

Staying Healthy Through Education and Prevention (STEP) Implementation Guide

Coaching Sessions

Prepared for:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, MD 20850
www.ahrq.gov

Developed under contract by:

Leading Age (formerly American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging)
Helaine Resnick, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Lauren Hovey, M.A.

Additional assistance provided by:

Good Samaritan Society
Laurie Parker, CTRS, ACC
James Zajicek

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The information in this guide is intended to help staff of continuing care retirement communities implement an exercise program for older adults. This guide is intended as a reference and not as a substitute for professional judgment. The findings and conclusions are those of the authors, who are responsible for its content, and do not necessarily represent the views of AHRQ. No statement in this guide should be construed as an official position of AHRQ or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As with any exercise program, participants should consult a physician before beginning a new regimen or making any lifestyle modifications.

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #1

Welcome to the STEP Physical Activity Program

Introduction

The purpose of this session is to introduce participants to their STEP program leader, to fellow participants, and to the STEP program. Coaching Session 1 sets the stage for the success and impact of the STEP coaching sessions.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Coaching Session 1.
 - Chapter 6: Exercise Principles and Practices.
 - Chapter 8: Behavior Coaching Principles.
- To assist with your discussion and explanation of the FITT Principle and the Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale, consider creating large posters or charts with the key information.
- Prepare folders for each participant to keep track of their session handouts.
- Print Session #1 handouts for each participant.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Meet the staff member in his/her role as the behavior/activity coordinator.
- Receive an overview of the STEP physical activity program.
- Review the goals of the program and why they are important.
- Be introduced to the FITT Principle.
- Be introduced to the RPE scale.
- Review health concerns that must be reported to staff.
- Discuss personal outcome expectations and concerns.
- Fill out the Participant Agreement (optional).

Session Outline

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. STEP Program Overview
- III. Personal Goals and Concerns
- IV. Staff-Participant Relationship
- V. FITT Principle
- VI. Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale
- VII. Reporting Health Concerns
- VIII. Questions and Wrap-Up

Session Content and Sample Scripts

I. Welcome and Introductions

- Greet participants in an enthusiastic and friendly manner.
- The most important part of this session is to establish a good relationship with participants and to convey enthusiasm for the STEP program. Encourage the participants to ask questions and express concerns. This session should be conversational rather than didactic.
- Use open-ended questions to facilitate participants speaking freely.
- After you have introduced yourself and talked about your background and role in the STEP program, begin by covering the following:

WELCOME TO THE STEP PROGRAM!

I want to welcome you to the STEP program, which is designed to help you all become healthier and more active people. The program is based on the latest research in physical activity and behavior change. It will give you the tools that you need in order to learn new, positive behaviors and to identify and change negative behaviors. It will help you develop an active lifestyle and teach you to maintain your new activity levels, in the program or on your own. You can already take pride in just being here ready to start this exciting new program! You have taken the first, very important step in this process.

Over the next couple of months, we will cover several topics that strongly influence your habits and your activity levels. Overall, I want to equip you with the tools, practice, encouragement, and information you need in order to build your confidence about being more active for the rest of your life.

I would also like to touch on the importance of the dynamics of this group and group participation. We all come from unique backgrounds and have many different experiences to share. That means we each bring something special to the group, which we can use to increase physical activity in our daily lives. How our group interacts will influence the success of this program. Positive group participation is a key component, as we help each other become and stay active.

Together, we will share our successes and our challenges. We will learn problem-solving skills to address our concerns and meet our goals. As a group, we will make this fun and successful for everyone! Are you as ready and excited as I am? Yes? So, let the process of becoming more active begin!

II. STEP Program Overview

- Provide a brief overview of the STEP program. Indicate that it is designed to help older adults improve their physical function and prevent physical decline.
- Review the structure of the program in Chapter 7, and describe what opportunities you have decided to offer your participants—walking courses, “destination” walking goals, parties, etc. You can also refer participants to the Session 1 handout “Overview of STEP Physical Activity Program” during your discussion to help introduce STEP.

Let me start by describing the basics of STEP. Our main goal is to build up to 150 minutes of exercise every week. That may sound huge right now, but if you think about it, when you get to that goal, it is less than 30 minutes a day. And you won't be doing the same exercise over and over again, either. STEP is a combination of aerobic exercise, to get your heart rate up; strength classes to keep your muscles strong; and balance and flexibility activities to keep you moving around easily. I'll talk about each of those activities in detail in a minute. Does anyone have any questions so far?

[Answer any questions that come up and if people ask questions that you'll cover later, don't feel shy about telling them so.]

Okay, great questions. I should also mention that the Surgeon General recommends moderate physical activity for 30 minutes on most, if not all, days of the week. STEP was designed with this public health recommendation in mind and was designed specifically for your age group, your needs, and your health.

Now let me tell you about the walking portion of the program.

Walking: Walking will be your main source of aerobic exercise, in addition to the group classes. We want you to walk regularly, by yourself, with a partner, or in a group. We strongly encourage you to set up a small walking group. It's easier to stay motivated when you're accountable to someone else, and I hope you'll enjoy the social aspects of these walks too. You can walk outside or inside [if you have set up a walking course or have a pool available, describe those options now]. When you exercise, make sure it is ~~dedicated~~ "dedicated" exercise. As in, you have put on your walking shoes and decided to go walking. Short episodes of physical activity are great for you too, like walking to the dining room, but they shouldn't be counted toward your total walking time. Over time I want you all to dedicate time specifically for exercise, and I will teach you how to do this. During the first 9 weeks of the program, we will work up to a goal of 150 minutes of total exercise each week. That is, the time in strength classes plus walking time will build up until you reach 150 minutes of exercise each week. You will have a physical activity log that you will use to record the time you spent walking. If you look at your handouts, you will see a chart marked ~~Overview of STEP Program.~~ "Overview of STEP Program." You'll see that your walking starts at 30 minutes each week and increases week by week.

Group-Based Strength Training Classes: The second important part of STEP is strength training. We will meet as a group for strength training at least once a week. We'll work toward a goal of attending strength training classes at least twice a week. In the first 9 weeks of the program, these classes will include behavior coaching sessions. The behavior coaching sessions are designed to help you develop the knowledge and skills to make long-lasting changes in your physical activity levels to improve your health and wellness. We'll talk about things like recognizing and overcoming mental barriers, building a strong support network, and staying motivated. Let me stop again at this point. Does anyone have any questions?

STEP Tracking Log: As I already mentioned, each of you has the option of keeping a log of your exercise—the time you spend in the STEP strength training classes and the time you spend walking. These logs will help you track your progress and meet your individual physical activity goals. We will also be looking at them in class and discussing your goals and activities, so we

strongly recommend you each keep a log. Copies of the STEP Tracking Log are included in today's session materials and I will distribute additional blank copies of the form each week. The easiest way to use the form is to enter your times immediately after each STEP class and walk. Again, you don't have to use these tracking sheets, but they are a very easy way for you to help keep track of and celebrate your progress.

Balance Exercises: Starting in the 3rd week of the program, you will receive a handout with several balance exercises you can do at home. Everyone will start at the beginning level of these exercises and move up as they improve. The balance exercises will complement the strength training and walking parts of the program by increasing your flexibility and stretching muscles that might get tight in strength class. You don't have to keep track of balance exercises in your log since they are not strength based or aerobic. You can do them every day or less often (of course, we recommend you do them sometimes!). The balance exercises are just one more thing that can help you feel healthier and more mobile.

Now you know the basics of the STEP Program! Does anyone have any questions before we continue?

III. Personal Goals and Concerns

- Engage participants in a discussion of their goals and concerns as they embark on the program.

It is very important to discuss personal goals and concerns. What do you want to achieve from being involved in this program? Have you ever tried this type of program before? Did you do it on your own? What happened? Do you have any concerns or questions before you begin the STEP physical activity program?

IV. Staff-Participant Relationship

- Introduce the guidelines for establishing a "winning team" with the participants.
- Let the participants know they can count on you to help them reach goals, answer questions, be honest, and provide support.

Some participants, because of their cultural heritage or personal history, may consider it rude to ask questions or to bring up difficulties. With these participants in particular, be sure to express your acceptance and appreciation when they voice their questions and concerns.

I want to make sure that you achieve your best possible results in our program. You will probably be most successful if you:

- **Come to all the classes.**
- **Do your best to reach your activity goals.**
- **Let me or someone else know if you have any problems.**
 - Ask questions when you don't understand something. I am here to help and I need to know when you have problems. There is no such thing as a "dumb" question.
 - It's smart to speak up when you have a question.

- **Stay willing and open to change.** I will help you in any way I can, including:
- **Reviewing your progress.**
- **Answering your questions.** It is important that you feel free to ask me any questions you have, and I will get the answers for you. Please remember that the staff are here to teach skills and assist you in any way we can.
- **Standing by you when you need me to support your changes.**
- **Believing you can reach your physical goals.** We all need someone to believe in us when we are making changes for the better. I know you can do it, and when you get discouraged, I am here to provide feedback.

Is there anything else you would like me to do to help you?

V. The FITT Principle

- Discuss the FITT principle with the participants.
- Consider using a large poster with the key elements of FITT listed as a discussion aid.
- Go through each element of FITT slowly and give examples of each element (frequency, intensity, time, and type), making sure participants understand the distinctions.

Now I want to talk with you about something called the FITT principle. We'll use the FITT principle to help monitor how hard we're working during our walking and strength exercises. **FITT is an acronym for Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type.** When you exercise, you should pay attention to these four things to get the most effective exercise you can while also staying safe. Let me explain each of these elements (refer to your wall chart, if you made one).

F = FREQUENCY (HOW OFTEN?)

- We recommend that you perform the aerobic (walking), strength, and balance activities at least 3 times per week.
- You can increase frequency gradually, as tolerated.

I = INTENSITY (HOW HARD?)

- You will measure the intensity of your exercise using the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE).
- You should try to maintain an RPE of 11-13 for aerobic activity, like walking.
- For strength training, maintain an RPE of about 15-16.
- I'll come back to this idea.

T = TIME (HOW LONG?)

- Gradually increase the total number of minutes you exercise based on how you feel. One of your handouts has a chart of the activities we'll be doing. We will start with 30 minutes each week and work our way up.
- At the end of 9 weeks, our goal will be about 30-50 minutes of aerobic activity on most days.
- You may perform your physical activity in short bouts, such as taking five 10-minute walks, if that suits you better.

T = TYPE (WHAT KIND?)

