6 Surprising Benefits of Adventure Sports

one YOU'LL FOCUS BETTER

With all the distractions pulling us from one thing to another within milliseconds, our environment is destroying our collective concentration. Seems like today everyone has ADD. ADHD. And what I have, CFFS (Can't Focus for Sh...).

Some worse than others.

Adventure sports force you into the now. You have to pay attention to not only what you're doing, but both other athletes and environmental conditions. As we practice and push ourselves, we continue to dial in, and the movements become second nature.

That's when magic happens, we find our groove. We find that sweet spot where everything works. It all comes together, and it's a beautiful experience. Welcome to what famed psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls flow.

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Consider it the ultimate experience in your sport journey. This is one reason you go out. For that relaxed mind. In flow, our brain waves shift from the beta waves of concentration to the alpha waves associated with rest and relaxation and the theta waves that occur during meditation.

What does all that junk mean? It means sport reigns in your concentration, by a lot.

That and apparently, memory and behavior, as Dr. Stewart Trost of Oregon State reported in 2007 after studying elementary students who engaged in just 15 minutes of physical activity. [1]

That same year, Newsweek magazine's Mary Carmichael published findings about adults who did three months of aerobic workouts. Participants enjoyed improved concentration and overall brain function, not to mention preventing cognitive and neurological disorders, like Alzheimer's and ADD. (Hey, there I am.)[1]

1. https://www.livestrong.com/article/457834-does-exercise-improve-concentration/

two YOU'LL SLEEP BETTER

Sleep rocks. Well, good sleep rocks, tossing and turning sucks. So knowing that sport improves this crucial aspect of our lives is a massive win.

Earlier bedtimes, increased deep sleep duration, and less disturbances all come from the moderate to vigorous activity offered up by adventure sport. A nationally representative sample of more than 2,600 men and women showed a 65 percent improvement in sleep parameters, such as those described above.[2]

That's awesome for feeling all warm and cozy each morning, but what tangible benefits are there? Eternal youth?

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2. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4067693/

Maybe not quite, but it can help you stay young and live longer. Reporting in Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience Dr. Mazzotti's study concludes that quality sleep maintains better hormone levels and, together with a healthy diet, usually present in long-lived individuals. [3]

Living longer is one thing, but looking young and avoiding disease is another. We know that sleep allows your body to repair cells, but recent studies from the Karolinska Institute and universities in Hong Kong show the actual DNA is repaired, too, and the efficiency of that repair is related to the quality of those ZZZs. Better rest means less DNA damage, a major contributor to aging and disease onset.[4]

OK, I'll live longer and not have wrinkles, but what about a beach body?

Researchers at the University of Chicago found that well-rested dieters lost more fat—a massive 56 percent of their weight loss—than those who were sleep deprived, who lost more muscle mass.

Dawn patrol, anyone?

3. https://ki.se/en/news/sleep-proteins-in-new-dna-repair-mechanism
4. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2951287/

three YOU'LL WIN RELATIONSHIPS

Man, you're going to win relationships so hard.

It's no secret that they play a key role in our overall life satisfaction. If we're off-kilter with someone, we don't feel as good as we could. Half of that interaction depends on you. Who you are as a person and how you come to it.

It might seem like a stretch to say that sports make you a better person, but we're just going by what the guys in the lab coats say. But, yeah, basically, athletes are better people. LOL.

Apparently, researchers found that adjectives to describe nonathletes include "unstable, impatient, often tense and dissatisfied." These individuals often "experience nervousness and anxiety, often restless, and succumbed to stressed more easily." Plus, they have lower emotional control.[6]

6. Tanya Kajtna (2004). Personality in High-Risk Sports Athletes. Kinesiology, 36 (1):24-34

Athletes, on the other hand—individuals who regularly test their limits physically and mentally—are proven to be more conscientious, trustworthy, and hardworking, among other wonderful qualities that smack of Godsend.

I mean who do you like to hang out with? Tom, the guy who's has to control everything, get his way, work life on his schedule, and lives in constant complaint-mode. Or Leo.

Always smiling, easy to get along with, loves being around friends and family, and is really passionate about getting better. Not just at sport, but at being.

