

## Increasing Your Movement for Better Emotional and Physical Health

Welcome to the Increasing Your Movement for Better Emotional and Physical Health. My name is Melanie Ordonez, and I will be one of your moderators, along with my colleagues Paisley Landry and Dustin Snedeker.

I'd like to welcome our speaker, Maureen Prinster. Maureen is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian, and a National Board-certified Health and Wellness coach. She has more than 16 years of experience coaching in the behavioral health field. Maureen committed her career for helping individuals live healthier, happier and more productive lives by coaching them to be their best self.

I would like to turn the presentation over to Maureen.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: Thank you so much Melanie for having me here today.

I'm happy to be here talking about an issue and perspective that can literally change lives. The impact that exercise and movement can have on personal mental, physical, emotional health really is extraordinary. I'm excited to share with you all only really a fraction of what I have learned during my career of working with behavior change and habit development and what I have seen physical activity do.

My goal today is you walk away with one idea or strategy to help you get more physical activity in your life.

Over the last two decades as a health and wellness coach I had discussions with literally thousands and thousands of people on this topic. The topic of getting more exercise.

One of the questions I ask them or anybody I'm coaching on this is on a scale of one to ten with ten being the highest, how important has exercising regularly over the last few months been to you? Obviously, the answer is on the higher end. Six, seven, even eight. It's interesting because then I'll ask on a scale of one to ten, how motivated have you been over the last few months to exercise regularly? As you can guess this number tends to be lower.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a great example of ambivalence. Many of us are walking around with when it comes to exercise and physical activity we feel too out of the way about it. This is uncomfortable or confusing. I'm here to tell you that ambivalence is very normal. What I like to do is bring that out in the open with clients.

Then we start to talk about how they think about getting exercise? What are the thoughts popping in their head or what visuals do they have inside I didn't remember mind? I want to know what is their perspective of going to the gym or going on a walk when it's chilly outside. They compare to other self care behaviors like brushing your teeth. What is their actual belief system and exercise and how that is really affecting them following through.

Today I would like to walk you through some of that. I'm going to challenge you and ask you some questions and give you something to think about, especially with your own perspective around this.

We are going to discuss ways to consider to change these if they are not helping you. And I would like to share with you some ideas that worked for some of my clients and really made a big difference in not only their view and perspective, but also what they are telling themselves when they don't feel like exercising, which can turn to make a big shift in our behavior and actions around exercise.

To get started and get into the meat of this webinar, I would like to do a quick poll. Melanie, can you post that?

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: Sure. Let me pull this bigger. So the poll is rate on a scale of one to ten with ten being the highest, what is your current motivation to exercise? And I see lots and lots of people responding. So, we are not broadcasting these, so just click the radio button next to your response.

That is how you vote. I'm going to give you just a few more seconds do this and then I'm going to close that poll so we can let everybody know where we are at with that.

So you can see here it looks like the highest is 14% at a 5.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: Right in the middle.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: Then you start talking about ten being the highest you have 6%. Then the one to five range seems to be the higher pick. Most people right now when you look at the scale of one to ten with ten the highest, it seems like most people are under -- are in that five level.

And, I want to let you know we are not broadcasting results right now. I'll read them off to you real quickly. Number one was 9%. Two is 13%, three is 12%. Four is 12%. Five is 14%, 6 is 9%, 7 is 8%.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: The majority of them look like some of us struggle with this which is normal. As far as the folks on the higher end, the six, seven, eight, nine, ten, that is fantastic. And hopefully from you all we might be able to learn a thing or two about what you do through this webinar.

Now, as far as the importance goes, I had asked my clients. I assume a lot of you feel this is important because you are here. I don't think you would be on this webinar if you didn't feel like this is something that in some way, shape or form was important to you. So thank you all for doing that.

Before we get into changing perspective and ways to change behavior, let's really talk about what we are aiming for when we say physical activity or exercise. Especially later when we discuss specific effects that exercise can produce in the human body and brain.