- Perform aerobic activities that use large muscle groups like brisk walking, swimming, or cycling when you aren't in class. The STEP program focuses primarily on this type of exercise.
- Perform the activities you will learn in strength class.
- Do the balance exercises we will learn in session #3 at home.

VI. Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

- Provide a brief overview of the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale. Refer participants to the Session 1 handout ~~–~~Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale.”
- As you are talking about the RPE Scale, you may find it helpful to have a large version of the RPE Scale on a flip chart or poster in the front of the room.
- Key points to discuss about RPE:
 - Participants should become familiar with their own RPEs for walking and strength training so they can achieve the desired intensity for these activities.
 - Insufficient RPE may not produce the desired improvement in function, even if the amount of time doing physical activity increases.
 - Excessive intensity may result in injury and should be avoided.

Basic Instruction:

As I mentioned before, Rate of Perceived Exertion, or RPE, is the way you'll monitor the intensity of your activities. This intensity is based on your perception of how hard you're working, or how heavy and strenuous the exercise feels to you. You will want to pay attention to the strain and fatigue in your muscles, any feeling of breathlessness, or other sensations to decide on your rating. But remember, the rating should be based on your subjective feelings and not on the actual physical load—since everyone is different, everyone's reaction to exercise will be different.

~~–~~Maximal Exertion,” or 20 on the scale, is the strongest exertion you have ever experienced. You should never be anywhere near this point in the STEP program! At the other end of the scale, we have 6, ~~–~~the absolute minimum,” or 7, ~~–~~very, very light.” Exercising at this level of intensity is not likely to benefit you in this program. The idea here is to exercise at a level that is above ~~–~~light” and below ~~–~~maximal” so that you are challenging yourself without putting yourself at risk. Let's go through the whole scale together and then start thinking about how strenuous our usual activities are.

Scaling Perceived Exertion:

- 6 Is the ~~–~~absolute minimum” effort you can exert.
- 7 Is ~~–~~very, very light.” It is easy and comfortable to do the activity.
- 9 Is ~~–~~very light,” like walking slowly at your own pace for several minutes.
- 11 Is not especially hard; it feels fine, and it is no problem to continue.
- 13 You are tired, but you don't have any great difficulty.
- 15 You can still go on but have to push yourself and you feel very tired.
- 17 You are so tired that you think you cannot continue for much longer.
- 19 This is as hard as you have ever experienced.
- 20 This is the ~~–~~absolute maximum” effort you can exert.

Think about the act of walking: Where do you usually walk and where are you usually going? Are you relaxed or are you in a hurry? Now think about how hard this walk is for you. Start with a *verbal expression* of how difficult or intense you find it. (Pause to let people think.) Now look at the scale and choose a *number*. If your perception of the intensity is ~~–~~very weak,” say 6; if it is ~~–~~moderate,” say 12; and so on. You are welcome to use half values (such as 10.5 or 13.5, or decimals, for example, 9.3 or 7.8). It is very important that you think about *what you perceive* as your level of exertion with this or other activities, not what you believe you should answer. Be as honest as possible and try not to overestimate or underestimate the intensity. And don't worry. We'll keep practicing.

[Note: If people seem a little confused, feel free to work through a few more examples. Ask the same questions as above to get them thinking, but relate the questions to playing with grandchildren (strenuous for some and not others), reading a book (very low intensity for most), doing chores, etc. This is an important concept, so don't rush through it. If you're running out of class time, be sure to review RPE during the next session.]

VII. Reporting Health Concerns

A brief note on safety: As always, we want to respond to any health issues that might affect your ability to engage safely in the STEP program. As you know, the strength classes are always supervised so that we can make sure everyone is using their weights safely. We also have plenty of time during our ~~–~~behavior coaching” sessions to discuss safety and health concerns. If you have any concerns that you would rather discuss in private, please let someone on the staff know and we can set aside time to talk and work on it with you. If you find yourself exhausted during a strength class, please stop, sit down, and rest. If you think you might be having a more serious health event such as chest pain, please tell us immediately so that we can address it.

VIII. Questions and Wrap-Up

- Summarize the material and concepts you covered in the session and provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions and express concerns.
- Explain the Participant Agreement.

- Remind participants of the time and date of the next session and the topic that will be covered.

I know we've covered a lot of material today. Do you have any more questions I can answer for you?

Now that you know more about STEP, I want to point out the Participant Agreement to you. This is an informal agreement, not a contract or anything binding. It gives you a brief summary of the program and the expectations we have for people who participate. For example, we expect you to communicate with us about medical issues that might lead us to suggest that you take a break from the program and so we can make sure you all stay safe while participating in the program. Look it over and make sure it sounds reasonable to you, then sign if you feel comfortable.

Our next session is _____. We will be talking about Being Effective Group Members and Motivation.

What I want to do now is give people an opportunity to practice using ankle weights. These are the weights we'll use for some of our exercises. We're not going to do any exercises today. I just want you to get comfortable with how they work. Let me now show you how to put them on... [See below for Practice instructions.]

Practice

If you have time, provide an opportunity for participants to get comfortable with the ankle straps and weights they will use for the strength exercises (as described in Chapter 7). Most participants won't have used ankle weights before and may need time to feel sure of themselves.

- Teach them how to put the cuffs on and take them off.
- Allow them to wear the cuffs without any weight in them to get accustomed to the feel.
- When the cuffs are off, allow them to hold the weights in their hands and practice inserting the weights into the cuffs.

You will probably need to find a separate time (outside of strength class or before) to help each participant determine his or her appropriate starting weights. However, it has been our experience that most seniors are comfortable starting with ½ to 1½ lbs, with men tending to start with somewhat more weight than women. It is critically important that participants do not "overdo it" with their initial weight selection because they can experience considerable muscle soreness that, although temporary, may cause them to quit the program almost immediately. During the next strength class, you can teach them the exercise movements and discuss monitoring RPE while using ankle weights. Remember that so far you have only discussed walking RPE. Use Chapter 7 as a reference.

Ending the Session

It was a pleasure to meet you/see you all here and I look forward to our next session together. Thank you for coming in today. I'm really glad that you are interested in starting the STEP program and I will do everything I can to make it as rewarding as possible for all of you!

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #2

Being an Effective Group Member and Motivation for Behavior Change

Introduction

This session involves a discussion of several topics (reasons for program participation, motivation, and group name/rules), provides participants with a foundation for effective group membership, and asks participants to verbalize their reasons for participating in the STEP program. This session also provides an opportunity for the group leader to emphasize the importance of motivation in helping to change behavior. Finally, this session provides an (optional) opportunity for participants to name their group and to define rules for participating in the group.

During this session, you should review the content from Session 1, including the STEP program as a whole, the FITT principle, the RPE scale, and health concerns that participants should report to the staff if they arise. Repetition is never a bad thing, especially given how much information you presented in Session 1. These concepts are critical to safety and success in STEP, so make sure you take your time reviewing them with participants and answering questions. Feel free to reuse the Session 1 explanations when you review STEP, FITT, and RPE in Session 2.

Session 2 has a three-question Take-Home Challenge that participants should complete at home and plan to discuss during Session 3.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Session 1.
 - Concepts related to motivation and behavior change, as they relate to STEP (review Chapter 8 coaching skills).
 - The three questions on the Session 2 Take-Home Challenge (STEP benefits, participants' main motivations, and how staff can help).
- Print/copy the Session 2 Take-Home Challenge for each participant.

Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Review the content of Session 1.
- Discuss group guidelines and how to be an effective group member.
- Discuss the importance of motivation in changing behavior.
- Determine if the group wants to establish a name (optional).

Session Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Why Participants Joined STEP
- III. Purpose of the STEP Program
- IV. Overview of the Organization of a Typical Group Session
- V. Group Guidelines/Creating a Positive Environment
- VI. Group Name (optional)
- VII. Three-Question Take-Home Challenge
- VIII. Questions and Wrap-Up

Session Content and Sample Scripts

I. Introduction

- STEP program leader offers greeting to group.
- Group members introduce themselves, facilitated by STEP program leader.

II. Why Participants Joined STEP

Facilitate a discussion regarding the reasons participants joined the program.

One of the most important **motivational factors** in becoming a more physically active person is understanding **WHY** you want to make positive, healthy changes in your life. Beginning with the end goal in mind, why do you want to change your lifestyle? What is motivating you?

Remember, there are many reasons people decide to become and stay active. What's important is that you know and believe in your own motivations for making these changes.

III. Purpose of the STEP Program

Review the content of behavior coaching Session 1.

Reiterate the purpose of the STEP program.

The purpose of the STEP program is to foster excitement about physical activity and to progressively increase your confidence in your ability to resume or begin a physically active lifestyle. We will learn important skills to make this happen, with an ultimate goal of reducing your risk of disability. As you progress through STEP, you will identify what is important to you from a lifestyle perspective and health perspective (How active do you want to be?) and use these ideas to set your own physical activity goals. Staying aware of these values will help motivate you as you work to maintain your behavior changes.

IV. Overview of the Organization of a Typical Behavior Session

Give STEP participants a brief summary of what they can expect in a typical STEP class.

Familiarizing participants with the session format is part of making them comfortable with and enthusiastic about class. If participants expect that every session will involve a discussion of the previous session, the homework, barriers, and motivational issues, they will come prepared to talk.

The standard session format is as follows:

- Introduction
- Review Take-Home Challenge from previous session
- State objectives for current session
- Interactively cover material
- Review participants' progress
- Questions and opportunities for problem solving
- Summarize and end session
- Review Take-Home Challenge handout to be discussed at next session

V. Group Guidelines/Creating a Positive Environment

- Facilitate a discussion regarding group members' preferences about how the group should be run and what guidelines, if any, should apply to participation.
- You may choose to establish a "buddy system": pair up participants (or ask them to choose partners) both for classes and for walking. STEP buddies will remind each other to attend class, help each other count repetitions and talk about/keep track of RPE during exercises, and encourage each other to keep up the good work. Walking buddies will keep each other motivated to walk outside of class. They can do this by making walking dates, checking in with each other about progress, etc. Remind participants that it's always helpful to have others rooting for you and keeping you accountable for your progress.

Participating in a behavior modification group can be very rewarding. Our goal is for you to feel comfortable discussing your goals and accomplishments, as well as barriers you encounter in becoming more physically active. Let's discuss any group rules or guidelines we want to establish to make sure you are able to talk openly about these things. Suggestions?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

VI. Group Name (optional)

Having a group name can create a sense of fun, common cause, and community. Some program leaders have found great success with group names, while others found participants were not interested. This is entirely up to you and your group.

