Using Self-Management Skills to Adhere to Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors

Learning and regularly using self-management skills can help you to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles throughout life.
Introduction

Reducing illness and debilitating conditions and promoting wellness and fitness are important goals for all of us. Practicing lifelong healthy lifestyles is the key to health, wellness, and fitness. Yet, there is considerable evidence that many people are not effective in making lifestyle changes, even when they want to do so. Experts have determined that people who practice healthy lifestyles possess certain characteristics. These characteristics can be modified to improve health behaviors of all people. Researchers have also identified several special skills, referred to as self-management skills, that can be useful in helping you alter factors related to adherence and ultimately help you to make lifestyle changes. Like any skill, self-management skills must be practiced if they are to be useful. In this concept, factors relating to healthy lifestyle adherence and self-management skills will be described.

The Facts about Lifestyle Change

Many adults want to make lifestyle changes but are unable to do so.

The majority of adults (66 percent) would prefer to alter their diet to improve health rather than take medicine. Nine of 10 people indicate that regular physical activity is important to their health. Approximatel...
Smokers were among the first studied. Smokers who are not considering stopping are at the stage of precontemplation. Those who are thinking about stopping are classified in the contemplation stage. Those who have bought a nicotine patch or a book about smoking cessation are classified in the preparation stage. They have moved beyond contemplation and are preparing to take action. The action stage occurs when the smoker makes some change in behavior, even a small one. Cutting back on the number of cigarettes smoked is an example. The fifth stage is the stage of maintenance. When a person finally stops smoking for a relatively long period of time (6 months) this stage has been reached.

The stages of change model (as illustrated in Figure 1), has now been applied to positive lifestyles as well as negative ones. Those who are totally sedentary are considered to be in the precontemplation stage. Contemplators are thinking about becoming active. A person at the preparation stage may have bought a pair of walking shoes and appropriate clothing for activity. Those who have started some activity, even if infrequent, are considered to be at the stage of action. Those who have been exercising regularly for at least 6 months are said to be at the stage of maintenance.

Whether the lifestyle is positive or negative, people move from one stage to another in an upward or downward direction. Individuals in action may move on to maintenance or revert back to contemplation depending on their attitudes and personal experiences. Smokers who succeed in quitting permanently report having stopped and started dozens of times before reaching lifetime maintenance. Similarly, those attempting to adopt positive lifestyles such as eating well often move back and forth from one stage to another depending on their life circumstances.

Once maintenance is attained, relapse is less likely to occur.

While it is possible to relapse completely, it is generally less likely after the maintenance stage is reached. At this point, the behavior has been integrated into a personal lifestyle and it becomes easier to sustain. For example, a person who has been physically active for years does not have to undergo the same thought processes as a beginning exerciser—the behavior becomes automatic and habitual. Similarly, a non-smoker is not tempted to smoke in the same way as a person who is currently trying to quit. Some people have termed the end of this behavior change process as “termination.”

Factors That Promote Lifestyle Change: The Facts

There are many factors associated with achieving advanced stages of healthy behavior.

The ultimate goal for any health behavior is to reach the stage of maintenance. The Surgeon General’s Report on Physical Activity and Health outlines some of the factors that relate to reaching and staying at the maintenance level for physical activity. These factors relate equally well to stages of change for other healthy lifestyles. For ease of understanding, they are classified as personal, predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing factors.
contemplation or even preparation. Enabling factors help those in contemplation or preparation take the step toward action. Reinforcing factors move people from action to maintenance and to help those in maintenance stay there.

**Personal factors affect health behaviors but are often out of your personal control.**

Your age, gender, and heredity are examples of personal factors. While these factors do not cause differences in behavior, differences in behavior are evident across these factors. For example, there are significant differences in health behaviors among those of various age groups. According to one survey, young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 are more likely to smoke (30 percent) than those 65 and older (13 percent). On the other hand, young adults are much more likely to be physically active than older adults.

Gender differences are illustrated by the fact that women use health services more often than men. Women are more likely than men to have identified a primary care doctor and are more likely to participate in regular health screenings. As you will discover in more detail later in this book, heredity plays a role in health behaviors. For example, some people have a hereditary predisposition to gain weight, and this may affect their eating behaviors.

While personal factors should be considered in making lifestyle changes, there is little you can do about your age, gender, or heredity. However, self-management skills can be effective for all people regardless of personal factors. Your personal characteristics may affect the way you use self-management skills but they do not prevent you from using them effectively.

