

Portfolio Handout 11 – 6 Ways Exercise Makes You Smarter

Name _____ Period ____ Teacher _____

6 Ways Exercise Makes You Smarter - Jennifer Cohen - Forbes Magazine - 5/08/2012

If you think muscles are just for meatheads or gym rats think again! Did you know that just 30 minutes of exercise a day can make you a genius? Ok, you still might not become Einstein but you can get pretty close. Check out the 6 ways that working out can make you smarter:

1. Increases Energy

The more you move, the more energized you will feel. Regular physical activity improves your muscle strength and boosts your endurance, giving you the energy you need to think clearer and come up with new ideas. A good 15 minutes of moving around, even just around your living room, makes your body produce more energy on a cellular level.

2. Sharpens Focus

Dr. John Ratey, author of “Spark – The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain” says that exercise improves your brain in the short term by raising your focus for two to three hours afterwards. If you have a presentation or speaking engagement try to work out beforehand; you’ll be at your peak when you have to perform. In the long term, it can even help starve off brain aging and Alzheimer’s. This works on the cellular level through neuroplasticity*, the ability of the brain to improve itself with blood flow and levels of brain-derived protein. He calls it “miracle-gro” for the brain, and it all comes from regular exercise!

* **Neuroplasticity:** The brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life.

3. Enhances Mood

Exercise releases endorphins, also known as nature’s mood elevator, which has been shown to improve memory. Exercise also releases serotonin, which improves mood and alleviates symptoms

4. Helps Impulse Control

Exercise helps trigger endorphins, which improve the prioritizing functions of the brain. After exercise, your ability to sort out priorities improves, allowing you to block out distractions and better concentrate on the task at hand.

5. Improves Memory

Your brain remembers more when your body is active. In an experiment published in the journal of the American College of Sports Medicine, students were asked to memorize a string of letters, and were then allowed to run, lift weights, or sit quietly. The students who ran were quicker and more accurate when they were tested than students who chose the other two options.

6. Increases Productivity

Ever heard of “if you want something done, give it to a busy person?” It’s a proven fact that productivity begets more productivity. When we’re productive and efficient it propels us to succeed more. After exercising in the middle of the work day, workers are more likely to be kinder to their co-workers, increase their work performance and improve their time management. All these amount to a more productive day – all from a few minutes of exercise!

Directions – Please complete the questions, writing your answers on the reverse side of the handout.

- 1- How does exercise help you to think clearer and come up with new ideas?
- 2- What is **Neuroplasticity*** and how does it improve your brain?
- 3- In terms of body chemistry, how does exercise improve mood?
- 4- How will “improved prioritizing functions of the brain” help you do well in all of your classes?
- 5- Select the one of the six “ways” that means the most to you and explain why.