- Discuss the idea of naming the group and determine whether the group wants to have a group name.
- If the group wants a name, ask participants to brainstorm over the next week and come up with ideas for a group name that they'll vote on at the next session.

VII. Take-Home Challenge

- Read the Take-Home Challenge (from Session 3 handout) and ask participants to write down their thoughts prior to the next group session.

In our first challenge for the group, let's think about why you want to make activity a regular part of your life. We touched on this topic earlier, but now I want you to think very specifically about your STEP participation and write down your ideas at home. We'll discuss your ideas at our next session. Now let's take a few minutes to look over this challenge.

1. What are the benefits that you believe you can get from becoming more physically active?
2. What are your main motivations for wanting to become more active? Why do you personally want to change?
3. Over the next couple of months, we will teach you the skills you need to become more active. Initially, how can we help you in making these changes?

VIII. Questions and Wrap-Up

- Provide a summary of material and concepts that you covered in the session and an opportunity for participants to ask questions and express concerns.
- Remind them to complete their Take-Home Challenge and come ready to discuss it at your next class on:

Date and Time: _____

- Let them know that Session 3 will be a discussion of Physical Limitations and Preventing Physical Decline.

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #3

The Faces of Physical Limitation

Introduction

This session involves defining “physical limitation,” discussing various issues related to the development of physical limitations and perceptions of physical limitations, and defining strategies to prevent further physical decline. This session provides an opportunity for the group leader to review the goals of the STEP program and the benefits of physical activity in preventing decline. This session also provides a review of topics from Session 2 (the benefits of physical activity, motivation, and how staff can help) and an opportunity to review group rules and guidelines and to finalize a group name if the group has elected to choose one.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Session 2.
 - Group name (optional).
 - Group rules and guidelines.
 - Goals of STEP program.
 - Organization of a typical group session.
 - The three-question Take-Home Challenge from Session 2.
 - Concepts related to motivation and behavior change as they relate to STEP.
 - The definition of “physical limitation,” perceptions, and strategies to reduce further functional (i.e., physical) decline.

- Print Session 3 handouts, including in-class worksheets, the Take-Home Challenge, and the balance exercise handouts.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Review content of Session 2.
- Review the benefits of physical activity.
- Further explore why everyone joined the STEP program by discussing Session 2’s Take-Home Challenge.
- Increase their knowledge regarding physical limitations, their current level of physical functioning, and their risk of physical decline.
- Discuss the role that physical activity plays in preventing further loss of function.
- Develop a general strategy to reduce their risk of physical decline and limitations.
- Receive and review balance exercise handouts and practice Level I balance exercises.

Session Outline

- I. Greeting/Review
- II. The Face of Physical Limitation
- III. Group Activity: Developing a Strategy To Increase Function and Reduce the Risk of Physical Decline
- IV. Balance Exercises
- V. Questions and Wrap-Up

Session Content and Sample Script

I. Greeting/Review

- Greet participants as they arrive.
- Determine if the group wants to select a name and record it below (optional).
- Group Name: _____
- Review group rules/guidelines (if defined in Session 2).
- Underscore the importance of the STEP program by summarizing the benefits of physical activity.
- Review staff expectations for participants.
- Review behavior challenge from Session 2.

Let's discuss the Take-Home Challenge from the last session.

- What are the benefits of regular physical activity?
- What are your main motivations for joining the STEP program?
- What can the STEP staff do to help you achieve your outcomes?

One of the reasons that people change their behavior is that they want to alter the past or achieve a new goal. No doubt, each one of you has identified some important reasons for being part of the STEP program. As we work together, we hope you will achieve some of these outcomes and identify many others that ~~increase~~ "increase" your desire or motivation to be physically active. In fact, during the next few weeks, we will talk about ways to track your accomplishments in STEP and some important features about the outcomes, or goals, for this program. For the remainder of today's session, however, our objective is to better understand the concept of physical limitations, or what used to be called disability. We'll talk about how it affects us, what restrictions it places on us, and what we can do to prevent it. Let's begin by defining a physical limitation.

II. The Face of Physical Limitation

- Define a physical limitation.

What is a physical limitation? Having a **physical limitation** means you have difficulty performing your usual activities. These limitations often interrupt our daily lives and may have detrimental effects on multiple aspects of our physical and mental well-being. In other words, physical limitation refers to the gap between a person's abilities and the demands of his or her environment.

Another factor is your emotions. Physical limitations can keep you from doing things you WANT to do or feel you SHOULD BE ABLE to do, which can be very upsetting and demotivating. But don't worry, by participating in STEP you are committing to increasing your physical activity, which is a great way to stay healthy and to maintain your physical abilities. Because what you don't want to happen is to go into what we call **physical decline**. This is when you become less and less mobile to the point where you are truly restricted from carrying out your usual activities, which can result in further physical and mental decline. Clearly, this is a scenario we all want to avoid. Now let's discuss your perceptions of physical limitations.

- Discuss participants' perceptions of physical limitations or decline and their current level of function.
- Discuss among the group any experiences that the participants have had in the past regarding losing some of their function and not being able to perform their daily activities or pursue their interests.
- How did this make them feel?

Here's a simple question – how many of you would say that you experience physical limitations? When you think about this question, I want you to think about activities that you have trouble with or have given up lately due to your physical or mental function. What are some examples of activities you find yourselves no longer able to do? (Wait for responses.) Okay, great examples. Now think about how these setbacks have affected your daily life. A little? A lot? Are they upsetting or things you'd rather not do at this point anyway (like run marathons)? (Wait for responses.)

These can be tough questions to answer, and, often, you and your neighbors in this group will have different answers or thoughts regarding limitations. Now I want you to think about your level of physical function and any decline you've experienced. Think about it in terms of a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no limitations or decline and 10 being significant limitations or decline. Where do you rate?

It is important to note that no matter where you are on this scale, physical decline is a continuous process of losing function in daily life. Often, as age increases, people start giving up on certain activities without even realizing that they are experiencing decline OR they are setting themselves up for decline. We need to remind ourselves that staying healthy involves maintaining our physical function. This means exercise like you're doing in STEP, but also little things around the house that keep you on your feet, moving around, and interacting with the world in a physical way. Staying active in big and small ways will help decrease your risk of developing physical limitations and will prevent decline in your overall physical health.

- Distribute the Take-Home Challenge –“Brainstorming About Physical Limitations,” review the questions on the sheet, and instruct participants to bring the sheet to the next session.

All of you have had a decrease in your function, putting you at risk for possible physical limitations and decline, but you have a chance to decrease that risk. You have a chance to change! Physical activity is one way to improve physical function and thus reduce your risk for further decline. Since you have already joined the STEP program, you have taken a very important –step” toward a more active and higher functioning self.

Let's briefly go over your Take-Home Challenge. We started having a great conversation about physical limitations and now we want you to take a close look at your limitations, your risk, and your improvement strategies when you get home. [Review the questions and ask everyone to complete the challenge for next session.]

III. Group Activity: Developing Strategies To Increase Function and Reduce the Risk of Physical Decline

You can imagine physical limitation as a waterfall and a river above that waterfall. If you are far away from the edge of the waterfall, then you tend to feel secure and have confidence that you will not fall over the edge. But the closer you get to the edge of that waterfall, the more fearful you become of something happening. What we often forget when viewing waterfalls is that one small slip, one small loss of balance, or one misplaced foot could change things for the worse, and we could fall over the waterfall.

In the STEP program, we want to use physical activity participation and behavioral strategies to push you up the river as far away from the edge of the waterfall or “physical limitation” as possible. While exercising, we will focus on aspects such as endurance, strength, and balance, but all these components ultimately aim at increasing your level of physical functioning and improving your ability to perform daily activities. So, I hope we can all agree that physical decline is an important area of concern as we age.

Now, let's brainstorm some more on how we can reduce our risk of physical decline. I want us to think strategically. What can we do to stay as far up the river as possible, at a safe distance from the waterfall? Let's look at our in-class worksheet and start brainstorming. These can be as general or as specific as you want. Our goal here is to have a list of strategies we can use to stay active, whether we're feeling unmotivated or uncertain, or maybe just forgetful.

- Distribute the in-class worksheet “Strategies for Reducing Physical Decline” and instruct participants to think about strategies to prevent further decline.
- Discuss strategies among the group by asking questions such as:
 - What have you done in the past to help you gain back your function?
 - What are some things that you have been trying recently to be more active?
 - What activities, chores, etc., could you start or resume so that you are moving around more?
 - What helps motivate you to do physical activity at home or around the community?

IV. Balance Exercises

Distribute balance exercise handout and demonstrate balance exercises.

- When you distribute the balance exercises, instruct all participants to begin at Level I. Even if they feel physically able to perform at higher levels, they should learn and master the Level I exercises before moving on.
- Demonstrate one exercise, then have participants stand up and join you if there is space and proper equipment. Then move on to each subsequent exercise. If participants don't have a

stable surface to hold for balance (for example, as needed in the heel raise) then do not have them attempt the balance exercises at this time.

- Practice as long as the participants need to feel confident. Remember, they will be attempting these balance exercises at home without supervision, so make sure you correct their form and body position while you have them in class.

V. Questions and Wrap-Up

- Briefly summarize the material and concepts that you covered in the session and provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions and express concerns.
- Remind them to keep walking!
- Remind them to complete their Take-Home Challenge and come ready to discuss it at your next class on:
- Date and Time: _____
- Let them know that Session 4 will be a discussion of Self-Awareness and Self-Monitoring.

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #4

Self-Awareness and Self-Monitoring

Introduction

This session involves teaching participants to be aware of their activities and accomplishments and to monitor their physical activity as part of a larger behavior modification effort. The group leader should review the content of Session 3 first, and then introduce self-awareness and self-monitoring skills. This session includes a group activity designed to help participants think about these new skills and apply them to monitoring their exercise with the physical activity tracking sheets. This session concludes with information about combining relaxing activities with self-monitoring.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Session 3 (definition of physical limitation and strategies to reduce risk of further decline).
 - STEP physical tracking sheet log and monitoring of physical activity time.
 - Concepts related to self-awareness and self-monitoring of physical activity.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Review content of Session 3.
- Review their progress in the physical activity program (strength class attendance, total minutes walking).
- Discuss two key skills: self-awareness and self-monitoring.
- Discuss feelings regarding their exercise patterns and accomplishments.