Let's just start with a standard definition so we are all on the same page. The American college of sports medicine provides recommendations and guidelines for physical activity and exercise based on the latest science and insight from health professionals. They provide us with really the optimal dosage range for getting the bulk of the exercise. This is what they recommend.

For aerobic physical activity if we can get 2.5 to 5 hours a week of moderate intensity aerobic activity which is anything getting your heartbeating faster, then we are going to get the bulk of exercise. An example would be brisk walking, riding a bike, hiking, water aerobics. For 1.25 to 2.5 hours a week of vigorous intensity aerobic activity.

An example would be running, hiking uphill with a heavy backpack, cycling ten miles per hour, jumping rope. High intensity stuff. Or an equivalent of the two. Some may be during the week of moderate and one of vigorous. They have stressed the fact if we are spread that throughout the week that is going to be the ideal.

So anything to the aerobic, they also recommend we do something with muscle strength. Something that moderate or greater to all muscle groups two or more days a week. One would be resistance bands, push ups, sit ups, anything using your own body weight. Climbing stairs even. They don't have a limit specified on the time we need to spend on this, but they do say performance to where it would be difficult to say to do another repetition.

Of course, just a reminder, if you haven't been exercising at all, you need to consult your doctor before you start any exercise program. Now, with the ACSM recommends may seem a little overwhelming, especially if you have been sedentary or have been sporadic in being able to fit this type of exercise in. But really, it's important to have this information because this is really where the magic happens. You can see someone's life change significantly, their health, how they feel everyday, their mental state all improve for the better.

It doesn't mean just a little bit of exercise is going to have an effect, it will. But this is where we know it will make the biggest impact. If we are just starting off we want to aim for baby steps and slowly progress. We will talk about that a little later in more detail.

We all have our own individual views of exercise and reasons we struggle with getting enough movement. These are real struggles. We all have them at one point or another. Let's face it, our culture is not setup for us to be extremely active. We have to be intentional about it.

The big promise that exercise is just good for you or good for the heart is not a lot of times powerful enough to motivate most of us to do something that we might think is a chore or uncomfortable or just a pain.

I would like to tell you a quick story about one of my clients. We will call her Tara. She is a 40 year old single working mother of teenagers. She works two jobs, running a household. She even has extended family responsibilities with aging parents. She is typical for a lot of mothers and fathers, too. We struggle putting our own self-care as a priority.

She found herself at 40 years old 25 pounds heavier than 5 years ago. She had a high stress level from all going on. She ended up in the emergency room one afternoon where she thought she was having a heart attack because she was having -- her breathing was rapid, her chest hurt, she was sweating, she knew something was wrong. Turns out she was having a panic attack. Anxiety had really built up and up and then she found out she had high blood pressure. This was all new to her.

She realized sitting there in the emergency room after she was told what was going on that she used to be really active. She used to take care of herself. Even when her kids from small, but because of different circumstances in her life she didn't have time in her eyes to devote herself to this.

She came to coaching wanting some help. What can I do because something has to change? We had to dig deep. We had to talk about what are her challenges? What is making it so hard for her to get in that physical activity for herself? Then, of course, again, one of them being time. You know, I did ask her, when you think about going for a walk or going to the gym, what thoughts come into your mind? What is that internal dialogue? What are you saying to yourself?

She said, exactly what we thought. I don't have time. I'm tired. She also said her son has homework and he needs me. What else are you saying to yourself? And she admits to thinking, this is so hard. I'm going to be so tired for the next day and I don't have the energy for that.

hour thought it's and effect ur behavior. She tells herself she doesn't have time and it will hurt and be tired. So it's like a self-fulfilling prophecy. I want to ask you to do some self-reflection. I'm going to give you a few minutes to do this. What are your challenges to getting the recommended amount of exercise? Why is it so hard for you?

But then, taking it again to another level, what is that internal dialogue when someone mentions getting more exercise? What are you saying to yourself?

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: We are going to give you a few moments of silence to let you know that so you can write this down and take a moment to do this activity. We will be silent for a little bit. Use the Q&A if you have questions or comments. Once you are done if you can please raise your hand. We have an allotted amount of time but if most people get done quicker, we can move on.

