

Feel Good Mum! - Exercise for your mind.

Biology and nature may take care of the physical transition to motherhood but in a world that is far more complicated than our grandmothers, the psychological transition is often far more challenging. Women's roles have changed and expanded. Many women now juggle careers and motherhood. Family structure has diversified with more single mums and second marriages creating combined families. People strive to be perfect parents without the extended family support of years ago. Body image is more important than ever and not confined to the 20 something year old pop star. Pressure is on to look good throughout pregnancy and be back in shape 6 weeks after the birth. The 'feel good factor' of exercise is a great tool to support you on your journey through pregnancy and motherhood.

Why exercise makes us feel good

Sleep – Exercise relaxes the body and increases production of sleep inducing melatonin. During REM sleep the memories of the day are processed giving psychological recovery. During deep sleep physical repair and restoration of chemical balance occurs. So a little extra of these helps you feel refreshed and ready to cope with your day.

Movement – Moving the skeleton and muscles releases stored up tension in the body keeping mum mobile and relaxed. Working the heart and lungs improves circulation. The more efficient delivery of oxygen and nutrients and removal of carbon dioxide, toxins and waste keep your body - and baby functioning at their optimum.

Stress hormones – A good level of fitness allows us to handle pressure with less adrenalin response. Also, each time we exercise we burn off excess stress drugs such as cortisol that cause negative emotions. At a time when your hormones are sending you on a rollercoaster ride this can benefit you, your family and work colleagues.

Feel good hormones – Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins. Serotonin helps prevent depression and weight gain. These naturally occurring drugs promote happiness, energy and a positive attitude to your changing body.

Distraction – Brain studies show that in a restful state 90% of a woman's brain is still switched on. Exercise is a 'time out' from all this brain activity especially if you can have a chat too.

Mental strength – Accomplishing a goal we have set for ourselves enhances our self esteem. Exercising to look after your health and baby makes you feel good about yourself. Completing an exercise when your arms are burning is mental conditioning that will help you in birth and motherhood.

Body image – Making the effort to exercise means you're less likely to undo your good work by eating chips and cakes. Keeping your body toned and at a healthy weight will give you a positive and sexy body image during pregnancy that is good for you and your relationship.

Bits and quotes for pull out boxes.

Morning exercise uplifts you setting a positive mindset for the day.

Evening exercise diffuses the stress of the day. It's a great time to take a walk in the park or at the beach as nature is an absorber of negative energy.

"I look forward to my Saturday morning exercise class. I love going and it gives me a buzz that lasts all day" (Karen 38 weeks pregnant).

"I've had to reassess and reorganize my whole life. Exercise is the one thing I do for me. It's definitely easier being a single mum when you look and feel good" (Tricia mother of 3 month old).

"Pregnant, overweight and with border line diabetes, I joined what I thought would be my first and last exercise class... 10 months later I'm still exercising – and having fun. I'm 20 kilos lighter, fitter and stronger than ever. I have new energy and confidence that my husband and kids are enjoying as much me" (Roseanne mother of 2).

"I arrive at class late and irritated with my mobile still stuck to my ear. I leave smiling, chatty and stress free. I know it's good for me and my baby so I try not to miss a class" (Loren 35 weeks pregnant).

"Exercise was once a rude word for me, now I hang out for my weekly class" (Stephanie 27 weeks pregnant).

Rachel Livingstone Glowing Expectations.