Yea. Me too.

four YOU'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE

What is self confidence? It's our belief in ourselves to get something done. And it's a muscle. You know how you build it? You do something out of your comfort zone, and keep doing it until you do it well, feel amazing about the progress you made. Now you know you can do something. Then, this snowballs into one thing after another and another. The more you do and grow with each task, you get closer to the best version of yourself that ever existed. Super You.

Unfortunately, few people ever seem to meet their ultimate version. Mostly because so many of us lack self-confidence. Despite it being a critical element in every aspect of our lives.

How do you fair?

If you didn't get the answers you want, no worries. You're not alone. Did you know that in England, employees really struggle with this?

Do you avoid difficult tasks because you don't think you can do them? Do you distrust your abilities? Do you fail to take on greater responsibility? Do other people who are far inferior workwise continue to pass you by because you don't believe in yourself?

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If you didn't get the answers you want, no worries. You're not alone. Did you know that in England, employees really struggle with this? According to research:

- 35% of employees lack confidence to ask for a pay rise
- 25% fear asking their manager for owed time off
- 32% are afraid of putting their own ideas forward
- 29% are terrified of client meetings
- 27% get nervous about working closely with a superior on daily a basis
- 20% consider themselves as a push-over
- 20% have missed out on a promotion because of their lack of self belief.[7]

That's a lot of people holding themselves back in a lot of ways. Sport changes that.[8]

Getting into a sport is a process. It's not going to happen overnight. Each time you come to it, you take steps forward. You learn something you need to know to progress. You do this by breaking it down into simple moves—as basic as focusing on the positioning of your heels—for hours. And then one day, those heels just go into place, and it changes your riding. And that moment feels so amazing.

- Because you can enjoy the sport more. Obviously.
- You've progressed, and as Tony Robbins says, if you're not growing you're dying.
- You've challenged yourself to take measured actions to get out of your zone, push yourself, and keep showing up until you got it.

What this teaches you is if you want to do something, you can. All you need to do is break it down into manageable steps and go through it one piece at a time. As you go, you learn whatever you need to learn, you talk to whomever you need to talk to, you read. You arm yourself with info. You learn. You apply. You move on. Sooner or later that thing is going to get done. No matter what it is. Yeah it might take longer than planned, but you're here to master your life. Who's worried about time?

Focus on excellence. On growth.

7. https://www.thehrdirector.com/features/performance/uk-employees-crisis-of-confidence/
8. http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/14931/3/Willig%20extrpaperJHP2.pdf

five YOU'LL BE CHILLER THAN A JAMAICAN ON HOLIDAY

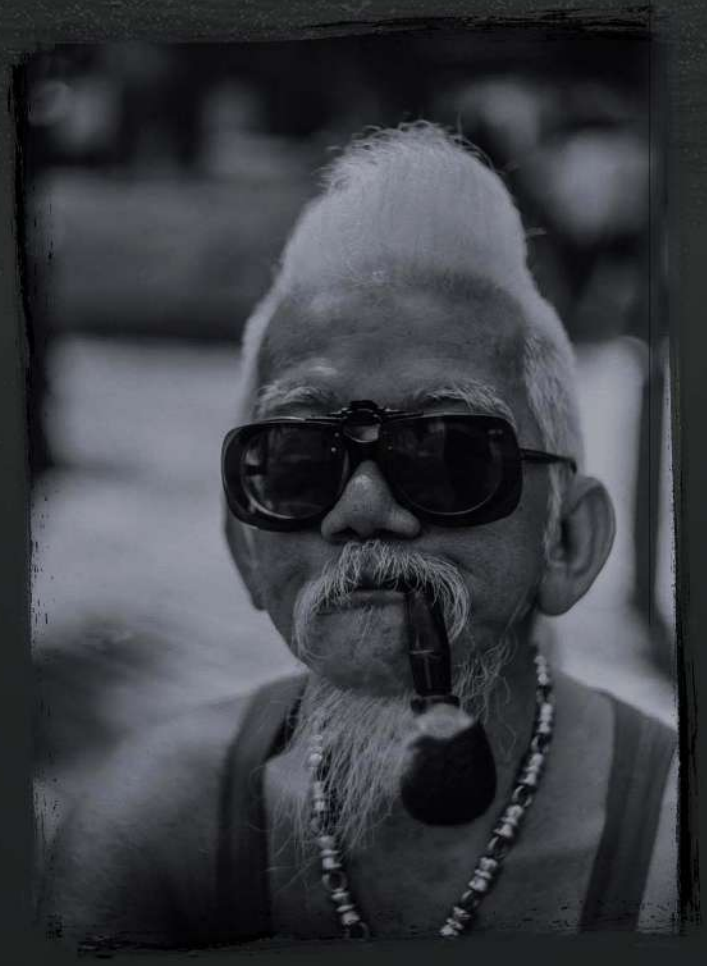
Have you ever had one of those moments when you go to season your breakfast and the lid falls off your pepper shaker, covering your eggs in black grains, and you lose it? Like you'd win best performance, as your cursing to yourself, banging the plate as loud as you can with your fork, as you scrape the mess into the trash, making sure everyone knows your pissed?

