Chapter 2: Principles of Adherence and Motivation
Learning Objectives

Based on Chapter 2 of the *ACE Personal Trainer Manual, 4th ed.*, this session describes the factors that influence exercise adherence and methods for keeping clients involved in their exercise programs.

After completing this session, you will have a better understanding of:

- The factors influencing exercise adherence
- The difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Leadership qualities that affect exercise adherence
- The personal trainer’s role in building adherence
- The importance of role clarity in establishing the client–trainer relationship
- Properly worded and structured goals
Starting—and then sticking with—an exercise program is a significant challenge.

There is a difference in motivation between starting and adhering to a program.

This chapter focuses on increasing the likelihood that clients will adhere to a program once they have started.

Personal trainers must learn to maximize the experiences of their current clients.
Exercise Adoption

- The most important factor in starting exercise program is the individual.

- A person cannot be coerced into starting to work out.
  - He or she must be ready to make a change.

- Applying the transtheoretical model of behavioral change principles will help increase the chances of success when adopting a new behavior.

- Factors that motivate individuals to start exercising may not be the same factors that keep them exercising.
Motivation and Adherence

- **Motivation**
  - The psychological drive that gives behavior direction and purpose

- **Exercise adherence**
  - The voluntary and active involvement in an exercise program

- **Established exercisers** have few problems with adherence.

- **New exercisers** may be intimidated by the recommended volume of physical activity.
  - The fitness professional must break recommendations down into a manageable and achievable program.

- **Recommended activity guidelines** should only guide a trainer in creating exercise programs.
  - Taking a “one size fits all” approach to program design is detrimental to long-term adherence.
Physical-activity Program Dropout

- More than 50% of people who start a new program will drop out within the first six months.
- Existing programming models may not be effective for exercise adherence.
- There is no exact formula for helping people continue with a program.
- Personal trainers must create:
  - Well-rounded programs that get people fit and healthy
  - An exercise experience that is positive and worthwhile
Determinants for physical activity are the factors that influence a person’s decision to engage in exercise.

The potential determinants for physical activity can be broken down into three categories:
- Personal attributes
- Environmental factors
- Physical-activity factors

Understanding these factors can help prepare personal trainers for the various challenges that clients may face.
Adherence to physical-activity programs has proven to be consistently related to education, income, age, and gender.

Lower levels of activity are seen with:
- Increasing age
- Fewer years of education
- Low income

Age, however, may be unrelated to adherence levels in supervised exercise settings.

Men demonstrate higher and more consistent activity adherence rates than women.
Biomedical status refers to health conditions and is a weak predictor of exercise behavior.

Obese individuals
- Typically less active than normal-weight individuals
- Less likely to adhere to supervised exercise programs

No consistent relationship between cardiovascular disease and activity adherence has been seen.

Biomedical variables and behavior change may be related to the characteristics of the exercise program and the fitness industry itself.
Personal Attributes: Activity History

- Activity history may be the most important and influential personal attribute variable.

- Supervised exercise programs
  - Past program participation is the most reliable predictor of current participation.

- Gathering activity history information from a client
  - Helps personal trainers in the development of the client’s program
  - Gives the trainer an idea of the challenges that the client may face in adhering to a program
Personal Attributes: Psychological Traits

- Psychological traits
  - General tendencies that people have in their personality or psychological makeup
  - Account for individual differences among people and are often difficult to define and measure

- Self-motivation
  - Reflective of one’s ability to set goals, monitor progress, and self-reinforce
  - Has a positive relationship with physical-activity adherence
Those who perceive their health to be poor are unlikely to start or adhere to an activity program.

- If they do participate, it will likely be at an extremely low intensity and frequency.

Locus of control

- A belief in personal control over health outcomes
- A consistent predictor of unsupervised exercise activity among healthy adults

Perceived barriers

- Consistently demonstrate a negative relationship with physical-activity program adherence
Access to facilities most frequently refers to facility location.

- When fitness facilities are conveniently located near a person’s home or work, he or she is more likely to adhere to the program.

