

LECTURE 5

Lifestyle Management & Behaviours

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- Lifestyle Management and Behaviours
- Damaging Factors
- Enhancing Factors
- Making Changes
- Behaviour Change Models
- Motivational Interviewing
- The Two Types of Motivation
- Dropping Out of Exercise

Lifestyle Management & Behaviours

Behaviour change, and the management/guidance of lifestyle is something that is a part of the PT's job role. Successfully identifying behaviours that are inhibiting progress, and providing strategies to assist the client in forming positive habits are often the key to their success.

Building positive habits is vital when it comes to success in fitness progression, and understanding how we can help our clients impart positive change is important in your role. We will explore these in more detail now...

Let's look at some of the damaging behaviours that limit health, fitness and wellness - and those that will enhance it.

Damaging Factors



Poor diet – diet underpins nearly everything we do when it comes to health & fitness. A good diet not only ensures we have better training sessions, better sleep and better performance but it will help us to feel better as well. A consistently poor diet will hinder our ability to do all of those things.

Lack of fruit & veg – when it comes to nutrition we often focus primarily on macro nutrients but micronutrients are just as important. Having enough vitamins and minerals will improve performance, help us feel better and help to stave off illness.

Poor planning – people lead busy lives and it's very easy for other priorities to derail our health & fitness efforts. Things like preparing meals in advance, making sure our gym bag is packed or booking into classes in advance can help us to be prepared.

Poor sleep – sleep is one of the key foundations of leading a healthy life. Without good sleep you will not be able to recover, apply yourself in training or even train at all due to fatigue.

Smoking – there has been an overwhelming amount of research showing the damaging effects of smoking. In particular the cardiovascular capabilities are impacted but even more worrying, are the implications on mortality.

Sedentary lifestyle – the impact an overly sedentary lifestyle can have is enormous. From postural issues to higher prevalence of weight gain and chronic illness, ensuring that people move enough is crucial.

Stress – it's part of our everyday lives but our ability to manage it goes a long way to minimising the impact it has on our health. There are ways to deal with it such as walking, meditating, reading, mindfulness and more.

Skipping breakfast – traditionally it has been thought that skipping breakfast can lead you to make worse choices throughout the day and having a nutritionally dense breakfast can help you start the day feeling energised. However, more recent research has demonstrated the effectiveness of intermittent fasting. In this, having nothing to eat for fourteen hours or more between the evening meal and late morning the next day has been shown to have great benefits.

Alcohol – it can be enjoyed in moderation but there comes a point in which alcohol consumption can be problematic when trying to achieve health goals. It is best to stick to the government guidelines.

Enhancing Factors



Balanced diet – eating a balanced diet can help you to feel energised, sleep better, recover better and perform better. You can still enjoy things you like in moderation but the majority of your diet should be nutritionally dense, whole foods.

Limit alcohol – as mentioned earlier it can be enjoyed in moderation but it should be limited. It's best to stay within the government guidelines.

Sleep – good sleep cannot be underestimated. It is the building block of everything. Good sleep allows you to recover properly, feel energised and be ready to attack the day. Without proper sleep the body is unable to function.

Hydration – the body is made up largely of water - staying hydrated is key to mental clarity and wellbeing.

Fruit & veg – ensuring you eat plenty of fruit and veg means you will get all of the vitamins and minerals your body needs to be healthy.

Vary workouts – varying your workouts can have a number of benefits, from helping with adherence by enjoying different workouts, to making it more challenging by trying new things. It's important to remember however, that some things will need to be consistent to be able to focus on progression.

Consistency – this is one of the biggest factors in your success. Working out frequently is more important than doing it infrequently at a higher intensity. If you are consistent at something for long enough, it's likely that it will become part of your natural routine and thus become easier.

Set goals – setting goals can really help to propel you through your health & fitness journey. Having a target to work towards and something that allows you to plan and aim for, can really make a difference - especially when things start to get more difficult.

Making Changes

So let's consider how to effectively change behaviour, enhance motivation, and make exercise a habit in our clients lives. First, what exactly do we mean by behaviour and habit...?

Behaviour



Behaviour describes what we do, how we act, and how we respond to situations. For example, as we receive a stimulus to respond to, we will do so with a specific type of behaviour. This is often learned and repeated and is acted in relation to the stimulus received. Learning to behave in a specific manner to a given situation takes time but can be a major step in the direction of positive change.

Habit



A habit is an act that we do without giving it any conscious thought. For example, when you're going to leave the house, you will put your shoes on and make sure you have your keys, almost automatically – out of habit. You wouldn't have to think about this or remind yourself to do so. A habit is a routine of behaviour that has been learned.

How Does This Relate to Exercise?

So, when a client embarks on their training journey it is likely that all the new behaviours need far more conscious consideration – when are they going to train? What do they need to take with them? Do they remember the exercises? What about the order? When will they eat? What will they eat? After a period of successful training, exercise will hopefully become a habit that forms a part of their regular routine. They won't need to consider the smaller details any longer and it will become something else that they just do.

