The benefits of exercise for students

Evelyn May

ce4553dr@metrostate.edu

Three years ago, I entered into Minneapolis Community and Technical College’s (MCTC) yoga and personal training program while I worked on my degree in business. I was driven to study yoga path because gentle exercise helped me cope with stress and chronic pain due to scoliosis. I’d never been one to exercise, but I needed a major change in my life. Through gentle weight lifting and cardio I’ve discovered many benefits.

Much has changed in my life since I graduated with my yoga teaching certificate. I started working full time and going to school full time. I’ve struggled to fit in workouts, and I find myself sitting for extended periods of time to study.

Like me, most students at Metro have jam-packed schedules. It is difficult to find time to take care of ourselves through exercise. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults need at least two hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, and at least two days a week of major muscle-strengthening activities.

So how do we get that exercise with such a busy schedules, not to mention tight budgets? One way of sneaking in a workout is to go between classes. Metropolitan State opened a fitness center on Feb. 23 in the Student Center. For students, this facility is free, and staff members can use it at a minimal fee. Even a light 20 minute workout or walk can have many benefits.

It is important to remember that the age-old saying, “No pain, no gain” is not correct. Exercise maybe difficult for you at first, but remember to be patient with your body. However, as celebrity personal trainer Jillian Micheals has said, “Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.” A workout should not leave you feeling pain, but having muscle fatigue after workouts is natural.

I once asked Jennifer Mason, the director of the MCTC yoga and personal training program, what constitutes aerobic activity for a walk. She stated “A 3–4 mile per hour or brisk walk for twenty minutes is considered a gentle cardio workout. It’s enough to feel warm and notice your heart rate elevate.”

A gentle cardio workout can help you gain energy by boosting oxygen delivery to your muscles and cardiovascular system. This is a much healthier than drinking a cup of coffee before a night class — not to mention you will sleep soundly at night.

According to the Mayo Clinic, exercise boosts various chemicals in the brain to promote improved mood. While it releases endorphins, it burns off pesky nervous adrenaline. This is the perfect prescription to prevent for finals week stress.

Sometimes busy students don’t have time to connect with friends. Exercise can be a way to reconnect with friends or meet new people. Try to meet a friend for your workout and set goals together. Or set up a study date while you work out, and use flash cards to quiz each other. Not only will you be doing something good for your body, your memory retention will improve. Think of exercise as YOU time. If you like music, create a playlist you love for your time in the Fitness Center. If you are like me and love audio books, download one to listen to during workouts. During my time training as a yoga instructor, I learned the term “pleasure bundling” from my instructors. This means treat yourself to something you love while you work on something that is challenging. One example of this in my life is running outside before the fitness room opened. I’m too broke for a gym membership, so I started running twice a week this winter. It’s hard, cold, and my three mile jog can get boring. But my reward is worth it. A cup of tea and my favorite fiction book before bed instead of homework.

The fitness center is located in the Student Center at the St. Paul campus. It contains strength training materials, such as dumbbells, resistance bands and kettlebells, in addition to cardio machines. Amenities include 20 lockers and two full bathrooms with showers. Best of all, it’s free for students. So try it out. It’ll be good for your body and your mind.