We are having some silence right now. If you are not hearing anything it's giving people time to finish some internal reflection here. Do you want to go over those questions again?

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: So the challenges to getting the recommended exercise. Why is it hard? What is your internal dialogue when someone mentions getting more exercise? What is your own personal perspective? That is it. It has to be personal. It's yours. It's no one else's. It's not your doctor or anyone else's. It's how you view it and the struggles that you may have.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: We have quite a few people raising their hand and some people working on it. We have some people commenting on the questions and they talked about things like I have a back injury. I have concern it will worsen my pain. I'm care giver for a sick person, a loved one and I'm overwhelmed at times. Someone mentioned a similar story as Tara. I have my work, kids, chores, things like that. Someone said redefining what I consider exercise.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: I love that. There are different ways to go about it. It is hard and these are all real struggles. They are not "excuses" in a negative way. These are real life issues. We have to take

those into consideration. Hopefully today we can come away with looking at things just a little bit differently.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: We have a good amount of people working on this. Some are finished. We have a limited amount of time today. If you haven't finished this go ahead and finish anything during the session. This is a foundation to get what you need from Maureen's presentation. With that Maureen you can go ahead and move on.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: Thank you all for taking the time to think about that. Hopefully you'll really look at, again, what is your own personal struggles and what is that internal dialogue? What is that self talk that you are telling yourself?

So I do want to go back to Tara for a minute. After leaving the emergency room, she knew something had to change. She realized that part of that was how she thought about physical activity and exercise. Therefore, her actions from those thoughts.

I challenged her as we talked through this to consider this. I do this with quite a few of my clients. I proposed the following. Exercise is medicine. It's not just a good thing to do. Medicine in its own right can work similar to pharmaceutical drugs in some instances, not all of them. There was a meta analysis done of 16 studies that compare the effectiveness of exercise intervention versus drug therapy. And what was so interesting is the exercise and drug interventions did not differ in terms of mortality benefits. The rate of death or in secondary prevention of heart disease, rehabilitation after stroke, treatment of heart failure or even prevention of diabetes. In some cases in these studies they say for stroke rehabilitation, exercise intervention was more effective than drug therapy. So researchers are now digging deeper into the mechanisms that underlie these benefits of exercise. And they are finding that exercise is both powerful and wide reaching for every part of the body. From the immune system to the brain to the energy systems themselves. The goal is to think of exercise as a therapy. It's like your own personal regenerative medicine.

exercise intervention should be considered as a viable alternative in some cases, not all of them, and that would be up to physician or along drug therapy. In some cases we need to get prescriptions from our health care providers this is what you need to do to take care of yourself.

We are told that, but in a way this is part of your therapy. This is part of how you are going to manage your health. I mean, if there was a prescription that could prevent and treat dozens of diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, would you take it? I mean, I probably would and many of us would. Again, assuming it's safe. It's so profound what exercise can do. And I want to talk more in detail about that. on what it can do for the human body and let's start with the mental health benefit.

Why can we even call it medicine? Exercise directly affects the brain by increasing the volume of certain brain regions through better blood supply, delivery of oxygen and nutrients. I don't want to get too, too technical here, but I have to mention of critical importance for mental health is part of the brain called the hippo campus. It's involved in memory, emotion and -- it creates new hippo campus neurons reconnecting pathways in the brain which can help relieve depression.

It can help stress and anxiety by diverting what you are stressed about. Muscle tension is anxiety. But as your heart rate goes up in the exercise, your brain will release anti-anxiety neurochemicals that mimic mild anti-anxiety medication.

It can increase a person's self-confidence. Completing workouts is a feeling of accomplishment which can affect your mood and distract us from negative thoughts. And you know, with our current state of what we have been through with the pandemic, experts say exercise is a great way to cope with the frustration. Even a simple walk can help. Exercise channels out the adrenaline when frustration builds up. We all know we have been frustrated with this pandemic. This is one -- one more reason how it with help our mental health.

So for those that suffer with ADHD or maybe not even diagnosed but the struggle with focus. When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals like neurotransmitters, one of them being dopamine.