**Predisposing factors are important in getting you started with the process of change.**

Predisposing factors are factors that are likely to help you move from precontemplation to contemplation or a higher state of healthy behavior. As illustrated in Figure 2, predisposing factors are associated with two basic questions: “Am I able?” and “Is it worth it?”

Am I able to do regular activity? Am I able to change my diet or to stop smoking? People who have “feelings that they are able” are said to have good perceptions of competence. They have the self-confidence and self-efficacy to embark on behavior changes for health improvement. Perceptions of competence, as evidenced by self-confidence and self-efficacy, are considered to be predisposing factors. If you feel competent, you are more likely to try something than if you feel incompetent. Later in this concept, you will learn several self-management skills that can help you improve perceptions of competence (if you do not already possess them).

Is it worth it? Making a change in behavior takes effort. You are more likely to make a change in behavior if you think your effort is worthwhile. Some factors that make a behavior change worthwhile are having the belief that the change will have benefits. Part of changing your beliefs is becoming knowledgeable about the behavior and its benefits. Enjoyment is another factor that makes a behavior change worthwhile. If you enjoy doing something, the enjoyment is its own benefit. Finally, attitudes make a difference. Research shows that people who have more positive feelings (attitudes) than negative attitudes are likely to adopt healthy behaviors.

**Enabling factors are important in moving you from the beginning stages of change to action and maintenance.**

Enabling factors help people follow through with decisions to make changes in behavior (see Figure 2). Having self-management skills is one type of enabling factor. Examples of self-management skills are self-assessment, self-monitoring, and goal-setting skills. You will learn more about these later in this concept.

Having access to the things you need to make changes in lifestyle is another type of enabling factor. For instance, having access to fitness facilities or cooking facilities would enable you to do regular exercise or cook healthy meals.

**Reinforcing factors are important in adhering to lifestyle changes.**

Women are more likely to use health care services than men.
Self-Management Skills: The Facts

Learning self-management skills can help you alter factors that lead to healthy lifestyle change.

**Self-Confidence** The belief that you can be successful at something (for example, the belief that you can be successful in sports and physical activities, and can improve your physical fitness).

**Self-Efficacy** Confidence that you can perform a specific task. (A type of very specific self-confidence.)

**Self-Management Skills** Skills that you can learn to help you adhere to healthy lifestyles such as regular physical activity. Examples include goal setting, time management, and program-planning skills.

Once a person has reached the action stage, it is important to move on to maintenance. Once a person has reached the maintenance stage, it is important to stay at that stage. Reinforcing factors help people stick with a behavior change (see Figure 2). Family, peer, and health professional influence are all reinforcing factors. If your family and friends or a doctor encourage you, it may help you adhere. It is important, however, that support from others does not create unnecessary pressure. Though support from others can be reinforcing, perhaps the most important reinforcing factor is success. If you change a behavior and have success, it makes you want to keep doing the behavior. If you fail, you may conclude that the behavior does not work and give up on it. Planning for success is very important in adhering to healthy lifestyle change.

Being aware of factors that influence lifestyles can lead to lifestyle change.

The factors described in the previous paragraphs and illustrated in Figure 2, are susceptible to change. Learning about these factors and studying how they affect you personally can help you in moving through the stages of lifestyle change.
management skills that are especially useful in promoting health, wellness, and fitness. In addition it requires you to learn to interpret your own self-assessment results. It takes practice to become good at doing self-assessments.

Self-Monitoring Skills
This involves monitoring behavior and record keeping. Many people think that they adhere to healthy lifestyles, but they do not. They have a distorted view of what they actually do. Self-monitoring helps give you a true picture of your own behavior. Monitoring progress in meeting goals is also important.

Goal-Setting Skills
This involves learning how to establish things that you want to achieve in the future. It is important that goals be realistic and achievable. Learning to set goals for behavior change is especially important for beginners.

Planning Skills
This involves learning how to plan for yourself rather than having others do all the planning for you. Knowledge and practice in planning can help you develop these skills.

Performance Skills
This involves learning skills necessary for performance of specific tasks, such as sport or relaxation. These skills can help you feel confident and enjoy activities.

Balancing Attitudes
This involves learning to balance positive and negative attitudes. To adhere to a healthy lifestyle, it is important to develop positive attitudes and reduce the negative attitudes.

