NMT, Take A Hike!

Did you know that you have the magic exercise pill but not in pill form? It is Socorro and the surrounding area. All you have to do is wear the appropriate attire and walk out your front door. Hiking is a great way to get a workout, yet it doesn’t feel like you are “working” out because you are outside surrounded by beautiful views, clean air, sunshine, and wildlife. A hike can be anything from a 30 minute walk around the golf course and campus to a few hours at a state park or BLM trail. Either way, you are outside and moving!

Hiking is considered aerobic exercise. Aerobic exercise offers a plethora of benefits such as:

- Improved cardiorespiratory fitness (heart, lungs & blood vessels).
- Reduced risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type II diabetes.
- Improved muscles endurance and improved muscle strength (not a substitute for weight training though).
- Reduced risk of osteoporosis and arthritis.
- Weight management.
- Increased energy level throughout the day.
- Improved quality of sleep.
- Reduction in stress, tension and anxiety.

Exercising outdoors, especially hiking outside the city limits, takes you away from the daily hustle and bustle of life. Hiking not only calms the nerves but it improves your mood and outlook on life. Hiking can even help with severe depression.

Memory, short term and long term, are affected as well. Movement such as walking and outdoor air and light, have been shown to improve short term memory as well as improve learning and reasoning because walking outdoors can “clear the head”. In a study published in Proceedings, an online medical journal, a group of middle-aged people were asked to walk/hike outside for 40 minutes three times a week for one year. At the end of the year, MRI scans showed that their hippocampus grew an average of 2 percent. As people age, the hippocampus becomes smaller, leading to memory loss.

Hiking Checklist

Before you leave the house to go to the trailhead, there are a few essential items that should be taken with you.

- Water: this is the most important item for any outdoor trek. I typically take a 3 liter (100 oz) camelback whenever I go out for an hour or up to 3 hours. If I am planning a longer trek, I take an additional one or two 20 oz bottle of water in my backpack. It is better to have more water than not enough.
Hiking Checklist Continued...

- **Food**: this is another essential item if you are out for an hour or more. Keep it simple with trail mix, dried fruit, energy bars, or a PB&J sandwich.
- **Clothes**: check the weather before leaving the house so you wear and pack the appropriate clothing. Layering is always best.
- **A map (or GPS)**: before leaving to the trailhead, make sure you have looked over the map so you don’t stray off the path and get lost. Maps are lightweight so take them in your pack for back up.
- **First Aid Kit**: this can be as simple as antiseptic wipes, band aids, tweezers and aspirin or ibuprofen for short hikes. For longer hike, packing a pocket knife, whistle, emergency blanket, duct tape and matches is a good start.
- **Matches and/or a lighter**: for a fire, in case you have to spend the night outdoors.
- **Flashlight or a headlamp**: in case you have to hike in the dark.
- **Sun protection**: sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat.
- **Additional items to consider**: cell phone (although reception is spotty in some locations), lip balm, insect repellent, bandana, camera, walking poles, tissue (and a plastic bag to carry it out).

Biking - specifically mountain (MTB)

Biking is yet another form of aerobic exercise that is done outdoors. Biking offers the same benefits as hiking. A bonus (in my opinion) is you can travel farther on a bike in less time. This means you get to see more of Socorro’s beautiful scenery. Most of the hiking trails in our area serve as biking trails as well. I am a MTB rider more so than a hiker but I have explored the majority of the trails on foot and on my bike. I was introduced to MTB courtesy of the New Mexico Tech Mountain Bike Club (NMT MTB).

The NMT MTB club has played an integral role in the upkeep and maintenance for many of the trails in Socorro and the surrounding area. Currently, the MTB club has 8 active members. The club has organized weekly group rides and a weekly bike maintenance service. For updates from the MTB club, join their Facebook page.

Hiking and Biking Resources

There are so many places in Socorro and the surrounding area that you can explore. I have listed a few resources with lots of information.

- Robyn Harrison recently published a book of hikes in Socorro County. Copies are available at the Socorro Visitor & Heritage Center as well as the Socorro Chamber of Commerce (off the Plaza). I highly recommend purchasing one or more. The gym has 2 copies to loan.
Hiking & Biking Resources Continued

- MTB Project is an online resource for mountain bike trail maps around the world provided by local riders. They provide trail maps for 5 trails in Socorro! They have an iPhone and Android app you can download as well (www.mtbproject.com)
- Another excellent on-line guide to local MTB trails is the Socorro Fat Tire Trail Guide (www.socorro.com/fattire/trails.html)
- Trail brochures for the Canyon Trail and Chupadera Peak trail can be obtained from the Bosque del Apache NWR Visitor Center.
- The US Forest Service Ranger Station in Magdalena sells trail maps for the Magdalena Mountains and the San Mateo Mountains.
- The Bureau of Land Management office on the south side of California Street sells maps of the area.
- The bookstore at the Bureau of Geology is another great resource for maps, right on campus!

Organized Hikes

We are organizing monthly hikes for NMT students in an effort to improve student well-being (physical and mental health). NMT staff: please encourage the students you work with to participate. NMT students: this is a great opportunity to visit new areas in and outside of Socorro, create a new healthy habit, and meet new people!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting location</th>
<th>Time departure</th>
<th>Destination; miles</th>
<th>Hike leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/27/16</td>
<td>Swim Center Lot</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Timber Peak; 5.8 miles</td>
<td>Peter Mozley</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Swim Center Lot</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Mesa Trail; 6+ miles</td>
<td>Bruce Harrison &amp; Karen Bowman</td>
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<td>10/22/16</td>
<td>Swim Center Lot</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Socorro Single Track; 5 miles</td>
<td>Rob Selina</td>
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<td>11/13/16</td>
<td>Swim Center Lot</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Canyon National Rec Trail; 2.2 miles</td>
<td>J.R.</td>
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<td>12/3/16</td>
<td>Swim Center Lot</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Chupadera; 9.5 miles</td>
<td>Stacy Timmons</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(For more information and to sign-up for a hike, stop by the gym and talk to Melissa)

You’re off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way!

Dr. Seuss