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A New Prescription For Depression: Join A Team And Get Sweaty

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Ryan “China” [McCarney](https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/personal-stories/becoming-change) (<https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/personal-stories/becoming-change>) has played sports his entire life, but sometimes he has to force himself to show up on the field to play pick-up soccer with his friends.

“I’m dreading and I’m anticipating the worst. But I do it anyway. And then, it’s a euphoric sensation when you’re done with it because you end up having a great time,” says McCarney.

McCarney was just 22 when he had his first panic attack. As a college and professional baseball player, he says getting help was stigmatized. It took him six years to get professional support. He still struggles with depression and social anxiety, but says exercising helps him — especially when it’s with his teammates.

Research shows exercise can ease things like panic attacks or mood and sleep disorders, and a recent [study](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(18)30227-X/fulltext) ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(18\)30227-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(18)30227-X/fulltext)) in the journal, *Lancet Psychiatry*, found that popular team sports may have a slight edge over the other forms of physical activity.

The researchers analyzed CDC survey data from 1.2 million adults and found — across age, gender, education status and income — people who exercised reported fewer days of bad mental health than those who didn’t. And those who played team sports reported the fewest.

One of the study’s authors, [Adam Chekroud](https://medicine.yale.edu/people/search/adam_chekroud-1.profile) (https://medicine.yale.edu/people/search/adam_chekroud-1.profile), an assistant adjunct professor at Yale’s School of Medicine, thinks team activity could add another layer of relief for sufferers of mental illness.

He says there are biological, cognitive and social aspects to mental illness.

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Contact

Public Radio WBHM 90.3 FM
650 11th Street South
Birmingham AL 35233
T: (Toll Free) 800-444-9246
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