

Scuba Fitness: Aerobic exercise improves mental performance for divers



istockphoto



Gretchen Ashton
Carlsbad Scuba Fitness Examiner
| Follow:

November 8, 2013

The "runner's high," a "feel better" sensation often experienced by long-distance runners, is generally attributed to high levels of endorphins in the the brain. Researchers have known for some time that exercise increases endorphin production. In addition to improving the efficiency of the heart, lungs and vascular system, aerobic training can actually produce an anti-depressant type of effect including improvements in emotional and intellectual health.

Aerobic exercise improves mood stability often allowing those under a doctor's care to reduce anti-depressant and anxiety medications. Improvements in self-esteem, increased confidence, and a more positive outlook for the future are also benefits of the effects of physical activity on brain chemistry.

Studies indicate that aerobic exercise improves mental acuity resulting in better concentration, enhanced ability to direct thoughts, and improved memory, all important mental performance activities for divers. Further neurophysiological advantages include a reduction in the symptoms of diseases such as Parkinson's, improved sleep patterns, and diminishing

the craving responses during smoking cessation.

Cardiorespiratory fitness is essential for scuba diving. Incorporating aerobic exercise in the diver's daily routine is definitely not a "no-brainer" but it isn't difficult to achieve. The results of the above-mentioned studies were accomplished in only five weeks with 30 to 60 minutes of exercise three times a week.

Examples of aerobic exercise are walking, jogging, running, swimming, rowing, cycling, jumping rope, aerobics classes, and dancing. Fitness centers and home gyms provide equipment such as treadmills, stairclimbers, ellipticals and exercise bikes. Aerobic exercise may also be performed outdoors almost anywhere and can be a family activity, social time for moms while children are at school, or tranquil time alone.