

Staying Healthy Through Education and Prevention (STEP) Implementation Guide

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Staying Healthy through Education and Prevention (STEP) implementation guide. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; February 2011. AHRQ Publication No. 10(11)-0076-EF.

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.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the Staying Healthy Through Education and Prevention (STEP) Implementation Guide and a summary of the STEP study results and the STEP physical activity program.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will:

- Understand the purpose of the STEP Implementation Guide.
- Have general knowledge of the STEP program.
- Understand the STEP study and its main findings.

Terms

Implementation guide: An online resource used to set up the STEP program in a continuing care retirement community or other congregate living environment.

Continuing care retirement community (CCRC): A community that often consists of independent apartments, assisted living apartments, and a skilled nursing facility.

STEP program: A structured program consisting of behavioral coaching, lower extremity strength training, and walking.

STEP study: A 12-month research study that compared the effects on physical function of a structured physical activity program and a wellness program that focused on lectures and social events. STEP was conducted in congregate senior housing.

Short Physical Performance Battery: A set of functional tests that constitutes the outcome of the STEP study.

Key Points

- This guide is meant as a tool to be used by CCRC wellness and activities staff to implement the STEP physical activity program.
- The STEP program is a physical activity program that focuses on walking and strength training for seniors.
- The STEP study showed that increased time spent in physical activity—particularly aerobic physical activity such as walking—resulted in better physical function among seniors in CCRCs.

Purpose of Implementation Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide the information, tools, curricular material, and other resources that are needed to implement the STEP program in CCRCs. The STEP program is an exercise program that is consistent with the Surgeon General's recommendations for exercise in older adults—at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week. The STEP

program involves walking as its primary mode of exercise, supplemented by lower extremity strength training that takes place in a group setting. The intended audience for this guide includes activities coordinators, wellness coordinators, and other staff responsible for organizing and implementing programming for seniors in congregate living settings.

Overview of STEP Study

Much of the material in this guide is based on the STEP study, which enrolled 317 seniors into a structured research study to test the effectiveness of the STEP exercise program compared to a wellness program that focused on lectures and social events. STEP was conducted in 10 congregate senior housing properties operated by a single nonprofit provider of services to older adults. This implementation guide is targeted at staff in similar congregate living settings.

The STEP exercise program and materials were adopted from a university-based research study called the LIFE-P study, which showed that a structured physical activity program consisting of walking and strength training resulted in more favorable scores on a battery of functional tests. That battery of tests is called the Short Physical Performance Battery (SPPB). The SPPB results constitute the main outcome of the STEP study.

The STEP study divided 317 seniors into two groups, with one group doing the STEP physical activity program and the other group meeting twice a month for educational lectures and social programs. The SPPB was done at the beginning of the study, at 6 months, and again at 12 months. In addition, over the 12 months, staff contacted participants every other month for a brief interview in which they were asked about falls, hospitalizations, and other health events. At the end of the study, SPPB and other data were compared between the group that did the STEP exercise program and the group that met monthly for education and social events.

Study Findings

Both the physical activity and wellness groups increased their SPPB scores between the beginning of the study and at 6 months. Overall, between the beginning of the study and when it finished 12 months later, there were no overall differences in SPPB scores between the groups. However, in both groups, a greater degree of adherence with the interventions resulted in better SPPB scores. The remainder of this chapter focuses on findings related to the physical activity group.

As detailed in subsequent chapters of this guide, the STEP physical activity program consisted primarily of lower extremity strength training in a class setting using ankle weights and aerobic activity, mostly walking, done independently. Both of these types of activity were to be done at a moderate level of intensity, with a target of 150 minutes of exercise per week. Over the course of 1 year, STEP participants reported attending STEP strength classes 64 percent of the time and engaging in 150 minutes or more of walking or aerobic exercise 76 percent of the time.

Study results showed that seniors who increased the weight used for the lower extremity strength training exercises had more favorable SPPB scores at the end of the study compared to people who did not. In addition, as the number of minutes of total exercise increased, so too did participants' SPPB scores. The data showed that compared to people who did not follow the physical activity protocol at all, people who followed it 100 percent would increase their SPPB

score by 2.25 points, a significant difference. Previous research has shown that among seniors, as SPPB scores go up, the risk of falls and nursing home admission goes down.

The data suggested that seniors who dropped out of the STEP program and those who did not follow the protocol closely tended to be less healthy at the beginning of the study. Although these individuals may have realized limited benefit in terms of SPPB scores, staff reported that a general sense of belonging and purpose was evident among seniors who enrolled in the program regardless of their baseline physical abilities. An ongoing, positive group dynamic cemented by regular classroom-based strength training and behavioral modification coaching by staff who were familiar with participants helped encourage residents to define and safely work toward long-term physical activity goals.

Ongoing feedback from STEP program coordinators indicated that personal relationships between participants and staff were very important in maintaining interest in the program. Since realizing the benefits of physical activity requires readiness to make long-term behavior changes, existing relationships between staff and seniors are an excellent springboard to implementing this program in congregate housing. After the STEP study ended, interviews with program coordinators in all communities that participated in the physical activity program revealed that the program would be continued.

In all cases, the decision to continue the STEP program was made before the reporting of study results. This finding strongly suggests that program personnel focus not only on quantitative information regarding the efficacy of new programs, but also on the impressions they gather locally from residents and other staff. For example, one program coordinator shared an anecdote in which a resident said that the STEP program was a “miracle” because she could now use a public restroom without assistance due to her increased leg strength. The resident’s ability to use a public restroom allowed her to engage more fully in activities outside the community and contributed substantially to her quality of life. The same resident added that she felt “less tired” because of the increased time spent walking.

Many participants shared similar observations. Although not all seniors in the physical activity arm experienced improvement (some were frail at the beginning of the study and could not follow the STEP protocol to its fullest), STEP coordinators expressed universal agreement that the program was popular with residents and would be continued.

In poststudy interviews, STEP coordinators provided feedback and suggestions to improve the program. These included:

- **Identify ways to make walking fun.** One example is crafting a walking program in which residents meet walking goals as they “walk around the world” or “walk across town.” Participants are each given a map (local, national, international) and track their walking distances. As destinations are reached, participants mark their progress on their personal walking maps. In this way, seniors could experience short-term successes while working toward long-term goals. In general, coordinators felt that to meet the walking goal of 150 minutes per week, this goal should be accompanied by a fun element that helped seniors see their incremental progress.

- **Motivate residents who are not currently involved in community programming.** Several STEP coordinators observed that the most successful STEP participants were residents who were already known to staff because of their high degree of involvement in community activities. Coordinators said that additional outreach to less engaged residents—via personal contact—was needed to secure participation by these individuals. Since disengaged, sedentary residents are likely to realize substantial benefit from physical activity, identifying effective approaches to engaging these individuals is needed.
- **Engage residents as program ambassadors.** In many congregate housing communities, residents who are recognized by their peers as community leaders can be leveraged as programmatic ambassadors, both to recruit peers into the program and to encourage ongoing participation. A number of STEP coordinators shared their experiences with these “program ambassadors” who enrolled early in the program and subsequently played an important role in motivating peers to join.
- **Enroll new participants in the program on a quarterly basis.** In the STEP study, a fixed group of participants was enrolled and followed for a year. STEP coordinators suggested that for real world implementation, new participants be enrolled in the program every 3 months, at which time the behavioral coaching sessions would begin anew. New participants would attend the behavioral coaching sessions, and “veteran” participants could be invited to refresh their knowledge and skills by repeating these sessions if desired. In this way, the behavioral coaching elements of the program could be reinforced on a regular basis to existing participants as new participants are welcomed into the program.
- **Understand the importance of incentives.** One theme that emerged from many STEP coordinators was the importance of the link between goal setting and incentives. Incentives do not have to be costly. Indeed, incentives can take the form of certificates when physical activity benchmarks are reached (printed on a personal computer) or public recognition at congregate meals or events.
- **Celebrate achievements often.** STEP coordinators indicated that recognizing seniors’ physical activity achievements—even small ones—was an important factor in retaining people in the program and for success of the program overall. Coordinators emphasized that seniors will enter the program at varying levels of fitness, and acknowledging achievements in a manner that is tailored to the baseline fitness level of participants never goes unnoticed. This is particularly true among participants who are less active when they enter the program and for whom behavioral modifications favoring increased activity represent substantial lifestyle changes.

The remainder of this guide will focus on how to set up the physical activity program that was conducted in the STEP study.

Chapter 2: How To Use the STEP Implementation Guide

Overview

This chapter provides information on how to use the Web-based STEP Implementation Guide and points out chapters of interest to various staff members in the CCRC community who are considering implementing this program.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify which chapters in the STEP Implementation Guide are relevant to the community's Senior Leadership Team.
- Identify which chapters STEP Program Coordinators should read and use in planning and administration of the STEP program.
- Identify the chapters Instructors should use in their training, preparation, presentation, and implementation of the STEP program.
- Understand the need for and materials to cover in the staff training workshop. This training can be run by either a staff member or an outside consultant who specializes in physical activity programs for seniors.

Key Points

This chapter will define the leadership and administrative roles that you will need to fill to implement and maintain STEP.

Target Audience for STEP Implementation Guide

The STEP Implementation Guide provides materials and information to four distinct audiences in your community: the Senior Leadership Team (Administration), the STEP Program Coordinator, STEP Instructors, and the STEP Workshop Instructor (if applicable). Note that in some communities, the STEP Program Instructors, Coordinator, and Workshop Instructor roles will be filled by the same person.

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team should be made up of the administrative decisionmakers in your community. Their support is essential to successfully implement this program. The following chapters in the STEP Implementation Guide will aid the leadership team in understanding the program and identifying programmatic features that will allow them to decide whether implementing this program is a priority:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** provides a summary of the STEP study as well as specific features of the STEP physical activity program.
- **Chapter 3: Implementation of the STEP Program** outlines the information you should gather to determine if your community is ready to start this program.
- **Chapters 4 through 10** summarize each component of the STEP program. These chapters can assist the leadership team in understanding what would be involved on a day-to-day basis if the program were implemented.

STEP Program Coordinator

This staff member has overall responsibility for STEP program implementation and coordination. This role includes scheduling the strength and behavior classes, maintaining paperwork such as the training logs, promoting the program, and informing the Senior Leadership Team of program progress. The Program Coordinator can also be a Program Instructor. This decision depends on staff availability, number of available staff, and other concerns that are in play in your community. It is important to determine whether the Program Coordinator can also act as a STEP Instructor or STEP Workshop Instructor.

For STEP to be effective, it is important that the STEP Program Coordinator read and be familiar with all aspects of the STEP Implementation Guide. The chapters of the STEP Implementation Guide that the STEP Coordinator will find most helpful in this effort follow:

- **Chapter 3: Implementation of the STEP Program** contains an Implementation Checklist that will guide the STEP Program Coordinator through program planning and implementation.
- **Chapter 4: Program Leader Training** will aid the STEP Program Coordinator in assessing and meeting the training needs of STEP Instructors.
- **Chapter 5: Recruitment of Participants** provides guidance on ways to secure and retain participants in the STEP program.

STEP Instructors

The STEP Program Instructors lead the STEP physical activity and coaching sessions. Senior housing communities will often have more than one STEP Instructor because they offer STEP classes at multiple times during the week. The STEP Instructor may have a background in exercise or fitness or have other qualifications or experience to act as the STEP Workshop Instructor as well. But a formal background in exercise is not necessary to be a STEP Instructor.

It is critical that the STEP Instructor read and understand the materials covered in the following chapters:

- **Chapter 5: Recruitment of Participants** provides numerous suggestions for the STEP Instructor to recruit participants into the STEP program.
- **Chapter 6: Exercise Programming Principles** and **Chapter 7: STEP Physical Activity Program** provide the core knowledge needed by the STEP Instructor to lead the STEP program strength exercises and to set up and maintain the walking program. These are the two fundamental components of STEP.
- **Chapter 8: STEP Behavior Coaching Program** provides an overview of the coaching that the STEP Instructors will perform in the STEP coaching sessions to help participants meet their goals.
- **Chapter 9: Coaching Curriculum** contains the scripted lesson plans to be used in each STEP coaching session.
- **Chapter 10: Coaching Session Handouts** are the materials that the STEP Instructor will distribute at each STEP coaching session.

