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Making a Habit of Running: The Social Construction of Running Addiction

Contemporary social theorists argue that health professionals offer exercise prescriptions to promote social control through the production of docile bodies-bodies that are both productive and compliant. According to these theorists, mental health professionals constructed the idea of exercise addiction to further this program of social control. The current study is a genealogy of running addiction that challenges that explanation of exercise addiction. A reading of early literature on “positive addiction” and negative running addiction reveals that runners and researchers used the idea of running addiction to grapple with questions of social and personal responsibility in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. The idea of running and exercise addiction endures because it helps Americans to make sense of health and personal and social responsibility in the 2000s.