People with ADHD usually have more dopamine in their brain. There is so much to talk about exercise and what it can do in the brain. For time's sake I can't go into all of it. That can be its own presentation in itself.

Next I want to talk about the physical side. We all know a lot about this. This is something we have all been told for our whole lives basically. We know cholesterol how it can help that, blood sugar, blood pressure. But exercise is really a dimension that moderates other risk. So let's say if you are cholesterol is high but you do exercise regularly, your risk of disease, of death is much, much lower than if you say, just sat on your couch all day and just had high cholesterol. It can offset some risk factors.

You know, we can't of course completely stop the aging process. But staying active can slow it down. And it diminishes immobility.

In addition to the cardiovascular disease, the type two diabetes the cholesterol, another amazing thing I found about exercise is how it can lower risk of cancers, specifically they found bladder, breast, colon, I mean the list goes on and on. Lung, stomach.

Another personal -- for me where it gets personal when we talk about what are our reasons and why we do this in the first place. My father has dementia. I know my risk of getting it is up because of that. But exercising has been shown to help reduce that risk. It doesn't negate it completely, but it definitely can make a big difference.

Also, you know, just as we age we are at risk of falling and getting injuries. Exercise can help with that along with mobilizing immune cells. And we all know we need that more than ever. Our immune system needs to be strong and healthy and getting regular physical activity can help with that.

So I would like to do another poll real quick. Again, personally and of course, no one can see exactly what we are typing in. But I would just like to know how can starting or increasing your exercise benefit you specifically? Personally. Knowing your health, family history and even your mental struggles, based on what we talked about so far or other areas that you know of. What would you personally benefit -- what would benefit you if you started or increased your exercise?

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: We have some results coming in. Before I read those I do want to real quick tell you my daughter who is a nurse works with a physician in his 80s and he is still practicing medicine. He asked him, Dr. Smith, what is the secret? He said movement. He said a moving target is harder to hit. That is his mantra. I thought that was so good.

We have a lot of different responses coming in right now and people are saying -- let me get in here. People are talking about it affecting blood pressure, cholesterol, lower those, getting healthy, they have a family history of cardiovascular disease. Quite a few people that are talking about relieving stress and anxiety. Increasing energy level.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: I see weight loss, diabetes, Alzheimer's, the feel good hormones being released. That is the thing about -- sometimes those immediate effects are not felt and that is why we can't give up. We want instant gratification benefits and at least at first if you are just starting out that is a lot of times not going to happen.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: People are being really personal here and thinking about this. I appreciate this. Someone wrote walking my dog. Sometimes it's worth thinking it's better for my dog if I can take my dog for a walk. That is your motivation. That is awesome. I see so many people here are talking about weight loss, mobility, keeping agile, lower cholesterol, lowering blood pressure, helping with diabetes, trying to lose weight, strengthening themselves, getting more energy. If I had to wrap it up in a nutshell that is what most people are focusing in on right now.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: Absolutely. It comes down to what is important to you and how is this going to benefit you in telling yourself that, reminding yourself?

That brings me to the next slide. We are going to talk about a wellness vision. I talked about this before. I use it a lot with my clients. Like we were saying, health benefits aren't the only reason to do physical activity. Like you said, the dog. Maybe it is aesthetic factors. Maybe it's having more strength.

You want to be stronger. You want to play with your children or your grand kids. It doesn't always have to be about our health, although that is obviously very important.

So as we think about our own reasons for why we want to make regular exercise a part of our life, this wellness vision is something I feel like can help. And a wellness vision is just a compelling description of your best self. It defines what you truly want out of your life and what you want to feel and how you are going to live in the future when you are at your best. That vision includes behaviors or actions or feelings. And hopefully, when and if you write this vision it will give you confidence and energy and a feeling of authenticity that I want you to use to start imagining again the healthiest version of you, that is realistic of course. That somebody who is six foot tall is not going to weigh 120 pounds. We are looking at what is realistic here.