STEP Workshop Instructor

Before starting the STEP program, all staff who will be involved in the program must receive training. The STEP Workshop Instructor role can be filled by any member of the STEP team who is proficient in the content of the program and can effectively convey this information to other staff. This role involves planning and coordinating a training workshop for all the staff members who will be directly involved in STEP and others who should be informed of program details. All the material in the Implementation Guide will need to be covered, from administrative details to demonstrations of the balance and strength exercises, to ensure that members of the STEP team fully understand the program.

If the Coordinator and Workshop Instructor roles are performed by different people, the Workshop Instructor should arrange to have each person present on his or her role and relevant chapters during the workshop. If the roles are filled by the same person, this person should lead the bulk of the workshop.

Use of an Outside Consultant

This Implementation Guide is intended to provide you with the guidance, structure, and materials you need to successfully implement STEP in your facility. With appropriate training, staff do not need a fitness background to lead STEP classes. However, if your facility would like to develop fitness expertise or would simply like more information regarding implementation and fitness training, you can consider hiring an outside consultant.

If you decide to work with an outside consultant, this individual should review the guide and conduct the training workshop in which STEP Instructors learn the specifics of the STEP physical activity program. An outside consultant can also offer additional guidance based on your facility's needs.

Chapter 3: Implementation of the STEP Program

Overview

This chapter will help you decide whether the STEP program is right for your community and will guide you through successful planning and implementation of the program. The chapter contains a variety of questions for you to consider in implementing the program, including equipment, facilities, finances, and enthusiasm on the part of staff and residents. As you review this chapter, you will be able to determine your organization's readiness to implement the STEP program.

After considering the questions posed in this chapter, if you decide to implement STEP, then you are well on your way through the planning stages. The chapter will advise you on additional steps to take to prepare for the successful rollout of this exciting program. The checklist at the end of the chapter will help you organize and implement a successful STEP program.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Assess your organization's readiness to implement the STEP program in your community.
- Develop an implementation plan to bring the STEP program to your community.
- Identify resources and materials needed to implement the STEP program.

Key Points

This chapter will help you evaluate whether STEP would be beneficial to your community by asking you to assess:

- Need and interest.
- Support from leadership.
- Facilities and staff.
- Budget.

If you are ready to implement STEP, the chapter will help you:

- Develop a budget.
- Identify and recruit staff.
- Identify training needs and resources.
- Acquire equipment.
- Orient and train staff.
- Recruit STEP participants, schedule classes, and maintain these activities once the program has begun.

Introduce the STEP Program to Senior Leaders in Your Organization

Before implementing the STEP program in your community, it is important to gain support and buy-in from your organization's senior leaders. Their support will ensure that you receive the needed time and resources to succeed as you move forward. Key leaders and staff in your community will need to review the STEP Implementation Guide, paying attention to the chapters on STEP Program Leader training (Chapter 4), Recruitment of Participants (Chapter 5), Physical Activity Intervention (Chapters 6 and 7), and Behavior Coaching (Chapter 8).

Determine the Need for STEP in Your Community

Before you commit time and resources to implementing the STEP program, you need to determine if your community needs the program or is interested in it. Key questions to ask are:

- Do you have a sufficient number of residents in your community who would be interested in being more physically active in general? Would they be interested in the STEP program in particular?
- Would the STEP program be a new and valuable added service in your community, or do you have other similar programs currently offered to your residents?

Determine Your Organization's Readiness To Implement the STEP Program

Form a workgroup or project team to assess whether implementation of the STEP program is feasible. Review the following questions with your team members to determine your community's ability to go forward with the STEP program:

Senior Leadership Buy-In

- Is senior leadership willing to support the STEP program financially and programmatically (investing in time, space, staff, and equipment)?
- Will senior leadership commit to using existing or new staff to build and sustain the STEP program?
- Is senior leadership willing to commit existing or new resources to build and sustain the STEP program?

Physical Environment/Space

- Does your community have a walking route that is at least 200 feet long?
- Is your community's walking route level to the ground?
- Does your walking route allow at least two people to walk side by side?
- Does your community have indoor and outdoor options for walking?
- Does your community have sufficient space to hold STEP behavior sessions and exercise classes?
- Can the room accommodate chairs, participants, and equipment comfortably and safely?
- Do you have a physical space for the strength training classes that is 400 square feet or larger?
- Will there be enough space between chairs so that participants can hold their arms out to the sides without touching one another?

Program Development

- Can you offer STEP programs at times and places that are convenient for your participants?
- Will you be able to recruit a sufficient number of participants on an ongoing basis to justify the investment in developing the STEP program?
- Do you plan to have the STEP program replace an existing program, or will it be added to your current program offerings? Will STEP compete with other fitness activities?
- Does your community have staff available to promote the STEP program from within and build excitement among potential participants?
- If needed, does your community have access to fitness and behavior coaching experts who could lead STEP training prior to program implementation? If not, do you have staff with this expertise?

Funding

If outside training is desired, is your organization willing to commit the time and resources to train STEP staff? Do you need to establish a budget to cover costs of any additional equipment, staff, and participant materials not currently available on your campus?

Develop a Budget

The STEP program was developed to be incorporated into an existing recreation/wellness program in senior housing communities. Therefore, the cost of implementing the STEP program should be limited to training costs (if you bring in an outside consultant or workshop instructor), printing, and purchase of ankle weights.

Ongoing costs would be limited to the cost of participant handouts for the coaching sessions. Staff time spent in planning and facilitating the STEP program would not be an additional cost unless your community elected to include the STEP program in an expansion of the number of programs and services offered or you decided to hire new staff. In most communities, existing staff can be trained to coordinate and administer the program on an ongoing basis.

Incentives are another optional expense. It is important to have incentives to motivate participants but you do not have to incur significant costs to provide them. For example, when participants reach an important milestone in the program, they can mark their progress on a map or hold a small celebration or trip to the movies. Some facilities find rewards such as key chains, coffee mugs, or other knickknacks highly motivating, but they do come at a cost. You need to decide what incentives will work best for your participants and how much you are willing to spend.

Below is a worksheet to develop your budget.

STEP BUDGET WORKSHEET

STEP TRAINING

Instructor/trainer cost (if needed) \$ _____

EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

Ankle weights \$ _____

Chairs (if needed) \$ _____

Pedometers (optional) \$ _____

PRINTING

STEP Implementation Guide \$ _____

Participant handouts \$ _____

STEP recruitment flyers/posters \$ _____

STEP participant incentives (optional) \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Identify and Recruit STEP Program Staff

To ensure success of the STEP program, you need to have an individual designated to coordinate the STEP program and facilitate the STEP classes. Questions to ask are:

- Have you identified a Program Coordinator who is motivated, organized, and able to ensure that the STEP program runs smoothly? This person would communicate program needs to senior leadership, manage the STEP program schedule, and perform other day-to-day support activities.
- Have you identified one or more staff members to be STEP Instructors who are energetic, experienced in leading group programs, and happy working with older adults?
- How many actively involved staff members will you need to run STEP based on the size of your community and the anticipated level of interest?

Identify Training Needs and Resources

It is important to determine the training needs of your staff before offering the Training Workshop described in Chapter 2. There are several categories of needs to consider.

Training Demands

- Do you have a sufficient number of staff who need training to justify a group training/workshop environment?

Staff Skills and Competencies

- What knowledge and experience does your staff have leading strength training exercises?
- What knowledge and experience does your staff have with behavior coaching techniques?
- Do your STEP Instructors have any previous training or certification in fitness or personal training for older adults? Remember that this is helpful but not necessary to run STEP successfully.

Identify and Recruit Experts for Training

- Do you want to seek the advice of an outside consultant?
- If so, have you identified a trainer with significant experience in senior fitness and lifestyle change who would be willing to train your staff using the STEP implementation Guide materials?

Acquire STEP Program Equipment

You'll need to purchase STEP program equipment before the Training Workshop. An important part of the training includes the STEP Instructors practicing with the actual equipment that residents will use during STEP classes. You will need the following equipment:

- **Walking courses:** Although only one walking course is required for STEP, it is helpful to have a few alternatives so that participants do not get bored, and so that both indoor and outdoor options are available in response to changing weather or seasons.

- **Ankle weights:** A pair of ankle weights should be available for each class participant.
 - The style of ankle weights should be such that weights can be added or removed as needed.
 - For the STEP study, we used 5 lb pairs that adjust in ¼ lb increments and 10 lb pairs that adjust in ½ lb increments. Ankle weights can be purchased through your local sporting good store or fitness catalogs.
- **Chair with no arms:** Each participant will need a sturdy chair.
 - The ideal chair should have a firm seat with no arms.
 - The chair should be high enough so that when participants sit all the way back their feet barely touch the floor.
 - The back of the chair should be high enough so that participants can hold onto it while standing behind it. (graphics)
 - Adjustments: For tall participants or in settings where participants' feet don't completely touch the floor when sitting down, you may need to make adjustments so that they can use proper form (see Chapter 7).
 - For tall participants, you may need to use a taller chair, stack two chairs, or place a pillow or towel on the seat.
 - For short participants, you may need a shorter chair or a sturdy support under their feet, such as a large book.

Provide Training to Staff on STEP Exercise Program and Behavior Coaching

Proper training of your staff is critical for the successful implementation of the STEP program. Chapter 4 outlines the content of the training you should provide. As you set up the staff training, ask these questions:

- Does each staff member and instructor have a copy of the STEP Implementation Guide?
- Have you confirmed the availability of your fitness expert if you are using one?
- Have you identified the speakers (your coordinator and a fitness instructor) who will train the rest of your staff?
- Does the training classroom have sufficient space for demonstration and practice of the STEP exercise program?

Recruit STEP Participants

Chapter 5 offers numerous suggestions and ideas for recruiting participants. As you prepare to recruit participants, ask the following:

- Have you identified your target participants? Who are they?
- How many participants do you want to recruit? Is there a limit to the number of participants you can accommodate?
- Have you identified your recruitment strategies? How can you get people interested?
- What is your timetable for recruiting participants? When will you stop recruiting and start the program?
- Who will be responsible for coordinating recruitment activities?

Schedule STEP Classes

Once you have recruited your participants, you want to begin your STEP program as quickly as possible, before their enthusiasm fades or they commit to other activities.

- Have you identified a room or location that is centrally located or convenient for your participants?
- What times are your STEP program leaders available to lead classes?
- How will you communicate the STEP class schedule to participants?
- Have you planned for preparation and setup time for STEP program leaders in your scheduling of STEP classes?
- How many STEP classes are you able or willing to offer each week? (Each STEP class is 1 hour.)

Plan Ongoing Support and Evaluation of Your STEP Program

After staff training is complete and your STEP program is underway, what plans are in place for maintaining the fidelity of the program and tracking its effectiveness?

- How often do you plan to review and evaluate STEP program leader skills and competencies in facilitating the STEP program? How will you do this?
- Will your outside consultants (if used) be available to provide review and reinforcement of training principles to your STEP Instructors once the program is underway?

STEP Implementation Checklist

- Introduce the STEP program to senior leaders in your organization.**
- Determine the need for STEP in your community.**
- Determine your organization's readiness to implement the STEP program:**
 - Senior leadership buy -in
 - Physical environment/space
 - Program development
 - Funding
- Develop a budget.**
- Identify and recruit STEP programming staff.**
- Identify training needs and resources:**
 - Training demands
 - Staff skills and competencies
 - Experts for training:
 - Behavior coaching
 - Fitness expert
- Acquire STEP program equipment:**
 - Ankle weights
 - Chairs
 - Space for coaching sessions, discussion, and exercise
- Provide orientation and training to staff on STEP exercise program and behavior coaching modules.**
- Recruit STEP participants.**
- Schedule STEP classes.**
- Plan ongoing support and evaluation of STEP program:**
 - Fitness and coaching experts to provide review and reinforcement of training principles

Chapter 4: STEP Team Training

Overview

Chapter 4 outlines the training STEP Instructors should receive prior to leading the STEP physical activity program. This chapter describes how the Implementation Guide can be used as a self-study tool or as part of a workshop-based training program and provides suggestions for training in both formats. It also recommends additional training resources, if your STEP program team would like more information.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will:

- Be able to use the Implementation Guide for training staff.
- Be able to use the Implementation Guide materials for self-study.
- Be able to identify the topics and competencies required of STEP Instructors.
- Understand how to assess whether STEP training has been effective.

Terms

STEP Program Coordinator: A staff person who provides management and oversight to the STEP program in a senior housing facility.

STEP Instructors: Staff who lead the strength and behavior coaching sessions. An instructor can also be the STEP Coordinator.

STEP Workshop Instructor: The person who takes on the short-term responsibility of coordinating the Staff Training Workshop. This person can be a paid consultant or an existing staff person with appropriate experience.

