

Emerald Isle Counseling

Making Physical Activity a Habit

Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby, 1873

- “Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness.”

Getting Beyond Just Getting Started

- This course is intended to:
 - Help you take greater ownership of your own physical fitness
 - Promote the discovery of physical activities suited to your interests
 - Encourage you to engage in active lifestyles that persist into your futures

Forming a Habit

- Habit formation depends on
 - Time
 - Repetition
- First step to forming a new habit may be difficult but following steps can be relatively easy
- All habits take time to develop
 - Take things slowly
 - Take on what you can handle

Being Physically Active Is a Habit

- Interests should guide activity experiences
- Make it a regular occurrence in a realistic manner
- Start gradually and ease into activities
- Explore new activities
- Do not give up on an activity program because you do not see results!
 - Be patient and trust that changes are happening

Being Physically Active Is a Habit

- Take on realistic performance goals
- Measure or log performance
- Incorporate physical activity strategies into daily life
 - Not an exercise program but every little bit helps
- Variety is the spice of life
 - In the beginning start small and once feel comfortable consider other activities
- Gradual beginnings and small incremental increases in duration or intensity, will lead to positive results
- Once activities become a habit, you will not want to miss workouts

New Physical Activity Habit

- Track your progress in forming new physical activity habits

Commitment and Exercise Adherence

- Know exercise is good for us, yet a high percentage of the people who begin exercise programs drop out within the first six months.
 - Lack of time, inconvenience, expense, physical discomfort, embarrassment, poor instruction, inadequate support, and loss of interest
- Factors that affect exercise adherence and motivation
 - Situation factors
 - Personal factors

Situation Factors Affecting Exercise Adherence

- To maximize exercise commitment:
 - Time
 - Money
 - Energy
 - Other commitments
 - Social support
 - Exercising with others
 - Facilities
 - Climate
 - Physical discomfort

Time

- Allow for other factors before and after the workout
- Don't 'squeeze' it in
- Get support from friends and family
- Work with an exercise partner
- Plan an exercise time to avoid conflicts
- Get into a weekly exercise routine
- Keep in mind that "blips" in the routine can happen and these are not failures

Money

- Align with personal income and budget
 - Do not have to join or enrol
 - Many activities cost little or no money
 - Instruction can be obtained from a physical education teacher, books, videos or DVDs
- Many affordable public sports facilities and community clubs

Energy

- Lack of energy is a common excuse for not exercising
- Ironic = you actually feel energized by working out
- Doing something is always better than doing nothing.
- Have more energy at certain times of the day than at others - schedule workouts at these times
- Nutrition or healthy eating
- Rest, recovery and sleep

Other Commitments

- Responsibilities and commitments
 - Scheduling and prioritizing our commitments is essential
 - Incorporating exercise into other commitments
 - Identify where our priorities lie and be prepared to make sacrifices
- “What is your health worth?”

Social Support

- Family and friends
- Help them understand how important this is

Exercising with Others

- Exercising with a group or a partner
 - More likely to keep than to neglect commitment
- Part of a team or a group exercise class
 - Miss a practice or class, generally have to explain absence to others
 - BUT fear of missing an obligation itself is not a good motivator alone to continue with exercise
 - Once one session is missed, it may establish a sense of failure

Facilities

- Affordability and location
 - Easily accessible location close to home, school, and/or the workplace
- Comfort with surroundings is vital
 - Understand how to use the facilities
 - Know where everything is located
 - Know where to get assistance
- Facility staff friendly, approachable and sensitive to needs

Climate

- Outdoor exercises
- Alternate plan in the event of bad weather
- Can make some facilities unusable
 - Safety
 - Allergies, asthma, common colds and respiratory infections
- Manitoba's climate provides opportunities for a tremendous variety
- Planning for a change in seasons is a critical component of a successful personal activity plan

Physical Discomfort

- Not everyone enjoys intense physical activity or finds it easy
 - Significant health and fitness benefits from activities of low intensity
 - Expect to experience discomfort with vigorous exercise (gain significant benefits from exercising at this level)
- Distinguish between pain and discomfort
- To minimize discomfort with exercise:
 - Stay active to minimize “delayed onset muscle soreness”
 - Include warm-up and cool-down
 - Start off slowly and gradually make increases in frequency, intensity and time
 - Expect to sweat and breathe harder when increasing work intensity

Personal Factors Affecting Exercise Adherence and Motivation

- By understanding more about ourselves, we can more successfully handle the inevitable difficult situations when they arise
 - Awareness of personality
 - Goal setting

Awareness of Personality

- Personality is a combination of a person's body, thoughts and behaviours
- personality affects exercise adherence and motivation
 - Do you tend to see your exercise habit, or lack thereof, as permanent or as changeable?
 - Do you attribute your habit, or lack thereof, to things primarily within or outside your control?
 - Do you attribute your habit, or lack thereof, to internal characteristics or external circumstances?
- Explaining a lack of adherence or motivation to exercise as
 - Permanent and beyond our control diminishes our expectations
 - Changeable and within our control provides a sense of empowerment, increasing the expectation of success
- Analyzing expectations can reveal something about personalities.
- Factors that improve self-confidence with regard to an exercise program:
 - Prior successes and achievements
 - Role models and success stories
 - Verbal encouragement and persuasion
 - Awareness and control of emotional responses to exercise

Goal Setting

- Enhance motivation and improve the likelihood of developing the habit
- SMART Goals
 - **Specific:** What kind of exercise will you do? When will you do it?
 - **Measurable:** How many minutes? What is your target heart rate?
 - **Attainable:** Are your body and mind ready for and capable of these challenges?
 - **Realistic:** Have you created a schedule that works for you and that you can stick to?
 - **Time framed:** What will you do each week? each month? How long are you giving yourself to reach your goal?
- Write your SMART Goals down in an exercise contract or memorize them and remind yourself of them daily
- Rewards

Reflecting on Personal Exercise Habits

- What are the key factors that have allowed you to stay with an exercise program or a new physical activity plan?
- Do you know of others who have successfully added the habit of exercise to their lives? How do they maintain the activity?
- Are there others who can give you support and encouragement? Who could aid you in maintaining activity? How could these people help?
- Are you aware of your emotions related to physical activity or exercise? Do you feel worried or confidently under control, anxious or relaxed, excited or bored?

Time to Get Moving

- Time to make a commitment to a personal physical activity plan

Personal Physical Activity Plan/Contract

- Review SMART Goals
- Establish your personal physical activity goals for periodic review and amendment