Session Outline

- I. Greeting/Review
- II. Self-Awareness and Self-Monitoring
- III. Group Activity: Examining Our Progress in the STEP Program
- IV. Self-Monitoring With Relaxing Reflection

Session Content and Sample Script

I. Greeting/Review

- Greet participants as they arrive.
- Facilitate a brief review of Session 3:
 - Definition of physical limitations
 - Brainstorming about physical limitations (from Session 3 handout)
 - Strategies for reducing risk of further decline (from Session 3 handout)

II. Self-Awareness and Self-Monitoring

- Define and discuss self-awareness and self-monitoring. Why are they important to behavior change and how can participants benefit from using these strategies?

During the past 2 weeks, we have discussed the primary reasons you want to be more physically active. We've focused on the benefits of being active and the concepts of physical limitation and decline. Now, you will begin to learn how to change your behavior so that it will be easier to integrate physical activity into your daily life. One of the first steps in making this important lifestyle change is to know how active you currently are or, in other words, to become **MORE SELF-AWARE** of the amount of activity you are doing. The best way to become more self-aware is to start **SELF-MONITORING** your activities. The best way to self-monitor is to **WRITE DOWN** (or **RECORD**) your physical activity every day. Writing it down will enable you to evaluate your activity over long periods without relying on memory. Self-monitoring will also allow you to identify behavior patterns so that you can notice your strengths and weaknesses and modify your behaviors accordingly.

- Discuss some key strategies for learning how to self-monitor (i.e., recording information in an activity log or using the tracking sheet, making sure that behavior matches up with goals).
- Discuss the concept of positive rewards and how self-monitoring can help participants know when to reward themselves.

Let's talk about ways to self-monitor. First, we have some easy tools that come with the STEP program—we have the physical activity tracking sheet for you to record the time you spend exercising. There's no way anyone can possibly remember all the activities they do each week. Given that our ultimate goal is 150 minutes, it makes sense to record our time, and I have some tools to help you do this. You've all been getting used to this idea over the past few weeks. Is this working well for you? [Solicit feedback.]

Another way to self-monitor is to review your tracking sheets regularly. We do this for the leg strength part of the program so that we know when you're ready to increase your ankle weights. Reviewing tracking sheets for walking can also be helpful week to week so that you can see the changes you're making, give yourselves a pat on the back, and decide how to continue moving toward your long term goals.

Another activity we do to help us self-monitor and become more self-aware is the Take-Home Challenge. These ask you to go beyond "the numbers" and think about your feelings and your satisfaction with the changes you're trying to make and the goals you've set. We'll talk about our most recent Take-Home Challenge in a few minutes so that we can start getting in the habit of self-monitoring.

As you can see, there are many ways to judge success and monitor change over time: the time you spend exercising, heaviness of ankle weights, number of repetitions, RPE; and if you feel stronger and more active, if you feel motivated and able to pursue your interests outside of exercise, etc. The more you pay attention to monitoring your physical activity, the more you will realize how much progress you are making toward your goals.

Another good reason to self-monitor is that it will allow you to celebrate your successes. This is something we'll do as a class and something you should do individually and with your walking or classroom "buddies." Each of you should be proud that you've started this program and you should be proud for each week that goes by. It's up to you how to celebrate—whether you want to give yourself a mental pat on the back or do something more. Celebrations of progress, even small amounts, are an important way to stay motivated. Why? Because sometimes you may not feel successful and you need to be able to bounce back and keep working toward being physically active. One of the ways you can do this is what we call "positive self-talk." We'll be working on this skill in Session 6, so stay tuned until then.

- Review the physical activity tracking sheet that participants can use to record their activity.
- Make a clear distinction between walking time and strength training (class) time, and reiterate that activity goals for the program involve both components: class time for strength training and walking time. Activities that involve "puttering around," such as cooking and running errands, are certainly encouraged but don't count toward walking minutes.

III. Group Activity: Examining Our Progress in the STEP Program

- Have participants look over their tracking sheets and start a discussion about their progress:
 - What do you notice about your physical activity minutes?
 - What do you notice about your attendance at weekly strength/coaching classes?
 - If you fell short of your walking goals or didn't attend as many classes as you planned, what happened? What changes can you make that will help you succeed this week?
 - Remember that this is a long-term process (the story of the Tortoise and the Hare is particularly relevant here).

IV. Building on the Idea of Self-Monitoring With Relaxing Reflection

- Discuss the importance of taking the time to be aware of accomplishments, not only in terms of activity time but also in daily physical and mental function.

It is also important to increase our awareness not only of how much activity we are doing but also of the physical and mental changes that we experience as a result of being active. Think about the changes related to physical limitations that you mentioned at the beginning of the session. What's the difference between BEING more active and FEELING more active? You have all started to BE more active; how does FEELING more active change your thoughts or behaviors? [Note: Examples might include feeling more able to do things, feeling happier in general, feeling motivated to try new things or satisfied with the amount they're doing.] Also, think about the goals you identified in our second session when we asked about your main motivation for becoming more physically active. How has physical activity become an important way to accomplish those goals? [Encourage discussion.]

Great ideas, everyone, and thank you for sharing. Being aware of these changes is the essence of self-monitoring.

So when do you have time to assess your feelings? Class is a good opportunity but you might want to do this outside of class too. One way to increase self-awareness is to practice relaxation techniques. To

do this, sit in a quiet, relaxing room, turn on some soft music if you'd like, and just start to focus on how you have felt since joining the STEP program. Let your mind wander as you think about all the positive changes that you have experienced by being active on a regular basis. Continue to explore your thoughts about your accomplishments for about 5 minutes. This strategy will help you to increase and maintain your motivation and confidence for becoming more physically active without taking up a lot of your time. Of course, feel free to spend more time assessing your feelings and progress—it's up to you.

You can also set aside some quiet time with one of your buddies and take turns discussing particular goals, feelings, challenges, and strategies. Take advantage of these relationships. The more you can incorporate what we're learning into your daily life, the more likely you are to succeed in making a permanent change in your activity levels.

- Refer to the Take-Home Challenge from Session 3 and discuss/review/reflect on responses. Examples you may encounter:

Some of you mentioned that you noticed an increase in your ability to get to and from meals more easily. Others mentioned that they noticed that they were feeling more happy and full of spunk. As we noted before, being aware of these changes is the essence of self-monitoring. What else did you experience or notice? Did you find that the physical activity log was an effective way to be more aware of your activity? This tool helps you better understand your physical activity and gives you a continuous way to monitor your activity. In fact, you have already been recording your exercise time since you started the STEP program, so we're off to a great start. In order to stay motivated to increase our physical activity, we're going to keep talking about self-monitoring in class and I would encourage you to take time to reflect at home as well.

V. Questions/Wrap-Up

- Briefly summarize the material and concepts that you covered in the session and provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions and express concerns.
- Remind them that their Take-Home Challenge is to be diligent about completing their tracking sheets and to come ready to discuss their progress at the next class on:
- Date and Time: _____
- Let them know that in Session 5 you will talk about additional self-monitoring techniques, discuss feelings about exercise, and learn strategies for dealing with negative thoughts.
- End the session on a positive, enthusiastic note and tell participants that you look forward to the next meeting.

For the next group session, instead of a Take-Home Challenge, we will review your progress using the exercise tracking sheets. I look forward to discussing how much more self-aware you have become and how well you're doing with self-monitoring!

Lesson Plan —Coaching Session #5

Examining Our Feelings: How We Think Can Affect How We Act

Introduction

This session involves teaching participants how thoughts and feelings about exercise influence their behavior. The group leader will first review the content of Session 4, and then lead an interactive discussion focused on the connections among thoughts, feelings, and exercise. The session concludes with the group leader handing out and explaining the Session 5 Take-Home Challenge.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Session 4 (self-awareness and self-monitoring).
 - STEP physical activity tracking sheet and monitoring of physical activity time.
 - How thoughts and feelings relate to exercise and behavior change.
- Print/copy the Session 5 Take-Home Challenge.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Review content of Session 4.
- Discuss how they are doing with the STEP program and becoming more self-aware of their physical activity.
- Discuss thoughts and feelings and how they influence behavior, specifically, physical activity.

Session Outline

- I. Greeting/Review
- II. Thoughts and Feelings
- III. Thoughts, Feelings, and Exercise
- IV. Take-Home Challenge
- V. Questions and Wrap-Up

Session Content and Sample Script

I. Greeting/Review

- Greet participants as they arrive.
- Review content of Session 4:
 - Self awareness
 - Self monitoring
 - Overall STEP exercise target of 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise
 - Important distinction between walking time and strength training (class time)
 - Use of the physical activity tracking sheet as a tool for self-monitoring

- Ask participants to share thoughts about their physical activity for the past week (Are they satisfied with the amount they've done? Do they have mental or motivational barriers to overcome next week?) and how writing down their activities on the tracking sheet helped them. Ask whether they have any problems or questions regarding the tracking sheets. Provide support and encouragement—it requires diligence but is extremely worthwhile.

It's pretty clear that you have become much more active over the past few weeks. You have been progressively increasing the number of minutes that you are physically active each week.

CONGRATULATIONS on making and keeping such a great commitment to your health and well-being! For the past few weeks, you have been recording your physical activity on the tracking sheet. This past week, you increased your focus and began to look closely at your own progress and walking time. What was the main purpose of doing this? [Pause to allow answers.] Great ideas. Another thing I would say is that your tracking sheets help you all become more aware of what you do or don't do on a regular basis. Let's take some time to think about what we found out.

Take a look at the numbers from last week on your tracking sheet and think about a few things: Were you physically active on any of those days? How many days were you physically active? Were you more active on certain days than on others? How different are these numbers from each other and do you remember a reason for the difference? [Encourage people to give examples of the reasons they experienced gaps in physical activity.] It's good to hear these examples because they are the exact issues we're learning about and developing strategies to overcome. I hope this shows how useful it can be to track your activities.

As you continue to increase the number of days (frequency) or the number of minutes (duration) that you are physically active, you will see a progressive increase in your total time doing physical activity. Once you are meeting the program goal of 150 minutes each week of activity (or close to it), you can shift gears and start working to maintain that level over the long term.

II. Thoughts and Feelings

- Lead interactive discussion on concept of thoughts and feelings and how they can affect behavior.

Today we are going to discuss another concept that will assist us in modifying our behavior. You have all recently started to become more aware of your physical activity patterns and how your body responds to exercise. First, does anyone have any questions about the importance of self-monitoring, strategies for self-monitoring, or anything else we discussed last week? [Pause.] Did anyone take some quiet time to practice reflecting on their physical activity? How did it go? What did you notice about the experience?