STEP Team: All staff members directly or indirectly involved in planning, managing, or leading STEP.

Key Points

- The STEP Team should be familiar with how the STEP program is structured and conducted and should therefore attend the Training Workshop.
- In addition to using the resources provided in this guide, staff are encouraged to seek additional, community-based resources to assist in developing and implementing the STEP program.

STEP Training Workshop Format

A training workshop on the STEP program should be a combination of lecture, demonstration, and practice of the exercises. The bulk of the training will involve reviewing chapters in the STEP Implementation Guide that address the STEP program. There should also be a period for practicing the movements participants will perform as part of the program (balance and strength exercises).

If your facility has an exercise specialist or physical therapist onsite, you may want to arrange for him or her to observe the practice session and ensure that your STEP leaders are using proper technique. That individual may also serve as a Workshop Instructor. If an exercise specialist is unavailable, you can rely on the descriptions and video provided by the guide. In this case, have your staff watch and critique each other until everyone is confident in the movements.

The length of the workshop can vary from 4 to 6 hours, depending on the size of the class and the amount of time spent reviewing each chapter of the STEP Implementation Guide. It is wise to plan ahead to ensure that all STEP Team members are available for this block of time.

To prepare for a STEP Training Workshop, you will need:

- A designated individual to serve as the Workshop Instructor.
- A room equipped for both lecture and exercise demonstrations.
- A room large enough to practice the STEP exercises.
- An armless chair for each training participant to use during exercise training.
- A set of ankle weights for each participant and the trainer.
- A copy of the Implementation Guide for each person being trained.
- Training Workshop Outline:
 1. Introduction to the STEP Program
 - a. Review the origin of STEP
 - b. Discuss the benefits and importance of exercise in old age
 2. STEP Program Format
 - a. Review each section of Chapter 6
 3. STEP Physical Activity Intervention
 - a. Review each section of Chapter 7
 - b. Demonstrate each exercise and watch the STEP video segments
 - c. Practice each exercise and receive feedback
 - d. Discuss the importance of walking
 4. Behavior Coaching
 - a. Review STEP Behavior Coaching Program
 - b. Review Behavior Coaching Session curriculum and lesson plans
 - c. Review Coaching Session handouts (Chapter 10)
 5. Recruitment and Retention of Participants
 - a. Review Chapter 4
 6. Implementation of STEP Program
 - a. Review any administrative details that the team needs to be aware of in their roles

STEP Self-Study Training

In some situations, a formal structured training workshop will not be practical or feasible for a senior community that plans to implement the STEP program. For example, sometimes the full STEP Team cannot be present for the workshop without neglecting important duties, or the team is not large enough to warrant a formal group training session. In such cases, the lead staff members should complete a self-study training that includes the following:

- Reading the STEP Implementation Guide, focusing on Chapters 1 and 4-8.
- Watching the STEP video segments that demonstrate each exercise.
- Demonstrating each STEP exercise to a physical therapist, exercise specialist, or other colleague.
- Reviewing Chapter 3, Implementation of the STEP Program.

How To Know Training Is Effective

This Implementation Guide is meant to provide instructions on how staff can develop the knowledge and skills to implement the STEP exercise program. However, this guide does not provide formal certification or oversight for the Program Coordinator or Instructors. It is therefore important for staff to assess whether the training has been effective. Accordingly, when training is complete:

- Staff have acquired detailed knowledge of all aspects of the STEP program.
- Staff can perform all STEP exercises according to examples provided in video clips.
- Staff can describe specific approaches to setting up the STEP classes and implementing a structured walking program in their facilities.
- Staff understand and can demonstrate the strength and balance exercises.
- Staff understand the strategies described in the behavior coaching sessions and the importance of this component.

Later:

- Staff are successful enrolling seniors in the STEP program.
- Staff are successful in retaining seniors in the program and helping them maintain their activity levels.

Additional Training Resources

The STEP Implementation Guide is designed to provide all the materials and information a senior housing community needs to ensure that their staff is prepared to offer the STEP program. However, we also encourage you to explore additional resources for guidance and to help you develop expertise as you implement your program.

Exercise and Physical Activity Expertise

Exercise specialists and physical therapists are a great resource for training staff on the proper techniques for each exercise. Check with your local rehabilitation center, YMCA, or private fitness center for individuals who would be willing to work with your community. If you need a STEP Workshop Instructor, these are good resources to access to identify a trainer.

Publications

Exercise & Physical Activity – Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging. Order from National Institute on Aging Information Center, P.O. Box 8057, Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8057; 800-222-2225 (toll free); 800-222-4225 (TTY/toll free); www.nia.nih.gov.

Exercise for Frail Elders, Elizabeth Best-Martini and Kim A. Botenhagen-DiGenova, Human Kinetics; www.humankinetics.com.

STEP Participating Organizations

The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society (GSS), 4800 West 57th Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57108; 605-362-3100. GSS has implemented the STEP program in a number of its senior housing centers and is available to answer basic questions about training, program implementation, and program management.

Chapter 5: Recruitment of Participants

Overview

To be successful, new wellness initiatives need to attract, engage, and retain participants over an extended period. Success involves a careful examination of the resident population and resources at your facility and a targeted approach to engaging that population in a new initiative. This chapter provides information on how to recruit participants into the STEP program and keep them engaged in the program once they have begun.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Assess the need for the STEP program at your facility and whether there is “room” for this activity given existing programmatic commitments.
- Identify a target population that is appropriate for STEP.
- Identify recruitment strategies and materials that will appeal to seniors in your community.
- Define approaches to maintaining interest in the program once seniors have enrolled.

Terms

Target population: Seniors at your facility likely to benefit from participating in the STEP program.

Marketing materials and strategies: Written materials, presentations, and other approaches aimed at encouraging seniors in the target population to participate in the STEP program.

Recruitment: Formally entering a senior into the STEP program.

Retention: Ensuring that seniors in the STEP program remain active in the program over an extended period.

Key Points

- Many existing resources and groups can assist staff in identifying seniors who might benefit from participating in the STEP program (e.g., Resident Services, Resident Council).
- It is important to understand how the STEP program is different from existing programs in your community and to communicate the differences to potential participants.
- Marketing materials should be exciting and use ample photos and pictures.
- It is important to use a combination of strategies to recruit participants, but in-person interactions are often the most effective way to get participants to join the program.
- A key element of retaining participants in the STEP program involves letting them know that you care and are invested in their health and wellness.

Your Target Population

Consider the various departments in your facility and the staff members who might help you identify and seek out potential participants for the program:

- Resident Services
- Home Health
- Nursing
- Therapy
- Reception
- Housekeeping
- Dietary
- Other frontline staff

Ask permission to attend department meetings to give a brief announcement about the program. Chat with individual employees whenever you meet them in an effort to promote the program, and convey excitement in your tone: This program can help to encourage greater physical activity among residents by providing program structure, support, monitored and self-driven exercise, and the skills to make long term changes.

Active residents love to be useful, so enlist them to help promote the program among their peers. These individuals may include:

- Floor representatives.
- Resident Council.
- Bible study group/leaders.

Ask the leaders of other group activities if you may drop in. Most groups welcome a guest speaker. These groups may include:

- Bingo
- Bridge
- Floor meetings
- Quilters
- Alzheimer's support group

Using a person's name is another way to gain trust and enlist a friend. Many residents feel more at home when you use their first name. If in doubt, ask for a preference. If you have a large facility or lots of turnover and your facility has a photo album of residents, make a black and white copy to help you learn names.

Request access to available data on the resident population. Sometimes this is housed in Medical Records, but you may find it in Resident Services or Nursing. Remember, HIPAA was not designed to prevent you from doing your job. It was designed to protect the facility's licenses and each licensed professional within. This information is part of your job. You do ~~not~~ need to know." Always ask permission from the department head before inquiring of their staff. Let them

know that you will maintain the confidentiality of the information and keep it locked up, but don't be afraid to request it.

Assessment of Existing Exercise and Social Groups and Events

Review your community's activity calendar from the last 6 months to see what is available to participants already. Even if you have been to an activity hundreds of times or are familiar with the calendar, review it with new eyes. Consider the number of individuals attending each event or outing. Do you have a pool of active participants or "joiners" and are there enough of them to support STEP? Are there less active residents who, if approached correctly, might be interested in increasing their activity?

Take particular note of any activities that include physical movement. What type of movement? Frequency? Duration? Level of intensity? Compare what you find with what the STEP program will offer. If you are not carving out new territory with STEP, people will want to hear the differences and be convinced of the benefits of trying something new. Your opportunity to explain will come when someone says, "—N thanks, I already walk with my friend once a week" or "—I do a water aerobics class on Tuesday. I don't need more exercise than that, do I?"

Recruitment Materials

In giving presentations, whether individually or with a group, you can be very effective by communicating with pictures of people in this age group as they exercise. If you use photos, be sure people are smiling or at least not frowning. The image of a resident who is happy about fitness can also be a useful communication tool for staff, especially if they personally think exercise is torture and cannot imagine promoting fitness among residents whom they perceive as frail.

The best photos are those of people whom your target audience actually knows, so consider using photos of participants in previous exercise programs. Although they cannot comment on the effectiveness of STEP, it will help if residents recognize people they know enjoying exercise. Just be sure to ask their permission before you distribute their photos.

Once you have established STEP, create a binder of large smiling photos of program participants with testimonials in their own words. Take it with you to visit new move-ins in their apartment and to resident meetings. Even if the person is not familiar, potential participants often identify with someone who also lives in the facility. It helps if the person who gave a testimonial is willing to answer questions from new or newly interested residents.

Consider what methods you will use (see Recruitment Methods, below) and produce the appropriate flyers, table tents, newsletter announcements, etc. Keep them simple and to the point, but compelling. Prepare yourself for in-person presentations and consider what supporting materials you will need to bring. Participants may want more information before they commit to STEP but do not need all the program details—mention the type of exercise, the time commitment (days in class), and especially the benefits.

Recruitment Methods

In-Person Presentations to Activity Groups or Individuals

Recruiting for new activities in a retirement community is most effective as a live presentation. In groups or with individuals, make eye contact and smile. Make the discussion interactive. Also make it personal and relevant. Pose relevant questions: Are you concerned about your balance? Would you like to learn to prevent falls? Anticipate the residents' questions and prepare inspiring and compelling answers.

Direct Contact by Phone

Over the phone, you have two options: the cold call and the warm call. If you do not know the person, state your business up front. Introduce yourself and request a time to meet in person to discuss the STEP program at your facility. If you know people well or even somewhat, always chat with them first about their life or activities. Then ask if they have heard about this new program yet and offer a brief explanation without making a sales pitch. Invite them to a group event for more details or offer to meet with them in person. If residents seem to have difficulty hearing you over the phone, consider knocking on their door while wearing your name badge or asking another resident who knows them and is enthusiastic about the program to share the information.

Flyers in Public Places

- Post flyers in public places, such as dining areas, activity areas, the office door of the property manager, and the door of the library.
- Make flyers colorful.
- Don't overload a bulletin board. If you put something up, take something down.
- Keep your material fresh.
- Be sensitive to rules about kinds of tape, not posting on doors, or whatever facility protocol you follow.
- Consider asking the dietary manager if you can put out table tents to promote the program.

Property Newsletters

Written materials should be in large font, which often means fewer words. Don't try to explain the whole program in the newsletter. Just write an exciting headline about the upcoming event you're hosting to discuss STEP. Remember to include free food, if possible, or at least coffee and tea. It is better to distribute handouts at the presentation than to tackle the details in a newsletter, which may overwhelm or discourage potential participants.

Strategies for Successful Recruitment

- When you approach potential participants, find a balance between expressing enthusiasm about the program and listening carefully to their needs.
- Timing is everything. Approach them when you know it is convenient for them to talk or after a fun activity when they're feeling enthusiastic about facility programs.
- If you can have fun talking about the program, then your potential residents will want to join.
- You should use existing relationships with residents to discuss interest and identify others who may be interested. Start with those who you know will be interested. Once they agree to

sign up, ask permission to use their name as you tell their friends and neighbors about the program. In this setting, name dropping can go a long way.

- Ask residents who have committed to join the program if they would be willing to help you with presentations. Have the resident demonstrate a simple leg extension or chair stand or talk about the center's walking course. This is a fantastic way to gain interest among nonexercisers.
- If you post marketing materials, they must include the name and phone number of the contact person at your facility. More recently, independent apartment residents have asked for an e-mail address. Again, remember to have an optional large-font copy of anything you print.
- Remember that repetition is effective: Newsletters, calendars, posters, casual conversation, presentations, reminder slips, phone calls, e-mails, and other methods all work well in concert.

