

## Walking with good posture can ease depression, study finds

October 5 2012, by Philip Riley

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(Medical Xpress)—Walking with a slouched or despondent body posture can lead to feelings of depression or decreased energy, but those feelings can be reversed by walking in a more upright position, according to new research.

In an article published Oct. 5 in the journal [Biofeedback](#), Professor of Health Education Erik Peper found that simply choosing to alter [body posture](#) to a more upright position can improve mood and [energy levels](#).

"We tend to think the brain and body relationship goes one way. In fact, the passages go both ways," Peper said. "When you choose to put your body in a different mode, it's harder to drop into depression."

Peper said that previous studies have established that movement and exercise can open up biological pathways that increase happiness and energy. Those feelings can be also consciously accessed when people choose more upright, open body postures, he found.

"What we're saying is that if you start integrating more [body movements](#) into your daily life, your energy level stays higher and your quality of life is better," he said. "It's very similar to the principle of 'fake it till you make it'—you can convince your body to have more energy."

Peper surveyed 110 students in his classes who were instructed to walk down the hallway in a slouched position and then skip down the hallway. A few minutes later, the students were asked to rate their subjective

energy levels. For the whole group, slouched walking decreased energy levels while skipping increased energy.

The students also took questionnaires to rate their general depression levels. Students who were generally more depressed reported far lower energy levels after slouched walking than those who were generally not depressed.

The finding may offer an explanation for how [environmental factors](#) such as posture can increase the tendency toward a cycle of depression. There are other factors that influence depression and energy levels, Peper says, but "what we demonstrated is that in this epidemic of depression, there are simple interventions you can do to help yourself."

**More information:** [biofeedbackhealth.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/good-posture-ease-depression.pdf](#)

Provided by San Francisco State University

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