III Thoughts, Feelings, and Exercise

- Lead a discussion on the connection between thoughts, feelings, and exercise.

Today, we are going to start talking about your thoughts and feelings and how they relate to exercise.

You may ask, “My thoughts? What do they have to do with exercise?” Actually, thoughts are extremely important to behavior, in part because we do not realize that we keep a running dialogue with ourselves all day. In other words, you talk to yourself! For instance, have you ever said things like this to yourself? “Gee, I sure liked that spaghetti last night.” Or, “I feel like going to the beach today.” You also have a running dialogue regarding your physical activity and activity programs. In fact, you may have noticed certain thoughts regarding exercise before, during, and after you participate. For example, have you ever said the following things to yourself about physical activity before a session? “I know that I *should be* exercising, but I just don't *feel* like it.” Or, “I am really looking forward to today's workout!” If you have had these thoughts (like we ALL have), you aren't lazy or undisciplined or unable to be active. In fact, you were probably trying to motivate yourself—acknowledging how you did not feel up to exercising but telling yourself to go to class or to walk anyway! And that is the key concept I want to emphasize here: your thoughts and feelings affect your **motivation** and so they ultimately affect your **behavior**.

Really, there are only two ways feelings can influence our behavior: in a positive way or negative way. So, how you talk to yourself can be a powerful tool or a huge barrier, depending on how you use it. When it comes to physical activity, you probably have constant thoughts about walking, strength class, and these behavior sessions. Most of the time, these thoughts are probably about whether you want to do these things or not and whether you have time or not. It's okay; it's only natural. We need to understand how we think and feel about physical activity in order to increase our motivation for modifying both our thoughts and behaviors.

Therefore, it's time to start examining your thoughts and feelings AND how they affect your exercising behavior. You may have noticed certain feelings regarding exercise before, during, and after you participate [Give or ask for examples]. If you're feeling good, how does that affect your exercise behavior? (Whether you go for a walk, come to class, etc.) If you're feeling bad, how does that affect your exercise behavior? [Pause for responses.] What about when you're at home and not necessarily thinking about exercise? If you wake up feeling good, do you get more accomplished that day? The same as usual? When do you tend to feel better or worse (in terms of your health, energy, or emotions)? Are these good times to exercise for you or bad?

I hope you're starting to get a sense of all the questions we can ask ourselves to monitor our feelings. And to review, what's the purpose of monitoring? [Give or ask for responses.] It's to understand. To seek information that we can use to help reach our goals. The time we spend talking about thoughts and feelings and the time you spend on your own analyzing your thoughts and feelings are very important. We need to understand how we think to ourselves and how we feel about physical activity in order to increase our motivation for modifying both our thoughts and behaviors.

IV. Take-Home Challenge

- Distribute the Session 5 Handout and Take-Home Challenge.
- Explain the Exercise Feelings Scale. This will help participants complete the Take-Home Challenge.

Now, we would like you to consider another strategy: focusing on how you feel about physical activity and exercise, as well as on how exercise makes you feel. So, let's take a look at the Exercise Feelings Scale. Just like you keep track of your exercise minutes every week, this week I also want you to keep track of your exercise-related feelings. One of the most common thoughts that people have before physical activity is: "I know that I need to exercise, but I just don't FEEL like it today." But then, after they start their physical activity session, they start to think, "Boy, I do feel better now that I have started!" It is precisely these kinds of feelings that have profound effects on how you act.

In keeping with the process of self-monitoring, we want you to notice and record how you feel before, during, and after physical activity for the next week. You should also write down what the activity was (walking or strength class) so that you will be able to identify whether you have more positive feelings about one versus the other. Finally, please take some time to write down the thoughts you have on the lines provided. It only takes a minute and is very important to seeing how our feelings influence our actions. You can write things as simple as, "I don't want to go," or you can record the thought and the reason. Next week, we will discuss this information and build on it when we discuss positive and negative self-talk and how we can break the chain of negative thoughts leading to negative behaviors. Good luck—I know you're all up to the challenge!

In the meantime, please continue to record your walking and other physical activity on the tracking sheet. We will continue to review your sheets each week in order to help keep everyone motivated and active!

V. Questions and Wrap-Up

- Answer any questions that participants may have regarding the assignment and wrap up the session.
- Remind them to keep walking!
- Remind them to complete the Take-Home Challenge before the next session meets:

Date and Time: _____

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session # 6

Thoughts and Feelings About Physical Activity

Introduction

This session involves defining “self-talk” and how positive self-talk can help individuals change their behavior, especially as it relates to changing their exercise habits. During this session, participants will review strategies for self-monitoring, including recording their exercise minutes and their feelings before, during, and after exercise. They will also learn questions to ask themselves when examining their thoughts and feelings related to exercise.

This session introduces the concept of “self-talk” and how to change negative self-talk into positive self-talk. It is also a good opportunity to assess participants’ engagement in the program. Make sure participants’ walking groups or buddies are still meeting regularly, provide updates on any group goals that were set or parties being planned, and solicit feedback on how you can help them stay motivated as the program continues.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Session 6.
 - Content of the Session 6 handouts and Take-Home Take-Home Challenge.
 - The concept and importance of self-talk.
- Print/copy in-class handouts and the Session 6 Take-Home Take-Home Challenge.

Session Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Review the Session 5 Take-Home Challenge.
- Discuss the concept of self-talk and how participants can use it to modify their behavior.
- Review different types of negative thoughts.
- Discuss and learn how to identify and stop negative thoughts regarding exercise.
- Discuss the next Take-Home Challenge.

Session Outline

- I. Greeting/Review of Session 5
- II. Using Self-Talk for Behavior Modification
- III. Dealing With Negative Thoughts
- IV. Negative Thoughts and Exercise Goals
- V. Wrap-Up/Check-In/Take-Home Challenge

Session Content and Sample Scripts

I. Greeting/Review of Session 5

Greet participants and review Session 5 Take-Home Challenge (exercise feeling scale).

Last week you learned about your thoughts and feelings, two very important issues that may influence how successful you are at engaging in regular physical activity. I also gave you some handouts to help you monitor your feelings before, during, and after each physical activity session. **What was the main purpose of that Take-Home Challenge?** [Pause for answers.]

This assignment builds on the concept of self-monitoring (for example, using the physical activity log). Being aware of your thoughts and feelings is another way to self-monitor (for example, taking time for quiet self-reflection or using the exercise feelings log). **Why do you think that it is important to monitor our thoughts and feelings?** [Pause for answers.]

Take a few minutes to ask your self these three questions:

- What did you realize about your feelings?
- Did you see an association between your feelings and your behavior?
- How do you think that you can learn from this assignment?
- Now, would anyone mind sharing what you've learned with the group?

Encourage discussion and ask questions if conversation is slow:

- What patterns do they see in their feelings?
- How did these feelings affect their behavior?
- What time of day did people have the most difficulty?
- Did they find that even if they felt unmotivated before exercise, they felt satisfied/proud by the end? (We hope this was the case.)
- Have their feelings about exercise changed as they have progressed through STEP?
- How should they use this information to help them reach their physical activity goals?

Okay, great discussion. I hope this Take-Home Challenge has demonstrated the link between feelings and behavior. Understanding this link is critical. It's important to recognize that your feelings have a lot of power over your behavior. Luckily, you have a lot of power over your feelings. That is what we're going to talk about today. Now that we understand that negative emotions often lead to negative behavior, we're going to learn how to overcome those emotions instead of letting them sabotage our moods and, of course, our fitness goals. One of the strategies you can use is called ~~po~~positive self-talk."

I. Using Self-Talk for Behavior Modification

Introduce and discuss the concept of self-talk and how it can be used to modify behavior.

What is self-talk? We touched on it last time when we discussed keeping an internal monologue with yourself, such as, "I'm hungry," "What a nice phone call I just had," or "Look at all this rain!" That kind of internal monologue is general in nature and often neutral. It can be about your feelings but it can also be a simple observation about the world or the weather. Self-talk is focused on ~~the~~self." These are the comments you direct at yourself, as if you were talking to

yourself in the mirror. For example, “I need to read that book my friend was talking about. It sounded interesting,” “I look tired today,” or “I didn’t work hard enough in class today. What’s wrong with me?”

Sometimes these thoughts are directives—do this! Other times, they can be encouraging or neutral, and often we’re all guilty of self-criticism. It is the overly critical, demotivating comments that we want you to learn to recognize and avoid. Actually, we want you to take it one step further—don’t just avoid negative self-talk. Focus on positive thoughts and turn negative thoughts into positive encouragement. Increasing the frequency and impact of your positive thoughts will help you feel better about yourself and will make physical activity more enjoyable for you.

Let’s take a moment and think about some of the negative self-talk you engage in when you think about physical activity. [Pause and encourage several examples from the group.] For example, what do you sometimes say to yourself when you miss a STEP session or maybe when you want to miss a session but feel obligated to come?

Good examples of negative self-talk. Now let’s look at the handout, “Changing Negative Thoughts to Positive Thoughts.” We’re going to practice turning negative self-talk into positive self-talk. When you catch yourself being negative or critical, we want you to get into the habit of saying something supportive instead.

[Read the handout as a group and discuss the examples. Allow participants to think about more examples of ways to convert the negative thoughts listed into positive thoughts. They will have a chance to generate their own negative/positive pairings later in the session.]

II. Dealing With Negative Thoughts

- Present “Joe’s Story” (below) as an example of how negative thoughts can result in negative behaviors that undermine our best intentions and our larger activity goals.

Talking Back to Negative Thoughts

We have all had negative thoughts at some point. Negative thoughts often lead to unhealthy behaviors, which may keep you from living a healthy, active lifestyle.

Let’s take a look at a hypothetical person’s experience with negative thoughts.

Joe is 74 and, up until recently, was coming to the exercise and group sessions on a regular basis. Several weeks ago, he missed 3 consecutive days of activity and stopped completing his exercise/activity on the tracking sheet.

On Sunday Joe thought: “I’m tired of working so hard. This STEP program is more than I bargained for.”

- Result: On Monday, Joe took an afternoon nap and did not go to STEP class or do any walking. Joe watched television all day and felt lethargic and tired.

On Tuesday Joe thought: “I really should go to the store and wash my car today, but I am tired and hopefully it will rain in a few days.”

- Result: Joe napped off and on all day and when he woke up it was getting too dark to wash the car. He ran out quickly to grab a hamburger and came back to watch the game. He was up until 12:30 a.m.

