



OUTDOORS

7 Reasons Running Improves Confidence

mbg Contributor

By Leigh Weingus 

Standing up straight, making strong eye contact, smiling. You've probably heard these tried-and-true methods for improving confidence, but what if we told you that the key to self-assurance lies in something you probably already do?

We're talking about running.

Regular exercise—specifically running—comes with a myriad of mental health benefits, confidence being one of them. So if you're not a runner yet, it's time to start. And if you're a runner looking for a confidence boost, consider adding just one more run per week. It could make a world of difference.

Need proof? Here are seven reasons why running makes you more confident:

1. Running reduces anxiety.

Anxiety is the most common mental illness in the United States—in fact, 40 million adults suffer from it. Whether you've dealt with mild or severe anxiety, you probably know that it doesn't make you the most confident version of yourself.

That's where running comes in. According to research, exercise creates new brain cells and an overall pattern of calm in areas of the brain. Ready to lace up your sneakers yet?

2. There's a significant link between goal-setting and confidence.

Whether you're working up to a mile or you're training for a marathon, a study conducted out of Columbia University found that setting and attaining ambitious goals has an impact on happiness levels, therefore raising your confidence.

So if you're not a long-distance runner, make it a goal to run your fastest 5K ever in 2017. Your self-esteem will thank you.

3. Running boosts your mood after a very short period of time.

No, you don't have to run for three hours every day to feel its effects on your mental health. As anyone who has ever turned to running as a way to release stress can attest to, there's an improvement in overall mood very quickly.

"The link between exercise and mood is pretty strong," says Michael Otto, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Boston University, in an article for the American Psychological Association. "Usually within five minutes after moderate exercise you get a mood-enhancement effect."

While that five minutes of running isn't guaranteed to immediately raise your confidence levels, happy people are generally more confident—and vice versa.



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4. Physical activity and self-esteem are linked from an early age.

It's no secret that the toned look that comes from running can raise confidence levels. But research conducted on girls between the ages of 11 and 13 found that exercise improves self-esteem across the board, particularly for younger girls who are at a high risk of becoming overweight.

So if you're suffering from low self-esteem in adulthood, go for a run and watch your confidence soar.

5. Running improves your memory.

A study done at the University of British Columbia found that regular exercise is excellent for cognitive function. Not only does aerobic exercise protect the aging brain, but it improves thinking skills.

Whether or not you're worried about preserving your memory just yet, having strong thinking skills in the short term is certainly imperative to confidence.

6. Running helps you sleep.

It's really hard to be the best, most confident version of yourself when you're not getting enough sleep and are walking around like a zombie with bags under your eyes.

One study found that people who get 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise per week had a 65 percent improvement in sleep quality and felt more alert during the day.

7. Outdoor exercise improves self-esteem.

Unlike many forms of exercise, running is typically done outside. Which is great news for your confidence, because research shows that exercising in green spaces results in lowered blood pressure and increased self-esteem.

The treadmill is great and all, but if you have the option to take your workout outside, make it happen.

What are you waiting for? Slip on those sneakers and hit the pavement.

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