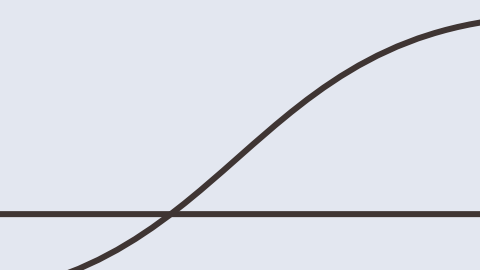




Climbing to Combat Depression

By: Logan Sherrer, doctorate of occupational therapy student



Objectives

1. Participants can demonstrate ways in which the physical act of climbing impacts feelings of depression
 2. Participants able to recall evidence to support climbing's benefit to mental health
 3. Participants can reframe climbing as not only exercise but also an activity to reduce symptoms of depression
-



**What is
depression?**

What is depression?

- “Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.”
- Depression has a variety of causes:
 - Traumatic life events
 - Chemical imbalance
 - Passed down hereditarily
- May be situational or clinical
 - It is possible to exhibit symptoms of depression without have major depressive disorder
 - Depressive disorder is when feelings of sadness or loss of interest are persistent whether or not there is an external trigger



**What does
depression feel
like?**


Symptoms of depression

Impaired Mood

- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Lack of energy
- Insomnia
- Agitation
- Impaired cognition
- Thoughts of suicide

Impaired Participation

- Difficulty in engaging in social situations
- Interest in hobbies may be diminished
- Motivation for daily occupations may be impacted



**How does
depression impact
your daily
occupations?**

Depression's effect on daily occupations

- Daily occupations are the things that occupy your time like hobbies, chores, self-care, or work.
- Occupations that may be impacted by depression:
 - Social engagement
 - Hobbies
 - Daily chores
 - Self-care
 - Work
 - Parenting
 - Sex
 - Meal preparation or eating
 - Exercise or climbing
- The occupations impacted will be different for everyone

What
occupations
does
depression
impact for
you?

Depression's effect on climbing

- When experiencing symptoms of depression you may be less motivated to participate in the things that you love to do
 - You may lose motivation to climb
 - The thought of going to the climbing gym or crag may be stressful
- The social aspect of climbing may be overwhelming
 - Depression symptoms may impact your desire to spend time with friends and communicate
- Your body may not feel up to it
 - You may feel fatigued
 - Sleep loss may be impacting muscle recovery and strength
- You may be more prone to risk taking and dangerous behaviors
 - Always climb with a friend who can look out for you in this state



**How do you reduce
depressive
symptoms?**

Ways to reduce depressive symptoms

- Take things one step at a time
 - Small victories can help alleviate depressive symptoms
 - Things as small as getting dressed or making a meal
- Practice stress relieving techniques
 - Mindfulness practices
 - Climbing or other forms of exercise
- Do not be afraid to ask a friend or family member for help or company
- When dealing with chronic depression long-term medical treatment, therapy, or counselling will help
 - Sometime medication or therapy are the best option when dealing with chemical imbalances
- You are **NEVER** alone
 - In emergency situations there are many resources available to help

Emergency response

If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, call 911 in the U.S. or your local emergency number immediately.

Also consider these options if you're having suicidal thoughts:

- Call your doctor or mental health professional.
- Contact a suicide hotline.
- In the U.S., call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Or use the Lifeline Chat. Services are free and confidential.
- U.S. veterans or service members who are in crisis can call 988 and then press “1” for the Veterans Crisis Line. Or text 838255. Or chat online.
- The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. has a Spanish language phone line at 1-888-628-9454 (toll-free).
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

If you have a loved one who is in danger of suicide or has made a suicide attempt, make sure someone stays with that person. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately. Or, if you think you can do so safely, take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room.

(Mayo Foundation, 2022)

Climbing to reduce depressive symptoms

- Climbing and physical activity have been proven to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression
 - Climbing releases endorphins that are healthy for our brain
 - Problem solving used in our climbs helps to provide a sense of accomplishment
 - Spending time with friends either to share beta or belay one another provides us with a sense of peace and connection
 - While climbing we are more in tune with our body and emotions
 - The adrenaline while climbing helps to clear our minds and reduce negative thoughts
- While in a depressive episode taking the effort and time to go climb may be difficult, but it can be a goal to work towards rather than something to force onto oneself.