On Wednesday Joe thought: “I have STEP class today, but I have not done any of my work and I have not exercised since Sunday. I can’t go now; everyone will know that I’ve failed. I’ll go next week when I’ve had a chance to get back on track.”

- Result: Joe did not return the next week and dropped out of the STEP program completely. He is now inactive and is starting to experience declines in energy, mobility, and mood.

Let’s take a minute to think about where Joe went wrong.

- What could he have done differently in order to maintain his physical activity program and happiness?
- Where did Joe go wrong?
- What are some things that Joe could have done differently?

III. Negative Thoughts and Exercise Goals

Negative thoughts regarding exercise may result from setting goals that are not realistic. If you continue to feel like you are not meeting your physical activity goals, you may need to reevaluate them and come up with new, more realistic goals that you’ll be able to meet and still benefit from physically.

This is why each time you set a goal, you should take a step back and make sure that the goal is realistic and fits well with your overall abilities. If you ever have a question regarding goal setting, please feel free to ask it during the classes, or anytime you see staff and have questions.

Remember, goals can be constantly reassessed and changed based on your changing needs. If you find that the goals you have set are just not working for you, change them.

Now, let’s learn some strategies that will help us talk back to negative thoughts. Let’s look at the Session 6 worksheet “Practice Changing Negative Thoughts to Positive Thoughts.” [Read the instructions as a group/to the group.] Let’s take a moment to think of some fitness goals that seem out of reach and some negative thoughts you’ve had related to physical activity. You can say them aloud or just write them on your page. [Pause if people want to share ideas.] Once you’ve written down at least three, go back to the first one. Is everyone ready? Okay, say that negative thought in your head and then let’s all say, “Stop!” [Count to 3 if people feel embarrassed so that everyone says, “Stop!” simultaneously.] Stop that negative thought. Don’t give it another minute to penetrate your brain and make you doubt yourself. Reframe that negative thought in terms of something positive—a goal you can reach, a phrase of encouragement, whatever response best addresses that concern but counteracts the negativity.

Let's look at the handout with the large box that says, "Strategies for Talking Back to Negative Thoughts." This sheet is a summary of everything we've talked about today. I want you to take this sheet home and refer to it. Put it on your refrigerator, by your bed, in your STEP folder, wherever you'll be able to refer to it easily. Make sure you look at it regularly. If you catch yourself being critical or allowing your mind to dwell on negative thoughts, I want you to pull out this sheet and go through every step as a way to "reset" your thinking. This will help you break the cycle of negative thoughts that feed negative behaviors. Let's go through the steps together. [Go through the steps and ask for questions or comments.]

IV. Wrap-Up/Check-In/Take-Home Challenge

- Answer any questions related to the session material.
 - Review the next Take-Home Challenge (Increasing Positive Self-Talk) and ask for questions. Participants are asked to write down four positive affirmations related to their fitness goals and their commitment to leading healthier lives. Ideally, they can look to these affirmations for encouragement when they find themselves unmotivated or resistant to exercise.
- Check-In
 - Encourage participants to continue walking on a regular basis and remind them to record their strength class participation and minutes of walking in the activity log.
 - If you have set group goals related to a party or "walking destination" on a map, this is a good time to update the group on its progress. You want participants to succeed and be able to celebrate after Session 9, so remind them about these secondary goals and make sure they are doing what it takes to reach them.
 - Make sure people are still engaged in their walking groups or meeting with their walking buddies. If some of these arrangements have dwindled, help participants resurrect their groups or form new ones. (This is also a good time to add a new walking course or change an existing one, if possible. Your participants have been involved for 6 weeks and may be struggling to stay motivated.)
 - Congratulate them on 6 weeks of involvement. Solicit feedback and encourage people with suggestions to meet with you outside of class or leave an anonymous note for you. Their success depends entirely on their level of engagement and commitment to the program.
 - Reiterate to participants that the STEP program consists of both walking and strength training components, with walking as the main part of the program.
- Remind them that the next session will cover mental barriers and problem-solving skills and will meet:

Date and Time: _____

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #7

Barriers to Physical Activity and the Art of Problem Solving

Introduction

This session introduces *barriers and lapses* and calls attention to the ways in which they can affect one's ability to exercise regularly. The session provides definitions and examples of barriers and lapses and asks participants to discuss examples from their own experiences. The Take-Home Challenge encourages participants to (1) think about barriers they encounter and the countermeasures they can employ to overcome barriers and (2) look carefully at certain aspects of their exercise patterns in the coming week.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Session 6, including
 - Positive and negative self-talk.
 - The STEP physical activity program.
 - How and why to record activity in the physical activity log.
 - Session 6 Take-Home Challenge.
 - The definitions of barrier and lapse.
 - How barriers and lapses can affect participants' exercise behaviors.
- Print/copy in-class handouts and the Session 7 Take-Home Challenge.

Session Objectives

Participants will be asked to:

- Review content of Session 6.
- Reiterate goals of the STEP program.
- Define and discuss barriers and lapses.
- Increase awareness of personal barriers and review problem-solving skills to prevent lapses in the STEP program.

Session Outline

- I. Greeting/Review
- II. Barriers and Lapses
- III. Personal Experiences and Problem-Solving Strategies
- IV. Take-Home Challenge and Wrap-Up

Session Content and Sample Scripts

I. Greeting/Review

- Greet participants.
- Review Content of Session 6:
 - Review of Session 6 Take-Home Challenge
 - Positive and negative self-talk
 - Relationship of positive self-talk to engagement in regular physical activity
 - Importance of recording physical activity in the log
 - Reiteration of STEP program goals and distinction between walking time and strength training time

Last week we challenged ourselves to practice catching negative thoughts and changing them into positive thoughts. Let's jump right in. [Encourage discussion.]

- What negative thoughts did you have regarding exercise in the past week?
- How did you modify your thoughts to be more positive? Or how could you modify them?
- What did you write down for your four positive thoughts?
- Did you post the positive thoughts somewhere in your house to remind you of them?
- How did recognizing negative thoughts and bolstering your positive thoughts help you with your physical activity?

I'm hearing that there is a very strong relationship between your thoughts and your exercise behaviors. The more positive your thoughts are, the more motivated you are to exercise, and the more negative your thoughts are, the more difficult it is to follow through on your exercise goals. This really is such an important skill, I'd like to spend a few more minutes talking through your experiences and making sure you've all mastered this skill.

Who found this Take-Home Challenge difficult and what was the hardest part? [Encourage discussion.] If talking back to your negative thoughts was hard, this could be a good time to get one of your exercise buddies involved. Since they've been in class, they understand the concept of positive and negative self-talk. Give them a call if you're feeling unmotivated; ask them to remind you about talking back to negative thoughts, or check in about completing your worksheets. We're all in this together, so let's remember to support each other in and outside of class.

Along the same lines, I want to encourage you to keep using your exercise logs. If you've been staying on top of it—great job! If you've fallen off the wagon, that's okay. It's a good time to pick it up again. At this point in the program, we're asking you to monitor your feelings, your walking, your strength training minutes, your RPE... How in the world could anyone keep track of all that information without writing it down? Create that record, that hard copy so you can look back whenever you need to and track your progress.

[Note: If the group has been working toward a shared goal or destination party, take a few minutes to update everyone on progress. Remind them of their individual goals as well: 150 minutes of exercise per week with a combination of strength exercises and regular walking. Strength RPE should be ~~hard~~” (15-16) and walking RPE should be ~~fairly light~~” to ~~somewhat hard~~” (11-13).

II. Barriers and Lapses

- Transition from a discussion of thoughts and feelings into a discussion of barriers and lapses.

During the last few sessions, we've talked a lot about positive and negative thoughts and feelings. Now I want us to get more specific. When you have a negative thought, is it just a passing thought? Or is it a thought you encounter frequently when trying to increase or maintain your exercise? What happens next? Can you fight through it and turn it into a positive thought or does it cause you to fall short on meeting your goals? It's possible that what you're encountering is a **BARRIER**, which puts you in danger of having a **LAPSE**. Today, we're going to discuss common barriers to physical activity and how these barriers can lead to lapses in physical activity. Remember that although it is important to identify your personal barriers to physical activity, it is even more important to have a plan to counteract those barriers and prevent an extended lapse.

- Define barrier.

A **BARRIER** is something that keeps you from participating in regular physical activity or following through on an exercise plan. Barriers may include things such as the environment (such as hallways without safety grab bars), feelings and thoughts, or daily interruptions such as the telephone, a TV show, an unexpected guest, or even a change in our health. But barriers are not always negative occurrences or things we need to eliminate from our daily lives. For instance, some people have caregiving responsibilities that challenge their ability to engage in regular physical activity. Barriers may often trigger a lapse in physical activity, making it difficult to be successful.

- Define lapse.

A **LAPSE** is usually the result of encountering a barrier that you don't know how to overcome, which causes you to miss a scheduled event or fail to meet a goal once or twice. If this starts to happen consistently, it may lead to an extended lapse, where you completely stop attending scheduled events or working toward your goals. In this case, that means not doing your regular walking and strength classes for more than a week or two. If the lapse continues much longer, then it is likely you will revert to your old habits and lose the new ones you've worked so hard to develop. And as we all know, when you reduce your activity, your mobility decreases and can be hard to regain as more time passes. We've learned that this can affect your mood, which in turn can act as a barrier.

Some of you may have joined the STEP program due to a lapse in your exercise or activity participation and others because you wanted to be even more active. Whatever your reasons, you've made an important commitment to yourselves and to your health that deserves

recognition. Now that you've come this far, don't let yourselves off the hook when it comes to physical activity and don't let a small lapse derail your long-term health goals.

That said, we have all had lapses at some point. You will probably have more of them. But they won't derail you if you ask the right questions and know how to get yourselves back on track. Remind yourselves that the sooner you bounce back from a lapse, the easier it will be to resume your physical activity at the same level. Don't worry about having a lapse. Instead, focus on ending it and getting back into your exercise routine as soon as possible.

- Provide additional examples of barriers and facilitate discussion in which participants come up with examples.

Now that we have defined **BARRIERS** and **LAPSES**, let's talk about some examples. There are two different types of barriers: external barriers and internal barriers. External barriers result from things in your environment or from your relationships with other people. Some examples are things such as a busy schedule or other activities, caregiving obligations or visiting relatives, or bad weather. Internal barriers emerge from inside you. Feelings of failure, feelings of resistance, dislike of exercise, and lack of motivation are common internal barriers people confront.

