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Acknowledgements

Exercise is among the top recommendations for living well with chronic conditions. People who followed the minimum guidelines for moderate or vigorous long-term, leisure physical activity lowered their risk of dying from any cause by as much as 21%.” (American Heart Association) Unfortunately, many adults do not know how to get started with exercise and cannot afford the costs associated with gym membership or personal trainers. In addition, rural communities may not have access to a fitness center. Beyond systemic issues around access, there is also the challenge of keeping a fitness routine going. This program helps participants work together to keep moving.

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Introduction

This manual is designed to guide a discussion portion to be added onto a group fitness class. A short set of conversation questions will be introduced at the beginning or end of 6 classes across a workshop series. These questions give participants an opportunity to share personal stories, reflect on the role of exercise in their lives, and encourage one another. The talking circle format helps ensure that every voice is heard, valued, and respected.

Along with these guided discussions, this manual also highlights current physical activity recommendations for older adults, offering a clear framework for what types and amounts of movement are most beneficial. Together, the combination of exercise and conversation creates a holistic experience, strengthening both the body and the community.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this program is to support older adults in maintaining active, healthy lifestyles by combining group fitness classes with guided discussion. Evidence suggests that people with greater social support for physical activity are more likely to be physically active. Through physical activity, reflection, and peer connection, the program aims to improve health and strengthen community by overcoming barriers, sharing personal experiences, and staying motivated to move throughout life.

The objectives of this program are:

- Identify strategies to overcome barriers to regular movement or exercise at home and in the community (e.g., no fitness center available).
- Enhance self-efficacy for physical activity (i.e., exercise outside of scheduled program sessions).
- Fosters connection and sense of community among older adults through inclusive, supportive group exercise experiences.
- Encourages personal reflection among older adults by integrating mindful movement and shared experiences that promote self-awareness and growth

Participant outcomes include:

- Increase self-efficacy for exercise.
- Implementation of an independent exercise routine.
- Improve physical or mental health and wellness.

Physical Activity Recommendations for Adults

- Adults should move more and sit less throughout the day. Some physical activity is better than none. Adults who sit less and do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity gain some health benefits.
- Exercise intensity can be gauged by using the talk test:
 - If you're breathing hard but can still have a conversation easily, it's moderate- intensity activity
 - If you can only say a few words before you must take a breath, it's vigorous intensity activity.
- For substantial health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) **to 300 minutes** (5 hours) per week of **moderate-intensity physical activity**, or **75 minutes** (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) per week of **vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity**, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity.
- Examples of **endurance or aerobic exercise** include: brisk walking, jogging, dancing, playing recreational sports, bicycling, swimming, hiking, and many other activities that raise one's heart rate over a set time period.
- Aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week. Everything adds up throughout the day and week and counts towards one's movement goals. Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond the equivalent of 300 minutes (5 hours) of moderate-intensity physical activity a week.
- Adults should also do **muscle-strengthening activities** of moderate or greater intensity and that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, as these activities provide additional health benefits. Aim for 8-12 repetitions of each exercise and repeat 2-3 times. Body weight can be utilized, along with hand weights, weighted household objects, or resistance bands.

Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Adults

The key guidelines for adults also apply to older adults. In addition, the following key guidelines are just for older adults:

- Older adults should determine their level of effort for physical activity relative to their level of fitness. Start out slow and increase as fitness level improves.
- Older adults with chronic conditions should understand whether and how their conditions affect their ability to do regular physical activity safely and consult with their healthcare providers.
- When older adults cannot do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week due to chronic conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.
- Flexibility exercises should be practiced on 2 or more days per week. Upper and lower body stretches should be incorporated. Stretches should be held for 15-30 seconds while breathing throughout the stretch.
- Balance exercises can reduce fall risk, lower body strength exercises are also beneficial in improving balance and should be practiced 2 or more days per week. Examples of balance exercises include: Tai Chi, standing on one foot, heel-to-toe walk, or standing from a seated position.

Key Guidelines for Adults with Chronic Health Conditions and Adults with Disabilities

- Adults with chronic conditions or disabilities, who are able, should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. Preferably, aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week.
- Adults with chronic conditions or disabilities, who are able, should also do muscle-strengthening activities of moderate or greater intensity and that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, as these activities provide additional health benefits. Aim for 8-12 repetitions of each exercise and repeat 2-3 times. Body weight can be utilized, along with hand weights or weighted objects, or resistance bands.
- When adults with chronic conditions or disabilities are not able to meet the above key guidelines, they should engage in regular physical activity according to their abilities and should avoid inactivity.
- Adults with chronic conditions or symptoms should be under the care of a health care provider. People with chronic conditions can consult a health care professional or physical activity specialist about the types and amounts of activity appropriate for their abilities and chronic conditions.
- Special considerations for specific chronic conditions can be found here at Exercise Prescription for Medical Conditions : <https://www.exerciseismedicine.org/eim-in-action/health-care/resources/rx-for-health-series/>

Safety Precautions

- Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise routine to learn what exercises are safe for you and any precautions you may need to take while exercising.
- Start slow and gradually increase frequency, intensity, and time (work your way up to completing physical activity to meet the current recommendations).
- **2-hour pain rule:** if your pain is worse for more than 2 hours after you finish exercising, decrease the amount of time or intensity for your next exercise session.
- It is normal to feel some muscle soreness when you start an exercise routine, but pain is not normal. If a movement induces pain, decrease the intensity until you can complete the movement with no pain.

