



# B.C. SAFE

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*The mission of B.C. SAFE is to reduce the number of youth suicides and suicide attempts by increasing public awareness and providing educational and training resources to teens, parents, and educators of Broome County.*

## **How simply moving benefits your mental health**

By Harvard Health/Srini Pillay, MD

While it is obvious that your feelings can influence your movement, it is not as obvious that your movement can impact your feelings too. For example, when you feel tired and sad, you may move more slowly. When you feel anxious, you may either rush around or become completely paralyzed. But recent studies show that the connection between your brain and your body is a “two-way street” and that means movement can change your brain, too!

## **How exercise can improve mood disorders**

**Regular aerobic exercise can reduce anxiety by making your brain’s “fight or flight” system less reactive.** When anxious people are exposed to physiological changes they fear, such as a rapid heartbeat, through regular aerobic exercise, they can develop a tolerance for such symptoms.

Regular exercise such as cycling or gym-based aerobic, resistance, flexibility, and balance exercises can also reduce depressive symptoms.

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## **Need Help?**

If you or a loved one is in crisis, seek emergency help immediately by calling **911** or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

### **Links:**

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: [www.preventsuicideny.org](http://www.preventsuicideny.org)

Suicide Prevention Center of NY: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**Download the free HOPE—Broome County Mental Health App for more information and resources; available for iPhone or Android**

## Upcoming Events

**Saturday, 5/7 9:00am**

*The Color Run*

To benefit the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier

**SUNY Broome Community College**

**907 Front St #1, Binghamton**

**Registrations available online at [thecolorrun.com/locations/inghamton/](http://thecolorrun.com/locations/inghamton/)**

**To volunteer, contact MHASt at (607)771-8888 or visit [http://www.eventbrite.com/e/volunteer-binghamton-registration-](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/volunteer-binghamton-registration-21068616800?aff=TheMentalHealthAssociationoftheSoutherTierInc)**

**21068616800?**

**aff=TheMentalHealthAssociationoftheSoutherTierInc**

**Tuesday, 5/10 6:30pm**

*An Evening with Kevin Hines—Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt*

The man who jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge and survived

**Greater Binghamton Health Center Auditorium**

**425 Robinson Street, Binghamton**

**Tickets \$10, Veterans Free—Available at [yourmha.com](http://yourmha.com) or at MHASt**

## Upcoming Trainings at MHASt

**Thursday, 6/9 8:30am—5:00pm:** Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, for those working predominately with ages 12-18

**Wednesday, 6/15 8:30am—5:00pm:** Mental Health First Aid Training

**Please call (607)771-8888. \$90 fee associated with trainings; discounts available to non-profits and students.**



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Exercise can be as effective as medication and psychotherapies. Regular exercise may boost mood by increasing a brain protein called BDNF that helps nerve fibers grow.

**For people with attention-deficit disorder (ADHD)**, another study showed that a single 20-minute bout of moderate-intensity cycling briefly improved their symptoms. It enhanced the participants' motivation for tasks requiring focused thought, increased their energy, and reduced their feelings of confusion, fatigue, and depression. However, in this study, exercise had no effect on attention or hyperactivity per se.

**Meditative movement has been shown to alleviate depressive symptoms.** This is a type of movement in which you pay close attention to your bodily sensations, position in space, and gut feelings (such as subtle changes in heart rate or breathing) as you move. Qigong, tai chi, and some forms of yoga are all helpful for this. For example, frequent yoga practice can reduce the severity of symptoms in post-traumatic stress disorder to the point that some people no longer meet the criteria for this diagnosis. Changing your posture, breathing, and rhythm can all change your brain, thereby reducing stress, depression, and anxiety, and leading to a feeling of well-being.

### **The surprising benefits of synchronizing your movements**

Both physical exercise and meditative movement are activities that you can do by yourself. On their own, they can improve the way you feel. **But a recent study found that when you try to move in synchrony with someone else, it also improves your self-esteem.**

In 2014, psychologist Joanne Lumsden and her colleagues conducted a study that required participants to interact with another person via a video link. The person performed a standard exercise — arm curls — while the participants watched, and then performed the same movement.

The “video link” was in fact a pre-recorded video of a 25-year-old female in a similar room, also performing arm curls. As part of the experiment, participants had to either coordinate their movement or deliberately not coordinate their movement with the other person's arm curls. They filled out a mood report before and after each phase of synchronizing or falling out of synchrony. They also reported on how close they felt to the other person.

The results were interesting. When subjects intentionally synchronized their movement with the recording, they had higher self-esteem than when they did not. Prior studies had shown that synchronizing your movement with others makes you like them more. You also cooperate more with them and feel more charitable toward them. In fact, movement synchrony can make it easier to remember what people say and to recall what they look like. This was the first study to show that it makes you feel better about yourself, too. That's probably why dance movement therapy can help depressed patients feel better.

### **Putting it all together**

Your mind and body are intimately connected. And while your brain is the master control system for your body's movement, the way you move can also affect the way you think and feel.

**Movement therapies are often used as adjunctive treatments for depression and anxiety when mental effort, psychotherapy, or medication is not enough.** When you are too exhausted to use thought control strategies such as focusing on the positive, or looking at the situation from another angle, movement can come to the rescue. By working out, going on a meditative walk by yourself, or going for a synchronized walk with someone, you may gain access to a “back door” to the mental changes that you desire without having to “psych yourself” into feeling better.

### **Suicide warning signs in teens**

Warning signs that a teen may be considering suicide:

- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- Violent or rebellious behavior, running away
- Drug and alcohol use
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomach-aches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Not tolerating praise or rewards

