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# Mind/body synchronicity

There's no doubt Kiwis are recognising the benefits of healthy living. The number of people joining and using gyms has increased by 20% since 1996, and participation in local and national half-marathons, triathlons and cycling events has reached an all-time high even for the 'wannabe' sportsperson.

But while we're putting all this effort into keeping our bodies trim, taut and terrific, we must not forget the equally important task of fine-tuning our state of mind or attitude.

Findings show that mentally positive people appear to live longer, be happier and report less physical and stress-related illness than those who have a negative perspective! At the same time, a substantial body of evidence also suggests that physically fit and energetic people report greater levels of satisfaction with their relationships, friendships and lives in general.

It makes sense then, to develop patterns and strategies that support the mind *and* the body.

Here are just a few of the benefits:

- Exercise means a healthier heart because it reduces cardiovascular risk, including high blood pressure.
- Being physically active can bolster good mental health as it helps you to manage stress, anxiety and even depression.

■ Improved mental health allows you to feel confident and generally happy. You are more likely to feel like meeting new people, participate in activities and perhaps even step outside your comfort-zone.

■ If your self-esteem is high you will more willingly seek out exercise to maintain an ideal weight and at the same time you will have a more positive view of your appearance.

■ If you are comfortable with your appearance and other lifestyle choices, you reduce factors like anxiety, depression, over-eating and other mood-related behaviours.

■ Most exercise helps strengthen bones and muscles to some degree and is good in promoting bone density and protecting against osteoporosis, which affects men as well as women.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to attend to both our mental and physical needs, takes the form of overwhelming statistics related to diseases like obesity, diabetes and osteoporosis that plague us like a nagging headache!

The choice is ours: we can either live in pain, ignoring the options we have to relieve the 'ache', or work towards 'mind/body synchronicity'... holistic health is only a decision away! **FHD**