

- **Managing Stress Through Exercise**
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May is one of the most beautiful months of the year. The feeling of spring is in full height, flowers are blooming, and the trees have regained their green leaves. Although nature may seem cheerful and in its best shape, high school students consider May as a month of stress and panic. The pressing matters that might be consuming their thoughts are prom, AP testing, the approach of finals, and ultimately, for high school seniors, the college commitment day.

As the days for each of these events approach, students can feel the stress weighing heavier down on them. This makes it important to learn how to cope with the stress in our lives and find ways to simply manage it healthfully. Aerobic exercise, such as jogging, swimming, or bicycling, is one of the easiest ways to help gather inner strength and reduce stress.

Aerobic exercise is sustained exercise that increases heart and lung fitness all while strengthening the body. Many studies suggest that the people who partake in aerobic exercise manage stressful events better, exhibit more self-confidence, feel more vigor, and feel less depressed or fatigued than those who do not. Aerobic exercise can alleviate negative emotions because it:

1. brings up mood-boosting chemicals, such as norepinephrine and the endorphins, from our body's internal pharmacy,
2. modestly enhances cognitive abilities, like memory,
3. and promotes the growth of new brain cells.

Exercise also strengthens the heart, increases blood flow, keeps blood vessels open, and lowers both blood pressure and the blood pressure reaction to stress. May is not the only month where students and adults experience stress; everyday problems can lead individuals to feel pressure and tension. However, one easy way to lower our negative feelings is to get out and participate in some exercise.