Reasons For Exercising

- **Wellness** – a desire to feel healthier.
- **Aesthetics** – they want to look a certain way.
- **Peers** – having a friend or family member that uses the gym may influence them to try as well.
- **Achievement** – sometimes the sense of achievement of completing an event like a 10K, or simply being consistent in the gym is enough.
- **Performance** – perhaps an athlete or someone who wants to perform a particular task or event.
- **Stress management** – exercise is a great way to relieve stress.
- **Mental health** – exercise carries many benefits for mental health including improved sleep, self-esteem and social benefits.
- **Occupation** – for some people their work requires a level of fitness. For example, those in the military or emergency services.
- **Enjoyment** – for some people they simply enjoy exercising.
- **Rehabilitation** – unfortunately injuries do happen. However, the help and support of a PT and a good training programme can not only help with recovery, but can help reduce the risk of future injury.
- **Weight management** – unfortunately in the modern world, the prevalence of obesity is increasing. Exercise is the most effective weapon in combatting this.

Barriers to Exercise

- **Time** – is a very common barrier, between full-on jobs, commuting, family and social commitments, finding time to exercise is one of the most common barriers to exercise.
- **Motivation** – another common barrier which can often lead someone to a PT to begin with. Helping provide some external motivation can really help overcome this barrier.
- **Self-management** – sometimes even with the best intentions, people are able to effectively manage their lifestyles or routines and exercise regularly.
- **Physical** – a client's physical ability may hold them back.
- **Facilities** – sometimes there are no facilities nearby or “nothing that I like” nearby. Although we know people can get results at home or even in the park, the facilities that are available can make a big difference.
- **Inconvenient** – some people can find exercise an inconvenience and have other things they would prefer to do. This is where highlighting the benefits of exercise can be useful.
- **Confident** – some people have the view that everyone at the gym is already fit. This can lead to a lack of confidence preventing them from going to the gym in the first place.
- **Financial** – some people can't afford the financial commitment of a gym membership or similar activity, or in other cases it can be that they can afford it but do not prioritise it enough to spend the money on that instead of something else.
- **Energy** – people often say that they do not have the energy, or they are too tired. However, once someone gets into a routine, exercising will actually help improve energy levels.

Barriers may be split into two categories – Those that are related to limiting beliefs and doubts (**intrinsic**) and those that are related to factors we feel are outside of our control, such as time (**extrinsic**).

We can also organise barriers into two different categories – **perceived** and **actual**. This isn't to say that a perceived barrier doesn't have merit, but our approach to it may differ from our approach with actual barriers. Actual barriers examples include childcare, transport and time. They can all be worked around, but there are specific logistical plans that need to be made. Perceived barriers include lack of ability, lack of fitness, or lack of facilities. All of these things are barriers to the client, but they aren't actually stopping exercise attendance.

One thing to note here is that the client should be involved in the identification of, and solutions to their own barriers. It can be easy as a PT to impart a barrier onto a client, but giving the client the space to understand them on their own, and the ownership of finding a solution, will hopefully lead to greater success.

Building Rapport



In order to fully establish an environment of trust, respect and integrity we need to work on building rapport with our clients from the outset. Understanding their specific situation, their goals, beliefs, barriers and circumstances, and approaching the relationship with a genuine desire to assist their development will go a long way in building rapport.

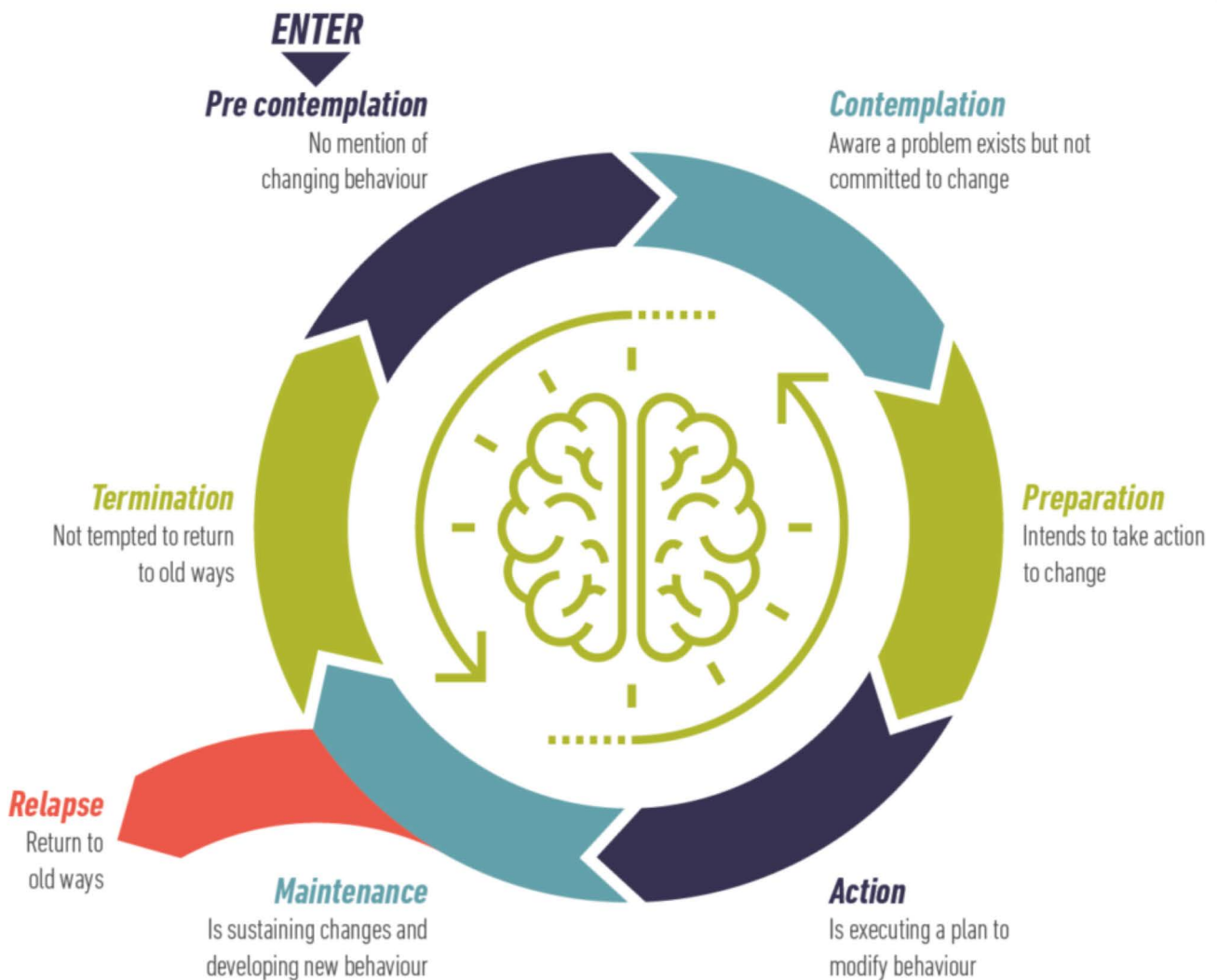
Once you have established this as a foundation in your relationship, it is far easier to help the client, and to suggest possible strategies and practices to help them achieve their goals going forward. The things you say, and the plans you devise are more likely to be closely adhered to if there exists a strong rapport.