What are some other examples of barriers to physical activity? [Encourage discussion about barriers in general and participants' personal barriers.]

Okay, great examples. Now I want you to take a few minutes to do some self-reflection. [Ask them to take out their training logs and handout and refer them to the in-class worksheet –Examining Your Week of Physical Activity.’] Think about your participation in physical activity this week and the emotions you had. Then think about the barriers you encountered. Even if you met all your exercise goals, it may not always have been easy—what was going on and how did you overcome those barriers?

III. Personal Experiences and Problem-Solving Strategies

- Allow participants to complete the worksheet and then facilitate a discussion about it. Focus on how they overcame barriers to avoid a lapse in physical activity.

[After discussion.] Thanks for sharing. Those are all good examples of overcoming barriers using self-reflection and self-monitoring. In fact, you can use all of the problem-solving skills we've learned to overcome barriers and prevent lapses. Let's take a minute to review the skills we've learned so far. [Prompt them to remember the strategies covered in previous sessions (examples are listed below).]

- Skills and strategies to use when you encounter a barrier:
- Practice self-awareness to help you identify the cause of that barrier. (Session 4)
- Monitor your emotions and when/where/why you have them. (Session 5)
- Talk back to negative thoughts. (Session 6)
- Replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. If necessary, set a new, reachable goal. (Session 6)

- Bolster your positive thoughts by posting your positive thoughts worksheet on the refrigerator. (Session 6)
- Think about your reasons for joining STEP and the benefits you will reap. (Sessions 2 and 3)
- Look back at your tracking sheets and look at the progress you've made. (Session 4)
- Call a friend or exercise buddy for support and motivation.

Many of these examples have to do with internal barriers, so let's spend a few minutes on external barriers. Think about your daily routines. Are barriers built into your schedule? Things that make it harder for you to be active even when you want to be? Those should be the first things you try to change. Make sure you have at least one block of time devoted to walking each week. It's nice to be flexible in general, but when it comes to exercise consistency is the only path to success. If you need help identifying barriers in your schedule and making those changes, I would be happy to help you come up with solutions. Or if there are things we could do at this facility to help you, come and talk to me about it so I'm on the alert.

We're going to reflect on barriers in the Take-Home Challenge and we'll review it next session so you have plenty of opportunities to continue this important conversation.

IV. Take-Home Challenge and Wrap-Up

- Hand out Session 7 Take-Home Challenge.
- Encourage participants to continue walking and to record their walking minutes and other physical activity time in the log.
- Remind participants of the overall goal of the STEP program: Building up to 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week.
- Answer any questions and end session on an upbeat, enthusiastic note.
- Remind them that the next session will cover the value of social support and how to create a support network and will meet:

Date and Time: _____

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #8

The Value of Social Support and How To Create It

Introduction

This coaching session will review the Session 7 Take-Home Challenge on Barriers to Physical Activity and Problem Solving. The concept of social support will be introduced and information will be presented about the importance of social support in changing one's behavior. The group will discuss ways to seek social support and identify people who can offer it. Participants will brainstorm about creating their own social support network tailored to their needs. The Take-Home Challenge will reinforce this discussion by asking participants to seek social support during the week and reflect on the experience.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of Sessions 7 and 8.
 - Content of the Session 8 handouts, including:
 - Social support, identifying what kind you need.
 - Keys to successful partnerships.
 - Building a supportive team.
 - Content of Session 8 Take-Home Challenge.
- Print/copy Session 8 handouts and Take-Home Challenges for each participant.

Session Objectives

- Participants will be asked to:
 - Review and discuss Session 7 Take-Home Challenge on barriers and counteracting them.
 - Learn about the value of social support.
 - Learn the steps needed to build an effective social support system.
 - Discuss Session 8 Take-Home Challenge.

Session Outline

- I. Welcome/Review of Session 7 and Take-Home Challenge
- II. Social Support
- III. Identifying Social Support Needs
- IV. Questions/Take-Home Challenge

Session Content and Sample Script

I. Welcome/Review of Session and Take-Home Challenge

- Review Session 7 Take-Home Challenge. Ask participants to share their answers, and encourage group discussion and problem solving on their perceived barriers.
- Summarize and reinforce the problem-solving strategies they mention. Suggest additional or alternative strategies.

Last week your Take-Home Challenge asked you to identify barriers to your physical activity and to brainstorm regarding possible counteractions to those barriers.

- What barriers did you encounter regarding exercise and physical activity in the past weeks?
- What strategies did you identify to help you counteract or overcome these barriers?

II. Social Support

So far, we've talked about several tools and thought patterns that are critical to becoming a physically active person. These tools include tracking your physical activity, focusing on positive self-talk, identifying barriers to physical activity, and finding solutions to these barriers.

Another very important factor often involved in the success of a physical activity program is **Social Support**.

We can define social support as the people or personal networks you use regularly to help you achieve a specific “outcome.” STEP focuses on good exercise behavior as the outcome but social support networks serve a variety of purposes in our lives. Sometimes it is easy to forget how much our social networks influence our behaviors in positive or (sometimes) negative ways. If people around you are active, especially people close to you, you tend to be more active. Similarly, if some people in your network like to discuss their feelings and others like to discuss sports, you probably have more conversations related to feelings with some people and sports with the others.

During this process, as you strive to change your habits and exercise behaviors, social support can have a very positive influence. People often think of social support as something that is passive. For instance, we think, “~~Either you have it or you don't.~~” Fortunately, however, **SOCIAL SUPPORT IS ACTIVE**. You **can** create it.

Today I want you to think about the kind of support you have and the kind you need as you work toward your exercise goals. Then we're going to take a hard look at our social networks and get active about pursuing the support we need. In fact, this is a great example of self-monitoring (identifying the support you need) and problem solving (seeking the support you need).

Let's look at the Social Support handout, “*What Kind of Support Do You Need?*” to understand the different kinds of social support out there. As we read through, feel free to put checks by the descriptions you think fit people in your life; you can even jot down a name if you want. Read the “~~Social Support~~” handout as a group and discuss certain “~~personalities~~” or types of social support as you go. Answer questions as they arise. Next, read through the “~~Keys to Successful Partnerships~~” handout together.

- Encourage group participants to share ideas about the social support they already have in place and ways that others could help them. They can also ask someone in their existing network to fill a new role or seek out someone new to meet an unfulfilled need.

The **STEP Physical Activity Program** is an example of a social support network that is helping you become a physically active person. The relationships that you have already built through exercise and the group sessions are a great form of support. We want to help you identify the social support networks you are already using and learn how to create new ones so you have all the support you need to be physically active.

Let's talk about how you can use social support to help you accomplish your physical activity goals.

First, it is important to identify what your goals are regarding physical activity. Next, brainstorm about the amount and type of support you would like to have available. Then, approach a friend or family member for support. Talk about the STEP program and your goal to stay mobile by taking control of your physical activity patterns. Discuss the idea of social support and ask the person to be part of your social support network. After you get agreement to help, ask the person what he or she thinks will help you in this process. Let your friend or relative know your specific goals regarding your physical activity and how you think he or she can help. Ultimately, the most important thing is open communication. So make sure the people you identify to ask for support are people you can talk to openly about your needs.

Some of you might wonder how many people you should have in your support network. It varies from person to person. You will surround yourself with the amount of support that you need to be successful, whether that number is 2, 12, or somewhere in between. Also, remember that you don't necessarily need a large group of people you can talk to; a handful of strong supporters may be all it takes.

We place a lot of emphasis on talking, and it is important, but look back at the handout from a minute ago. There are many other roles to fill. You also need people to give you encouragement, or people to exercise with you. For example, do you go on walks with friends on a regular schedule? Do you meet a STEP group member for meals or other activities? If you do any of these things, **THAT'S GREAT!** You already have some strong social support established.

It will also be beneficial for you to seek out some different forms of social support, maybe some that you currently don't use, to increase your success.

III. Identifying Social Support Needs

Distribute **–Building a Supportive Team**” handout to each participant.

Now that we've had a chance to talk about all the components in a strong support network, we should start reflecting on our individual networks and building our **–support team**”.

Building a Supportive Team

Let's look over the **–Building a Supportive Team**” handout to organize our thoughts. Notice that the handout pulls together all the elements we've been talking about: It asks you to identify what you need help on, the kind of support you want, whom you can ask, how they can help, and how you can ask for help.

Note: Encourage participants to share ideas on completing the handout. You may want to fill out the top row of the handout as a sample (call: sister/friend, ask for: encouragement, etc.) but remind them to be specific. They should pick a particular friend for one type of support and a particular family member for another type of support. Another way to encourage discussion is to ask the group what they think a typical participant would need help with and how that person might complete the form. In this case, participants should complete their handouts at home with the Take-Home Challenge.

IV. Questions/Take-Home Challenge

Great discussion. It sounds like you have some good ideas about building a social support team and the people you would like to approach. I'd like you to take some time at home completing the "Building a Supportive Team" handout based on your needs and goals.

After you have completed this handout, try to use one of the different social networks you feel will positively influence your physical activity this week. For example:

- Walk with another person during exercise at the STEP program, someone new whom you have yet to talk with during exercise, or
- Ask a friend to give you a call to see how your activity is going during the next week.

Then, before our next session, complete the Take-Home Challenge. It will ask you to consider how using this new social support helped you reach your goals for the week. So, for next week you need to identify your social supports (using the in-class handout), contact one or two of them for support, and then... let them support you! Afterward, reflect on this experience with the Take-Home Challenge.

Since this is a multistep process, set yourselves up for success by starting right away. I would recommend completing your social support handout tonight while our conversation is still fresh. Then, when you wake up tomorrow you'll be ready to call your contacts and set up support for the week.

If you find yourself stuck at any point in the process, remember your self-monitoring skills: pull out your old handouts on examining your feelings, overcoming barriers, and using positive self-talk. Work through whatever hesitation you have about asking for help and then reach out to your support network. You can even ask for help asking for help! We will discuss this experience during our next session.

Before we leave – any questions? Feel free to seek me out if anything comes up during the week.

Also, don't forget to keep walking most days and to record all of your exercise time on the tracking sheet so you can keep track of how well you are doing.

Good luck gathering social support this week.

Lesson Plan—Coaching Session #9

Review of Self-Monitoring and Setting Goals

Introduction

This session is the last of nine behavior coaching sessions in the STEP program. The session reviews many aspects of the previous 9 weeks of coaching and introduces concepts related to short- and long-term goal setting. The session concludes with a discussion of goal setting and a handout designed to assist participants in defining short- and long-term physical activity goals.