People with greater access are more likely to be physically active than people with less access.

Personal trainers should understand how convenient or inconvenient it is for each client to reach the facility.
Environmental Factors: Time

- Perceived lack of time
  - The most common excuse for not exercising and for dropping out of an exercise program

- This perception is likely due to:
  - Not being interested in or enjoying the activity
  - Not being committed to the activity program

- Personal trainers must help clients change their perception through proper goal setting, time management, and prioritizing.
Environmental Factors: Social Support

- Social support from family and friends is an important predictor of physical-activity behavior.
- Support from a spouse is an important and reliable predictor of program adherence.
- Personal trainers must be proactive in creating and establishing a support network for the client.
Physical-activity Factors: Intensity

- **Vigorous-intensity exercise**
  - The drop-out rate is almost twice as high as in moderate-intensity activity programs.

- **Most people choose to start moderate-intensity programs rather than vigorous-intensity programs.**
  - This is true regardless of whether intensity is measured physiologically or psychologically.
Physical-activity Factors: Injury

- Approximately half of all people who engage in high-intensity activities are injured each year.

- Injuries that occur as a result of program participation are directly related to program dropout.

- Injured exercisers
  - Are able to participate in modified exercise programs
  - Often report engaging in significantly more walking than non-injured exercisers
Understanding Motivation

- Motivation can come from:
  - Within a person and is sometimes described as a personality trait
  - Other people’s encouragement, guidance, and support
  - Things, ideas, and events

- A person beginning an exercise program must buy into the process and into the motivators.

- Numerous constructs have been proposed to explain motivation and its relationship with performance and achievement.
Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

- **Intrinsic motivation**
  - Being physically active because a person truly enjoys it
  - Associated with positive attitudes and emotions, maximal effort, and persistence when faced with barriers
  - Very few adults are completely intrinsically motivated.
  - Personal trainers should maximize enjoyment and engagement, but not expect clients to always demonstrate intrinsic motivation.

- **Extrinsic motivation**
  - The engagement in exercise for any benefit other than for the joy of participation
  - Being physically active because of some external factor
  - Associated with feelings of tension, guilt, or pressure related to participation
Situational Motivation

- Very few people are entirely intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

- Personal trainers should strive to enhance the feelings of enjoyment and accomplishment through:
  - Creating mastery
  - Providing consistent and clear feedback
  - Including the client in aspects of program design
  - Creating a workout environment that is aesthetically pleasing

- These things will help increase motivation during the actual workout.

- Situational motivation
  - Motivation that occurs as people are actually exercising
Contextual Motivation

- Contextual motivation involves how the client generally views exercise.

- A personal trainer should empower the client with the perception of control over participation.
  - Personal trainers must teach, not manipulate a client to act.

- Teaching self-sufficiency and autonomy can help facilitate intrinsic motivation.

- Client independence
  - Failing to build client independence is related to less-motivated clients who may ultimately drop out.
Self-efficacy

- Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s own capabilities to successfully engage in a behavior.

- Self-efficacy is positively related to motivation.
  - Self-efficacy leads to a positive attitude and more effort and persistence.

- Personal trainers can use the sources of self-efficacy to help influence efficacy levels.
  - This can be as simple as creating short-term success by designing a workout that the client can master.
  - Each workout should build on previous accomplishments.
Self-efficacy Awareness

- Clients require different amounts of verbal encouragement and statements of belief.

- Help clients re-evaluate appraisals of their physiological states to create more positive interpretations.
  - Trainers can help clients view the “feelings” of working out in a more positive light.

- Being aware of self-efficacy levels allows personal trainers to consistently motivate their clients and help them create positive self-belief.
Feedback

- Feedback can be either intrinsic or extrinsic.
- Extrinsic feedback
  - The reinforcement, error correction, and encouragement that personal trainers give to their clients
- Intrinsic feedback
  - Information that the clients provide themselves based on their own sensory systems
- Extrinsic feedback is always important in the exercise environment.
- Long-term program adherence is dependent on the client’s ability to provide his or her own feedback.
The Role of Feedback in Motivation

- Feedback provides a guide to clients of how they are doing.