Behaviour Change Models

When looking at behaviour change it helps to identify where our clients currently are by utilising some of the behaviour change models available to us. We will look at a range of models and approaches, beginning with one that translates really well into the world of fitness – the Transtheoretical Stage of Change Model (originates from Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983)

Making a lasting change can be very difficult, so when we work with a client it is important to understand the stages of behaviour change so that we can assist them on a long-term basis. Using a stage change model won't guarantee long-term adherence, but can give us an insight into how we can best help our clients right now, and helps us identify potentially problematic periods. Have a look at the different stages below.

Stages of change



Adapted from Prochaska and DiClemente 1983

Other Models

Health Belief Model (originates from Hochbaum & Rosenstock, 1952)



The Health Belief Model (HBM) is based on the idea that there are six elements that go into our decisions and behaviours. They are...

- Risk susceptibility.
- Risk severity.
- Benefits.
- Barriers.
- Self-efficacy.
- Cues to action.

In effect the idea is that you will weigh up all these things in relation to the behaviour you are considering changing, and make a decision to change based on your conclusions.

Theory of Reasoned Action (originates from Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, 1967)



The theory is that our behaviour change is primarily linked to our intention to make a change in behaviour, which is influenced by our pre-existing attitude to the behaviour and our perception of the results of the change. This was then expanded upon several times including with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model below.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (Icek Ajzen, 1988)



This theory is based on the idea that behaviour change can be the result of a decision-making process around our attitude to the planned behavioural change, the subjective norm (our perception about the behaviour), and our perceived control over the behavioural change. So, if we hold the prospective change in low regard, and feel it is beyond our control, we may not attempt to make a change.

Arousal Theories (including the Yerkes-Dodson Law)



The idea is that each individual has an optimum level of arousal, unique to them, and it is linked with both **motivation** and **performance**. If arousal drops too low we will seek to raise it, and if it is too high we will opt for calming activities.

The Yerkes-Dodson Law is centred on the idea that arousal improves performance in a linear fashion, but that there comes an upper limit, at which point further arousal will actually inhibit performance.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1983)



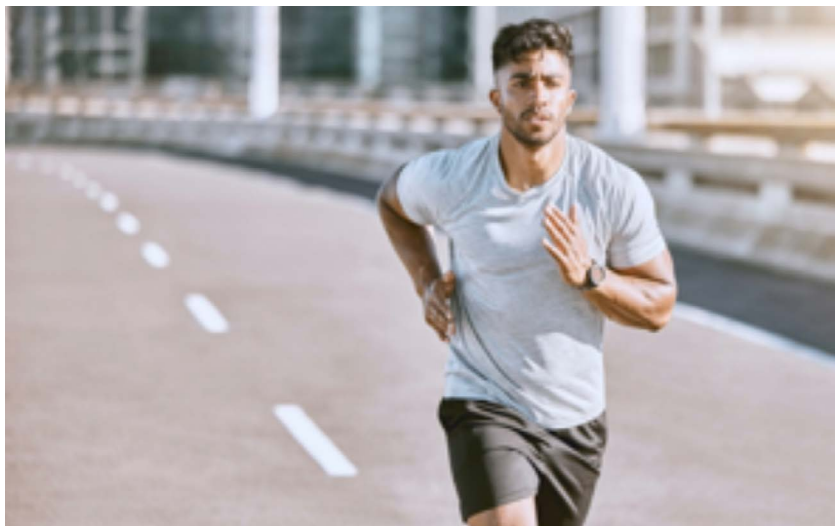
The theory here is related to social learning theory and is based upon the idea that an individual's beliefs around their ability to successfully achieve something is related to whether or not that engages in the behaviour. By this theory the assumption would be that an individual will only choose to embark on a fitness plan, or a healthier lifestyle change if they believe they will be successful at the task. Equally if they believe they can manage the change and will excel, they are more willing to attempt it. This is linked to self-efficacy – a person's beliefs that they can be successful at a given task.