Participants' Readiness for Physical Activity

Are potential participants contemplating increasing activity levels and do they need more information from a professional? Are they ready psychologically but need to prepare by purchasing tennis shoes or finding a support buddy? It is important to determine if the senior is ready to consider making the lifestyle changes that are fundamental to the STEP program.

Take time to consider each individual's physical readiness. You do not want to engage people who are risk takers and might hurt themselves due to denial about a physical limitation. Similarly, you do not want to try to recruit someone who is not appropriate for the program due to temporary or chronic physical difficulties. Know your clients. More information on safety considerations is available in Chapter 6.

Participant Retention in the STEP Program

Maintaining physical activity over a long period can be just as difficult as starting an exercise program for the first time. Once participants have started the STEP program, it is important that staff take steps to keep them involved. For example:

- Be enthusiastic. Participants will "follow the lead" of the STEP program leader and if the leader does not appear invested in participants' continued engagement in the program, participants are not likely to continue investing their time in STEP.
- Let participants know you care about their health, wellness, and continued participation. The importance of the one-on-one relationship between the program leader and staff and participants can't be overstated.
- Assist participants in troubleshooting and problem solving when they encounter obstacles. Their willingness to continue is tied to their progress in achieving their goals. Support in the face of a challenge will encourage them to persevere instead of quit.
- Take an active interest outside of class. Mention the program and inquire about progress when you pass participants in the hall or see them at other activities. A little extra effort on the leader's part goes a long way toward making participants feel committed and fulfilled.
- Continue to advertise STEP classes and walking groups in resident newsletters, bulletin boards, and other announcements so that the program continues to have new people and new enthusiasm.

Additional Resources

If you want to contact experts with questions about seniors and exercise:

- Age Dynamics is a consulting firm that helps design and create wellness centers and programs. 1-800-829-2719 or www.agedynamics.com.
- The American Council on Exercise offers a certification program for Group Fitness Instructors, Personal Trainers, Lifestyle & Weight Management Consultants, and Advanced Health & Fitness Specialists. They offer continuing education courses for training older populations and individuals with chronic conditions. 1-858-576-6500 or www.acefitness.org.

If you would like to educate yourself further about the benefits of exercise and risks of inactivity, the Internet or your local library can be great resources. You can also use these materials as supplemental sources of information to achieve a stronger impact with potential participants. Some references you may find helpful are:

- The American College on Sports Medicine (ACSM), part of the Active Aging Partnership, offers resources on starting an exercise program and on Federal Physical Activity Guidelines. www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=General_Public.
- For free booklets on the benefits of exercise and some simple routines for seniors, check the National Institute on Aging publications catalog at www.niapublications.org or www.NIHseniorhealth.gov.
- The International Council on Active Aging publishes the *Journal on Active Aging* online and in print, which contains many relevant articles. They will send you a sample upon request. 1-866-335-9777 or www.icaa.cc.
- For fitness resources, including the Senior Fitness Test Manual, call Human Kinetics at 1-800-747-4457. www.HumanKinetics.com.

Chapter 6: Exercise Programming Principles and Practices

Overview

Regular physical activity can improve an individual's mental health and cognitive function, as well as physical well-being and quality of life. The Surgeon General recommends that older adults engage in moderate-intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes 5 days per week. The STEP program is an approach to achieving this recommended activity level in congregate housing settings.

Before offering the STEP program to participants, it is important that the program leader become knowledgeable about several exercise programming principles and practices that underpin the program. These principles and practices will help to ensure that STEP program participants have fun in a safe environment while being challenged in a way that improves their overall physical well-being.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain the FITT concept to participants.
- Understand and use the Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) to guide participants.
- Provide an exercise program that both challenges participants and promotes safety.

Terms

FITT Principle: Guidelines developed for exercise prescription. FITT is an acronym for Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type.

Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE): A way of measuring the intensity of physical activity based on individuals' perception of how hard they feel their body is working.

Key Points

- The STEP program should be fun, safe, and effective.
- Program staff need to identify individual abilities and help participants set goals and solve problems.
- The FITT principle helps staff and participants think about exercise goals in terms of Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type.
- The Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) helps participants target their exercise at an appropriate level.
- Staff should be familiar with a number of safety guidelines and tips to ensure that participants achieve maximum benefit from the program without being injured.

Elements of an Effective Exercise Program

All exercise programs should be fun, safe, and effective.

- If participants are having fun, they will return to your program, and they may encourage others to join.

- If participants become sore or injured during or as a result of an exercise program, they may not return to the program once they have recovered.
- If participants feel that the exercise program has made a difference in their physical abilities, then they will continue to participate in the program.

Key Approaches to Offering an Effective Physical Activity Program

Identify Individual Abilities

Use a validated instrument to determine each participant's baseline abilities. It will help you identify areas of strength and weakness that may lead to loss of functional ability and can also serve as a target in the STEP program, if you so choose. The Senior Fitness Test is one such instrument (refer to the Resources section at the end of this chapter). Once baseline data are established, you can readminister the test at a predetermined interval (e.g., quarterly, biannually) to measure the impact of your program on each individual's function.

Set Goals

If participants define reasonable goals, they are more likely to see improvements. Goals should be specific to each individual's ability and could relate to any aspect of the exercise program (frequency of attendance, amount of time spent in moderate-intensity activity, etc.). **Use STEP tracking sheets to assess each participant's progress toward his or her individual goal.** Detailed guidance on goal setting is available in Behavior Coaching Session #9, but please review all behavior coaching session materials for a complete understanding of the strategies recommended by STEP.

Coach and Problem Solve

Use the behavior coaching materials provided to facilitate the behavior coaching sessions. These sessions will assist seniors in developing behavior strategies and skills that will help them adopt and maintain an active lifestyle. There may be times when participants need additional support or when class time is insufficient to provide everyone with individual feedback on an exercise or behavior session activity. Supply additional support on an individual basis outside of class and at your discretion.

It is essential to help participants deal with the emotional and physical challenges they encounter during STEP, but it is equally important to accomplish as much as possible during class. That way, all participants can benefit from the group discussions and you as leader do not become overburdened providing excessive amounts of outside consultation.

Build Social Support

Encourage new behaviors and physical activity program participation through peer and staff support. Behavior Coaching Session #8 discusses the importance of social support and presents formal strategies to build it. Informally, remind participants to ask for help, support, and encouragement, and remind staff (even those not involved in STEP) to supply help, support, and encouragement. Emphasize the importance of walking groups or buddies for motivation and good friends whom participants can talk to when they need it.

The FITT Principle

FITT is an acronym for Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type and is a useful tool to help participants set goals and achieve the most from their STEP activities.

F = Frequency (how often to exercise)

- Seniors should aim to walk or perform other aerobic exercise at least 5 times a week and attend a STEP strength training class at least once a week.
- The frequency of both walking and strength training can gradually increase over time, as tolerated by participants and as their abilities improve.

I=Intensity (how hard to exercise)

- Use the RPE to help participants target moderate intensity (explanation below).
- STEP participants should aim for an RPE of 11 to 13 for aerobic activity such as walking.
- For strength training, STEP participants should maintain an RPE of 15 or 16.

T=Time (how long to exercise)

- STEP participants should aim for about 30 minutes of aerobic physical activity on most days of the week.
- Participants, especially inactive ones, can increase the amount of time based on how they feel and as their abilities improve.
- Participants may choose to perform physical activity in short bouts, such as five 10-minute walks, if that suits them better than fewer, longer episodes of activity.
- Participants should take a few minutes to warm up and cool down before and after their aerobic activities. This can take the form of activities such as seated stretches or walking in place.

T=Type (what kind of exercise to do)

- STEP emphasizes two types of exercise: walking and lower extremity strength training.
- At the end of 3 months, the goal is for participants to be exercising a total of 150 minutes each week, with the majority of that time being independent or group walking at a moderate level of intensity. The rest of the time should be spent in the STEP strength classes.

Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale

Proper intensity maximizes the benefit of exercise, so it is important to remind participants not only of the importance of engaging in regular exercise, but also of challenging themselves in terms of intensity. The STEP program aims to have seniors walking and doing strength training exercises at more than a “light” level of intensity.

The Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale is a subjective method of measuring exercise intensity based on how the participant perceives his or her own level of exertion. The scale runs from a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 20, with midrange targets for walking and strength training. Participants should think about and evaluate their own “exertion” based on

their experience of muscle fatigue, breathlessness, and emotions or “sense” of how hard they are exercising.

Because RPE is assessed through perception, not weights, speed, time, or distance, this rating is entirely individual and it may take time for participants to understand. It will require practice and a level of honesty from participants. They must rate the difficulty as they subjectively perceive it, and only they will know if they are overchallenging or underchallenging themselves.

The target intensity for walking is an RPE of 11 to 13. Exercising at this level, participants should perceive the exercise as “not especially hard.” They are exerting themselves but are comfortable and have no problem continuing (RPE 11), or “somewhat hard” (they are tired but not excessively tired and they do not have great difficulty continuing to exercise (RPE 13).

The target intensity for strength exercises is 15 or 16, meaning that exercise should feel “hard.” They can still go on, but they have to push themselves to continue and they do feel tired. **For example:**

An individual who wants to walk at a moderate intensity level would aim for an RPE of “somewhat hard” (13). If he describes his muscle fatigue and breathing as very light (RPE of 8), he would want to increase his movements. Conversely, if he describes his intensity level as “very, very hard” (RPE of 19), then he should slow down in order to achieve his targeted intensity level and to ensure safety.

As part of the introduction to the STEP program, the program leader will work with participants to teach them about the RPE scale and how it relates to exercise targets in the STEP program. When you present the RPE handout to participants, it is important to emphasize these key points:

- Perceived intensity is how strenuous the exercise feels to *them*. Have them think about the strain and fatigue of their muscles and their sense of breathlessness and describe how it feels.
- It is important for participants to think about the intensity of exercise in terms of what they perceive, not what they think the program leader wants to hear. Participants should be encouraged to be honest and not overestimate or underestimate the intensity of their activity. The program is ongoing and there is ample time to “ramp up” their abilities. They should assess their honest level based on what is challenging but not unsafe or upsetting.
- Targeted intensity is important. Staff should consistently remind participants about the importance of engaging in physical activity that they perceive is challenging, a level above “light.”
- Insufficient RPE intensity does not produce the desired effect. In order to improve in their functional abilities, participants **MUST** exercise at a sufficient RPE. They will not receive the same benefits from exercise done at lower RPEs.
- **Excessive intensity can lead to injury and diminished interest in the program.** It is important to emphasize that “too much too soon” is NOT the goal of the STEP program. The goal is to determine the appropriate intensity based on one’s abilities and then strive for improvement over time.

Visual Aids

Create a large poster-size copy of the RPE scale and post it in the room in which you lead the physical activity intervention so that you can refer to it throughout the program. Also provide a copy to participants in the first behavior session. Refer to this scale frequently throughout the program to help participants pace themselves and build strength.

Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

	6	Absolute Minimum	
	7	Very, Very Light	This requires minimal effort. It is easy and comfortable.
	8		
	9	Very Light	Like walking slowly at your own pace for several minutes.
	10		
	11	Fairly Light	Not especially hard. It feels fine and is no problem to continue.
Walk (11 to 13)	12		
	13	Somewhat Hard	You can still go on but you have to push yourself and you feel tired.
	14		
Strength (15 to 16)	15	Hard	
	16		
	17	Very Hard	You are so tired that you cannot continue much longer.
	18		
	19	Very, Very Hard	This is as hard as you have ever experienced.
	20	Absolute Maximum	

Exercise Program Format

The STEP exercise program consists of independent walking and group classes focusing on lower extremity strength training. This section provides information on how to organize the strength training classes.

Strength Class Content

Each class is composed of three parts:

Warmup (5 to 10 minutes)

Exercises (10 to 30 minutes)

Cool-down and stretching activity (10 to 15 minutes)

Since participants will start the program with varying abilities (explained below), you will need to tailor these activities to individual abilities. The warmup period should last 5 to 10 minutes, the strengthening exercises 10 to 30 minutes, and the cool-down and stretching activity 10 to 15 minutes.

Duration of Strength Class

Most strength classes will range from 30 to 60 minutes. Typically, the classes are longer when the program is newly established and when new participants join. As participants become familiar with the routine and use of the ankle weights, the strength training will run more quickly.

