

Mental Health Benefits of the Beach

The beach can be a refreshing place that makes you feel better the longer you're there. Some studies show short walks along the beach can boost your mood and affect your mental health. This is because the beach is considered a blue space -- a water source such as an ocean, lake, pond, or swimming pool. Exposure to blue spaces has been linked to overall improved health.

The beach is a good place to head to when you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

Benefits of the Beach

When you're feeling burnt out at work and in need of a vacation, you might automatically think of the beach. Most people have come to associate the beach with relaxation and happiness. The beach does impact your mental health in the following ways:

It's a change of scenery. Some studies show that your senses experiencing the same thing over and over again can cause stress. When you change your setting and go to the beach, your senses are engaged in new sights, smells, tastes, and sounds. This can improve your mental state and increase feelings of relaxation.

It improves overall well-being. Getting exposure to the sun and ocean air is great for your mental health. "Surf therapy" is shown to boost your overall mood. Getting in the water and moving around increases mindfulness and allows you to get some physical activity.

It lowers stress. Being in nature, a place you feel safe, can lower your blood pressure and stress hormone levels. Likewise, spending time at the beach can lessen anxiety and nervous system arousal, which is what makes you feel stressed and anxious.

It lifts your mood. Time on the beach increases your self-esteem and promotes relaxation. People with attention deficit disorder can feel calmer at the beach. Walking along the shoreline can make you feel less isolated and happier.

The beach can have lasting benefits for people who have anxiety, depression, elevated stress, and other mental health conditions. Spending just 20 minutes walking along the beach can boost your mood.

Using the Beach to Improve Your Well-Being

When you're overwhelmed and in need of a vacation, you might want to put the beach at the top of your list. The best beach activities for stress include getting in the water and spending time outside.

Book a vacation. If you live in the city or a place where blue spaces are limited, you might start feeling depressed or burnt out. That's when a vacation comes in handy. The beach is one of the best places for your mental health to recover.

Get outdoors. Looking at electronic screens too much can harm your mental health. Turning off the phone or tablet and getting outdoors can clear your mind. The point of being outside is being more present and connecting with yourself and the world.

Focus your senses. It's good for your overall health to soak up the sun and get plenty of vitamin D. When you're out on the beach, be mindful of the sounds and smells around you. You can even try meditation while you're lying in the sand with your eyes closed. This can focus your mind and clear away your stress and worries.

Choose a safe location. In some cases, you may be afraid of what's in the water. If this is preventing you from taking a trip to the beach, that's OK. But you can research beaches or blue spaces and choose a place that makes you feel safe so you'll be able to relax easier.

Limits of the Beach as a Mood Booster

Going to the beach won't be a solution to other mental health conditions, especially if you don't really enjoy it. One study shows that people who are already excited about the beach are likely to experience greater mood and mental health effects.

If you're not excited, you may still feel anxious or depressed at the beach. In the same study, men are more likely to experience more mental health benefits of the beach.

Going to the beach isn't just a fun vacation destination. There are benefits for your mental health by getting out into these blue spaces and enjoying the outdoors. The next time you're feeling overwhelmed with stress, think about heading to the beach and spending as much time near the water as you can.