Health Locus of Control (Wallston, Wallston, Kaplan and Maides, 1976)



Locus of control is related to the extent that an individual feels in control of their situation. If they feel the locus of control is **internal** then they feel they are in control of it, whereas if the locus of control is **external** it is related to an outside source. So in terms of fitness, it is related to how much control someone feels they have over their potential success in performing the required behaviours. If they are responsible for the outcome, they are more likely to feel in control of it, whereas an external locus of control would indicate they are reliant on others for their success.

Self-Efficacy (Bandura 1977)



Self-efficacy is a psychological concept linked to a person's beliefs that they can successfully achieve a given outcome. Each situation is different of course and is related to an individual's self-efficacy. For example, a person's belief that they can complete a 10km race will be related to their past experiences and prior success. Their feelings on being able to achieve the outcome will rely on if they believe they have the requisite tools to do so. Bandura also stated that self-efficacy can be improved in four ways...

Performance Mastery



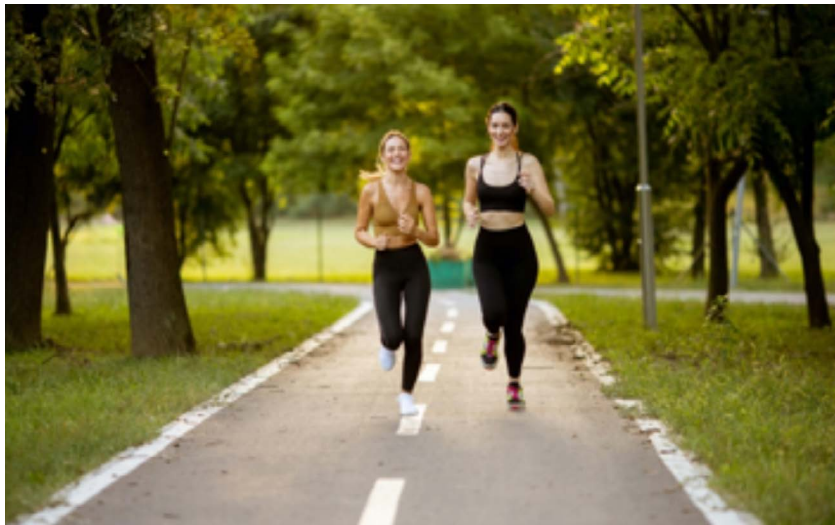
Positive past experience and performance outcomes play a major role in a person's self-efficacy and their belief that they can achieve. For example in our prior example we discussed completion of a 10km race. If someone has done this before, even if it was years ago, they have an element of performance mastery that will enhance their belief that they can do it again. They know what it takes to be successful.

Verbal Persuasion



Positive verbal feedback on the performance of a given task will lead to enhanced feelings of ability, potential future achievement, and an increased self-efficacy. Let's look at the early stages of a client learning to squat. If they do something well, and we praise them for it, they are more likely to have elevated belief in themselves to replicate the technique over time.

Vicarious Experience



If someone who the individual perceives as similar to themselves completes a task, then this will serve to raise the belief that they too can be successful. So, if a friend of similar perceived fitness and ability completes a 10km race then it is likely to raise the belief that it is an achievable target.

Psychological and Physiological



The emotional state you are in will have an impact on your self-efficacy. For example if you are in a good mental mindset you will likely have a greater belief in your ability to achieve success in a given task, whereas if you are suffering with anxiety or depression it is likely that you will experience less belief in your abilities.

In Conclusion

So, from all of the above, it is clear that there are many theories to support human behaviour. We can use this understanding to assist us in preparing our clients' programming and behaviour management strategies going forward. You do not need to be an expert in any of these areas but the use of these models to assist in understanding your clients, and their behaviour in relation to lifestyle is useful.

- We can utilise the stage of change model to identify the stage that our client currently inhabits. We can use this to understand their needs in order to maintain a positive trajectory.
- We may need to offer greater levels of motivation,
- adapt the programme to ensure continued challenge and progression (arousal, motivation and performance have greater impact when there is challenge), or
- educate them into some of the additional benefits they could see with a little more focused effort...

If we can empower our client through education, as to the benefits of exercise and lifestyle change they will be in a better position to make decisions to support their health. If they attribute greater value to their health, they will be motivated to make change.

Motivational Interviewing

If we simply listen to our clients and then tell them what to do, there is less ownership of the required behaviour and habitual changes. A more successful strategy is to ensure the client 'buys in' to the changes by contributing to their formation. The PT can help this process by creating a sense of empathy with the client and their situation and ensuring collaboration on the plan and process going forward.

A key take-home here is the sense that the client is entering a partnership with their trainer instead of a reliance. Certainly, we have more knowledge in terms of techniques and methodologies, and we should use this to best suit the client's needs, but the client's results are more reliant on **their** actions and **their** ability to change than they are on the PT's. This speaks to why it is important for them to really engage with the necessary changes, and to have a hand in creating them.

(In other words, you want them to have an **internal** locus of control rather than an **external**. (See "Health Locus of Control" above).

An important part of motivational interviewing is to be aware of the client's beliefs, to recognise and acknowledge them, but work to educate them if they are misguided. For example, if a client comes to you with the belief that their weight-loss goal will only be achieved through a programme of purely cardio-vascular exercise you should respect their current beliefs, but work to impart more accurate knowledge. Their understanding that including resistance training in their programme will benefit them is paramount to them actually doing it!