In addition, as participants become fitter, the time distribution for each segment will gradually change. Early in the program, participants may be shifting from sedentary to active lifestyles. This means your initial classes may need to include shorter bouts of strength exercises (10 minutes) and longer periods of warmup and cool-down (10 to 15 minutes of each). As participants become stronger and more confident, you should increase your focus on strength exercise (30 minutes) and adjust the warmup and cool-down periods (5 to 10 minutes each).

During the first 9 weeks, most facilities hold the strength classes and behavior coaching sessions back to back. This arrangement often results in higher participation by minimizing the number of separate activities participants need to remember and motivate themselves to attend. It also allows you flexibility to schedule additional sessions if you have a large group of interested participants, if you want to hold makeup sessions, or if your program leader's availability varies. Ultimately, scheduling should be done according to the needs of your individual facility. It is up to the program coordinator and leaders to assess these needs and determine the best way to meet them.

Class Size

For safety and to enhance participants' experience, limit the number of participants to 12 to 16 per instructor. If you are team teaching, then you can increase the number of participants accordingly.

Session Length

It's good practice to offer your physical activity program in blocks of classes. Many communities offer classes in a 3-month or quarterly time block. Having definite start and end dates has several advantages:

- It creates an opportunity for celebrating goals such as regular class participation or increases in the amount of ankle weight used.
- It provides logical timing for recruiting and encouraging new participants to join.
- It provides a logical time for you to change or modify your program.

Record Keeping

There are a number of forms that you can introduce to participants in conjunction with the physical activity program. Participants should be strongly encouraged, but not required, to use these forms. Forms serve multiple purposes, monitoring progress and adherence to program goals, facilitating goal setting, and supporting other behavior change strategies that are critical to success in the program.

Realistically, participants may feel the paperwork burden is too heavy between the logs for strength class and the handouts and homework they receive in the behavior coaching sessions. The Physical Activity Tracking Sheet is the most important, given that it allows them to track both walking and strength training minutes and reminds them of the overarching STEP goal (150 minutes of exercise a week). The behavior coaching sessions will reinforce the use of this log by asking participants to reflect on their exercise minutes.

Encourage participants to complete all or as many logs and handouts as they are willing; however, any amount of tracking or homework they do is a step in the right direction.

Participation Roster

You can use the participation roster in several ways. Posted on the wall, it can serve as a motivational tool for class participants to track adherence to the goal of participating in the STEP class weekly. It also lets the STEP program leader see at a glance if an individual has missed multiple classes, which might prompt you to contact the participant and offer support and encouragement to rejoin the program.

On the other hand, you do not want to introduce an element of competition or shame that might discourage some participants or undermine the supportive environment you are trying to create. If you anticipate these issues or sense them once class has begun, there is no need to post the participation roster. Simply keep the roster with your program records and encourage participants to track their attendance individually.

Physical Activity Tracking Sheet

Participants should complete the Physical Activity Tracking Sheet or log on a weekly basis. Here, participants will record the number of minutes they spend exercising each week. There are separate lines for them to record time spent in STEP strength classes and time spent outside of class doing an aerobic activity, such as walking. The tracking sheet is a great tool to help participants monitor their progress every week and motivates them to continue their involvement

in the STEP program. You should introduce the tracking log in the first coaching session so that they can start keeping track of their exercise time immediately.

Weight Training Log

The purpose of the weight training log is to record the ankle weight participants use in each strength class and to track individual progress. Recording this information provides another means for participants to monitor changes in their physical abilities. In addition, if your STEP classes are led by different staff members, the weight training logs ensure that residents know what weight to use to continue building their lower extremity strength. Log sheets can be stored in a simple 3-ring binder that contains a sheet for each participant, dates of class attendance, the weight used for each exercise, and the number of repetitions. Also remember to print the log in large type so that both residents and trainers can refer to this important resource.

Group Facilitation Tips

Leading a physical activity group is an art. Here are some suggestions that will help you monitor and engage your participants:

- Greet people by name as they arrive at the class and thank them when they leave.
- Make sure each participant can see and hear your instructions and demonstrations.
- Watch every participant perform the exercises and ensure they are using proper technique. It is important for safety, but they will also appreciate your attention.
- Ask participants how they are doing with the current weight in their ankle weights and make sure the weight is appropriate.
- Remind your participants about exercising at the targeted RPE.
- Foster a social atmosphere – get group members to chat, tell jokes, etc.
- Be enthusiastic. If you're not having fun, your participants probably aren't either.
- Make eye contact with each participant during class.
- Keep it interesting (e.g., use music, have a theme day, change the props you use, post trivia questions and fitness quotes).
- Acknowledge accomplishments big and small.
- Remind participants about the “big picture” and that the STEP program is more about the “long haul” than short-term gains.
- Think about incentives (e.g., t-shirts, water bottles, pedometers), which are a great way to encourage and motivate your participants.

Safety Techniques and Guidelines

Determine Readiness for Physical Activity

In spite of the benefits of physical activity, not all interested residents will be healthy enough to participate in STEP. Residents should consider the state of their health and assess whether STEP is right for them. A number of online resources can aid them in this decision. One popular online tool is the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q). The PAR-Q provides a series of questions that participants answer to determine if they should contact their physician regarding their involvement in an exercise program. You will find the link below in the References and Resources section.

Obtain Medical Clearance To Exercise

Ideally, your participants will contact their physician before starting any exercise or physical activity regimen. This allows the physician to communicate any limitations or contraindicated movements specific to that individual. However, many senior communities do not require clearance for participation. Staff should follow local procedures that govern residents' participation in exercise programming.

Always Have a Warmup and Cool-Down at Each Session

Make sure participants understand the importance of warmup and cool-down at each STEP strength training session and as part of their regular walking routines.

Discuss Proper Breathing Techniques

Proper breathing techniques are essential for the safe and appropriate performance of strength training exercises. It is fairly common for people to hold their breath during weight training. Direct their attention toward their breathing and guide them to breathe through their mouths continuously and regularly throughout the exercises. This can be done in one of two ways.

1. Counting aloud to keep the pace of the exercises. Talking (counting) ensures they are not holding their breath.
2. Inhaling before the lift, exhaling through the mouth while lifting, and inhaling through the nose during the lowering phase. Sometimes it takes a little practice, but this is a very effective technique called “exhale during exertion.”

Additional guidance on strength training movements and breathing is provided in Chapter 7.

Emphasize That Strength Training Should Be on Alternate Days

A break between sessions gives muscles a chance to recover. If strength classes are held on consecutive days or multiple times in a single day, participants should be discouraged from attending classes on consecutive days or multiple times in a single day. Allowing for recovery time actually strengthens muscle and allows it to repair from the workout.

A rest day also prevents mental exhaustion and burnout, which is better for participants' short-term attendance and long-term goals. Participants can walk on “rest days,” which will not cause them additional soreness and could help loosen and warm sore muscles. Walking is a critical component of the STEP program and should not be neglected.

Facilitate a Slow, Gradual Progression of Weights

While some participants might be wary of ankle weights and overexertion, others may be very enthusiastic during strength training exercises. The amount of weight that is appropriate for each individual will vary, as will the rate at which people increase their weights. Program staff must work with participants individually to determine an appropriate initial weight and to decide when it is time to increase weight. Regardless of their eventual progression, all participants should start at a low weight to ensure that they do the exercise movements correctly. This is the key to long-term success and safety.

Monitor Exercise Intensity

Using the RPE scale, remind participants frequently that the optimal target intensity is 11 to 13 for walking and 15 or 16 for strength training. Participants should be actively and regularly discouraged from exercising beyond the intensity levels designated for the STEP program.

Discourage a Competitive Atmosphere in the Group Setting

A competitive atmosphere can sometimes lead participants to overexert themselves in class, which can lead to safety issues. A competitive atmosphere can also be a turnoff to seniors who seek a more collegial group environment. The purpose of the STEP program is to improve each individual's functional ability, not to determine who can do more repetitions or weight. It is therefore important to ensure that group classes do not take on a competitive feel.

Emphasize general victories, such as increasing weight or repetitions, or maintaining strength from the previous week. Praise everyone who comes to class regardless of performance, because any workout is better than no workout when it comes to reaching long-term goals.

Be Aware of Environmental Hazards

Conditions such as excessive heat or cold or a slippery floor may have serious health consequences. Chairs that are too close together can cause participants to bump or jostle one another and lose their footing. Be aware of potential hazards in your particular classroom and take whatever steps are needed to minimize them. Always make sure your residents are safe and comfortable.

Encourage Perseverance

If people are out of town or take a break from the program for health reasons, remind them that they can rejoin STEP at any time. Similarly, if participants worry that they are not meeting the STEP goals (either in terms of time walking or class attendance), assure them that *participation* is paramount. Even if they fall short of the target goals, they are still succeeding in changing their health behaviors and they should continue to walk and attend class when they can.

References and Resources

Listed below are resources and references for additional information on planning an effective exercise program for older adults:

- **Exercise & Physical Activity – Your Everyday Guide** from the National Institute on Aging. Order from National Institute on Aging Information Center, P.O. Box 8057, Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8057; 800-222-2225 (toll free); 800-222-4225 (TTY/toll free); www.nia.nih.gov.
- **Exercise for Frail Elders**, Elizabeth Best-Martini and Kim A. Botenhagen-DiGenova, Human Kinetics; www.humankinetics.com.
- **Exercise for Older Adults – ACE's Guide for Fitness Professionals**, Richard T. Cotton, Editor, American Council on Exercise; www.humankinetics.com.
- **Physical Activity Instruction of Older Adults**, C. Jessie Jones and Debra J. Rose, editors; www.humankinetics.com.

- **PAR-Q: Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire:**
<http://www.americanheart.org/downloadable/heart/1176844249407Phys%20Activity%20Questionnaire.pdf>.
- For Fitness Resources, including the **Senior Fitness Test Manual**, call Human Kinetics at 1-800-747-4457. www.HumanKinetics.com.

Chapter 7: STEP Physical Activity Program

Overview

Physical activity in the STEP program involves aerobic fitness, strength training, flexibility (stretching), and balance. The goal of the STEP program is to have participants gradually build to a target of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week over a period of about 2 months. Some of this activity is conducted in group classes that focus on lower body strength and balance, but most of the activity in the STEP program consists of walking and is done outside the class setting, either individually or in groups.

Objectives

Chapter 7 provides the information needed to conduct the strength training and flexibility exercises in STEP classes. It also provides instruction on how to engage participants in independent walking in a way that helps them meet the goals of the STEP program.

After reading this chapter, you will:

- Understand the difference between the aerobic and strength training components of STEP.
- Know how to set up and maintain interest in the walking component.
- Understand the strength exercises and how to lead these exercises.
- Know the stretching exercises used during the warmup and cool-down periods.

Terms

STEP classes: Regular, prescheduled time slots—often held multiple times per week—in which STEP participants meet in groups to engage in strength and flexibility exercises. For the first 9 weeks of the STEP program, these classes are also the setting for the behavioral coaching curriculum.

Aerobic exercise: Activities that involve or improve oxygen use in the body. Aerobic exercise is often performed at moderate levels of intensity for extended periods of time.

Strength training exercise: Activities that use resistance and weights to develop muscles.

Flexibility exercises: Activities that improve the ability of joints to move through a full range of motion.

Key Points

- The STEP program consists of aerobic activity such as walking, as well as lower body strength training and balance exercises.
- Walking should be done at an intensity of 11 to 13 on the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale.
- Strength training should be done at an intensity of 15 to 16 on the RPE scale.
- Attendance at the STEP strength classes does not mean participants have satisfied the program requirements: Participants must also walk regularly at a moderate level on most days to benefit fully from STEP. Both strength classes and walking are important.

- The goals of the program are to exercise 150 minutes per week at the appropriate intensity to help increase strength, flexibility, and balance. And, of course, to be healthy.

Components of the STEP Physical Activity Program

The STEP program includes aerobic, strength, flexibility, and balance activities.

- **Aerobic:** Walking is the primary mode of aerobic activity in the STEP program because it is popular, cheap, and easy to do in senior housing communities. Walking can be done independently or in groups at a moderate level of exertion on the RPE scale.

Alternatives to Walking

The STEP Program focuses on walking for aerobic exercise but we realize walking is not always an option for certain people. If a pool is available, water aerobics, lap swimming, and “water walking” are acceptable alternatives to walking. For people with painful joints, the buoyancy of the water will take pressure off the joints and make people “weigh” less. If people usually use walkers on land, they should hold onto a pool noodle for balance and safety when walking in the water. **Note:** Everyone, regardless of physical condition, should wear pool shoes with grip soles for safety.