Table 1 Self-Management Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Management Skill</th>
<th>Lifestyle Examples</th>
<th>How Is It Useful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assessment Skills</td>
<td>A person wants to know his/her health strengths and weaknesses. The best procedure is to select good tests and self-administer them. Practicing the assessments at the end of many concepts in this book will help you become good at self-assessment.</td>
<td>Helps in setting goals, provides basis for planning, helps make success possible, basis for new way of thinking, basis for learning skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Monitoring Skills</td>
<td>A person can’t understand why he/she is not losing weight even though restricting calories. Keeping records may show that the person was eating more than he/she thought. Learning to keep records of progress is also important to adherence.</td>
<td>Provides information, helps in setting goals, provides basis for planning, provides feedback, increases chance of success, provides information, helps alter beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-Setting Skills</td>
<td>A person wants to lose body fat. If he/she sets a goal of losing 50 pounds, success is unlikely. Setting a process goal of restricting 200 Calories a day or expending 200 more a day for several weeks makes success more likely.</td>
<td>Provides basis for planning, increases chance of success, basis for feedback, may enhance enjoyment, may influence attitudes, may alter beliefs, may help build confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Skills</td>
<td>A person wants to be more active, to eat better, and to manage stress. Self-planning skills will help him/her plan a personal activity, nutrition, or stress-management program.</td>
<td>Provides basis for success, basis for reinforcement, may help self-confidence, improves enjoyment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Skills</td>
<td>A person is stressed and anxious in many life situations. Learning stress-management skills, such as relaxation, can help a person cope. Like all skills, stress-management skills must be practiced to be effective.</td>
<td>Enhances enjoyment, provides for success, enhances self-confidence, influences attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing Attitudes</td>
<td>A person does not do activity because he or she lacks support from friends, has no equipment, and does not like to get sweaty. These are negatives. Shifting the balance to positive things such as fun, good health, and looking good can help promote activity.</td>
<td>Enhances enjoyment, basis for planning, helps in setting goals, influences beliefs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Personal, predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing factors influence the way you live. These factors are of little practical significance, however, unless they can be altered to promote lifestyle change. Self-management skills influence many of the factors that are associated with healthy lifestyle change. It takes effort to learn self-management skills, but, with practice and effort, they are skills all people can learn. Descriptions of various self-management skills that are especially useful in promoting lifestyles that enhance health, wellness, and fitness are included in Table 1.

It takes time to develop unhealthy lifestyles and time to change them.

People in Western culture are used to seeing things happen quickly. We flip a switch, and the lights come on. We want
Concept 2

Using Self-Management Skills to Adhere to Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors

Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Management Skill</th>
<th>Lifestyle Examples</th>
<th>How Is It Useful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Overcoming Barriers                    | People at work are often exposed to snack foods high in empty calories. For this reason his/her nutrition is not what it could be. Skills in overcoming barriers include planning and preparing your own food and selecting good foods. | • Improves access  
• Provides good environment  
• Makes time available  
• Contributes to enjoyment  
• Improves self-confidence |
| Learning Consumer Skills               | A person avoids seeking medical help when symptoms of illness are present. Instead, the person takes an unproven remedy. Learning consumer skills provides knowledge for making sound medical decisions. | • Builds knowledge  
• Promotes sound beliefs  
• Influences attitudes  
• Improves self-confidence |
| Finding Social Support                 | A person abuses alcohol. If friends and family also abuse alcohol, the abuse will probably continue. In some cases, it is best to find support elsewhere and then seek support of friends and family. | • Reinforces healthy behavior  
• Doctor’s advice motivates  
• Supports idea that you are able  
• Supports idea that it is worth it  
• Improves self-confidence |
| Preventing Relapse                     | A person stops smoking. To stay at maintenance, the person can learn to avoid situations where there is pressure to smoke. The person can learn methods of saying “no” to those who offer tobacco. | • Builds self-confidence  
• Aids environment  
• Promotes success  
• Builds knowledge |
| Adopting Coping Skills                 | A person avoids physical activity because he/she does not have the physical skills equal to peers. Coping skills allows this person to tell him or herself that self-comparisons are not important and then choose to be active anyway. | • Improves enjoyment  
• Enhances attitudes  
• Improves self-confidence  
• Promotes success |
| Managing Time                          | A person wants more quality time with family and friends. Monitoring time can help a person reallocate time to spend it more consistently with personal priorities. | • Provides options  
• Helps overcome barriers  
• Provides for skill learning  
• Aids planning |

