Barriers to An Active Lifestyle

Understanding Barriers
It's important to recognize that we all have barriers that discourage us from being active. It's normal and natural to feel resistant toward exercise in one way or another. The first step to overcoming barriers is to acknowledge and accept them. The CDC has identified the 10 most common barriers to physical activity, as well as recommended strategies for overcoming those barriers.

Discovering Strategies
After identifying our own barriers to physical activity, it is important to pinpoint the underlying reasoning for that resistance. For instance, exercise may be unenjoyable to us, but it could be unenjoyable for a variety of reasons - boredom, uncomfortable with new bodily feelings, embarrassment, and so on and so forth. Find your common barriers below and see if some of the action steps will work for you today!

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<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Sounds Like...</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
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| No TIME to exercise      | ● “I'm a busy person. I just can’t figure out when to add a half hour of exercise to my schedule.”  
● “My kids keep me so busy running around that I can never find time for myself.” | Identify available time slots by monitoring your daily activities for one week.  
● Identify at least three 30-minute time slots you could use for physical activity. Or break up the thirty minutes into 10-minute chunks throughout your day.  
Look ahead and plan for the future.  
● Every weekend, sit down with your calendar and actually plan in exercise sessions like you would meetings or other commitments. This way, you visually see the commitment you are making to yourself to exercise at the time selected, and thus, are more likely to make it happen.  
Add simple movements and physical activity to your normal daily routine.  
● Examples: walk or ride your bike to work, organize social activities around physical activity, exercise every time you watch TV or a certain show, park farther away from your destination, squat when picking something |
Reprioritize or reorganize other activities that can feasibly be altered. What areas of your life would you be willing to re-prioritize or make more efficient? What's taking up more of your time than you'd like it to?

- **Examples:**
  - Save time with a crockpot meal, don’t drive home between children’s sports practice (exercise around the complex/mall/nearby gym instead), relax with a gentle yoga routine instead of a sedentary behavior like browsing Facebook or watching TV

Select activities requiring minimal “set-up” time. Many exercises can be done at home and with little-to-no equipment.

- **Cardio Examples:** Walking, jogging, or stair climbing
- **Strength and/or Balance Examples:** Bodyweight exercises

### INCONVENIENT to exercise

- “I don’t want to get sweaty or mess up my hair.”
- “I feel guilty leaving my partner at home to take care of the kids and cook dinner.”
- “I struggle with getting up early in the morning and hopping on the treadmill.”
- “I will be traveling next week. I’ll try my best to find a gym at the hotel, but I’m not sure if they even have one…”
- “It’s too cold and/or dark to walk outside, and I don’t want to join a gym.”

Convince yourself that if you give it a chance, physical activity will be worth it; then, try it.

- Consider the inconveniences of NOT exercising and what could arise from that (low mobility, injuries, less strength, disabilities, etc.)

### No SELF-MOTIVATION

- “It’s just so much work to get up, get dressed, go to the gym/or a walk, get sweaty…”
- “I know I should sign up for a class, but I just keep putting it off and forgetting about it.”
- “I don’t know why. I just can’t make myself do it.”

Understand your feelings toward exercise, exploring 3 topic areas: confidence, focus, and direction

- If you don’t believe you can succeed, what’s the point in trying?
- If you don’t know what you want, do you really want anything?
- If you don’t know what to do, how can you be motivated to do it?
Set realistic expectations. If your expectations are too high, you might give up without even trying.

Create an exercise contract with someone who can keep you accountable. This contract should:
- Outline expectations (of exerciser and of supervisor/trainer/family member)
- Specifically describes:
  - Amount of exercise
  - Expectations
  - Promises of reinforcement/rewards

### Exercise isn’t ENJOYABLE

- “I hate ______ (running, walking, exercise classes, etc).”
- “I’ve never been into sports or gym class. I’m not that type.”
- “There is something in me that just makes me want to cry when I have to do exercise. I never feel good after I do it. I desperately wanting to like exercise, but just can’t.”
- “I spend the whole time wondering when I will be done.”
- “I wouldn’t feel comfortable working out in front of other people.”

### Exercise is BORING

- “Exercising seems like such a waste. I have better things to do with my time.”
- “I try jogging on the treadmill, the elliptical, cycling and other things. But, I just can never go for more than 15 min. because I get SOOO bored!”

Try out different forms of exercises that maybe haven’t before. Running and biking may not be your ideal activity, but perhaps a dancing class or aerobics class would be more fun to you?

Follow what interests you - you’ll be more likely to stay interested. Remember, anything that gets you moving counts. It doesn’t have to “look” like what we always think exercise is. It can be running around with your kids, doing heavy gardening, hiking up steep terrain, or lifting heavy objects at your job.


Pick an exercise that matches your personality: [http://images.huffingtonpost.com/2013-10-16-fitnesspersonality.png](http://images.huffingtonpost.com/2013-10-16-fitnesspersonality.png)

Find creative ways to change up your workouts.

