PERSONAL TRAINERS CONFERENCE 2013

APPLICATION IN MOTION™

MARCH 8 - 9, 2013 | LAS VEGAS | NSCA.COM/PTCON2013
Suspicious Minds:
What actually motivates clients, and what holds them back

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Can you feel the motivation?
Three stumbling blocks

• They lack social support
Three stumbling blocks

- They lack social support
- They lack self-management skills
Three stumbling blocks

• They lack social support
• They lack self-management skills
• They simply can’t deal with the discomfort of exercise
Our goals today

• The state of play
  – How many people exercise
  – How many start programs and then drop out
Our goals today

• The state of play
• Some impediments to adherence
Our goals today

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• Some impediments to adherence
• What actually motivates people
Our goals today

• The state of play
• Some impediments to adherence
• What actually motivates people
• How to improve adherence
Our goals today

• The state of play
• Some impediments to adherence
• What actually motivates people
• How to improve adherence
  – People who’re really screwed
  – People who’re just kinda screwed
  – People who rolled Yahtzee
Our goals today

• The state of play
• Some impediments to adherence
• What actually motivates people
• How to improve adherence
• Lame attempt to sum everything up on one slide
Part 1: The state of play
Why exercise?

• Weight-loss programs based on calorie restriction typically fail (80-90%)

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• Weight-loss programs based on calorie restriction typically fail (80-90%)

• Calorie restriction often results in weight gain

• Exercise is strongest predictor of maintained weight loss
  Annesi and Marti, “Path analysis of exercise treatment-induced change in psychological factors leading to weight loss.” *Psychology and Health* 2011; 1-18 iFirst
How many Americans exercise?

• 217 million Americans considered “active”
• About 60% participate in “fitness activities”
• About 44% do this “regularly” or “frequently”

What nonexercisers wish they were doing

Among inactive people 13-44 years old, “working out with weights” is the most aspirational activity

Source: SGMA
Government-approved!

- 43.5% “aerobically active” (150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity)
- 28.4% “highly active” (300 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity)
- 21.2% meet strength-training guidelines (2x week)
- 18.2% meet both guidelines

The dropout rate

50-65% of those who begin an exercise program will quit within 3-6 months
Part 2: Impediments to exercise
“Stereotype threat”

Uncomfortable social situations make people feel “conditional stupidity”

Annie Murphy Paul, “It’s not me, it’s you.”

Wrong friends

“People’s assessment of the health benefits they receive from exercise are influenced by ... comparisons ... of other people’s exercise amounts.”

Maltby et al, “Contextual effects on the perceived health benefits of exercise: the exercise rank hypothesis.” Journal of Sport & Exercise Physiology 2012; 34: 828-841
Wrong friends, cont’d

“Friendship is generated, in part, by cognitive systems that function to assemble a support group for potential conflicts.”

Too many changes at once

- Willpower is a limited resource
- Willpower requires a steady supply of glucose to the brain, which exercise and a calorie-restricted diet both deplete
- Those who make one firm decision, and commit to it, are more likely to succeed

They don’t enjoy the exercise they’ve chosen

- Best results occur at higher intensities
- Adherence is highest at lower intensities
- Pleasure mediates participation

Part 3: What actually motivates people
General Motivators

• Autonomy
  – Perception of choice predicts effort in any task

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- Competence
  - Practice makes you feel you’re getting better, and getting better motivates you to continue

Part 4: How to improve motivation and adherence
Heart-failure patients

- 95% say exercise is important
- 60-70% don’t exercise
- 50% of adherence interventions fail

Adherence strategies over 24 weeks

• Exercise logs
• Heart-rate monitor watch
• Group support sessions
• Graphic feedback based on goals
• Website (info, forums, access to experts)

Duncan et al 2011
Clear winners and losers

1. Group support sessions
2. Heart-rate monitor watch
3. Graphic feedback based on goals
4. Exercise logs
5. Website (info, forums, access to experts)

Duncan et al 2011
Fine print

- Small study (20 participants)
- Short duration (6 months)
- Unhealthy, sedentary population

But!

- They exercised 5x week (3 AT, 2 RT)
- They completed 75% of all workouts
- They reached 105% of goals for AT duration and intensity

Duncan et al 2011
Healthy but sedentary adults

- Yelling at them doesn’t work!
- *Extrinsic* motivation (abs! skinny jeans!) rarely works for long
- Intrinsic motivation (pleasure from task or challenge) is key to long-term adherence

“Coach approach”

- Middle-aged, obese, sedentary men and women with long-term weight-loss goal
- Long-term goal broken down into short-term process goals
- 6-month program; 1 counseling session per month
- Focus on self-regulatory skills
- Progress tracked graphically
- Participants chose own form of endurance exercise
- 6 1-hour nutrition-education sessions in first 3 months

Annesi and Marti, “Path analysis of exercise treatment-induced change in psychological factors leading to weight loss.” *Psychology and Health* 2011; 1-18 iFirst
“Coach approach”

• Weight loss modest (~ 15 lbs. in 6 months)

• Strong correlations between:
  • Self-regulation for exercise and self-regulation for diet
  • Self-regulation for exercise and weight loss

Annesi and Marti 2011
“Coach approach”

Figure 2. Proposed pathways of treatment-induced psychological changes, behavioral changes, and weight loss derived from a synthesis of research.
“Coach approach”

“Self-regulation applied to exercise enhanced, rather than detracted from, self-regulation for appropriate eating.”

Annesi and Marti 2011
Elite collegiate athletes

Task orientation:
• Success relates to their ability to train competently
• High intrinsic motivation

Ego orientation:
• Goal is to compete with others, and win
• Linked to boredom and willingness to cheat

Elite collegiate athletes

Task-oriented:
• Predominantly upperclassmen
• Expressed fear of letting teammates down
• Linked individual effort to team success

Ego-oriented:
• Strong link between self-enhancing and social-approval orientations (they thrive on praise from coaches and respected teammates)

Gilson et al 2008
Part 5: Pretending I can tie all this together into a coherent set of guidelines
PERSONAL TRAINER

What my friends think I do  What my mother thinks I do  What society thinks I do

What my clients think I do  What I think I do  What I really do
Lesson #1: Exercise first

“One of the paradoxes about self-control is that it seems to take some to get some. Physical exercise, for instance, improves self-control.”

Daniel Akst, *We Have Met the Enemy: Self-Control in an Age of Excess*  
(Penguin, 2011)
Lesson #2: Gooooooall!

• Have client spell out his or her goals
• Make sure *you* understand those goals
  • Extrinsic: Possibly short-term, but still real
  • Intrinsic: What will make this client happy?
• Make sure client understands you’re working toward those goals
Lesson #3: Be graphic

• Charts and graphs showing progress toward goal can be tremendously motivating
Lesson #4: Make it social

- For most disabled clients, social support from peers can mean more than instruction from pros.
- Working out in groups can inspire better performance.

Irwin et al, “Aerobic exercise is promoted when individual performance affects the group: a test of the Kohler motivation gain effect.” Annals of Behavioral Medicine 2012; 44: 151-159
Lesson #5: Praise effort

• People work harder when they think hard work has been, and will be, rewarded
Thank you!