I’ve always known that I climb out of any pool a lot happier than when I dove in.

Yes, I know any kind of aerobic exercise relieves depression.

For starters, it stimulates brain chemicals that foster the growth of nerve cells; exercise also affects neurotransmitters such as serotonin that influence mood and produces ANP, a stress-reducing hormone, which helps control the brain’s response to stress and anxiety. But swimming, for me, seems to zap a bad mood more efficiently than even running. Swimming a good 3000 meters for me can, in the midst of a depressive cycle, hush the dead thoughts for up to two hours. It’s like taking a Tylenol for a headache! It was with interest, then, that I read an article in “Swimmer” magazine about why, in fact, that’s the case.

Here’s the gist, excerpted from the article “Staying Happy?” by Jim Thornton in the [Jan/Feb issue of “Swimmer”](http://www.usmsswimmer.com/issue.php?i=31) magazine.

Regardless of cause, a growing number of researchers and psychologists alike have become true believers in the efficacy of swimming. “We know, for instance, that vigorous exercise like swimming can significantly decrease both anxiety and depression” says sports psychologist Aimee C. Kimball, director of mental training at the Center for Sports Medicine at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. “Currently, there’s a ton of research looking at the various mechanisms by which it works.”

On the physiological level, hard swimming workouts release endorphins, natural feel-good compounds whose very name derives from “endogenous” and “morphine.” Swimming serves, as well, to sop us excess fight-or-flight stress hormones, converting free-floating angst into muscle relaxation. It can even promote so-called “hippocampal neurogenesis” – the growth of new brain cells in a part of the brain that atrophies under chronic stress. In animal models, exercise has shown itself to be even more potent than drugs like Prozac at spurring such beneficial changes.

Moby Coquillard, a psychotherapist and swimmer from San Mateo, Calif., is so convinced that he prescribes exercise to depressed patients. “I absolutely believe swimming can serve as a kind of medicine. For me, it represents a potent adjunct to antidepressant medications and, for some patients, it’s something you can take in lieu of pills.”

Besides possible biochemical changes in the brain, swimming requires the alternating stretch and relaxation of skeletal muscles while simultaneously deep-breathing in a rhythmic pattern. If this sounds familiar, it’s because these are key elements of many practices, from hatha yoga to progressive muscle relaxation, used to evoke the relaxation response. “Swimming, because of its repetitive nature, is incredibly meditative,” Coquillard says. There’s even a built-in mantra, be this the slow count of laps, or self-directed thoughts like “relax” or “stay smooth.”

“I teach a mindfulness-based cognitive therapy class for depression,” he adds, “and we use focus on the body here in the moment to keep past thoughts or future worries from invading our consciousness.” By concentrating on different aspects of their stroke mechanics, from hip rotation and kick patterns, to streamlining and pulls, regular swimmers practice this intuitively. The result: On a regular basis, most get a break from life’s not always pleasant stream of rumination.

Moreover, since most pools have set times for lap swimming and coached Masters workouts alike, regular swimmer usually find themselves settling into a schedule that becomes automatic. There’s no need to decide if you should go exercise now or later. For stressed out people, this lack of options, says Coquillard, is paradoxically comforting because it removes the burden of yet another decision. “All you have to do is show up at the regular time,” he says, “and you know there’s a good chance you’ll end up leaving the pool feeling a little better than when you arrived.

**Energizing**

First of all, swimming, compared to other sports, lets you feel energized afterwards. Nothing beats a swim session early in the morning to feel great before starting a work day. If you can find a pool that opens early enough, and that you want to do something good for yourself and be fit for a work day, this is highly recommended!

**Stress Relief Exercise**

Swimming is also a fun way to relieve stress from a work day. The contact with the water is very beneficial and helps to loosen up the body and the mind. The regular rhythm of the stroke, the immersion in the water and the concentration on the technique quickly feel like a relaxing meditation in the water.

**Keeping Social Contacts**

Swimming is also a very social sport. When you start to go to the pool, you quickly get to know the like-minded regulars. To chat about various topics and to exchange [swimming tips](http://www.enjoy-swimming.com/swimming-tips.html) and tricks while you relax in the water is very enjoyable. The swimming pool is also a place where you can chat with people of all ages, which becomes rare in our society.

While you are chatting with your buddies, just make sure you follow the [swimming pool etiquette](http://www.enjoy-swimming.com/swimming-pool-etiquette.html) and don't stand in the path of the people swimming. ;-)

**Having Fun**

Swimming or playing pool games with your friends, family or children is a great recreational activity, especially in the summer.

**Mood-lifting**

Because swimming gives you a well-toned body, it increases your well-being and self-confidence. The contact with the water also improves your mood when you feel tired or depressed.

**Benefits of Helping Others**-We are all always advised to offer assistance to other people by our guardians or parents. Many of us have wondered why such advice is given. The following article explains key benefits of helping others. Read on to enlighten yourself.

**1. Brings happiness**: Researchers have done lots of work proving the beneficial effects of helping others on our overall happiness. It also appears that assisting others is an in built nature. In the current society that is filled with competition, being helpful to others is beneficial. Obviously you do not require rejecting your competitive spirit as cooperation and competition do not require being mutually exclusive.

**2. Benefits you:** Helping others may benefit you also but you are advised not to help others for this particular reason. Your helpful actions will almost constantly have unforeseen effects of providing various advantages to you. This is because other people will also be inclined to offer their assistance to you. It will even appear like magic because you will likely get many great successes in your life. This means that you will now focus on what other benefits you could possibly provide to others in the society. Moreover, through putting other people first, all aspects of your life might take on a new meaning.

**3. Enhances society:** The mentality of paying it forward is increasing in popularity since more individuals are now realizing that we no longer require competing for survival. The increasing number of persons inclined to assist others without requesting for any rewards in return leads to better attitude in the society. The society therefore becomes even more giving,more accommodating as well as keener to offer help. Such an environment is beneficial to live in as it is very peaceful.

Helping others does not possess any shortcomings and it is also regarded as blessing by other people.