep track of whether they were achieved.

**Achievable** – you are much more likely to start and keep with something you are capable of accomplishing.

**Relevant** – make goals that are meaningful for you. Since exercise has many benefits, choose one that is most important: stress reduction, physical fitness, mood improvement, better focus, etc.

**Time limited** – goals should have a start and end point. The end point acts as an opportunity to reflect on whether the goal was accomplished as well as a chance to set new goals (possibly reduced if the previous goal was not accomplished; increased if it was).