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Does physical activity makes you really happy?

The search for happiness seems to be a very relevant topic in social life. This is one of the reasons why research is very much interested in developing methods and trainings to become happier. The aim of the present systematic review was to systematically investigate the influence of sportive interventions on the feeling of happiness. In order to do so the search of the concepts of happiness were combined with the concepts of exercise, training, sports and physical activity for papers of the last 10 years. The extensive literature research identified 1099 records, eight of which were finally included into the review according to the following criteria: happiness as dependent variable, physical activity as independent variable and the existence of a control group. From these studies the number of participants, the kind of intervention, the dependent variables, the statistical values and the results were registered. The analysis showed that the studies were highly heterogeneous concerning the health (patients with a chronic disease and healthy participants), the age (means between 10 years and 85 years), and the gender distribution (percent of females between 28 and 100% of the participants). The control group was always a waiting control group. Overall, in seven out of the eight studies physical interventions yielded improvements in happiness. Even though this is a systematic review it is limited by the fact that happiness is conceptualized with the term of happiness, integrating other terms of happiness would have resulted in more than one million studies which were published in the last 10 years. For future research, further studies have to investigate the question of the influence of sports on happiness in more detail and especially relating to the neuroscientific and biological aspects of the described phenomenon..

Biography

Petra Jansen has studied Biological and Social Anthropology, Psychology and Mathematics at the Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz. In 1999, she received her PhD in Cognitive Psychology at the Gerhard-Mercator University, Duisburg, (topic: Cognition of Distances– Investigation in Virtual-Environments). In 2008, she completed her habilitation at the Heinrich-Heine University, Düsseldorf in Experimental Psychology (topic: Development of Spatial Cognition). Beside this, she holds a degree of Dance Therapy from the Westfälische-Wilhelms-University, Muenster. Since 2008, she owns a full professorship for Sport Science at the University of Regensburg. Her main research focuses on the influence of movement on cognition and emotion. Several of her research projects were funded by the DFG and around 140 peer-reviewed papers respectively book chapters have been published.

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