- Instead of just walking or running on a treadmill, incorporate interval activities of varying the speed or incline every other minute to keep you on your toes and focused throughout your workout.
- Add competition to the mix
| Low CONFIDENCE in abilities | \- “Nothing helps. Why bother?”  
\- “I just feel dumb - It’s so obvious that I have no idea what I’m doing and it’s embarrassing.”  
\- “I’m so out of shape, and the only exercise I’m able to do is just pathetic.” | Remind yourself that everyone in the gym has insecurities and is worried about their abilities and appearance. Instead of letting yours limit what you do, encourage yourself to go and do something beneficial to your body!  
\- Don’t worry about becoming a superstar athlete or joining the hard-bodied athletes at the fitness club. Simply focus on the positive changes you’re making to your body and mind.  
\- Select activities requiring no new skills, such as walking, climbing stairs, or jogging.  
\- Find a support team: A kind coach, a beginner exercise group, a skill-building class (ex. beginning hip-hop)  
Workout from the comfort of your own home; there are many exercise videos, DVDs, and programs that are made specifically for beginners and those new to exercise. |
|---|---|---|
| FEAR of Injury | \- “I have a very weak heart, so I have to be careful about what I do.”  
\- I have limitations (fibromyalgia, arthritis) and I don’t want to overdo it.” | Many times, light exercise is actually good for a healing injury or chronic condition (ex. fibromyalgia, arthritis). It is advised to take it slow and easy, but do not let fear get in the way of doing something that may actually assist in your recovery and pain.  
\- Get professional help - a doctor, a physical therapist, an athletic trainer, a chiropractor, etc.  
\- Learn how to warm up and cool down to prevent injury.  
\- Learn how to exercise appropriately considering your age, fitness level, skill level, and health status. |
| No SELF-MANAGEMENT | \- “I’ve tried to get into exercise so many times, but I always end up quitting after a few weeks.”  
\- “I get so excited and riled up about my routines and then -bam- my motivation fizzes and I’m back doing the same things I always was.”  
\- “I will work out for a week or so and not see progress so I stop - what’s the point?” | Lay out an action plan:  
\- Concrete plans that specify when, where, and how a person will translate exercise intentions into action  
Additional self-monitoring outside of Prevent tracking:  
\- Make an exercise calendar  
\- Put a coin in a jar every time you exercise for 30 minutes |
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<th>Lack of SUPPORT</th>
<th>“I have no one to go to an exercise class with.”</th>
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<td>“My husband can’t watch the kids long enough</td>
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<td>for me to go for a nightly walk.”</td>
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<td>“None of my co-workers walk at lunch or get up</td>
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<td>during the work day. I feel strange doing</td>
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<td>exercise at work by myself.”</td>
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Develop new friendships with physically active people.
- Examples: Join a group (YMCA, hiking club, class at local gym/rec center), start your own group (meetup.com, advertise on community billboard).
- Invite friends and family members to exercise with you. Plan social activities involving exercise.
- Exercise with the kids-go for a walk together, play tag or other running games, get an aerobic dance or exercise tape for kids (there are several on the market) and exercise together. You can spend time together and still get your exercise!

Deliberate plan for “alone” time:
- Examples: Use home gymnasium equipment while the kids are busy playing or sleeping, exercise when others are out of the house (i.e., during school hours)

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<th>No SAFE place to exercise</th>
<th>“My neighborhood isn’t safe to walk around in.”</th>
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<td>“It’s cold outside and I don’t own a treadmill.”</td>
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Try out some at home cardio or muscular activities. There are plenty of ways that you can utilize your own body weight and home space to get in a great exercise session.
- Exercise classes offered through a local recreation department, school, or community education group might fit your budget better than an annual gym membership.

**Strategies for Additional Barriers:**

**Lack of Energy to Exercise:**
- Give your body the “best time of your day” - Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic. Ensuring you exercise will give more energy for the rest of your day.
  - Morning Workouts: Prepare to take on day’s challenges
  - Mid-day Workouts: Break to recharge “batteries”
Evening Workouts: “Purge” the tensions and worries from the day, or wind down for the night
- Rely on a healthy caffeine source to get you up and going, or consider food sources that might be zapping that energy.
- Sometimes the best exercise we can give our tired bodies is a stretching or deep breathing routine. There are lots of benefits from these types of exercises, even if they don't burn a lot of calories. When we reduce the stress hormones in our body and improve our breathing/diaphragm health, our metabolism and body works more efficiently. And when we feel more rested, we generally tend to move more throughout the day and voluntary engage in exercise. Would you be open to learning more about these type of activities?

