

# WALKING THE STRESS AWAY

An investigation on the benefits of walking for thirty minutes a day on a persons physical, mental and other aspects of overall health. Walking once a day is thought to relieve stress and improve over all physical health.

## The Problem

In a study conducted by the JED Foundation, 62% of students stated that their mental health is worse than before the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also found that 82% of students face anxiety, and 60% of students have a difficult time coping with stress. Mental health is a major issue for many students, and the current state of the world has only made that worse. I looked at the benefits of walking for 30 minutes a day, and how it impacted my own personal overall health and mental well-being.

My mental health tracker from the past twenty-one days

## Problems Surrounding Overall Student Health

According to Georgetown University

Students are more likely to experience:

- Stress, anxiety, & depression
- Cold and Flu
- Meningitis, and other diseases due to close proximity
- Lack of physical activity due to packed schedule
- Difficulty
- Sleeping
- Eating disorders
- Addiction [9]

## The Experiment

I went on a 30 minute walk every day for 21 days, and logged my overall feeling of health on a rating scale of happy, mediocre, and bad as depicted by the emoji's above. This task was completed at various times of day, and was only completed outside.

## Physical benefits of walking for 30 minutes a day

- Increased cardiovascular and pulmonary fitness
- Reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- Stronger bones and improved balance
- Increased muscle strength and endurance
- Reduced body fat [7]

## My Sleeping Heart Rate

A resting and sleeping heart rate is a good indicator of overall health, and I recorded my average sleeping (SHR) and resting (RHR) heart rate every 3 days from the past 21 days to better gauge my physical health improvements. This data was collected via Apple Watch.

• Days 1-3	SHR: 64	RHR: 81
• Days 4-6	SHR: 62	RHR: 75
• Days 7-9	SHR: 61	RHR: 68
• Days 10-12	SHR: 58	RHR: 71
• Days 13-15	SHR: 60	RHR: 65
• Days 16-18	SHR: 52	RHR: 66
• Days 19-21	SHR: 55	RHR: 63

## Mental health benefits [3]

- Self-perception and self-esteem
- Mood and sleep quality
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Improves mood and fatigue [4]
- Can help to improve social relationships [4]

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students have had suicidal thoughts in the past month [1]

Walking for an hour a day reduces your risk of depression by

26% [7]

Walking reduces the risk of cardiovascular events by

31% [1]

and reduces the risk of dying from an event by

32% [1]

68% [1]

of students currently suffer from social isolation/loneliness due to the pandemic

## How to Integrate Walking into Your life

- Start by setting a specific time when you will complete the task
- Create a music playlist that will make you look forward to walking
- Create a walking group with friends
- Have multiple routes to change up scenery
- Track your progress through a fitness tracker, or even a mood tracker as I did
- If there's a busy day, break it up into multiple shorter walks

## Barriers and Potential Solutions

Lack of walking paths

- ↳ Utilize hiking paths, or sidewalks through town

Lack of time

- ↳ Break the walk up into shorter sections, such as three 10 minute walks

Unfit or health problems

- ↳ Start somewhere! Even though 30 minutes is recommended any is better than none

It's boring

- ↳ Create a walking group with friends, make a unique music playlist, or listen to a podcast [10]

## My Experience

- Before beginning the 21-day challenge, I was very overwhelmed with school work, and had was unable to prioritize anything except school
- By committing to walk for a simple 30 minutes a day, it forced me to make the time to take care of my own physical and mental health.
- I experienced an improvement in my mental health, and also overall physical health
  - Based on watch recordings, my sleep also greatly improved, from longer hours to an overall more restful sleep
  - I felt less overwhelmed and stressed about school work having strictly set 30 minutes aside to complete this stress reliever

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