Strategies for Action: The Facts

Many people feel that factors influencing health and wellness are out of their control. www.mhhe.com/hper/physed/chw/student/  
A recent poll indicates that 91 percent of adults would like to change their lifestyles to make their lives more enjoyable and to change factors associated

food quickly, and thousands of fast-food restaurants provide it. The expectation that we should have what we want when we want it has led us to expect instantaneous changes in health, wellness, and fitness. Unfortunately, there is no quick way to health. There is no pill that can reverse the affects of a lifetime of sedentary living, poor eating, or abuse of tobacco. Changing your lifestyle is the key. But lifestyles that have been practiced for years are not easy to change. As you progress through this book, you will have the opportunity to learn how to implement self-management skills. Learning these skills is the surest way to make permanent lifestyle changes.
with wellness, such as reducing stress and tension. Unfortunately, many people feel that they do not have personal control over good health and wellness. For example, one survey suggests that most of the lifestyle changes deemed important by millions in our society will remain in the realm of fantasies, just beyond realization. Experts have shown that people who feel that health is beyond personal control express such ideas as “Bad things [illness] can’t happen to me and good things [wellness] are beyond my reach.”

Many people can benefit from a new way of thinking about health, wellness, and fitness. Many people have unrealistic expectations about health and fitness. They compare their fitness to athletes and their appearance to models and movie stars, often setting standards for themselves that are impossible to achieve. Some say “I could never do that” when considering becoming physically active, altering eating patterns, or learning to manage stress. Many lack information about what is really possible concerning healthy lifestyles. Those who feel a lack of control, set unrealistic standards for themselves, and lack confidence in their own abilities to change.

Adopting a new way of thinking can have dramatic implications. A major purpose of this text is to help you adopt a new way of thinking toward health behaviors. This new way of thinking acknowledges that many of the factors that influence health, fitness, and wellness are largely within your control. Learning and practicing self-management skills can help you develop this new way of thinking.

Assessing factors that influence healthy lifestyles provides a basis for changing those factors that can contribute to health, wellness, or fitness.

Lab 2A allows you to assess predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing factors associated with one healthy lifestyle—regular physical activity. Similar assessments are possible for other healthy lifestyles. Self-assessments allow you to determine the factors that you can alter to make changes in any or all healthy lifestyles.

Assessing your current self-management skills provides a basis for future skill development.

Lab 2B provides you with an opportunity to assess your current self-management skills for one healthy lifestyle—regular physical activity. In subsequent concepts, you will practice the self-management skills relating to a variety of different healthy lifestyles. As you learn more about self-management skills, especially those that relate to physical activity, you can refer to Lab 2B to see if your assessments of your self-management skills were accurate.

You can benefit from a critical analysis of the theories and models that help us understand the factors that lead to healthy living.

Table 2 describes some of the best-known theories and models used by researchers to study the factors associated with healthy living. Much of the information presented in this concept was derived from research using these theories and models. The suggested readings provide more information about the theories and models for those interested in studying them further.

WEB Review

Web Review materials for Concept 2 are available at www.mhhe.com/hper/physed/clw/student/

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You can benefit from a critical analysis of the theories and models that help us understand the factors that lead to healthy living.
Table 2 Theories and Models Associated with Healthy Lifestyle Adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transtheoretical model</td>
<td>This model is also referred to as the stages of change model. As described earlier in this concept, this model suggests five stages of change that characterize various health behaviors. The model suggests that doing the correct things (processes) at the right time (stage of change) is important to self-change in health behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health beliefs model</td>
<td>This model suggests that a person’s health behavior is related to the following five factors: the belief that a health problem will have harmful effects, the belief that a person is susceptible to the problem, the perceived benefits of changing a lifestyle to prevent the problem, the perceived barriers to overcoming the problem, and the confidence that he/she can do what is necessary to prevent it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social cognitive theory</td>
<td>Social cognitive theory is also referred to as social learning theory. Central to this theory are self-efficacy and positive expectations about behavior change. Also, the theory suggests that a person must value the outcomes of a behavior if he or she is likely to do that behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of reasoned action</td>
<td>This theory suggests that a person’s behavior is most associated with the person’s intention to do the behavior. The two factors most likely to influence a person’s intentions are attitudes (beliefs) and the social environment (opinions of others).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of planned behavior</td>
<td>This theory is often combined with the theory for reasoned action. It has the same basic tenets but adds the concept of “perceived control” over the environment. The person must believe that he or she has some control over the factors that allow performance of that behavior. Perceived control is in many ways similar to self-efficacy in social cognitive theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination theory</td>
<td>Central to self-determination theory is the importance of choice in a person’s life (autonomy). Perceptions of competence at mastering life’s tasks are also critical to the theory. Making personal choices in attempt to master the tasks of daily living are emphasized rather than making choices based on external pressures to comply. Self-determination theory, and its subtheory cognitive evaluation theory, emphasize intrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation inherent in behaviors that are exciting and/or fulfilling to do, is very important in making activity choices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested Readings


Lab 2A: The Physical Activity Adherence Questionnaire

Purpose: To help you understand the factors that influence physical activity adherence and to see which factors you might change to improve your chances of achieving the action or maintenance level for physical activity.