Exercise Modifications

If a movement is **too easy for a participant**, INCREASE one or more of the following:

- Range of Motion (ROM)
 - Lift leg or arm a little higher each rep (while maintaining proper form)
 - Go a little deeper to increase a stretch/contraction (ex: squat)
 - Increase stretch depth in flexibility movements
- Time
 - Hold at the top of a motion for 1 second before returning to neutral position
 - Increase the duration of an endurance activity such as walking or biking
 - Increase the time each stretch is held
- Repetitions
 - Increase the number of repetitions completed of the movement
- Weight
 - Add or increase weight for the movement

If a movement is **too hard for a participant**, DECREASE one or more of the following:

- Range of Motion (ROM)
 - Move in a smaller space
- Time/Speed
 - Slow down the rate of movement and have the participant move at a pace that is comfortable to them
 - » With the exception of strength moves, slowing down can sometimes increase difficulty
 - Decrease the duration of an endurance activity
 - Decrease the time each stretch is held
- Repetitions
 - Decrease the number of repetitions completed of the movement
- Weight
 - Decrease the weight or only use your body weight to complete the movement
- Impact
 - Instead of standing, complete the movement in a seated position
 - Walk instead of run, take a step instead of jumping

Session Questions

Session 0 - Introductory Session Discussion Questions

- Please share your name and some information about yourself that you feel comfortable sharing with the group to get to know you better.
- What comes to mind when you hear the word “exercise”?
- What are you hoping to gain from participating in the Fitness Fellowship?

Session 1

- Currently, are there any physical activities you enjoy participating in? (examples: dancing, gardening, walking the dog, playing with grandchildren) Has it changed throughout your life?
- Is there anything related to physical activity or exercise that seems intimidating or that prevents you from successfully participating in activities?
- Who (family, friends, coaches, instructors, etc.) influenced your attitude toward being active?

Session 2

- Currently, what are the biggest barriers, challenges, and frustrations to staying physically active regularly?
- Can we brainstorm as a group ways to overcome some of these barriers? What ideas, strategies or suggestions do you have?
- Do you find that you are more active during certain seasons of the year? Why or why not?
- Think about a small, attainable goal that you can accomplish before our next discussion session. Write it down. What small steps can you take to reach this goal?

Session 3

- Discuss your movement goals from last session. Were you successful?
- What worked well and what did you struggle with?
- Have you found someone or a group of people who can help you stay accountable on your physical activity journey? (family member, friend, Fitness Fellowship member, healthcare provider, spiritual leader, etc.)

Session 4

- Do you have a personal definition of health? What does a healthy person look like to you?
- How does physical activity make you feel? Have you noticed that you feel differently after these sessions or after practicing at home?
- How do you think your physical health impacts your mental health?

Session 5

- What opportunities exist within your community for physical activity? How do these vary with the seasons of the year?
- Are there additional tools, resources, or spaces that would be helpful in meeting your movement goals?
- Have you ever had to adapt exercise because of health issues, injuries, or life changes?

Session 6

- How can members of this group support you in maintaining your physical activity journey?
- Do you feel confident you can continue on your physical activity journey? Why or why not?
- What are your personal goals for staying active in the next year?

Closing & Follow-Up

Thank you for your leadership, time and effort in guiding Fitness Fellowship. Through your guidance, numerous lives were influenced to lead healthier lifestyles. The meaningful conversations facilitated through this program will have long-lasting impact and it could not have happened without your leadership. The commitment to promoting health and well-being within your community is commendable. Thank you for your dedication.

Additional Resources

- SDSU Extension Physical Activity Programs
 - Walk with Ease, <https://extension.sdstate.edu/walk-ease>
 - EnhanceFitness, <https://extension.sdstate.edu/enhancefitness>
 - Tai Chi, <https://extension.sdstate.edu/tai-chi>
- Better Choices, Better Health Chronic Disease Management Workshops
 - <https://goodandhealthysd.org/bcbh/our-program/>
- Healthy SD - General Website
 - <https://healthysd.gov/>
- Healthy SD - Walking Resources
 - <https://healthysd.gov/category/physical-activity/walk-walk-walk/>
- Healthy SD - Park Rx Program
 - <https://healthysd.gov/category/physical-activity/park-rx/>
- Move Your Way Resources
 - <https://health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/move-your-way-community-resources>
 - <https://healthysd.gov/category/physical-activity/move-your-way/>
- Great Plains Tribal Health - Health & Wellness Guide
 - <https://www.greatplaintribalhealth.org/downloads/health-topics/health-promotion-prevention/good-health-wellness-program/148-community-health-resource-guide-2022/file.html>
- Exercise is Medicine Resources
 - <https://www.exerciseismedicine.org/eim-in-action/health-care/resources/rx-for-health-series/>

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