Motivational Interviewing will likely form a part of your initial consultation, whereby if behaviour change is to form a large part of your focus you may also issue a short psychological questionnaire to the client that highlights their likeliness to engage in certain behaviours, and the value they place in these behaviours. This will allow you to identify possible patterns that may interfere with their progress, in order that you can assist them in finding solutions.

A key part to developing long term, sustainable change is to ensure the client's continued motivation. At the beginning, everything is new and assuming they have 'bought in' to the process, motivation shouldn't be a major problem. Adherence may suffer when the training becomes less interesting. As a personal trainer it is important to vary the stimulus to maintain interest and enthusiasm. We do this through continual challenge, ensuring the client understands the changes and realises their importance.

In terms of motivation and exercise adherence every client will likely need something different from you. Let's look at these things below.

Experienced Client



An experienced client may have knowledge in specific areas but needs guidance in others. If they are currently exercising and have been for a while then your role might be to guide them in their exercise, and show them the best way to achieve a new goal. Motivation might be waning as exercise becomes commonplace, so education around progression may be important.

Inexperienced Client



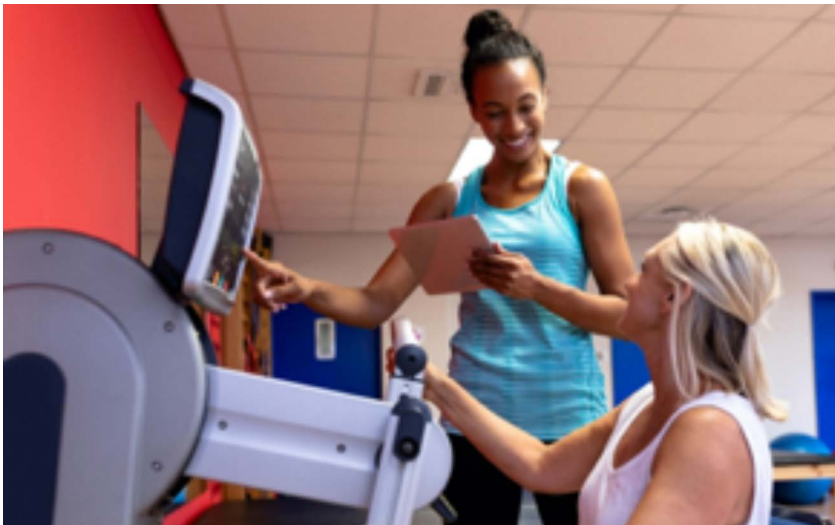
Motivation might be high with this client. They are embarking on a new lifestyle of health and fitness and it is exciting. However, they may not be very well-informed regarding technique etc. Your role here won't lie in motivation so much as assisting with lots of advice, technical delivery, and in designing a programme that ensures progression towards their goals.

Currently Active



Similar to experienced exercisers, currently active clients may not be at risk of falling out of exercise but may need to be given lots of assistance in maintaining their exercise habit and ensuring it is still productive. As a long-time exerciser it can be easy to fall into a routine that never changes, whereas varying the stimulus is important for continual development.

Currently Inactive



Inactive clients - those who have dropped out of exercise, or have never started, will need to be given lots of motivation at the outset. They will be at their lowest fitness level at the start and may feel like there is a very long road ahead. Your motivation, enthusiasm and guidance are vital in developing an exercise habit that will create long term change.

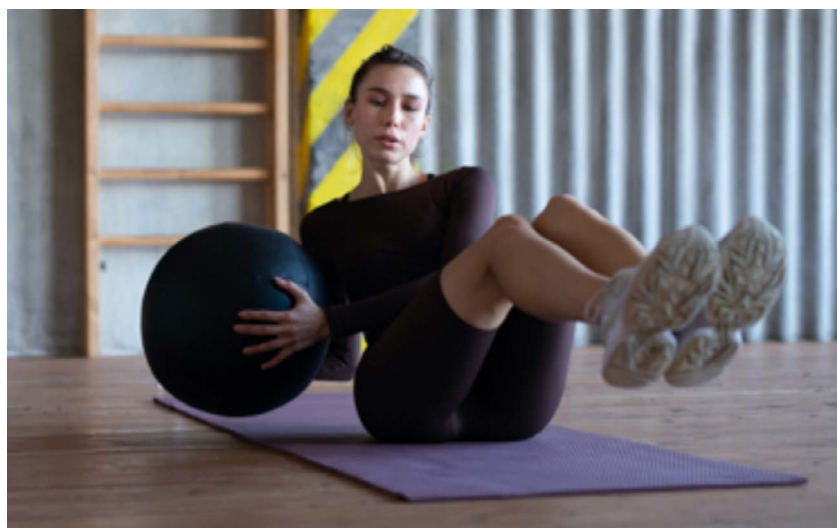
The Two Types of Motivation

Extrinsic



If someone is extrinsically motivated it means they are 'reward-driven'. This means that they are likely to take part in exercise not simply for the enjoyment of it, but primarily for the aesthetic and physiological benefits that are a result of training.

Intrinsic



If someone is Intrinsically motivated it means they are likely to do something without any obvious incentives or rewards. This person is likely to simply enjoy the process of exercising and doesn't need to focus on the aesthetic or physiological outcomes to maintain their adherence.

