Motivators and Barriers to Exercise

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Chapter 7B
Factors that affect older adults’ willingness to begin and maintain an activity program:

- Knowing why exercise is important (motivators)
- Knowing what to do
- Understanding barriers (why don’t I exercise?)
- Knowing strategies to start and maintain
Motivators
Why should older adults exercise?

- Maintain independence
- Reduce risk for disability
- Increase your energy
- Feel stronger
- Feel more confident
- Improve your walking
- Improve your flexibility
- Decrease your risk of falling
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Improve your self image
- Sleep better
- Make new friends – have fun!
- Prevent/manage disease
- Improve longevity
- Improve quality of life – feel better
- Prevent falls
What exercises should older adults do?

US Surgeon General’s Recommendation:

- “Every US adult should accumulate 30 min or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week”

- **Strength training** 2x/week is also recommended
Barriers: Why don’t older adults exercise?

Lifestyle
- Time – don’t have the time
- Place – don’t have a place
- Cost – don’t have the money

Health Status
- Chronic disease
- Overweight
- Pain

Psychological
- Fear – worry about injuries
- Depression – don’t have the energy

Other
- Lack of Self-efficacy – belief that you can do it
- Cultural – retirement means rest
- I don’t want to
- It’s hard work
- I don’t have anyone to exercise with
- Exercise is boring
- I am too old to start
- Weather

Weather
Senior Falls Prevention Study

Reasons for low attendance:

1) Medical Reasons – 40%
2) Leisure Conflicts – 35%
3) Personal/Family Problems – 8%
4) Transport – 5%
5) Other/Unknown – 12%
Stages of Change

- **Pre-contemplative Stage** –
  - I am not exercising now, I don’t want to start!

- **Contemplative Stage** –
  - I am not exercising now, but I am thinking I may start a program soon.

- **Preparation Stage** –
  - I am not exercising now, but I will start this month.

- **Action Stage** –
  - I am exercising now.

- **Maintenance Stage** –
  - I have been exercising for the past six months.
Pre-contemplation

- Identify the problem – what are the specific reasons for not exercising?
- Goal – help them to move on to the next stage (i.e. to contemplate exercise). They are not going to start exercising today!
- Raise awareness of the risks attached to remaining sedentary.
Contemplation

- Consider the pros and cons of:
  - not exercising
  - exercising

- Have they tried exercise in the past?

- Help them find some positive aspects from previous experience of exercise
Preparation

- Assess their strength of commitment: there might still be some barriers
- Help them to make an action plan: ask them why they think that exercise will be beneficial
- What will be their first step towards starting regular exercise?
**Action**

- This person is now ready to be engaged in an exercise program
- To increase self-efficacy, focus on the exercises that they do well
- Celebrate accomplishments eg “you came to class 3 times this week – well done!”
- Remember the “Return to Exercise” quiz if they consider quitting
Maintenance

- It takes 6 months for a new activity to be considered a “behavior change”
- If they stop coming to class, call and discuss: is it an old or new reason?
- Remember – relapses are normal
- Increase their commitment with periodic reviews i.e. Fitness Checks
- Plan a pleasurable event to encourage staying in the class
Making a Plan

- Social Support: alone, spouse, friend
- Set individual goals
  - Short term goals
  - Long term goals
- Keep a record
  - Exercise calendar
  - Plan ahead – when will you exercise this week?
  - Track your progress: Fitness Checks
Dealing with relapses

- Understand that relapses happen
- Identify the reason
  - Change in health status
  - Stressful life event
  - Change in schedule (travel)
  - Change in season
- Look at the “Return to Exercise” leaflet
- Be compassionate with yourself
- Start again!
“Golden Rules”

1. Express empathy
2. Avoid arguments
3. Support self-efficacy
4. Roll with resistance
5. Develop discrepancy
THANK YOU!