So, I want to give you a real quick example of a wellness vision. We are going to go back to Tara because I asked her to do this. So her wellness vision was I feel strong and mobile. I can move with grace and speed without pain in the activities I pursue. I regularly exercise by walking, lifting weights at the gym twice a week and feel energized everyday to challenge my mind and body. I feel like I'm in the best shape of my life, I feel healthy and present to the people I love.

She said I take care of my body and health to prevent stress and worry of those around me as well as myself. And her anxiety is under control. Her blood pressure is less than 120 over 80. She feels stronger than ever before. That one is pretty long and detailed. I don't expect you to do that, of course.

I do ask you to take a couple minutes. I want you to just get started. Just write down what your wellness vision is in your mind right now. So just say three years from now. What do you want to be and how do you want to feel? And how does physical activity fit into that?

Just look at and think about what that would look like and quite a few words about the description of yourself.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: I'm going to time this for three minutes to give you time to write this. Then we will have silence so you can focus on the activity.

Looks like we are at the end of that time. We have a lot of people commenting. You can tell they are really thinking about this. They are writing things about commitments they are making and things they want to do as far as being able to exercise. One person made a great comment here. They said, her yoga teacher said you can't just do self-care, you have to be self-care.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: Love that.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: Thank you, everyone for sharing those with us. We appreciate that.

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: And giving yourself time to as the webinar is over and then you are thinking about maybe what you want to do or continue to do or add to your fitness life. Take some time to think more deeply about this wellness vision. Give yourself that time. Put it somewhere where you can see it. You can add to it even.

So thank you all for doing that. I hope that you can walk away and take something from that and that you can strengthen your own personal perspective on exercise.

So, this is kind of the theme we have been talking about here. But it really is changing that mind set and reframing how you think about physical activity and exercise and you know, how you can maybe change some of that. And we always hear exercise is part of a healthy life style. We hear that a million times.

I think we need to stop and reflect on the gravity of that statement and the shift in all that it entails. If we can not incorporate exercise into our life, obviously our thought process is not making it what I like to say, non-negotiable.

Because if you view exercise as optional, it's going to be most likely absent. Your life is busy. If we view it as annoying and undesirable, we are never going to find time for it.

So this is a basic and overlooked truth about exercise. Healthy people who exercise regularly and have these two things in common, they know they will keep exercising. Quitting is not an option. It is

not negotiable. This is part of who they are. Part of the threat of their makeup now. And they also develop looking forward to working out. They enjoy it at some level or they some how get a reward from it. Again, reward may not be immediate.

But you know, you might think, how can people look forward to exercising? I could never do that. I'm not athletic. I'm not really into it. But, you can. I have seen it happen multiple, multiple times. And believe it. It can happen.

You know, we forget from an evolutionary stand point, we are still living in the same body as the primitive humans. People who had to be active all the time to stay alive. Just means our bodies and minds simply just don't function optimally without physical activity.

The people who look forward to exercise they have experienced first hand true exercise habit and find it's essential. They realized it makes them feel complete, energetic. But understand, if you rarely exercise you are not going to feel this way after the first few times you workout or go on a walk. This feeling comes after you pushed past that initial resistance.

So, I ask you internalize this idea that quitting is not an option. This doesn't have to be intimidating. Not quitting can't be as simple as going for a walk every couple days or if that is what it takes to get started. Not quitting just means exercise is viewed as something necessary like eating, showering, brushing your teeth. I would argue exercise is the most important habit we can have. One that a lot of times allows other things to fall into place. Usually if we exercise we are eating better, our stress is better. We may even find ourselves a little more time to be present while exercising.

So people just don't feel up to working out for an hour a day. They have that all or nothing thinking so they don't do anything at all. That is a dangerous place to be when it comes to this. We have to do something. Walk for five minutes. Do ten push ups. Even the ones on your knees. Something. We have to start small. And I have seen it happen many times and you may have even experienced it. I know I have. We try to start exercising and we become overly ambitious. We go out and try to run a mile and we haven't run a mile in 20 years. Then it's so hard and we are so sore afterwards we just don't go back and do it again.