Preparation

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - Content of entire STEP behavioral program.
 - Definitions of goals and objectives.
 - Concepts related to short- and long-term goal setting.
 - REACT framework for goal setting.
- Print/copy Take-Home Challenge.

Session Objectives

- Participants will be asked to:
 - Review content of Session 8.
 - Review major concepts from behavior sessions 1-8, including self-monitoring, social support, FITT principle, STEP program goals, and barriers to physical activity.
 - Discuss REACT and goal setting.
 - Wrap up behavior sessions with a discussion about short- and long-term goal setting.

Session Outline

- I. Greeting/Review
- II. Review of Self-Monitoring and Other Strategies
- III. Goal Setting
- IV. Review of Final Take-Home Challenge
- V. Questions and Wrap-Up

Session Content and Sample Scripts

I. Greeting/Review

- Review progress in self-monitoring.

Welcome to your final STEP coaching session. Even though you will continue your strength classes, walking, and balance exercises, our coaching sessions are ending. Congratulations to all of you for completing this part of the program! We will restart the cycle of coaching sessions on [date], so if at any point you want to refresh your skills on a particular topic or stop in to participate in a discussion, feel free. Our formal time together is over, but you can continue to

seek support from each other, from these coaching sessions, and from me when I see you at STEP strength classes or at other times.

The first thing I want to do on our last day is review your physical activity logs. For the past couple of months, you have been recording the minutes you were physically active and the type of activity you were doing. Now is a great time to revisit those 9 weeks of exercise and assess our progress. [**Note:** If you have planned a party or reward, or set a group goal, update everyone on your collective progress and discuss when you will meet to celebrate.] The main purpose of the tracking sheets was to help you all become more aware of what you do or don't do on a regular basis and to help you increase your physical activity.

Let's take some time to think about what we found out. Think about your physical activity time on the tracking sheets and consider a few things: On average, how many days were you physically active? How has your physical activity time changed since the beginning? Are you on the right path? Are you meeting the STEP program goal of 150 minutes per week? What days seem to be the best days for you to get in your activity? What are your biggest exercise barriers and how are you working to overcome them? [**Note:** Allow people individual time to look at their progress and assist them as needed. Then engage participants in a group discussion.]

Review content of Session 8 and the Take-Home Challenge.

Let's move on and review last session's assignment. At our last meeting, we talked about identifying social support contacts and the kind of support you need, and then approaching people for support. Everyone, take out your handouts and the Take-Home Challenge and let's talk about how the exercise went. Were you successful in identifying and seeking support? Did you run into any barriers along the way? If so, what actions did you take to address these barriers? [Engage the group in discussion.]

[**Note:** Summarize their ideas and emphasize the importance of social support. Encourage problem solving during the group discussion and allow participants time to work through any barriers they encountered. The next time that they encounter these problems, they will need to rely on the skills they've learned and the social network they've built. Make the most of this opportunity to reinforce the material you've covered in the past 9 weeks.]

II. Review of Self-Monitoring and Other Strategies

- Transition from social support to goal setting.

Social support is going to be very important as we end the formal behavior coaching sessions and move into the maintenance phase of the STEP program. Let's review the concept of self-monitoring and discuss the various strategies you have learned to help you self-monitor. Then we will talk about how this knowledge will help you to set effective and realistic goals.

- Facilitate a group discussion about their successes and challenges with self-monitoring and their status regarding home-based activities (self-monitoring, tracking sheets, balance exercises, etc.). You should also discuss:
 - FITT principle in the context of self-monitoring (review FITT acronym).
 - Where participants are in terms of the STEP goal of 150 minutes total per week.

- What benefits STEP has provided to participants.
- How these achievements have motivated participants to stay active.
- Review the topics, skills, and strategies covered in the previous eight sessions:
 - Session 3
 - Review your motivations for pursuing an active lifestyle.
 - Remember the importance of avoiding physical limitations and increasing function.
 - Review your written strategies for decreasing physical decline.
 - Session 4
 - Keep up your self-monitoring activities by maintaining your physical activity logs and your exercise feelings tracking sheets, as well as your record of your ankle weights and repetitions.
 - Practice self-awareness by reviewing these logs and records and reflecting on your progress.
 - Session 5
 - Acknowledge the effects of your feelings on your behavior and address your feelings honestly.
 - Session 6
 - Stay aware of positive versus negative self-talk:
 - Identify the negative thoughts and STOP them.
 - Analyze the associated feelings.
 - Convert negative thoughts into positive thoughts.
 - Session 7
 - Recognize barriers and prevent lapses.
 - Review your worksheet about counteracting barriers.
 - Session 8
 - Maintain and expand your social support networks.
 - Reflect on your needs.
 - Identify appropriate people.
 - Ask for help.
 - Reflect, discuss, and maintain.
 - Session 9
 - Set short-term and long-term goals.
 - REACT.

III. Goal Setting

- Define short- and long-term goals and introduce the REACT framework.

Does this sound familiar? “For my New Year resolution, I’d like to lose weight, stop smoking, and get healthy...” At one time or another, we’ve all made a worthwhile resolution that never became a reality. Chances are it didn’t come to pass because it was too broad and undefined. The key is to look at your aspirations and then define them in terms of concrete, attainable goals that you can act on. Once you set a goal, you need a plan. Not a general plan like “walk more” or “eat better”; your plan has to have specific steps and strategies, as well as short- and long-term goals.

You all have experience with this approach through the STEP program. We have been working on the huge goal “to live healthier lives” by defining it in terms of smaller, more specific goals, strategies for reaching them, worksheets and logs to track them, and people to help us reflect on them. As the behavior sessions end and you move forward, I want you to make sure you recognize all we’ve accomplished and continue to use the skills we’ve been practicing. As you move forward, you may also need to redefine your goals, adjust your habits, and set new goals, so let’s talk about how to do this.

What is a **goal**? **A goal is a desired outcome or end we plan to achieve, often with great effort.** Let me point out three keywords I know you’re all familiar with: desire, plan, and effort.

There are two types of goals: **Long-term goals** (such as losing weight or reducing your blood pressure) and **short-term goals** (exercising three times this week). Long-term goals are worthwhile, but often they involve a general desire that is too broad to act on. You need smaller goals and a specific plan to achieve them. Short-term goals have numerous benefits: you stay goal oriented (constantly reevaluating your progress and striving for improvement), you create opportunities for success (small victories each week boost your confidence and keep you motivated), and you achieve the long-term goal through incremental steps and continuous effort (which is how most big changes have to be made—gradually).

Here are some tips for effective short-term goal setting. An effective goal should be:

Realistic	The goal should be reasonable, not excessive or extreme.
Evaluable	You should be able to determine whether you met your goal.
Attainable	You should be able to accomplish your goal with the right steps.
Challenging	Your goal should require you to work for it.
Time based	For right now, your goals should involve only the next week (this interval may increase as you become more experienced).

It is very important to remember that your goals can be flexible. You should be able to revise your goals so that you can avoid failure and respond to unexpected changes, such as a change in your schedule due to a vacation or a temporary illness. The next assignment

takes you through the process of setting your first short-term goal in relation to your physical activity habits. Let's try this out.

[**Note:** You can do an example as a class or split people into small groups to focus on their individual goals. Either way, make sure they use the REACT principle and set short-term goals that will help them achieve their long-term goals. This is your last (scheduled) chance to reinforce their understanding.

IV. Review of Final Take-Home Challenge

- Highlight the importance of setting goals to which participants can commit and at which they will succeed.
- Participants **must** feel confident in their goals and optimistic about their eventual success to carry out the necessary steps and to do so independently.

The last Take-Home Challenge involves setting a specific short-term goal that will help you to increase and maintain your physical activity. You will try to achieve this goal over the next week and then repeat this process in subsequent weeks, setting and achieving new short-term goals, evaluating them, and beginning again. As you approach this task, let's think about a few questions:

- What is one of your most important long-term goals?
- What is your biggest weakness right now in terms of your physical activity program? (Think about the physical activity recorded on your tracking sheet from this past week.) Is it how many days you exercise, how long your physical activity sessions are, or your intensity of exercise?
- What is the first thing that you want to work on improving right now: your time, your days, or your intensity?

At this point in the STEP program, you have progressed into a maintenance phase. The behavior classes are ending and you should be approaching your goal of 150 minutes of exercise per week, including the STEP strength classes, which will continue as usual. Therefore, you will need to continually reevaluate and modify your goals based on your progress and ultimately be responsible for maintaining the changes that you have made. Here are some examples of goals that other people have set during this phase of the program.

- Before STEP, Betty wasn't walking at all. Currently, she is walking 1 or 2 days per week. Therefore, she is not getting in the total minutes that she should be. Betty has set a goal to walk 4 days this coming week. This means that she will strive to be physically active more days each week.
- Maggie was always a slow walker before participating in the STEP program. But now that she knows about perceived exertion (RPE) from STEP, this week Maggie is going to increase the intensity of her walking from an 11 to a 12.
- Phyllis currently exercises 3 times a week for 30 minutes each time. Now that she understands the importance of physical activity, she is going to set a goal of walking 4 times per week and she will try to take the stairs instead of the elevator some of the time.

In setting your goal for this week, you may choose to increase any component of your activity program: frequency, intensity, or time. Just remember *never* to exceed an RPE of 13 when walking or doing other aerobic activities. Also, NEVER exercise to the point of pain.

V. Questions and Wrap-Up

- Encourage participants to continue their walking and strength classes AND to engage in ongoing assessment of their goals and progress in the STEP program.
- End behavioral coaching sessions on a very positive, upbeat note and explain that although they have completed the formal coaching sessions, you will be there to assist participants as they continue working toward their goals and using all the behavioral strategies they learned and practiced in the coaching sessions.
- Suggest participants keep a dedicated journal or notebook where they can store their worksheets and handouts and record new self-monitoring activities. Arrange to have copies of certain worksheets available (for example, the physical activity log and handouts in Sessions 7 and 9, which they will continue to need), or suggest they record this information in their notebooks.
- The STEP strength classes will continue, so they will have access to you if questions arise. Make yourself available to discuss ongoing goals and review concepts from the coaching sessions. Also let them know when (and if) you will be restarting the coaching session cycle and encourage them to drop into sessions if they need a skill refresher.
- Congratulate yourself and them on a job well done! They have acquired many important skills to support their efforts at maintaining physical health and they could not have done it without you and the group environment you have created.