As we know from exploring the many models and theories around behaviour, it is important as a PT that as well as providing motivation it is important that you offer the client appropriate education. Successful behaviour change and motivating a client to embark on the process relies heavily on their beliefs in the process and outcomes being valuable and achievable. Through education, the client has a better understanding of their training and how they will progress, which should lead to continual motivation to achieve.

Dropping Out of Exercise

Let's consider why people drop out of exercise programmes in the first place. Among the reasons...

- Boredom with the programme.
- Lack of results.
- Low motivation.
- Injury.
- Expense of health club / trainer.
- Not getting enough use of the facilities.
- Lack of time.
- Exercise is not a priority.

Everyone who drops out of exercise does so for a reason. If we can recognise when the issues occur, we can hopefully assist before the client drops out of their training. You should, in your role of PT, be able to plan around these issues to help the client maintain motivation to train.

How Can We Help People Stick to Their Programme?

One way is to maintain an ever-evolving programme with new challenges and targets to achieve. Setting achievable, meaningful goals is one of the best ways we can help someone to maintain their exercise motivation.

Focusing on, and achieving a target is a great way to ensure people feel successful - creating a good relationship with exercise. Subsequently realigning the goals and forming new targets should be the next step.

There are many types of goals you can plan, and you might link these to either Intrinsic or Extrinsic motivation for the client...

- **Short term** – I aim to go to the gym twice a week for the first month.
- **Medium term** – I want to lose 6lbs over the first 8 weeks.
- **Long term** – within 6 months, I'd like to have lost 15lbs.

Notice that all the goals written above are **SMART** – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed. For a recap on this concept revisit the lecture on goal setting...

There are other methods that we can utilise to enhance motivation and prevent relapse before it happens.

Self Monitoring



This is helpful in terms of clients becoming more educated into their own behaviours, and to empower them to be in charge of their own change. By periodically checking in with themselves, or by keeping a diary of recent behaviours they are able to increase their awareness. This in turn will lead to greater adherence to positive behaviours, and possibly the identification of the reasons behind negative behaviours.

Action Planning



Creating an action plan at the outset of the client's exercise journey is a great way to ensure long-term progression. It can help to identify the areas that might prove problematic, and future barriers that might get in the way. This will enable the PT and the client to work around these things before they become an issue.

Reviews

In truth you will have plenty of opportunity to informally review your clients progress, as you will see them relatively frequently. However, booking a formal review can be very beneficial in order to discuss their progress towards their adapted behaviours and lifestyle changes, and offers the chance to assist in maintaining their progress.

Let's consider some further ways to enhance adherence, create a positive and empowering environment, and support the changes our clients want.

Keep Training Fun

Progressing the exercise stimulus is a great way to keep your clients engaged in the process. If you do the same programme for too long you will plateau physically and become bored.

It is accurate to suggest that success comes from consistency. However, if you never vary your training, you will inevitably become bored. Enjoying your training is a fantastic way to overcome this potential eventuality, and planned variety is a great way to achieve this.

It is a good idea to invite the client to a class you're teaching, or a session you might be running on posture or exercise technique etc. These additional aspects of fitness and new experiences may serve to enhance the members motivation.

You could also offer them a challenge. It might be their inclusion in a obstacle course race in your team, or a local 10km run for example.

Involve Others

Training with a friend or joining a class can offer a sense of community, friendship and belonging.

The camaraderie that group participation can provide is one of the key reasons that group exercise classes are so popular.

Alongside this you should consider the social support network the client has around them. This can include partners, friends and family members. If they are also embarking on a fitness journey or can be relied upon to provide support to the client, there is a greater likelihood of achievement.

Regular Contact & Support

Training can be an easy thing to commit to at the start when everything is new and the programme is exciting. However, the process can start to become a little monotonous and that is when we risk members falling out of the habit of training. If we can check in with them frequently throughout the process, and book regular reviews we can influence their experience much more.

As a PT you will have your own methods of communication - among them text messaging, emails and social media. All these approaches have benefits and can serve to keep your client focused on their health and fitness.

Scheduled Contact

Planning or scheduling workouts, and programming them into the diary is a way to enhance the client's adherence as they then have an obligation to their training. If you can work with them to arrange their training week there is a greater chance of them sticking to the programme.

Training Diary

Recording workouts is a great way to demonstrate to the client how far they have progressed since they started training. It is important also to see what you have been doing so that you can appropriately adapt future sessions. You can do the same for the client's nutrition also.

Tech

Clients may benefit from being a part of a social media group that you use to celebrate success and offer tips, guidance, and daily motivation. You could also utilise apps and other technology to ensure they remain on track with their training and nutrition. The technological side of the fitness industry is growing at an enormous speed, and is something PTs can utilise to greatly benefit their businesses.

Empowerment

Keeping the client involved in the planning and progression process and empowering them to make their own decisions in training, nutrition and the management of their barriers is a good way to enhance their ownership of the process. Promoting autonomy will also lead to greater self-belief and self-efficacy, which will in turn improve performance and success.

Client Focussed Approach

Offering the client a more holistic view of other products and services to benefit them could help to make health and fitness a permanent feature in their lives. Through your network of fitness professionals, as well as the ones that are available at your workplace there should be lots of different opportunities open to your client that could enhance their fitness experience. Sports massage, physiotherapy and yoga are all examples of services you might not offer personally, but may increase your client's enthusiasm for fitness.