So instead of doing this, just go out and walk five minutes, ten minutes. Do a few sit ups. Just gradually increase in the coming weeks.

So, I would like for you to think about a thought that you have that hinders your ability to reach your exercise goal. Something that I have thought in the past that keeps you from making it a part of your life or even getting started. Maybe it's something you started and you tell yourself and you stop. I want you to reframe that sentence. I want you say it in a way that is positive that is going to make you feel like, okay, this is something I need to do or that is good for me.

Basically, reframing one of your negative thoughts about exercise.

We have good stuff coming in. Can you hear me Melanie?

>> MAUREEN PRINSTER: No amount is too little. I'm thinking exercise is something I have to do. It's something I get to do. Fantastic. This is what I was asking you do. You have to start somewhere. Get out of the house. Fantastic. I love it. Thank you all for sharing those. The commenter just said just get started. Think about your goals. You think about why you are wellness vision you developed. Think about a three-month goal you would have to move yourself towards that. Then I would ask you to break it down further.

In an example I will walk two miles per day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. And then your one week goal is for 15 minutes. It doesn't have to be 15 minutes. It can be five minutes. Something that is going to move you in that direction so you don't have to go out and feel like you have to do that two miles right away.

Here are some tips to stay motivated which I know a lot of times it's difficult for a lot of folks to get started. Then we struggle with keeping it going. And this is something I work with clients all the time. You know, I love the 15 minute rule. You know, if you don't feel like doing something whether it's a walk

outside when it's chilly or something like raking leaves, set your timer for 15 minutes on your phone. Just promise yourself you are going to do that for that long and that is it.

sometimes you might surprise yourself and do it longer and you may say I'm done. Use positive peer pressure. Create a text chain with some coworkers or friends and say, hey, did you workout today? Did you go on your walk? Just really support each other. Then that 1% improvement concept, if you think about improving 1% a week in say the amount of walking, how that over time, over say a year how much more improvement that would be.

You are talking 40, 50% improvement. So just really looking at it from that perspective versus feeling like you have to go out and 45 minutes or an hour doing something.

So, just to finish up. Tara, I loved working with her. I was able to see a transformation that was phenomenal. She got herself walking regularly. She did get some strength training in. Her blood pressure and anxiety was under control. She wasn't perfect she had struggles in life where she got off track, but she got back on it. She made it a priority and not negotiable. I hope this is one concept or idea that you can take away from today. Think about how you can apply it to your own life when it comes to moving your body.

Finish that well decision. Finish it. Add to it. If you do that, it may change the way you think about getting more movement in your life.

Here are some resources that you can refer to if you would like on American college of sports medicine. I know someone wanted information on how physical activity affects the brain. The Mayo clinic has that information. Thanks so much, Melanie. I appreciate you having me today.

>> MELANIE ORDONEZ: I'm going to switch this slide for a second and then I'll go back to it. I just want to quickly remind you about your employee assistance program which is available by using your toll free number or the website 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Let me go back to this page while I talk about that.

If you are struggling with this particular health component, you are not alone. There are lots of us that struggle. We have a lot of resources available through the EAP. Reach out to call us on your toll free number. If you are not sure what your toll free number is or your website, call your HR department or e-mail them and ask them for that information. We don't have that here because there are so many companies on the line. You may even have coaching that is available. If you are one of those people today that were saying I just need to get started, maybe a few coaching calls will help you to just get motivated and moving.

Maureen give us some wonderful tips today. Thank you so much for that, Maureen. It looks like we don't have time for questions today. Again, if you have questions, please feel free to reach out to us at EAP. We are here to help. Call your toll free number or go on the website. We are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. If you can fill out the poll question here, it says rate your overall satisfaction with today's webinar. Click the radio button next to your response. We are not broadcasting results. So do know if you click the radio button next to your response it will tally your response and we will get that. Also, your certificate of completion is available for download if you have a role or title click the download to your computer. Save it where you remember it. I want to thank you Maureen so much for your presentation today. It's wonderful to have you.

I want to thank everyone for joining us. Have a wonderful rest of the day and this ends our webinar.