Survey



Group sign-ups

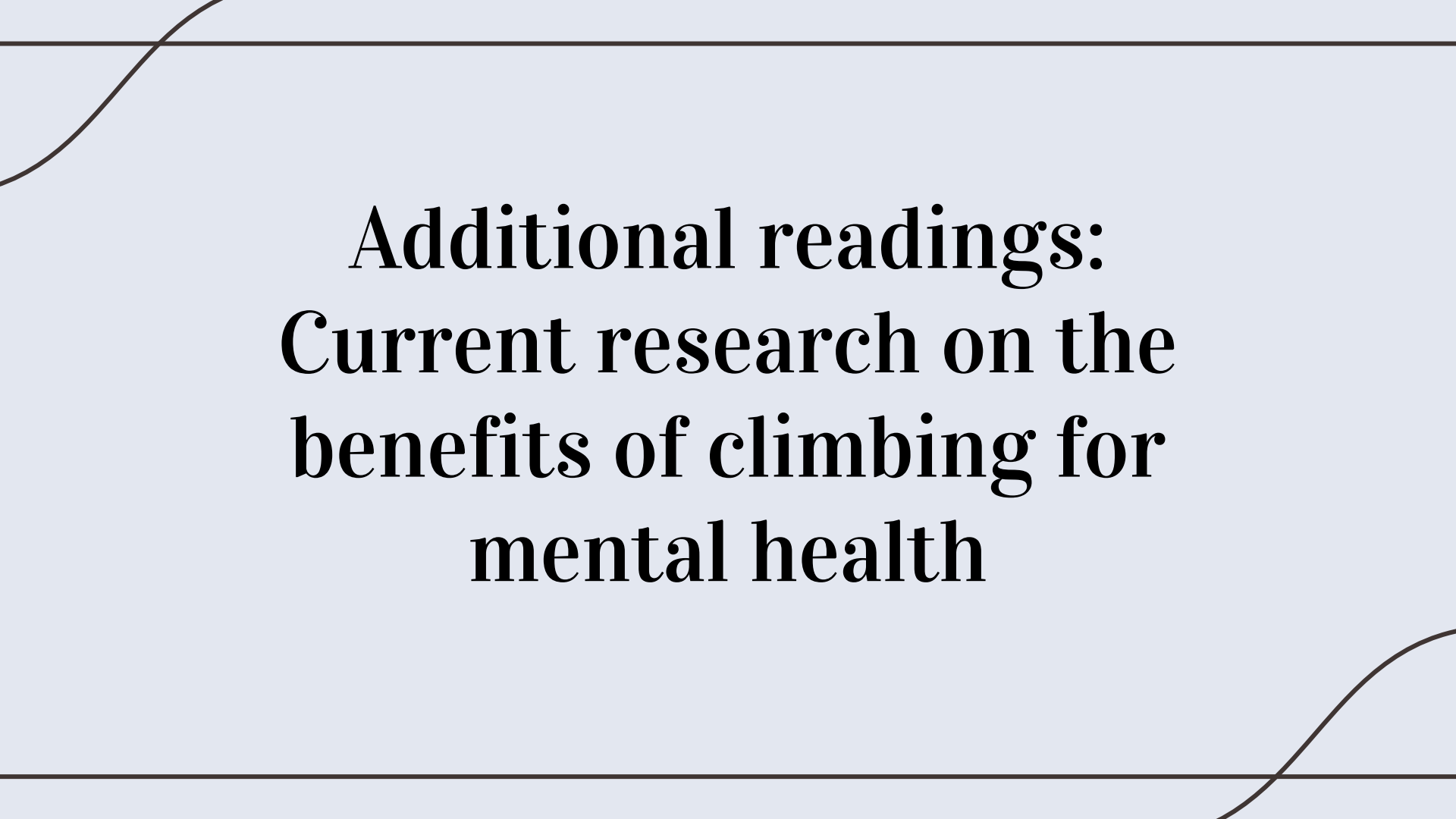
Thank you for your interest in The Spot's mindfulness series! If you want to learn more consider using the links below to sign up for one or more mental health groups led by Logan Sherrer, a Doctorate of Occupational therapy student.

[Denver](#)

[Golden](#)

[Louisville](#)

[Thornton](#)



**Additional readings:
Current research on the
benefits of climbing for
mental health**

Evidence to support therapeutic benefits of rock climbing

- Exercise alone has long time been a proven way to reduce anxiety (Karg et al., 2020)
- Exercise causes our body to increase heart rate and respiration to trick the mind into responding to a fear response even if something is not actually there
- Climbing as a form of exercise or recreation is found to be even more effective than traditional exercise alone (Karg et al., 2020)
 - Outlet for adrenaline
 - Clears the mind
 - Community engagement and support

Information from:

Karg, N., Dorscht, L., Kornhuber, J., & Luttenberger, K. (2020). Bouldering psychotherapy is more effective in the treatment of depression than physical exercise alone: Results of a multicentre randomised controlled intervention study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 20(116), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02518-y>

Cultural considerations

- Evidence suggests that community-based exercise is an effective means to provide mental health support to marginalized and lower-socioeconomic communities (Lamb et al., 2015)
- These individuals may not have as easy or comfortable access to traditional mental health services
 - Community engagement and exercise reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Climbers should continue to provide a welcoming and culturally sensitive community (Lamb et al., 2015)
 - Supportive communities help to reduce external stressors

Information from:

Lamb, Dowrick, C., Burroughs, H., Beatty, S., Edwards, S., Bristow, K., Clarke, P., Hammond, J., Waheed, W., Gabbay, M., & Gask, L. (2015). Community Engagement in a complex intervention to improve access to primary mental health care for hard-to-reach groups. *Health Expectations: an International Journal of Public Participation in Health Care and Health Policy*, 18(6), 2865–2879. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12272>

References

- Karg, N., Dorscht, L., Kornhuber, J., & Luttenberger, K. (2020). Bouldering psychotherapy is more effective in the treatment of depression than physical exercise alone: Results of a multicentre randomised controlled intervention study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 20(116), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02518-y>
- Lamb, Dowrick, C., Burroughs, H., Beatty, S., Edwards, S., Bristow, K., Clarke, P., Hammond, J., Waheed, W., Gabbay, M., & Gask, L. (2015). Community Engagement in a complex intervention to improve access to primary mental health care for hard-to-reach groups. *Health Expectations: an International Journal of Public Participation in Health Care and Health Policy*, 18(6), 2865–2879. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12272>
- Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. (2022). *Depression (major depressive disorder)*. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007>
-