

# MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF MOVEMENT

Movement is an essential part of the toolkit we use in caring for our basic mental health needs. The connection between our physical health and mental health can be intrinsically linked. But it doesn't have to be super complicated or intense to make a difference. Sometimes all we need is some light stretching or a stroll outside to help feel connected to our body. Movement allows us to quite literally move the energy created by our emotions through and hopefully (eventually) out of our systems.

*Somatic Movement* is an approach that can help release stress, tension, and trauma from the body. Somatic therapy usually incorporates body-oriented modalities such as dance, breathwork, and meditation to support mental healing. If this sounds of interest to you, our guided practice "Intro to Somatic Movement" led by Aaron Moore, LMHC, is available on the Introductory Mental Health Toolkit hub.

## Here is a list of some basic benefits of movement and how it can impact your mental health:

- Increased energy, ability to focus, and gratitude
- A physical outlet for anxiety or aiding in reducing stress
- Boosts self-esteem and allows for self-expression
- Helps you become more aware of your breathing, which can act as a way to ground yourself
- Combats the severity of certain mental health issues
- Supports brain function by increasing blood flow to the brain, which is crucial for its proper functioning and the release of certain hormones
- Can help you build a new, supportive community through the movement experience such as group classes, running groups, or meeting people at the gym

Insights and research have shown that regular physical activity, in various forms, is deeply beneficial not only for physical health, but also for our mental well-being, cognitive function, and overall quality of life. It's important to note that while beneficial, it is best to pair it with other coping skills, practices, and tools to help build mental health resilience.