

A time to play

After school fun makes kids' minds sharper

IF YOUR CHILD cannot wait to play after school, it's better not to restrict him, a study suggests. Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day after school saw substantial improvements in the ability of children to pay attention, avoid distraction and switch between cognitive tasks, the findings showed.

"Those in the exercise group received a structured intervention that was designed for the way kids like to move," said lead researcher Charles Hillman, a professor at the University of Illinois in the US.

The study involved a nine-month long, randomised and controlled trial involving 221 pre-pubescent children. They performed short bouts of exercise interspersed with rest over a two-hour period. All participants underwent cognitive testing and brain imaging before and after the intervention.

The intervention, called FITKids, was based on the CATCH exercise programme, a research-based health promotion initiative used by schools and health depart-



ments across the US.

"We saw about a six per cent increase in fitness in children in the FITKids intervention group," pointed out Hillman.

Fitness improved less than one per cent in the control

group, he added. The children in the FITKids exercise group wore heart-rate monitors and pedometers during the intervention.

"A big reason why kids participate in a structured sports

environment is because they find it fun and they make new friends. And this intervention was designed to meet those needs as well," Hillman noted. The study appeared in the journal *Pediatrics*. IANS

Love yourself

Self-compassion leads to positive body image in women



WOMEN WHO ACCEPT and tolerate their bodily imperfections appear to have a more positive body image despite their high body mass index (BMI) and are better able to handle personal disappointments and setbacks in their daily lives, a research indicated.

This self-compassion may protect girls and young women against unhealthy weight-control practices and eating disorders.

"Women may experience a more positive body image and better eating habits if they approach disappointments and distress with kindness and the recognition that these struggles are a normal part of life," explained professor Allison Kelly from the department of psychology at the University of Waterloo.

The study gathered data

from 153 female undergraduate students and used BMI calculations based on each participant's self-reported height and weight.

The research team administered a series of questionnaires assessing levels of self-compassion, self-esteem, body image and eating behaviour.

"We found that regardless of their weight, women with higher self-compassion have better body image and fewer concerns about weight, body shape or eating," Kelly noted.

According to her, "there is something about a high level of acceptance and understanding of oneself that helps people not necessarily view their bodies more positively but rather acknowledge their bodies' imperfections and be okay with them".

The study appears in the journal *Body Image*. IANS

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Aches & Pains

Many people suffer from aches and pains. They have a tendency to develop headaches and are also prone to constant back related problems. It is a myth that body pain is common among old people. These days I come across young clients who complain of body and joint pains very often. No amount of medication can help body pain if you don't understand the root cause of the pain. So how does it all start and how can you control pain?

Every cell in our body has prana or chi or life force energy. When there is an imbalance in this energy, you are likely to develop aches and pains all over your body. There are many triggers that cause a major imbalance in your energy – phobias, emotional stress, relationship break ups... the list is endless. When you go through an emotionally taxing event or work in a high stress environment, you are likely to absorb all the negative emotions and store them in your cells. Over a period of time, the negative energy keeps piling up and then suddenly one day you complain of back pain or stiff joints. You panic and run to the doctor who is happy to prescribe painkillers. You keep taking the medication without treating the cause and the problem keeps resurfacing often. Over the years you start believing that you are developing arthritis and resign to the fact that you will always have pain. It's a loop and you are stuck in it.

Your cellular memory and your subconscious mind tend to store all your experiences in life. If you are constantly leading a high stress and emotionally turbulent life, then that's what is stored in your body and your mind. If you are fearful all the time, then you tend to store your fears in your joints. The more you absorb the negativity, the more you will feel tired and ill. So how can you get out of this loop and lead a pain free life?

First and foremost, take control of your emotions and stop being fearful. Manage your stress through daily practice of yoga and meditation. Taking up sports also helps in getting things off your mind. Developing hobbies outside of work also takes away stress. Hobbies such as reading, writing, gardening, and photography bring your stress levels down and help you to divert your focus on something different other than stress.

Acknowledging that you have aches and pains and then identifying what causes them will help you to lead a pain free and happy life.

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