- Knowledge of results
  - Feedback that provides information on progress
  - Without it, persistence suffers and people give up
  - Motivational comments during a training session can help keep clients on track.
  - Feedback also helps in the re-evaluation and goal-setting process by contributing to knowledge of results.
Leadership Qualities

- An effective personal trainer is an effective leader.
- Professionalism is a straightforward component of being an effective leader.
  - Appearance should be clean, neat, and non-threatening.
  - Personal trainers should practice what they preach and exemplify what it means to live an active and healthy life.
  - Personal trainers should also be punctual and prepared.
  - Personal trainers should take every opportunity to demonstrate to their clients that they listen.
  - Clients appreciate personal trainers who demonstrate genuine concern for them and excitement for their craft.
  - An effective personal trainer includes the client in all aspects of the program.
A personal trainer must be able to:

- Design a program with regard to each client’s preferences, schedule, experience, apprehensions, and constraints
- Create customized programs based on promoting long-term adherence to physical activity
- Take the time and energy to hear and meet the needs of a client
A common cause of conflict is the lack of role clarity.

- If expectations are not clearly defined, misinterpretations and assumptions may lead to problems.

A personal trainer should clarify his or her role, as well as that of the client, as part of the written agreement.

- The expectations of both parties should be written down and agreed upon.

Any questions about expectations should be discussed and modified from the start.
Goal setting is relatively simple to employ and extremely effective.

SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) guidelines are useful for effective goal setting.

The following are a few issues to keep in mind during the goal-setting process:

- Avoid setting too many goals
- Avoid setting negative goals
- Set short- and long-term goals, as well as outcome and performance goals
- Revisit the goals on a regular basis
An effective way to create clarity is through the use of behavioral contracts and written agreements.

When used effectively, these documents can give the entire training process clarity by defining:
- What the client should expect
- What the program entails
- The rationale for the program design

The agreement-writing process:
- Enhances the communication between the client and the trainer
- Gives the client an accurate perception of the program
Relapse from regular physical-activity participation is common and should be expected.

Countless things can trigger a relapse.

The most important tool in dealing with a relapse is planning ahead and being prepared.

Personal trainers should:
- Educate clients about the potential occurrence of a relapse
- Prepare clients in advance for relapses and resuming exercise

Preparation allows clients to get back on track with their activity programs soon after experiencing a relapse.
Personal trainers must work to increase their clients’ support systems at home.

Trainers should also create a support system within the exercise environment by:

- Maximizing opportunities for group involvement and social interaction
- Making clients feel as though they belong in the program and are part of a team of people who have common interests and goals
Personal trainers can help clients prevent program relapse by teaching them to be assertive.

**Assertiveness**
- The honest and straightforward expression of one’s thoughts, feelings, and beliefs

A lack of assertiveness may mean a lack of self-confidence or feelings of vulnerability.

Clients should be assertive with regard to their:
- Progress
- Concerns
- Accomplishments
- Struggles

More assertiveness equates to more long-term success.
Personal trainers have a tendency to want to regulate clients’ behavior for them.

- Instead, clients must be taught to self-monitor and to make behavior changes that will maximize their success.

Perceived control

- Once clients perceive control over their behavior, they are more able to deal with barriers and challenges as they arise.
Maintaining Motivation Through High-risk Situations

- Identifying high-risk situations helps clients deal with program barriers and relapses.

- Personal trainers should also identify clients who appear to be most at risk for program relapse, including those who have:
  - Poor time-management skills
  - A lack of social support
  - Busy schedules

- Trainers should work on:
  - Developing a plan for adherence
  - Being supportive, understanding, and empathetic
Effective personal trainers have motivated clients who enjoy experiences that keep them coming back for more.

This session covered:
- Factors influencing exercise participation and adherence
- Understanding motivation
- Feedback
- Leadership qualities
- The personal trainer’s role in building adherence
- Strategies to maintain client motivation