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**

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.

**INCREASED ENERGY**

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

**STRESS RELIEF**

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

**IMPROVED SLEEP**

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.

**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 has been linked to many of the other mental benefits of exercise, such as reduced anxiety/depression, improved sleep, and stress relief.

**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 safely distance appropriately.

**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.**

**How to Stay Physically Active During COVID-19**

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