Procedures:
1. The factors that predispose, enable, and reinforce adherence to physically active living are listed below. Read each statement. Place an X in the circle under the most appropriate response for you: very true, somewhat true, or not true.
2. When you have answered all of the items, determine a score by summing the four numbers for each type of factor. Then sum the three scores (predisposing, enabling, reinforcing) to get your total score.
3. Record your scores in the Results section and answer the questions in the Conclusions and Implications section.

Predisposing Factors
1. I am very knowledgeable about physical activity. 3 2 1
2. I have a strong belief that physical activity is good for me. 3 2 1
3. I enjoy doing regular exercise and physical activity. 3 2 1
4. I am confident of my abilities in sports, exercise, and other physical activities. 3 2 1

Enabling Factors
5. I possess good sport skills. 3 2 1
6. I know how to plan my own physical activity program. 3 2 1
7. I have a place to do physical activity near my home or work. 3 2 1
8. I have the equipment I need to do physical activities I enjoy. 3 2 1

Reinforcing Factors
9. I have the support of my family for doing my regular physical activity. 3 2 1
10. I have many friends who enjoy the same kinds of physical activities that I do. 3 2 1
11. I have the support of my boss and my colleagues for participation in activity. 3 2 1
12. I have a doctor and/or employer who encourages me to exercise. 3 2 1

Predisposing Score =

Enabling Score =

Reinforcing Score =

Total Score (Sum 3 Scores) =
Conclusions and Implications:
In several sentences, discuss your ratings from this questionnaire. Also discuss the predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing factors that you may need to alter to increase your prospects for lifetime activity.

In several sentences, speculate about adherence factors for other healthy lifestyles such as eating well and managing stress. Do you think you need more or less work in these areas as compared to physically active living?
Lab 2B: The Self-Management Skills Questionnaire

Purpose: To help you assess your self-management skills that are important to adhering to physically active lifestyles.

Procedures:
1. Each question reflects one of the self-management skills described earlier. Read each statement. After each statement, place an X over the circle indicating whether you think the item is very true, somewhat true, or not true.
2. When you have answered all of the items, score the questionnaire using the information in the Results section.
   Determine your ratings and answer the questions in the Conclusions and Implications section.

Rating Individual Scores Total Score
Good 3 30-36
Marginal 2 24-29
May need improvement 1 less than 24

1. I regularly assess my health-related fitness and rate my fitness test results using health-fitness standards.
2. I keep regular physical activity logs to monitor current physical activity levels.
3. I set realistic and attainable fitness and activity goals and monitor progress in meeting these goals.
4. I have planned a personal program that includes activities for all parts of fitness and for optimal health benefits.
5. I have the motor skills necessary to perform several physical activities on a regular basis.
6. I have more positive than negative attitudes about physical activity.
7. I find a way to do my activity even when the weather is bad or my time is limited.
8. I know how to identify fitness misinformation and quackery.
9. I know how to get others to do exercise with me and to get the support of others for doing my own activity program.
10. I know and use strategies to stick with it especially when I have not been active for a while.
11. I participate in activities that I am not very good at because I am able to enjoy them even if I don’t excel.
12. I manage my time to allow regular performance of my physical activity program.
Results: Record your score for each skill as well as the rating in the chart below. There is one question for each self-management skill. Your score for each self-management skill is the number inside the circle for that question. The number of the question for each skill is noted in the chart below. To get your total score, sum the scores for all of the self-management skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Management Skill</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing attitudes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming barriers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning consumer skills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding social support</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing relapse</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting coping strategies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing time</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Conclusions and Implications:
In several sentences, discuss your ratings regarding self-management skills. In which areas do you think you need to learn more to be able to be a better self-manager?

In several sentences, speculate about your self-management skills for other healthy lifestyles such as eating well and managing stress. Do you think you need more or less work in these areas as compared to managing for physically active living?