

The Importance of Exercise for Well-Being: A Research Overview

Studies show that regular exercise improves well-being in a myriad of ways. These benefits include reduced anxiety and depression, increased energy, improved sleep, stress relief, and improved mood, among others. In this time of uncertainty with COVID-19, exercise can be especially useful. Here is what science and the experts have to say about the mental benefits of exercise:



REDUCED ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

The body of research supporting a link between exercise and reduced depression and anxiety symptoms is vast. Research states that the aspects of exercise such as distraction, self-efficacy, and social interaction aid in the improvement of anxiety and depression symptoms.

Scientists have found that moderate aerobic exercise increases the amount of slow-wave sleep (a.k.a. deep sleep) that people experience. Physical activity also improves mood and decompresses the mind, which by default can aid in the transition to sleep.



IMPROVED SLEEP




IMPROVED MOOD

Distraction, self-efficacy, and social interaction are believed to have a positive effect on overall mood, along with higher production of endorphins. Improved mood is likely connected to many of the other mental benefits of exercise, such as reduced anxiety/depression, improved sleep, and stress relief.

Many of these studies were based on an average of 30 minutes of cardiovascular activity a day, for at least three days per week. The mental benefits resulting from this exercise only provide more reason to get moving regularly, especially in stressful times.

The endorphins released during physical activity boost energy levels. According to a study published in 2016, 24 weeks of moderate aerobic exercise improves cognitive function and concentration.



INCREASED ENERGY



STRESS RELIEF

Direct factors of exercise which improve stress include the production of endorphins, the concentration used while working out, and the improvement of overall mood. According to the Mayo Clinic, any form of physical activity can aid in stress reduction.

How to Stay Physically Active During COVID-19

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity. The American Heart Association has recommendations for how to stay safe while working out during COVID-19. The World Health Organization suggests walking, running, or biking outdoors if you can physically distance appropriately, following the guidelines of the local health authority.

Join the IPR Run for Research 5k

To help encourage physical activity and well-being during COVID-19, the Institute for Public Relations is hosting the first-ever IPR Run for Research 5K, a virtual walk or run. It's very easy to do—pledge to walk or run 3.12 miles and then complete the challenge during the month of August 2020. Share your accomplishments and tag IPR on social media or send a photo to IPR at info@instituteforpr.org to receive cool swag and a finisher medal. 100% of the proceeds are going to fund research projects at IPR.

For more information including training programs, check out the run site at <https://instituteforpr.org/ipr-run-for-research-5k/>.