

Lifting can take a weight off of CSUF students' shoulders

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With the constant piling of deadlines, balancing school, work and a social life can feel overwhelming to many students. However, while many rely on caffeine-fueled all-nighters to push through, others have found a more sustainable solution through exercise.

For Kohen Rugg, a second-year kinesiology major, exercise is more than just a fitness routine. It is a lifeline for his mental well-being.

"My biggest motivator is just fun," Rugg said. "I love working out, rock climbing, moving around and staying fit... But when I take long breaks from exercising, I notice a decline in my mental health."

Rugg has learned that movement helps him stay centered, even when academic pressure builds.

"When the stressful moments come, going and getting a good exercise or workout always helps lower that stress level and then kind of get me back to regular," he said.

Inside the Student Recreation Center, another form of exercise that is on the rise is strength training. Strength training has become a go-to for students looking to relieve stress and build confidence.

Madison Lowery, the SRC's Fitness and Wellness Coordinator, via email to the Daily Titan, describes weightlifting as an avenue for mental and physical transformation.

"Strength training is most effective when the practitioner is able to direct their mind towards very specific



RODRIGO GARCIA / DAILY TITAN

Andrew Bim, fourth year mechanical engineering major, does a bench press at the SRC.

parts of the body in order to properly engage and activate whatever target muscle group they are aiming for," Lowery wrote. "I believe that this skill can foster a really special relationship with the body."

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For many students, weightlifting is not just about getting a good workout — it is about

watching themselves grow stronger and more confident over time.

"It's very exciting and reassuring for me as a fitness professional to see young adults seek out strength training," Lowery wrote. "I think collectively people are realizing how much better they feel both physically [and] emotionally through the pursuit [of] lifting weights vs. excessive cardio as we've seen in the past."

To make weightlifting more accessible, the SRC offers Strength Circuit classes and affordable personal training. Lowery has witnessed firsthand how these programs impact students beyond the gym.

"I see them becoming more

confident and emotionally open with me and with one another... I have two students in particular who have told me that they plan their entire week around coming to my class and it makes me want to cry happy tears," Lowery wrote.

Beyond the SRC, students can access various wellness resources, including intramural sports, campus walking trails and workshops integrating physical and mental health practices.

Graduate kinesiology student Matthew Nguyen sees strength training as an essential tool for self-care.

"It helps with self-confidence, so as you get more fit, as you reach those goals you become more, essentially

more confident. Confidence kind of makes you feel less stressed and anxious about general life," Nguyen said.

Students continue to use exercise as a mental health outlet throughout the semester, using it as a reset from college.

One tip that Rugg has for people who want to work out to better themselves, yet feel overwhelmed, is to do exercises that cater to one's interests.

"Not everybody's got to be a weightlifter, even something simple like a pickleball game or just going for a walk around your neighborhood," he said. "That's all exercise, do what is easy for you, something you feel comfortable with."