Rewards

Having a reward system and incentives for your clients to 'earn' through their exercise achievement and adherence is also a good way to enhance motivation with your clients.

Consultations

A consultation with a new client is the first opportunity you have to meet, greet and understand your client's needs. It also serves as a good chance to build a rapport with them, and to make them feel comfortable in the fitness environment. When the time comes to plan their sessions, you want to have considered as many details relating to the client as possible. This will not only make the programme design stage easier but will also ensure a more effective programme that is safer. You will most likely be working with healthy individuals most of the time, but some clients will require more intricate programmes based on current or prior issues they have.

In order to maintain the health of the client, help them achieve their goals, and to avoid chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease it is also important that you screen clients well prior to exercise. We will look at all of these areas in this module.

So, what are some of the important aspects to learn from your client when conducting a fitness consultation?

Their 'Why'

Initially we need to ascertain why the client has taken their first steps into exercise. What was the reason they made the decision to join the gym in the first place?

- Maybe they have an event coming up that they want to lose weight for?
- Maybe they realise that they aren't as fit as they used to be?
- Maybe they have fallen into a largely sedentary lifestyle and want to change it?
- Perhaps they have suffered an injury.

We need to know what made their decision so that we can assist in maintaining their motivation.

Their Aspirations

They will have an aspiration that links to their initial 'WHY'. This is not yet a fully-formed goal as such, but is the basis from which we can formulate their goals later. An aspiration might be to lose weight, have more energy, increase their flexibility, or fix their back pain.

Barriers

Barriers are an important point of discussion. If we can help the client to identify the things that may impede their progress and attendance in their programme, we might be able to help them to find a way around their barriers. For example, if time is a major limiting factor in the client's life, we could help them by creating short workouts that they can do in the gym or at home so that fitness isn't a large time-commitment for them.

Current Activity

An understanding of what they currently do for exercise allows us an insight into how we can assist them. Perhaps they cycle to work, play recreational sport or walk the dog twice a day. Or perhaps they are completely sedentary.

Our programming should serve to enhance and build upon the activity the client currently does and should fit in around their lifestyle.

Exercise History

An understanding of the client's former fitness involvement allows us to learn about their education in fitness. It may be that they have simply fallen out of the habit, yet they were previously very active. In this instance we can help the client to regain their fitness before building upon it. Equally, an insight into their exercise history might offer explanations about any muscular compensations they may exhibit. For example, if they have a history of cycling or studio cycling classes, they may have relatively tight hip flexors.

Availability

If we know what time the client has available to train in a typical week, we can build their programme accordingly. If they are only available twice a week, we can develop a plan to cover the 'fitness bases' over two sessions, rather than developing a complicated split routine etc.

Preferences

There is little point in including exercises in your client's programme that they simply do not enjoy. With so many fitness modalities available to us we should be able to find a suitable alternative to meet the needs of the client if they really dislike a particular exercise type. Equally if there is an exercise that they are really happy with, we should try to make sure to include this as it will increase their motivation and adherence.

Below, we recap some of the methods that you can use in the consultation to gather information as well as some of the other things you might need to find out about your client.

- Questionnaire.
- Face-to-face interview.
- Observation.
- Listening.
- Their goals.
- Any current barriers.
- Their preferences.
- Their expectations.
- Their age & training history.
- Their general lifestyle.

Once we have the above information about the client's background we are in a better place to offer advice and guidance. We will partner the above information with the information that we gain from the screening process.

Screening

Screening a client involves gaining a detailed understanding of their medical history, any potential risks, identifying exercise contraindications, and potentially referring them for medical clearance if necessary. The entire process is designed to ensure their safety when training, and to find out enough about them to design the best possible programme.

Some exercise modalities, including high intensity exercise for example, would not be suitable for certain clients, lifting weight above the head is contraindicated for others, and even exercises that are static in nature, such as the plank, would be a poor choice for some clients. So the screening process is an important one as it will assist you in a number of ways to ensure the correct journey for each client you have.

Screening involves:

Par-Q



Having the client complete a PAR-Q (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire) is an easy way to ascertain if they have any prior issues relating to health. It will also tell you if they have a family history of any issues that are of concern. You can take all this into account when you create their programme, including any contraindications you need to be aware of. If a client answers 'NO' to all questions and is between 15-69 years of age, it is normally agreed that they can start training. Those answering 'YES' to any question should gain medical clearance prior to training.

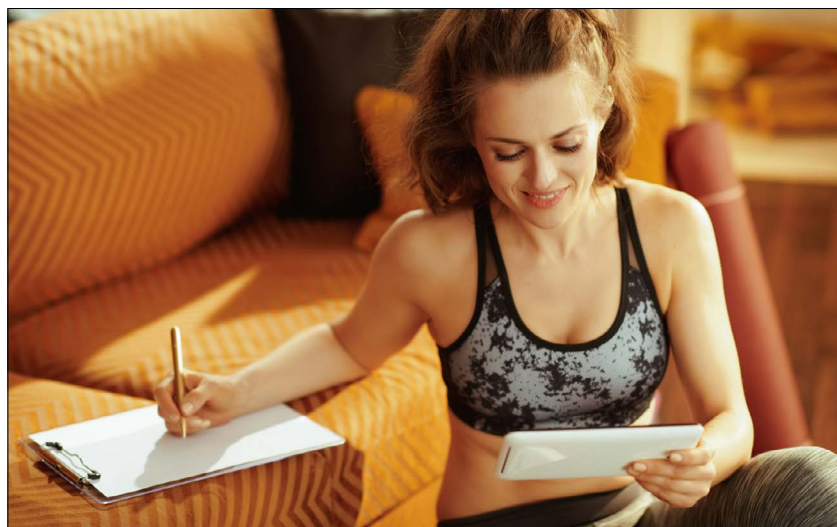
[As an aside here you need to be aware of the need to perform a verbal PAR-Q at the start of your sessions to ensure nothing has changed with the clients health.]

