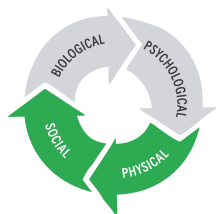


Exercise



The main focus of exercise is on physical factors, although it may help with your social life if you take up a sport or group exercise!



Remember, a sideways thumb just means not enough people have done research yet to show whether this works. More thumbs ups means more people have done research that shows that this approach does work.

What is it?

Exercise might be any type of physical activity or movement, like walking, running, yoga or football. Exercise groups and treatments offered through the NHS for unusual, distressing experiences are usually offered alongside medicines and other standard care.

What does it aim to do?

Exercise may stop you from putting on weight when you're taking some of the medicines in this booklet. It's also been suggested that exercise may help if you feel sad or anxious too, so a possibility might be that exercise reduces how upsetting your unusual experiences are or how much they affect your daily life.

Exercise also aims to improve physical health by helping you to have a healthy weight and a healthy heart. It aims to help your general health and wellbeing. If you are physically fit and healthy, you may find you've got more energy for the things you want to do in the day and you may find it easier to keep a healthy body weight. Also, when you exercise your body produces special chemicals called endorphins that are known to help reduce stress, ward off anxiety and depression, and aid good sleep.

Does it work?

The effects of exercise (e.g. yoga) on unusual distressing experiences have only recently been looked at, so there are only a few studies that have looked at how helpful exercise is for unusual, distressing experiences alongside medicine and other usual care.

Only the studies with a good design – remember these are randomised controlled trials – were considered. These have shown that exercise helps when people feel down, flat, or de-motivated and one study showed that yoga (alongside usual care such as medicines) was helpful for reducing unusual, distressing experiences and that it also improves your general quality of life.

Results do show that regular exercise can help you to be more healthy generally, with a healthier weight and better mental wellbeing.

A recent big review (meta-analysis) of exercise interventions has shown that exercise alone, can make you more physically fit, which protects against heart disease. It also showed that moderate-vigorous exercise (90 minutes a week or more) can reduce unusual upsetting experiences and give you more energy and motivation. It may also improve your day to day function, quality of life, depression, anxiety and memory.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

NICE reviewed 24 randomised trials of either: exercise and healthy eating, or just exercise, in people with unusual, distressing experiences. They found that interventions that included exercise and healthy eating together reduced weight gain and improved wellbeing in people who experienced unusual distressing experiences.

Exercise alone wasn't better than usual care at reducing weight and there weren't any studies that looked at healthy eating alone. So, just like it's better to have medicine and talking therapy together for unusual distressing experiences, it's better to have exercise and healthy eating together for weight and physical health.

See if you can build up to exercising for one and a half to three hours a week for the best results, but remember exercise means lots of different things: walking to a friend's, to work, or to the shops all count. And it helps to watch what you're eating a bit too!

How can I get this treatment?

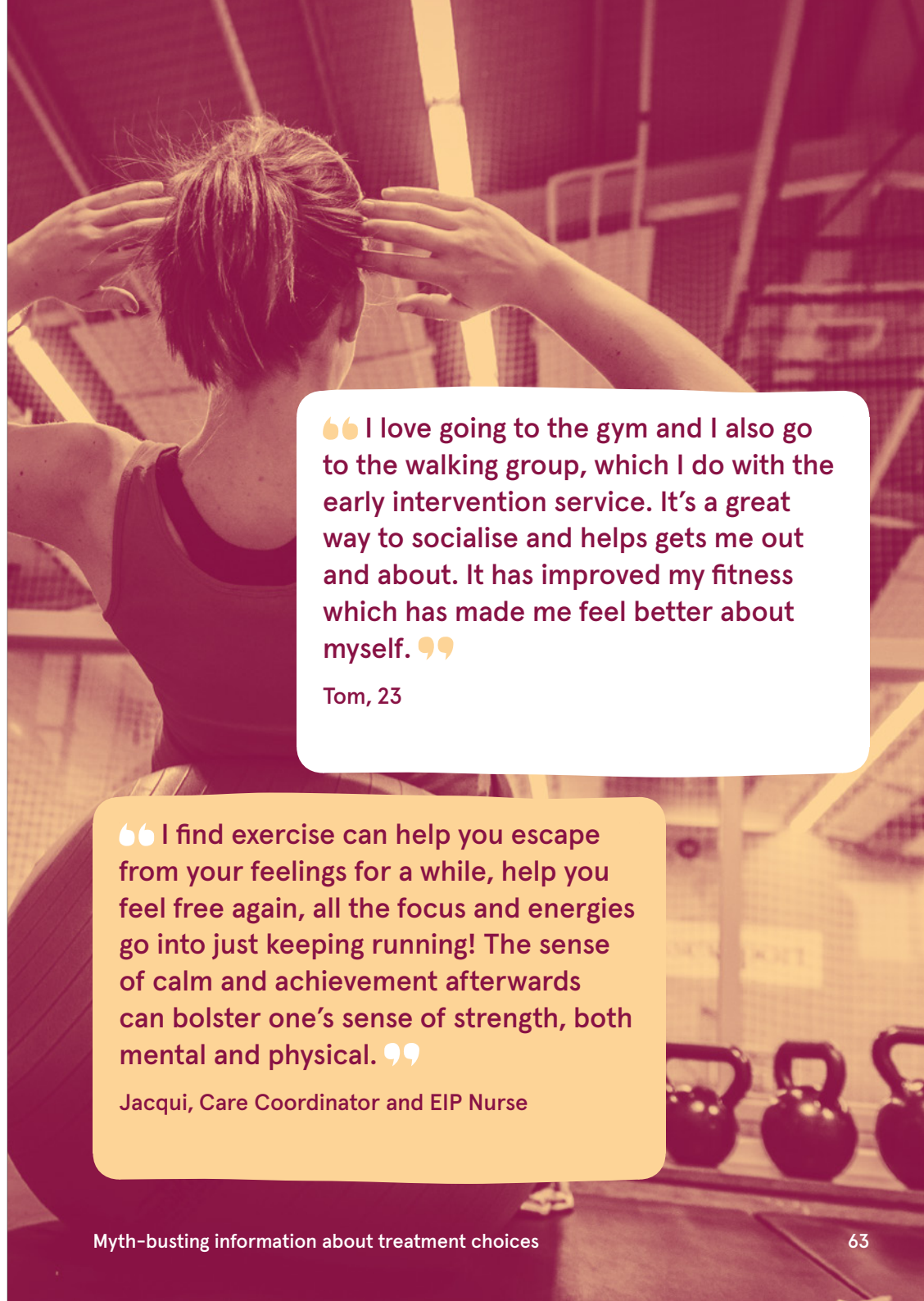
There are lots of exercise things that you can do for free, like walking, cycling, running, playing football etc. You can also ask your care coordinator, GP or mental health worker about any free passes for local classes, gyms or leisure centres that you might be able to get, as well as any classes that they might be running.

✓ Main pro

Exercise is easy and free to do. It helps you to keep fit, improve your physical health and wellbeing.

✗ Main con

There is not enough evidence yet to show whether exercise interventions also help with unusual and distressing experiences.



“ I love going to the gym and I also go to the walking group, which I do with the early intervention service. It's a great way to socialise and helps gets me out and about. It has improved my fitness which has made me feel better about myself. ”

Tom, 23

“ I find exercise can help you escape from your feelings for a while, help you feel free again, all the focus and energies go into just keeping running! The sense of calm and achievement afterwards can bolster one's sense of strength, both mental and physical. ”

Jacqui, Care Coordinator and EIP Nurse