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Rock On



By Joan Maiden

My Grandma did it. My Grandpa did it. I did it with my daughter. As a mother, I learned rocking soothes a baby. Is rocking beneficial as we get older?

Contemplating this question, I was surprised to find that there has been research done on the benefits of rocking.

Just as rocking soothes babies, it can have the same effect on adults. Rocking releases endorphins, the feel good hormone, which elevates the mood. It moves the body into a restorative state and can help relieve pain. President Kennedy used a rocking chair to alleviate his back pain.

For seniors, even those with dementia, it's been found that rocking reduces anxiety and depression. Rocking stimulates better balance which can help reduce the risk of falls. It is a great way to exercise the ankles. Although it is not a substitute for strength training, rocking can help strengthen weak muscles. It has been found beneficial for people after knee replacement surgery. Rocking stimulates circulation and speeds healing.

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Rocking calms the spirit, soothes a stressed body and focuses the mind. Just 15-30 minutes of rocking can be a form of meditation and self-hypnosis. It actually changes the brain waves and has a calming effect.

After a hard day of work, my grandparents would relax on the porch in their rocking chairs and enjoy a glass of iced tea. I'm sure many of life's problems were solved in those rocking chairs.

The front porch was also a social gathering place. Neighbors would drop by, sit, rock and discuss world affairs and the meaning of life.

With all the distractions available now, we don't often stop and take time to just rock and commune with ourselves. I have my grandma and grandpa's rocking chairs. I think I'll bring them out. It's time to slow down, sit down and rock on.

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