



Management Memo

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SUBJECT: MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

COMPANY NAME:

MANUAL NAME:

APPLICATION: MOTIVATING SENIOR MEMBERS

PAGE No.:

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How to Motivate Seniors to Become Physically Active

IT IS DIFFICULT to believe that the large number of older adults who do not engage in physical activity are simply unwilling to exercise. Instead of writing them off, maybe the fitness industry needs to change its motivational strategy. Motivation is an important factor in older adults' abilities to perform functional activities and recover from disabling events. Some research has found that beliefs, social support and verbal encouragement are related to older adults' motivation to participate in exercise activities. They also participate to recover from orthopedic and cardiac events. So, how can you motivate the older adult population to exercise? You can strengthen their motivation by focusing on the following factors: beliefs, physical sensations, individualized care, social support, spirituality and goal setting.

Beliefs

Beliefs result from perceptions formed from previous experiences. If people believe that they can perform a physical activity, they will likely try. If they shy away from physical activity, they have probably not been motivated to try anything in the past, and they are probably convinced that they cannot perform such activities. Some simple ways to alter people's beliefs in their ability to exercise include giving verbal encouragement, pairing them with people who are already active, and eliminating unpleasant sensations associated with the activity. Remember that some seniors will shy away from a facility that is crowded.

Physical sensations

Pain and fear have a major impact on motivation. They can directly affect an older adult's willingness to perform specific activities. To relieve discomfort, facilitate appropriate use of pain medication. "Facilitate" means encouraging older adults to consult with their physicians. Also, start with programs that are pleasurable, such as relaxation techniques and yoga. After their mindset changes about physical activity, your senior members can progress to activities that are more intense, but not painful.

Individualized care

Individualized care acknowledges that older adults are

unique. Recognize differences and needs by using kindness and humor, empowering older adults to take an active role in their own health, and providing gentle verbal persuasion and positive reinforcement. Recognizing a unique need can be demonstrated by offering a rest period or playing appropriate music.

Social support

Emotional and material resources provided by other people make up social support. This support can include encouragement from others and making each participant feel cared for and cared about. Offering group exercise classes or outings is an example. Another way to increase social support and, thus, motivation, is to pair up participants for workouts or encourage them to recruit a friend as a workout partner. This social interaction can be just as important to older adults as the activity itself.



Spirituality

Spirituality can be defined as a belief in and a feeling of interconnectedness with a power greater than the self. Spirituality offers the possibility of hope in the face of illness, the receiving and giving of love, and a purpose in life. At the minimum, it may be possible to encourage this interconnectedness by having older members keep a journal or set

aside time each day for meditation and reflection.

Goal setting

Goal setting is an important motivational component in exercise programs for everyone. It helps people incorporate self-determination and realize that it is their own personalities and resolutions that keep them motivated. Goals are most effective when they are related to specific behaviors, and when they are challenging, realistic and achievable. If a goal is long term, help the person make additional short-term goals to attain the ultimate goal. Involve the individual in goal setting. Goals are more likely to be followed when the individual creates them.

Focus on strengthening these factors in your senior programs, and you can help motivate the older population to engage in physical activity, and to improve functional ability and quality of life. **RM**

By strengthening your senior programs, you can help seniors to engage in physical activity and to improve their functional ability and quality of life.

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