

# Study finds changes in mindset key to helping college students exercise more

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Viewing physical activity as an outlet for stress can increase college students' willingness to exercise. However, in order to maintain that routine, students need social support from family and friends, according to research published in *The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*.

Researchers surveyed 135 [college students](#), assessing their willingness to exercise for the recommended 150 minutes per week. Participants were asked to weigh pros, like improved energy and health against perceived disadvantages, like being tired and not having enough time for academics or leisure.

Once convinced that more exercise would benefit them, students were asked what they needed to get started. The single most significant factor was behavioral confidence, which involves visualization of future performance and external sources of confidence, like one's [religious faith](#) or an encouraging mentor.

"Physicians who want to encourage their patients to get more [physical activity](#) should suggest the techniques from this study," says Vinayak K. Nahar, MD, Ph.D., an assistant professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and co-author on this study. "Accessing internal and external sources of inspiration and resilience is an effective and sustainable model for positive change."

According to the survey, respondents indicated that sustaining the

weekly 150 minutes of exercise would require the support of family and friends, as well as an emotional shift, in which students would use exercise as an outlet for stressors. Respondents also said [social changes](#), like making friends who also exercise regularly would improve their ability to persist.

"Nearly half of all adults in the U.S. do not engage in the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week," says Manoj Sharma, MBBS, Ph.D., a professor of behavioral health at Jackson State University and lead researcher on this study. "This basic lack of exercise is tied to myriad health problems, so it is important to address it early."

**More information:** Vinayak K. Nahar et al, Using the Multitheory Model to Predict Initiation and Sustenance of Physical Activity Behavior Among Osteopathic Medical Students, *The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association* (2019). [DOI: 10.7556/jaoa.2019.089](https://doi.org/10.7556/jaoa.2019.089)

Provided by American Osteopathic Association

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