Traveling For Work/Vacation:
- Pack your gym shoes and at least one work-out outfit.
- Stay in places with swimming pools or exercise facilities. Take advantage of the hotel gym and schedule time for at least a quick 20-30 work-out or walk. We often have less control over our food when traveling, but at least you can pride in staying as active as possible.
  - No gym available? Bring an exercise DVD or follow an online work-out.
- Plan your exercise in advance.
- Pack light accessory to pack when traveling. Resistance bands and jump ropes are great to pack in a suitcase.
- Frequent traveler? Join the YMCA or YWCA (ask about reciprocal membership agreement).
- At a conference where you will spend a lot of time seated, listening to talks or reports?
  - When we sit for long periods of time and the big muscle groups in our body don't move (i.e., legs, back), it slows our metabolism way down. If you can't stand, try engaging your back and legs on your seat by slighting squatting or tensing certain muscle groups.
    - See if you can stand in the back of the room instead of sitting for a presentation or two.
    - Take laps around the conference center between every (or every other) session.
    - Stand up at the end of every presentation
    - Practice active sitting
  - Get your walking in during the morning before any work or conference activities begin. Do a lap around the building before entering, take the stairs, park at the end of the parking lot, use the hotel gym, etc.

Weather Issues:
In both cases - hot or cold weather - the actual temperature matters less than how one prepares for it.
- Cold Weather
For those cold and snowy winter months, it’s best to develop a set of regular activities that are always available. (Like a tool box - You never know what you might need, but the more tools you have? The better!)

For most people, our winter activity/physical activity routines are completely different from our spring/summer/fall routines. Or, they at least differ in slight ways. For instance, some people choose to focus more on lifting weights in the winter, and more on cardio activities in the warmer months. Or, people use a cardio machine or exercise DVD in the winter instead of walking. Kind of like changing out our clothes every season, we change up our routines.

Inside the Home:

■ Jumping jacks, pushups, sit-ups, leg lifts, squats, and running in place are all exercises that can be completed at home at no cost, using only one's body weight for resistance. Some more examples include: lunges, jumping jacks, sit-ups, push-ups, crunches, pull-ups, squats, calf-raises, dips, and flutter kicks.

■ Invest in a great exercise DVD, or visit the library to rent one (P90x, Total Gym beginners, Biggest Loser Powerwalk)

■ Use free sources on the internet: attend a “virtual class” when the weather is too cold (doyogawithme.com, fitnessblender.com)

■ Invest in simple equipment: jump rope, kettlebell, set of 2-3 varying free weights, a yoga mat, resistance bands, an exercise ball. Dedicate an unused space in your house for these items.

■ Try “house-exercising” Pace around while watching TV or talking on the phone, don’t let yourself carry more than 1 item at a time, make multiple trips up or downstairs -- all these little movement add up to keep you feeling active and healthy. (Google "NEAT physical activity benefits" for more info!)

At a Gym:

■ A gym will almost never depend on the weather and usually offers a range of activities. Most gym memberships cost an average of $40-50 bucks a month and include activities like: indoor cycling, group exercise classes, indoor swimming, free weights, cardio equipment, sport courts (ex. basketball, racquetball).

■ Find an indoor place to walk. Contrary to popular belief, mall walking is a great activity for people of all ages.

■ Walk, run, or jump the stairs in a large indoor building.

Outside:

■ Be sure to stretch and warm up your muscles first, since cold temperatures make your body less flexible and more prone to injuries.

■ Proper attire: The proper gear can mean the difference between suffering and enjoyment. Wear shoes with deep traction to prevent slipping on wet or icy roads. Wear layers (that you can be removed when your body temperature rises). Set clothing somewhere it can dry and be worn again the next day.
Embrace the environment! Partake in winter sports like snowboarding, skiing (downhill or cross-country), sledding, body sliding, tubing, or ice skating. Carrying winter equipment uphill, hiking through snow drifts, and shoveling heavy snow are all great ways to enjoy the cold. Don't forget about building a snowman and digging snow tunnels, either.

**Warm Weather**

- The first step is to identify exactly what is it about the heat that keeps someone from exercising? Common heat-related barriers to exercise include: fear of heat-induced incidents (ex. heat stroke, passing out, sunburn), general discomfort (ex. dislike of sweat, harder to breathe, clothing rubbing), clothing-related issues (ex. lack of appropriate attire, embarrassment in a swimsuit/tank top).
- Here are some great suggestions for "beating the heat":
  - Swim, tread water, water aerobics, run through a sprinkler, squirt gun fight
  - Become a morning or night exerciser! Try yoga with the sunrise, or take your walks when the sun is headed down.
  - Don't forget to keep your water bottle close, and to keep it cold! Stock cold water bottles in the fridge or freezer so you always have a cool drink handy.
  - Look for activities that are "less sweaty" like stretching, yoga, pilates, tai chi, cleaning the house, or walking.
  - Keep an extra set of clothes around for after your workout.
  - Plan out times to shower after your workouts.
  - Find places with good AC units and get active: Mall walking! Taking laps inside your local library. Walking the stairs at large office complexes.
  - Seek out cool or damp places (like forests and wooded areas) to take a walk or a hike.
  - Join a night league to play group sports at night in the cooler air.
  - Purchase a fan to keep the cool air on you while you exercise.
  - If you can't avoid the heat? Shorten the workout and increase the intensity. If you can get your daily physical activity into a vigorous 10-15 minute workout, then you can spend the rest of the day cooling off.