- **Strength and flexibility:** STEP involves instructor-led classes that teach strength and flexibility exercises and focus on the lower body. Strength exercises involve ankle weights and body weight. Some are conducted sitting while others are done standing. Flexibility exercises are done after strength exercises to loosen the muscles and prevent injury.
- **Balance:** Balance exercises are done by participants at home. Staff train participants in these exercises during class and provide an illustrated handout that participants can use when exercising at home.

As STEP program staff, you should be available for ongoing consultation, encouragement, and guidance in all aspects of the STEP program. Participants often need reminders about the goals of the program and target intensity levels. They may also need help solving problems, such as lack of motivation.

The first 9 weeks of the STEP program involve a lot of coaching and emphasis on behavioral strategies to help participants achieve their short-term strength goals AND to ensure long-term compliance with STEP program goals: 150 minutes of exercise each week. These aspects of the program are discussed in Chapter 8.

Walking Program

In the initial behavioral coaching sessions, explain to participants that walking is the major aspect of physical activity in the STEP program. Guides for coaching sessions can be found in Chapter 9. The guide includes class instructions for staff and handouts for participants to take home to familiarize themselves with STEP. Handouts review the schedule for building to 150 minutes of exercise per week, the strength exercises, and the number of minutes they should walk each week in their first months with the program.

Setting Up the Walking Program

The first session is also the time to introduce participants to the **Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale** to help them target an appropriate level of intensity during their exercises. When walking, they should **target their intensity at 11 to 13** (–somewhat hard”). Discourage them from exercising at levels that are too hard (15 or greater) or not hard enough (below 11).

Participants can walk indoors, outdoors, or on treadmills, if these are available. Participants may want to simply walk in the hallways or outdoors but you can find ways to make walking easier, more motivating, and more fun for them. For example, you might want to:

- Establish indoor walking courses and make participants familiar with these courses.
- Mark indoor courses with bright tape or another –trail marker.”
- Establish walking groups at various times during the day and week to promote group walking.
- Encourage participants to find a –walking buddy” they enjoy walking with and socializing with.
- Establish a –walking log”: a 3-ring binder with a page for each participant to track his or her walking times.
- Present participants with certificates for reaching key milestones (e.g., 500 minutes of total walking or one month with 120 minutes of walking each week).
- Make announcements in resident newsletters highlighting walkers’ achievements.

The more support you can provide (such as courses and walking buddies), the easier it will be for participants to reach their STEP goals and the more fun they will have doing it. You may also find that when your participants see results, other residents become interested. With any luck, over time walking and exercise will become part of the culture of your facility, and residents will motivate each other to maintain good habits.

Maintaining the Walking Program

As the program progresses, participants may focus their efforts on strength training because it is more structured. They may concentrate less on the walking portion because it is done independently of staff. Help them avoid this bias toward strength training.

Encourage Walking

You know what the heart doctors say: —Walk your dog twice a day, even if you don’t have one.” Use the weekly strength training sessions as an opportunity to remind participants how important walking is, to encourage them to use the walking log (if one is being used), to promote the achievements of –super walkers,” and to encourage all participants to remain actively engaged in walking. This encouragement can take place outside of class as well, such as when staff members see participants at meals or other activities.

Problem Solve

If you realize that some participants are only attending STEP strength classes and are not walking much, intervene and problem solve with them to identify strategies to get them walking. We will discuss some helpful strategies in Chapters 8 and 9.

Keep It Fresh

Some people enjoy routine but others get bored walking the same “courses” and may lose interest in walking altogether. Consider changing the indoor courses from time to time to keep things fresh. If you have space for multiple courses, change one (the “blue course”) every month or two for those who like variety and keep one (the “yellow course”) the same for those who prefer routine. Pedometers are also an excellent way to help participants set goals, keep track of their walking (especially when the courses change), and stay motivated by striving to improve their walking time and intensity. Remember that the number one goal is **minutes of walking** but it is fun to note that approximately 2,000 steps equal a mile.

Take a “Road Trip”

Add a pedometer program focused on a destination. As a community, or as individuals, choose a destination like the Grand Canyon or San Francisco. Tally up how many miles it would take to walk there and plot out a route to get there. Then set goals to get everybody where they want to go. You can even plan “stops” along the way, as if people were on a road trip. Stops will keep the sense of fun and motivation alive. Track everyone’s progress with a map on the wall and turn it into a party at the finish to celebrate the journey and the destinations.

Strength Training

Starting Equipment

The STEP strength training program involves lower body movements, some of which use ankle weights. We recommend that you purchase ankle weights with multiple “slots” so that weights can be added or taken away in increments of ½ lb (for 10 lb weights) and ¼ lb (for 5 lb weights). We also recommend ankle weights or “cuffs” with Velcro rather than buckles, which can be uncomfortable and difficult to use.

Cuffs

Your first meeting should be more of an orientation session than an exercise session. Most participants won’t have used ankle weights before, so be sure to give them time to get comfortable with the equipment. Teach them how to put the cuff on and take it off. Allow them to wear the cuffs without any weight in them in order to become accustomed to the feel.

Weights

Only after participants are comfortable wearing the cuffs should actual weights be inserted into the slots. You can add weights during the initial meeting or at Session #2, depending on how your participants react to the equipment. If they seem comfortable, this could be a good time to determine the appropriate weight each person should use for each exercise.

Exercise Movements

When participants seem comfortable with the ankle cuffs and how to add and subtract weight, move on to an exercise practice session (you may have time in Session #1 but may need to wait until Session #2). Teach them the exercises one at a time and allow them to practice the movements until they feel confident. Encourage them to wear the ankle cuffs (without weight) during the practice session—after all, they will be wearing the cuffs during class.

During the practice session, don't worry about performing a certain number of repetitions or about the targeted RPE intensity. Focus on perfecting the movements with good form. In subsequent strength training sessions when "it counts," start monitoring and recording repetitions and RPE on the tracking sheet.

When they are ready to practice, tell participants that the strength training component of the STEP program begins with a warmup and is followed by several lower body strength exercises. The strength exercises are followed by a brief cool-down consisting of flexibility exercises. Then demonstrate the following elements:

- Warmup
- Wide leg squat
- Heel raise
- Seated leg extension (with ankle weights)
- Standing leg curl (with ankle weights)
- Side leg raise (with ankle weights)
- Cool-down (stretching)

Warmup

The warmup session should last 5 to 10 minutes to adequately warm up the muscles and loosen the joints. We recommend that you do the following exercises for approximately 1 minute each:

- Alternate stomping feet (marching or walking). Start slowly and increase speed.
- Alternate moving feet in and out (gently extend leg and tap heel, bring back in).
- Alternate knee lifts (as though walking through snow).
- Alternate leg extensions (bend leg up and extend forward).
- Alternate toe point and flex.
- Alternate ankle rotations (foot only) clockwise and counterclockwise.
- Both feet: heel lift to toe rocking.
- Shoulder shrugs.
- Backward shoulder rolls.
- Seated leg stretch:
 - Sit on edge of chair, one leg out straight.
 - Bend ankle up, pointing toes toward ceiling.
 - Tighten muscles on top of thigh by pushing knee down toward floor.
 - Take a deep breath and hold stretch for 6 seconds.
 - Relax and switch legs.

Sets and Repetitions for Strength Exercises

For each strength exercise, participants should perform 10 repetitions (one set), rest for 1 minute, and then perform a second set. Some participants will find this routine easy, and others will find it extremely difficult. Once things get started, you may need to adjust participants' weights so that they begin at a comfortable level. Remind everyone to move at their own pace and make sure the leader or coach is aware of individual needs and accommodates them with sensitivity and positivity. Participants who get discouraged will be unlikely to return to subsequent classes, so spend the extra time to ensure that every participant feels successful in their efforts.

For the leg extension, leg curl, and side leg raise exercises, participants should alternate legs during the set, performing one repetition on the left leg, one repetition on the right leg, and so on. As noted earlier, target intensities of STEP program activities are measured using the RPE scale. Participants should do their strength exercises at an RPE of 15 to 16.

Summary

2 sets of each exercise

- Wide leg squat—10 reps per set
- Heel raise—10 reps per set, both legs simultaneously
- Seated leg extension (with ankle weights)—alternate legs, 5 reps per leg, 10 total
- Standing leg curl (with ankle weights)—alternate legs, 5 reps per leg, 10 total
- Side leg raise (with ankle weights)—alternate legs, 5 reps per leg, 10 total

Starting Weight and Progression

For exercises that use ankle weights (leg extension, leg curl, side leg raise), the instructor should determine the appropriate starting weight for each participant for each exercise. During the first strength training session, ankle weights should contain a small amount of weight (3 lb for men and 2 lb for women). Note that these are *recommended* weights to start the program. Some people will find this difficult while others will find it easy. Also remember to use the same amount of weight on each leg, even if one leg seems stronger.

During early strength training classes, staff should orient the participant to strength training with weight settings that are “very easy” for the participant to use. If the recommended weight is too much for a participant, the weight should be reduced.

- When the weight is light, participants can safely learn proper technique for each exercise and take the time to learn to breathe properly.
- After mastering proper technique and breathing, participants can start to progress and work toward meeting the target intensity for an effective workout.
- Participants will experience a sense of accomplishment as they progress through the program, learn new skills, and develop new walking and strength training habits.

After the first week of strength training, participants should be encouraged to complete each physical activity with weights that they can lift at least 10 times with moderate difficulty (RPE rating of 15 to 16).

- If one or more of the exercises seems too difficult (e.g., if the participant cannot complete 10 repetitions), then the weight is too heavy and should be reduced.
- Work closely with participants during the early weeks of the program to ensure proper identification of the ideal starting weight.

Over time, as participants improve their lower body strength and become confident, instruct them to increase their weights to maintain an exercise intensity of 15 to 16. Retrain them regularly on the use and interpretation of the RPE scale to ensure their continued understanding of program targets for intensity.

Soreness

Although the warmup and cool-down should prevent excessive soreness, remind participants that it is okay to be a little sore. Soreness indicates muscle growth and progress being made. On the other hand, if the soreness is intense and long lasting, encourage participants to decrease their weights slightly. Remind them that they are always searching for balance—weights, repetitions, and intensity that are not too hard but not too easy. You will be an important advisor as they seek this balance.

Clothing

Everyone should wear comfortable clothing to STEP classes. A comfortable pair of socks is also advisable to prevent skin irritation where the ankle weights are secured. High-heeled shoes are not recommended for any STEP program activities.

Instructions for Strength and Flexibility Exercises

Videos demonstrating the exercises are available at www.ahrq.gov/research/stepmanual/step7.htm.

Wide Leg Squat

Starting Position:

- Participants sit with their feet slightly greater than shoulder-width apart and about 6 to 8 inches in front of a chair. Their arms should be crossed in front of their chest and shoulders relaxed.

Exercise:

- Participants pause for an inhale in the seated position.
- Leaning slightly forward, they EXHALE to stand up, making sure to keep their knees directly above their ankles. While doing this, they should push up from their heels through their lower legs, thighs, hips, and buttocks, which will help keep their knees from moving in front of their feet.
- Leaning slightly forward at the hip, participants aim their buttocks into the chair and slowly lower themselves back to a seated position. During this exercise, keep their chest up (lifted) and their back, neck, and head in a straight line.

Sets and Repetitions:

- 2 sets, 10 reps per set, both legs simultaneously

Complete 10 repetitions using both legs for the set. Rest for about 1 minute; then repeat for a second set of 10.

Make sure participants:

- Lean just slightly forward when beginning the move.
- Don't allow their knees to come in front of their toes.

- Tighten their abdominal muscles.
- **Don't hold their breath.**
- Keep their chest lifted throughout the movement, so that the body doesn't curl forward.
- Are looking straight ahead rather than down at the floor.

If participants experience any knee pain, check their technique: Their knees should not move forward past their toes during the movement. The thighs should stay parallel to each other; make sure the knees do not drift inward.

Heel Raise (Without Ankle Weights)

The heel raise is an excellent physical activity that improves balance and ankle flexibility while strengthening the feet and calves to provide more power for our walking stride. As participants get stronger, they can progress from Level 1 to Level 2 of the exercise.

- **Level 1:** Heel raise on both feet with hand support.
- **Level 2:** Same as Level 1 but without hand support.

Start with Level 1.

If participants' calf muscles are weak, they may not be able to raise their heels very far. They can improve the strength of these muscles at Level 1 until they are better balanced and can lift their heels more easily. Then proceed to Level 2.

