

Research finds a way to 'trick' the mind, turning lazy people into sports enthusiasts

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A new study has explored whether incorporating mindfulness training into a fitness program could encourage university students to maintain healthier exercise habits. The study, conducted at three sites in the UK, looked at the impact of a 30-day digital mindfulness intervention on a group of students who were already highly sedentary.

Challenges from a sedentary lifestyle

Physical inactivity is common among college students and can lead to poor mental health. While physical activity (PA) programs help improve outcomes, many people have difficulty maintaining long-term behavioral changes. Researchers wanted to test whether mindfulness training—designed to build mental and physical skills—could make a difference.



Research methods

The study was conducted with the participation of 109 volunteers, randomly divided into two groups:

1. **PA-only group** : Use activity tracker with a goal of 8,000 steps/day.
2. **MPA Group** : Same step goal but combined with 30-day digital mindfulness practice.

Indicators such as activity level, sedentary time, mental health, motivation, enjoyment, and self-efficacy were assessed before and after the intervention.

Research results show:

1. Activity levels doubled, and sedentary time decreased by 9.5 hours/week in both groups.
2. The MPA group improved more in terms of motivation to stay active, but there was no statistically significant difference compared with the PA-only group.
3. Self-efficacy remained unchanged in both groups.

According to the researchers, adding mindfulness increased students' motivation but did not make a big difference in their actual levels of exercise. They recommend further research to determine whether mindfulness-based thinking leads to lasting behavioral changes.

The findings highlight the potential of digital mindfulness interventions in wellness programs. However, the researchers note that more research is needed to optimize how to encourage students to maintain sustained physical activity.

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