

# A Safety Net for Mental Health

## Edit and Issue

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## Staying Healthy by Incorporating Doing Exercise into Our Daily Life

A new year has begun. There must be many who are setting new year resolutions and making plans for the year ahead. However, it is also a time when fatigue from the year-end and New Year holidays tends to linger. Although we have ample motivation, our mind and body do not always keep up, and before we know it, our resolutions may fade just in a few days.

There may be some who are so tired that they cannot bring themselves to even think about new year resolutions.

To begin with, why not try getting some exercise, such as walking or jogging, to recover from both physical and mental fatigue? Speaking of walking, the commonly cited goal of walking 10,000 steps a day often comes to our mind, which can be felt a daunting goal. I myself have found it difficult to walk as many as 10,000 steps a day, and I used to think that incorporating doing exercise into my daily life was challenging.

However, a recent study conducted by the Medical University of Lodz in Poland reported that walking 4,000 steps a day on average reduces the risk of premature death. Notably, the study also found that as few as 2,337 steps per day could lower the risk of death from cardiovascular disease, and that the risk would continue to decline with every additional 1,000 steps per day.

Further, it has become evident that doing exercise has direct positive effects on the brain as well. For example, when people are exposed to a stressful situation, the brain is stimulated to increase the secretion of cortisol—often referred to as a stress hormone—placing the body in a state of fight-or-flight. If this condition persists for an extended period, it can cause shrinkage of the hippocampus in the brain and negatively affect the immune system, central nervous system, and metabolic functions, contributing to stress-related illnesses. To maintain an optimum cortisol balance, getting aerobic exercise such as jogging or cycling is said to be effective. Although doing aerobic exercise places a certain load on both the mind and body and initially promotes cortisol secretion, the secretion is suppressed once the exercise ends. By repeating this process, the body gets used to regulating cortisol secretion, making it easier to maintain the balance even when facing real-life stressors such as interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, walking has been shown to help prevent mental health issues and to improve ability to memorize. Some of you may have found it easier to memorize matters when you try it while you are walking.

As such, getting moderate exercise offers a wide range of benefits not only for the body but also for the brain. During this time of the year, when many of us tend to push ourselves both physically and mentally, I hope you will find this information helpful and use it as a reference for being healthy every day.

- References**
- Hansen, A. (2018). *Undō no* [The exercise brain]. Sunmark Publishing.
  - European Society of Cardiology. (2023, August 8). Press release.

## Counselor's Oasis

I love spending quiet, relaxing moments enjoying a cup of coffee or tea. Recently, I have noticed local brands of coffee in many regions I visit. When I come across such drip coffee packs while traveling on business or for leisure, I like to buy them and enjoy them later.

Such local coffee makes wonderful souvenirs and are packaged in a wide variety of designs to our enjoyment. After returning home, taking time to savor the flavors unique to each region while remembering the place I visited has become a most relaxing moment in my daily life.

### Schedule a counseling appointment

☎ 0120-783-744

Office hours: (excluding holidays)  
Monday through Friday 10:00~20:00  
Saturday 10:00~18:00

✉ E-mail :  
sodan@humanfrontier.co.jp

※We will reply to you within two business days after receiving your message.

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You can also schedule a counseling appointment through the LINE app.

(\*Reservations only.

Counselings are not available on LINE.)



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