Starting Position:

Participants should stand 12 inches away from a wall (or back of a chair), with feet about 12 inches apart.

- **Level 1:** Resting their fingertips lightly on a wall (or back of a chair) to help maintain balance.
- **Level 2:** Standing in front of the wall (or chair) without touching it. For safety's sake, always perform this physical activity with a wall (or chair) in front of them.

Exercise:

- Participants slowly rise on the balls of their feet.
- They hold the position for a slow count of 3.
- They slowly lower their heels back to the ground.

Sets and Repetitions:

- 2 sets, 10 reps per set, both legs simultaneously.

Complete 10 repetitions using both legs for the set. Rest for about 1 minute; then repeat for a second set of 10.

Make sure participants:

- Maintain good upright posture.
- Do the heel raises slowly—many people have a tendency to raise and lower themselves too quickly.
- **Don't hold their breath.**

Seated Leg Extensions (With Ankle Weights)

Starting Position:

The participants sit back in a chair with their feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly separated and directly above their feet. If they are tall, you may need to make some adjustments so that their thighs are flat and their knees aren't raised above their thighs. Some suggestions are using a taller chair (or one with a higher seat), stacking two chairs to raise the seat, or placing a pillow or towel on the seat of the chair to raise the participant. However you choose to address the issue, it is important that participants start in the correct body position.

Exercise:

- Keeping the thigh in contact with the chair and the foot flexed, participants EXHALE and slowly straighten the left leg until it is fully extended, with the foot off the ground.
- They then **pause for a breath.**
- They slowly bend the knee and lower the left foot back to the ground.

Sets and Repetitions:

- 2 sets, alternating legs, 5 reps per leg, 10 reps total.

Complete 10 repetitions, alternating the right and left legs for the set. Rest for about a minute; then repeat for a second set of 10.

Make sure participants:

- Don't arch their backs. Contracting the abdominal muscles should help stabilize the lower back and prevent discomfort.
- Straighten their legs as far as possible at the end of the lift—the last part of the muscle contraction is the most important.
- **Don't hold their breath.**

Standing Leg Curl (With Ankle Weights)

Starting Position:

Participants stand with their feet slightly apart behind a chair with their hands gently resting along the top of the chair back for balance. They should then shift their body weight to their left leg while keeping the knee slightly bent.

Exercise:

- Keeping their thighs side by side and knees directly under their hips, participants slowly lift their right foot toward their buttocks until their upper and lower leg form a 90-degree angle.
- They **pause for a breath**.
- They slowly lower the right foot back to the ground, shift their weight to the right leg, and repeat the move with the left leg.

Sets and Repetitions:

- 2 sets, alternating legs, 5 reps per leg, 10 reps total.

Complete 10 repetitions, alternating the right and left legs for the set. Rest for about a minute; then repeat for a second set of 10.

Make sure the participants:

- Keep thighs parallel and hips and knees aligned.
- Don't arch their backs as they do the exercise.
- Don't let the knee or thigh move forward as the lower leg curls up.
- **Don't hold their breath.**
- Stay in a "pain-free range." The movement may be difficult but the knee should not hurt.

Side Leg Raise (With Ankle Weights)

Starting Position:

Participants stand tall with feet parallel and hands gently resting on the back of a chair for balance.

Exercise:

- Keeping their toes pointed straight ahead, they EXHALE and slowly lift their right leg out to the side until their foot is 5 to 8 inches off the ground. The knee on the supporting leg should not lock.
- They **pause for a breath**.
- They lower the right leg slowly back to the ground and repeat with the left leg.

Sets and Repetitions:

- 2 sets, alternating legs, 5 reps per leg, 10 reps total.

Complete 10 repetitions, alternating the right and left legs for the set. Rest for about a minute; then repeat for a second set of 10.

Make sure participants:

- Keep their bodies upright during this exercise, not leaning to one side.
- Raise their legs no more than 12 inches off the ground.
- Keep their fingertips on top of the chair for balance.
- Keep their feet straight, not angled, and lead with the heel.
- **Don't hold their breath.**

Cool-Down (Stretching)

Upper Back Stretch (Without Ankle Weights)

- Participants stand (or sit) with their feet shoulder-width apart, their knees straight but not locked, and their hands clasped in front.
- They rotate their hands so that their palms face the ground. Then they raise their arms to about chest height or until they feel a stretch.
- They press their palms away from their body and feel a stretch in the neck, upper back, and along their shoulders.
- They hold the stretch for a count of 20 to 30 seconds.

Hamstring and Calf Stretch (Without Ankle Weights)

- Participants stand facing a sturdy chair.
- They slowly bend forward at the hip, keeping their legs straight without locking their knees. Resting their hands on the back or seat of the chair with their elbows slightly bent, they should feel a stretch in the back of their upper and lower legs. The back should be kept flat.
- They hold the stretch for a count of 20 to 30 seconds.

Chest and Arm Stretch (Without Ankle Weights)

- Participants stand with their arms down by their sides.
- Clapping their hands together, they extend both arms behind them. Make sure the arms are straight before lifting.
- They should keep the chest forward and shoulders back during the stretch.
- They hold the stretch for a count of 20 to 30 seconds.

Chapter 8: The STEP Behavior Coaching Program

Overview

The first 2 months of the STEP program include behavior coaching sessions that are conducted in group settings during the STEP classes. The coaching is designed to assist seniors in developing behavioral strategies and skills that will help them adopt and maintain active lifestyles.

Objectives

This chapter describes the STEP behavior coaching program, including when and where coaching takes place and essential coaching, communication, and leadership skills. When you finish reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe the rationale and purpose of the STEP coaching program.
- Describe when and how coaching is conducted.
- Understand key skills for facilitating coaching sessions and group activities.
- Demonstrate important problem-solving skills that will help you conduct the coaching portion of the STEP program.

Terms

Coaching: Working with another individual to facilitate change or to meet a predetermined goal.

Coaching skills: Group facilitation techniques that encourage participant engagement in the coaching process.

Behavior coaching: A method of coaching using behavioral strategies to help participants make long-term changes.

Behavioral strategies: Techniques or methods that create awareness and encourage practice, goal setting, and problem solving to achieve a particular goal.

Social Cognitive Theory: A model that proposes that behavior is affected by environmental influences, cognitive factors, and behavioral factors.

Key Points

- Behavior patterns (including health behavior) are acquired and maintained through a complex set of behavioral, cognitive, and environmental conditions.
- Six behavior change strategies are stressed in the behavior training component of the STEP program.
- Nine distinct skills are important for leading successful coaching sessions aimed at changing behavior among STEP participants.

Overview of Behavior Coaching

Behavior coaching is an approach to working with individuals or groups that incorporates behavioral strategy models into physical activity coaching to facilitate a desired change. In this case, the desired behavior is 150 minutes of exercise per week. For STEP physical activity interventions to be effective, behavioral strategies must be integrated into the program. Without the behavior strategies, participants are more likely to drop out.

Behavioral Strategies and Principles

The STEP coaching sessions are based on a social cognitive model of acquisition and maintenance of health behaviors. The social cognitive model sees positive changes in health behavior as being achieved through a set of behavioral, cognitive, and environmental modifications. A number of studies have found social cognitive intervention strategies to be effective with older adults in programs aimed at increasing physical activity.

STEP combines the social cognitive approach with other strategies so that participants can develop the skills to overcome the mental and physical challenges they will face while pursuing their physical activity goals. These strategies include consciousness raising and other cognitive approaches early in the program, and reinforcement management and other behavioral approaches in the later phase of the STEP program.

The following **behavioral strategies** should be part of every session:

- **Social support.** Peer support is an important element in getting and keeping participants engaged. For example, the exercise buddy system gives the participant someone to go to class with and walk with.
- **Self-awareness.** Understanding one's values, feelings, and thoughts helps identify what action or behavior to change.
- **Goal setting.** You cannot achieve or measure change until you have identified the desired outcome. Setting reasonable goals helps reinforce participation in the STEP program.
- **Feedback.** Feedback reinforces participation by helping participants evaluate their progress.
- **Positive reinforcement.** Incentives, recognition, and rewards for reaching milestones or target goals reinforce participants' exercise and their engagement.
- **Problem solving.** Identifying perceived and actual barriers and finding solutions to overcome them are critical to success and something participants will need your help with.

Timing of Coaching Sessions

It is important to start new participants in the coaching sessions as soon as they enroll in STEP. The coaching sessions will provide participants with a social support system and an accountability mechanism to keep them motivated to be active, as well as the building blocks to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.

When you introduce the STEP program into your facility initially, your coaching sessions can take place in conjunction with the STEP strength training classes. As your program grows over months and years, you will want to offer the STEP coaching sessions separate from the physical activity class. That way, new participants can benefit from the coaching sessions and –seasoned”

participants who have gone through the sessions already will not become bored or irritated with the repetition.

Coaching Skills

In addition to the structured coaching sessions, STEP program leaders can incorporate and present behavior coaching strategies during the class (e.g., during warmup or cool-down). This is a great way to reinforce the changes participants have made and will continue to make. The skills that program leaders teach during the coaching sessions are not meant to exist ~~in~~ isolation.” They are skills that are designed to be reinforced, revisited, and reiterated continuously among all program participants.

Leading successful coaching sessions requires nine distinct skills. These skills are:

1. Engaging in Active Listening and Empathic Communication
2. Asking Open-Ended Questions
3. Paraphrasing
4. Giving and Receiving Feedback
5. Handling Emotions
6. Summarizing
7. Solving Problems
8. Leading Groups
9. Dealing With Challenging Behaviors

Each of these skills is described below in further detail, and examples are provided to illustrate successful application of each skill.

Skill 1: Engaging in Active Listening and Empathic Communication

Active listening is listening in a way that lets people know they have your full attention. Nonverbal attending skills include good eye contact; a relaxed, nondefensive body posture; and an open, appropriate facial expression. Verbal attending skills include vocalizations or brief statements such as “Mm hmm,” ~~yes~~,” or ~~I see~~” that let your participant know you are actively listening to him or her. You can do a number of things to convey active listening during behavior coaching sessions:

- Ensure that the STEP class is not interrupted.
- **Turn down the radio if it is on, and turn off computers and television sets to avoid competing noises.**
- Listen more than you talk in every conversation.
- Make encouraging sounds (~~Mm hmm~~) so that participants know you are paying attention.
- Don’t interrupt or change the subject (unless your participants have wandered and the conversation needs to be turned back to exercise).
- Don’t spend too much time talking about *your* experiences. Your job is to listen fully to your participants’ experiences and to give personal advice sparingly. Your experiences are important and may be invaluable to your participants. Just be sure your sharing doesn’t take up too much time. A good general rule: participants should talk about three-fourths of the time.

Advice on Active Listening

- **Keep good boundaries.** If you only have 30 minutes allotted to coaching, stick to your timeframe. You are not being rude by interrupting your participants if they get off track or are too chatty. You can say something like, “I’m going to stop you there. I know your time is precious and I want to be sure we get a chance to discuss physical activity goals for the next week.”
- **Think of the people you enjoy talking to the most.** Chances are they are pretty good at listening. Free advice is cheap, but careful listening is precious.

Empathic Communication

Empathic communication is the most fundamental and vital coaching skill. Conveying empathy to the participant involves two key components: understanding and reflection. Empathic understanding, or recognition, involves accurately perceiving the private, inner feelings and experiences of participants as they experience them. You need to “walk in another person’s shoes” and seek to grasp the meaning of his or her experience. Empathy also requires you to go beyond factual knowledge and to achieve moment-to-moment awareness of the participant’s affective, perceptual, and cognitive worlds. Understanding alone is not enough; staff must also be able to convey that understanding back to participants.

To succeed at empathic communication:

- Maintain eye contact and a responsive posture while a participant is talking. This assures the person that you are fully present and engaged in understanding his or her thoughts and concerns.
- When participants finish talking, reflect their concerns back to them by paraphrasing, such as: “What I’m hearing is that when you aren’t able to increase your repetitions each class you feel like a failure and that makes it hard to motivate yourself for the next class. Did I get that right?” Allow them to clarify if need be. Then validate those feelings and encourage the group to do so as well.
- Encourage participants to be specific in expressing how they feel and why, and ask questions as needed to elicit this information. This will help them clarify and better understand their feelings and will help you and the group understand and respond in an empathic way.
- Be specific in your responses. “That sounds upsetting” does not illustrate understanding. Instead, restate the problem and the feeling so they know they have been understood.
- Respond to the impact of events on the participant (effects on their feelings, mental state, and behaviors) rather than to “the facts” only.
- Respond in a voice, tone, and intensity that mirrors the participant’s. If someone is concerned, let your voice and face show equal concern.
- Avoid professional jargon and clichéd introductory phrases (e.g., “Well, we’ve all been there,” or “Sometimes life throws you curveballs”) and respond in language attuned to participants.