Par-Q+



To overcome some of the limitations of the PAR-Q there is a more sophisticated PAR-Q+ that is available for use in assessing clients. It involves lots more questions, as well as follow-on questions for any of the 'YES' answers. This allows the client to offer more information around the severity of the issues they have, and the trainer can make an informed decision on whether medical referral is necessary.

Informed Consent



An 'informed consent' form is signed by the client as an acknowledgment that they understand the process they are about to take part in and consent to it. They are also agreeing that their data will be taken and held for the purposes of planning etc. They are confirming that they are happy to proceed.

You should highlight all the stages they are going to go through including testing, physical assessment and exercise delivery.

Exercise History

You may decide that referral to your client's GP is a good idea. The severity of the issues presented should make your decision easier but if in any real doubt a GP referral is always a good idea. The client's welfare is the most important aspect to consider and they should be encouraged that this is precautionary and that their exercise journey will make them healthier in the long run.

Exercise Referral, Absolute Contraindications and Risk Stratification

There will be some members whom you absolutely cannot work with, and must be passed along to a medical practitioner, or a suitably qualified exercise specialist. There are many different medical issues that would lead to exercise contraindication and in order to work with these populations you should gain additional qualifications centred on the management of medical issues and diseases. Below we discuss exercise referral and clearance...

There are several conditions for which exercise would be considered absolutely contraindicated until such a time that the client has been medically cleared to train, and the condition is controlled. They include but are not limited to.

- Recent 'cardiac event' including myocardial infarction, or new/uncontrolled arrhythmias.
- Cardiac problems including severe aortic stenosis, acute myocarditis or pericarditis, or uncontrolled/unstable angina.
- Blood Pressure or heart-rate issues including a resting blood pressure of 180/100, a significant drop in blood pressure during exertion, or uncontrolled resting tachycardia (100bpm).
- Acute uncontrolled psychiatric illness.
- Pain, dizziness or excessive breathlessness during exertion.
- Febrile illness.
- Other unstable/uncontrolled conditions such as diabetes.

Other reasons for referring a client to their GP for medical clearance, and potentially to a more suitably qualified trainer would include...

- Client preference.
- PT doubt or uncertainty.
- PAR-Q answers raising concern (YES answers should be referred).
- Diagnosed cardiovascular, pulmonary or metabolic disease.
- If they exhibit multiple risk factors for disease such as cardiovascular disease.

The bottom line is that it is better to practice caution and refer the client rather than move forward and potentially cause more issues.

Some Conditions You May Encounter

- Heart disease.
- Eating disorders.
- Mental health issues.
- Diabetes.
- Angina.
- Hypertension.
- Stroke.
- Osteoporosis.
- Chronic fatigue.



Tools To Use When Screening

Another method we have available to us to ensure client safety is risk stratification. The aim of this process is to identify those clients that are at risk during training, understand the likelihood of them suffering a problem, and deciding what the best exercise process will be for them.

Available online is a tool that you might choose to use when assessing the risks of exercise for your clients. The Irwin and Morgan Risk Stratification tool is a widely used model that enables you to decipher whether your client poses a low, medium or high risk to exercise participation. Many risk-stratification models also have a pyramid with example strategies to employ with the clients training. Let's look at some of the things we may see...

Step One – does the client train on a regular basis? If yes then the client is able to train assuming they have no signs or symptoms of any cardiovascular, pulmonary or metabolic diseases or similar. If they have any symptoms, they should be referred to a qualified specialist and their exercise monitored and planned by a suitably qualified trainer.

Step Two – based on their prior activity levels we need to decide what intensity is correct to start at. If they are new to exercise, that intensity should be lower.

Injuries – if a client is injured or is suffering from an injury that you cannot assist with, then they should be referred to a specialist first.

Blood pressure – hypotension and hypertensions are a significant risk that you should be aware of - whether a client has either. If so, refer them to a medical practitioner.

Lower back pain – there are many causes of lower back pain, consultation with a specialist is recommended as training with such symptoms, can exacerbate the problem.

Pre / post natal – the desire to remain fit and active while pregnant, and to return to fitness following childbirth is a very big focus for many mothers. You should seek medical clearance for this kind of training and work with, or refer to a pre / post natal specialist.

Mental health & wellness – depression & anxiety, among other issues should be dealt with by a trained professional. While exercise can assist in the management of symptoms, in many cases those suffering should be referred.

Causes for concern – there are a range of other issues including neurological issues, fatigue, degenerative disorders and more. You should always refer your client for medical clearance if you or they have any doubts about their suitability. A medical referral follow by structured exercise through one of the locally or nationally- recognised referral schemes is the best course of action for many people.



Once you have appropriately screened the client and gained as much information as you can from them it is time to move on to physical measurements, as well as dynamic testing if they are fit and cleared to train.

Move on to the next lecture to explore this process in more detail.