Because of pepper.

Then what's worse, as you're watching it happen in your mind, you know it's an unmeasured response to something so small, but you're furious anyway. And you let yourself stay in that emotion, just because the anger feels good?

Been there. Yeah, it's not pretty, but it happens.

Your reaction is not about the eggs. Or the pepper. That anger is a release. Bottled stress that's been aging too long and finally found an outlet.



You're not alone.

Stress gets to us, especially if we continue to push ourselves beyond what's humanly possible without adding in fun stress relief that counters the heavy side of life.

If we don't have effective strategies in place to handle our emotions, they will handle us. With them in power, all sorts of mischief gets kicked up. Poor choices. Relationship problems. Work issues. And it creates this vicious cycle that can be difficult to escape.

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Goosfraba, mon. Goosfraba. (I know I'm mashing up Eskimos and Jamaicans, but stay with me here.)

If you're going to work hard, you need to play hard. You need balance. That's exactly where sport comes in.

Not only a good time, adventure sports mellow you out. Maybe not to the actual degree of Jamaican on vacation, because that level of relaxed doesn't even seem feasible. But calm, low key, easy day? Yeah, you'll get all the good adjectives that describe someone who's got their emotions in check.[9]

Here's why:

- You're connecting with nature, which has been proven to mellow you out significantly.
- You're physically exerting yourself, so you'll get that post-workout trip on serotonin and dopamine. Love that.
- By regularly going out and putting yourself in what can be sometimes challenging, maybe even sometimes scary situations, you're conditioning yourself to improve your stress response. It's not the same thing, of course, but a Newsweek article reported that studies found that "the more soldiers were subjected to adrenaline-boosting situations, the more efficient they become at handling future stressful events."

This means you and the pepper can be friends again. How nice.

9. http://www.newsweek.com/ultimate-stress-test-special-forces-training-82749

Six YOU'LL FEEL PART OF THE WORLD…WELCOME

With so many screens and avatars, schedules and changing tech, it's easy to feel like you're watching the world, rather than actually participating in it. Oh you might tweet or meet up for drinks, but you're not really getting out into the world. You're not testing all of your senses and experiencing things that don't come in pixels or on ice.

That comes from moving your body in the world. Feeling the sun, trying cool stuff, pushing your limits, doing something different for once, connecting with others who share your passion, the…look, you're going to feel more part of the world. You really will, and not only is it totally badass, but proven.

Basically, the guys with the data found that getting into flow by way of adventure sports allows you to manage existence tensions, like feeling disconnected, in more "creative and purposeful way."

"Generating the experience of 'flow' through engaging in extreme sport may be one way in which participants were able to foreground unity with the world and to temporarily foreclose their more commonly experienced individuality and separateness."

https://eprints.qut.edu.au/38859/1/38859a.pdf

SO...

Basically, you'll have life stoke...about everything.

- You're going to live longer.
- You'll have less wrinkles and a better body, so you'll look better doing it.
- Your confidence is going to be stupid high, so you'll go after what you really deserve, instead of settling...ahem.
- You'll be more focused, your brain is going to work better, and you're even going to be more creative.
- You'll not only communicate better, but you'll have your emotions in check. So your relationships will improve all around.
- You'll be moving physically, dosing yourself with massive shots of dopamine and serotonin, meaning happy days.
- You'll connect with nature, which isn't just cool in itself, but offers numerous bonuses.
- You'll actually have quality experiences that charge all of your senses.

In every way, it seems your life will be 1000% improved by sport.

GET CONNECTED: