

O'Connell JK, O'Connell DG, O'Connell KK. 2020. *Psychological Benefits of Physical Activity in Children with Mental Health Disorders*. International Journal of Child Development and Mental Health. 8(1):53-62.

Abstract

This review article examines the latest evidence on the effectiveness of physical activity in treating children with mental health disorders. These disorders can affect growth and development, educational attainment and the ability to lead a productive life. Children with mental health disorders often face isolation, discrimination and stigmatization. Physical activity has been found to be effective in managing emotional self-control and improving social interaction among peers. It can help reduce obesity which may reduce depression and anxiety in children. Structured physical activity can improve overall health, motor function and learning as brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) is up regulated during moderate exercise activity and can encourage neuroplasticity. Moderate physical activity should be encouraged and implemented in the pre-school years and continued throughout life for maximal benefit. Research has demonstrated positive outcomes in children with mental health disorders who participate in physical activity and therefore should be considered as a viable treatment approach in the management of a variety of childhood mental health disorders.