Skill 2: Asking Open Questions

Open questions encourage a person to talk without feeling defensive. Closed questions are the kind used by doctors (“Does this hurt?”), lawyers (“Can you identify the defendant?”), and parents (“Did you eat your vegetables?”) to get specific information. While closed questions are necessary at times, they do not allow people to explore their thoughts.

- A **CLOSED** question can be answered by “yes,” “no,” or one word.

Example: —~~Did~~ you exercise Monday?” —~~Did~~ you walk or bike?”

- A **CLOSED** question starts with “is,” “do,” “have,” and similar words.

Example: —~~Do~~ you want to exercise this week?”

- A **CLOSED** question discourages talking and shuts down conversation.

- An **OPEN** question cannot be answered by one or two words.

Example: —~~What~~ is your biggest challenge around exercise?”

- An **OPEN** question usually starts with “how” or “what.”

Example: —~~What~~ do you do to motivate yourself to exercise?”

- An **OPEN** question encourages the person to talk.

Open-ended questions help participants be real partners in the conversation. Open questions are phrased to help people explore and discuss in-depth information. When you allow participants to speak freely and personally, they are more likely to find their own solutions.

How To Use Open Questions With STEP

1. **Beginning a conversation:** —~~What~~ has your week been like?”
2. **Clarifying and elaborating:** —~~What~~ do you mean when you say you feel stuck?” “What’s been going on?”
3. **Working with feelings:** —~~How~~ did you feel after you exercised?”
4. **Solving problems:** —~~How~~ can you fit a little physical activity into the week?”

Advice on Asking Open-Ended Questions

- Avoid “why” questions. They make people feel defensive.
- Keep open questions simple and clear.
- Expect and encourage long answers. If someone answers briefly, follow up with, “Can you tell me more about that?”

Skill 3: Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing simplifies what someone says to just “the facts” or “the essence” without extraneous details. A good paraphrase:

- Conveys the same meaning but usually uses different words.
- Is brief. A paraphrase is shorter than what was originally said.
- Is clear and concise. A paraphrase clarifies things, rather than confusing them.
- Is tentative. You want the participant to feel comfortable about disagreeing or correcting your paraphrase if it is inaccurate.

Reasons To Paraphrase

- To check perceptions. A paraphrase verifies that you have accurately heard your participant. When you paraphrase what a participant has said, he or she can tell you whether you are accurate or inaccurate.

YOU: “It sounds like you have trouble finding time to exercise.”

PARTICIPANT: “Yes, that’s right. I just can’t fit it in.” <OR> “Well, not really. Time is a factor, but I don’t really like it that much.”

- To encourage more indepth discussion. Often a paraphrase brings up new thoughts and feelings.

YOU: “So you feel happy after you exercise.”

PARTICIPANT: “Yes, and you know, I feel really proud of myself, too. I never thought I could do this, but now I feel great about myself.”

- To show empathy. An accurate paraphrase lets your participant know that you really are listening and that you understand. Empathy is central to coaching. When people feel understood, they are more likely to open up.

Advice on Paraphrasing

- Use paraphrase or restatement instead of repeating word for word what was said, to make a person feel heard and understood.
- Use standard opening lines such as, “Let me see if I got that right...” “It sounds like...” “So, in other words...” End by saying, “Is that right?”

Skill 4: Giving and Receiving Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback requires courage, skill, understanding, and respect for yourself and others. Here is a framework for delivering feedback in a positive, productive fashion.

- **Focus your feedback on the person’s behavior, not on the person’s personality.** Refer to what the person does, not to what you imagine his or her traits to be. Commenting on behavior is not as personal and allows people the opportunity to change. Commenting on

people's personality or character can seem critical, judgmental, and even hurtful, especially if they disagree with what you have said.

- Behavior (positive feedback): ~~It~~ sounds like you had trouble getting out of bed this week to exercise. Is there another time of day that might fit your schedule better?"
- Personality (negative feedback): ~~It~~ sounds like you're the type of person who doesn't like to get up in the morning. Is there another time of day that might fit your schedule better?"
- **Be descriptive, not judgmental.** Refer to what occurred, not to your judgments of right or wrong, good or bad. Judgments arise out of a value system. Descriptions represent neutral reporting.
- **Focus your feedback on a specific situation rather than on abstract behavior.** What a person does is always related to a specific time and place. Feedback that ties behavior to a specific situation increases self-awareness.
- **Share your perceptions and feelings, not advice.** By sharing perceptions and feelings, you leave people free to decide how to use the feedback in light of their own goals in a particular situation at a particular time. When you give advice, you tell other people what to do with the information and thereby take away their freedom to determine for themselves what the most appropriate course of action is for them. At some point in the conversation, participants may want your professional advice, which is only natural. The more you can problem solve WITH them and help them come to productive solutions, the more likely they will follow through.
- **Do not force feedback on people.** Feedback is given to help people become more self-aware. Feedback should serve the needs of the receiver, not the giver. If people are too upset, defensive, or uninterested to understand it, do not force feedback on them.
- **Do not give people more feedback than they can understand at the time.** If you overload people with feedback, it reduces the chances that they will use it.
- **Focus your feedback on actions that the person can change.** Your feedback should focus on the individual, not an ideal. If participants have physical limitations, habits, or preferences that they cannot or do not want to change, work within their boundaries. Be optimistic but realistic in helping them set goals. Also, focus on changing things that are within their control, such as their own thoughts and behaviors.

Skill 5: Handling Emotions

Behavior coaching sessions should focus on thoughts and emotions related to **physical activity**. Unfortunately, that means you won't have a lot of time to explore deep feelings about other types of situations. But remember that helping people explore exercise-related feelings teaches them important skills to work through barriers to behavior change. Encourage them to use these same skills to work on other areas of their lives.

- **Identify the feelings by asking –feeling questions.”**
 - ~~How~~ do you feel when you complete a physical activity session?"
 - ~~How~~ do you feel when you miss a session?"

- **Paraphrase spoken feelings.**
 - –So you feel exhilarated when you engage in physical activity. Is that right?”
 - –Sounds like you are disappointed when you don’t exercise.”
- **Acknowledge the feelings.**
 - –I can understand that you feel disappointed when you don’t engage in physical activity.”
 - –It feels so good to be energized!”
- **Relate thoughts to feelings.**
 - –I can understand that you feel guilty when you don’t exercise. Can you tell me what you feel guilty about?” (Often, participants feel guilty about not exercising because they think they are disappointing you. Let them know physical activity is for their own benefit, not to please anyone else.)
- **When working with negative feelings, provide positive feedback.**
 - –I know you feel disappointed, but give yourself credit for what you did do. You have a lot on your hands right now. It’s great that you exercised twice this week. Perhaps things will be better next week and you can try to fit in one more session then.”

Advice on Handling Emotions

- Some participants want to talk about personal problems and feelings beyond the scope of physical activity coaching. Don’t feel bad about steering the conversation back to exercise.
- If a serious nonexercise issue comes up, offer to continue the discussion after class and talk to the participants in private about where they can seek appropriate help, support, therapy, or other resources.

Skill 6: Summarizing

A summary is several paraphrases combined and often includes a reflection of feeling. A good summary helps people see what they have done and what they plan to do in the future.

A summary:

- Serves as a perception check. (Do I really understand what we said?)
- Demonstrates empathy.
- Clarifies information for you and your participant.
- A summary is not just a sequential recounting of what has been said. A good summary takes what was said and puts it into a logical form. It mentions thoughts and feelings and ties them together.

Advice on Summarizing

- It really makes a person feel heard when staff can accurately reflect back what was said during a conversation.
- Making participants feel heard helps build trust, which will be essential as you help them motivate, problem solve, and share their experiences during behavior coaching sessions.

Skill 7: Solving Problems

Inevitably, you will come across situations in which a participant is stuck or is having trouble exercising. Your goal is to help the participant find solutions to barriers, based on strategies that have worked well in the past. Now is the time to brainstorm problem-solving strategies.

Approaches to Problem Solving

1. Make sure you have correctly identified the problem. Use paraphrasing.
–“So you’ve had trouble exercising because the weather is bad?”
2. Ask the participant what he or she has done before to cope with this barrier.
–“What has worked for you in the past when it has been raining?”
3. If the participant does not have a solution that has worked in the past, see if he or she can come up with one now.
–“What are other activities that you could do when it is raining?”
4. If the participant has trouble generating ideas, offer some to fuel the conversation.
–“When it rains, sometimes people go to the mall to walk.”
–“Some people use stationary machines on rainy days.”
–“We have a great physical activity video that you can use on rainy days. It’s easy and it’s fun to do.”

Advice on Problem Solving

- Without a doubt, everyone has times when it is difficult to come up with solutions to problems. Give the participant time to grapple with this challenge. Try not to rush to come up with solutions for the participant.
- Silence on the part of the participant does not necessarily mean he or she does not have an answer. Try to be comfortable with the silence; it could mean the participant is thinking hard about the problem-solving dilemma.

Skill 8: Leading Groups

A number of important skills that are part of running effective groups are listed in the table below. During the initiation of any group, it is important to be explicit about the adoption of “rules for the group.” Here, we will refer to the “group leader” and “group members.”

Skill	Description	Aims and Desired Outcomes
Active listening	Attending to verbal and nonverbal communication without judgment.	To encourage trust, self-disclosure, and exploration.
Restating	Repeating but with slightly different words to clarify meaning.	To determine if the leader has understood correctly the member’s statement.
Clarifying	Grasping the essence of a message at both the feeling and the thinking levels.	To arrive at a meaningful understanding of communication.
Summarizing	Pulling together important elements.	To avoid fragmentation and give direction to a session; and to provide continuity and meaning.
Questioning	Asking open-ended questions that lead to self-exploration of the “what” and “how” of behavior.	To elicit further discussion, get information, stimulate thinking, and increase clarity and focus.
Interpreting	Offering possible explanations for certain behavior, feelings, and thoughts.	To encourage deeper self-exploration and to provide a new perspective.

Skill	Description	Aims and Desired Outcomes
Confronting	Challenging members to look at discrepancies between their words and actions or body and verbal messages; and pointing to conflicting information or messages.	To encourage honest self-investigation, promote full use of potential, and bring about self-awareness of contradictions.
Reflecting feelings	Communicating understanding of the content of feelings.	To let members know that they are heard and understood beyond the level of words.
Supporting	Providing encouragement and reinforcement.	To create an atmosphere that encourages members to continue desired behaviors, to provide help when members are facing difficult struggles, and to create trust.
Empathizing	Identifying with members by adopting their frame of mind.	To foster trust in the relationship, communicate understanding, and encourage deeper levels of self-exploration.
Facilitating	Opening up clear and direct communication within the group, helping members assume increasing responsibility for the group's direction.	To promote effective communication among members and to help members reach their own goals in the group.
Initiating	Promoting group participation and introducing new directions in the group.	To prevent needless group floundering, redirect if the discussion strays, and increase the pace of the group process.
Setting goals	Planning specific goals for the group process and helping participants define concrete and meaningful goals.	To give direction to the group's activities and to help members select and clarify their goals.
Evaluating	Appraising the ongoing group process and the individual and group dynamics.	To promote better awareness and understanding of the group's dynamics and direction.
Giving feedback	Expressing concrete and honest reactions based on observation of members' behaviors.	To offer an external view of how the person appears to others and to increase the member's self-awareness.
Suggesting	Offering advice and information, direction, and ideas for new behavior.	To help members develop alternative courses of thinking and action.
Protecting	Safeguarding members from unnecessary psychological risks in the group.	To warn members of possible risks in group participation and to reduce those risks.
Disclosing oneself	Revealing one's own reactions to here-and-now events in the group.	To facilitate deeper levels of group interaction, create trust, and model ways of revealing oneself to others.
Modeling	Demonstrating desired behavior through actions.	To provide examples of desirable behavior and to inspire members to fully develop their potential.
Linking	Connecting the work that members do to common themes in the group.	To promote interaction between member-to-members and to encourage the development of cohesion in the group.
Blocking	Intervening as a leader to stop counterproductive group behavior.	To protect members and to enhance the flow of the group process.
Terminating	Preparing the group to close a session or end its existence.	To help members assimilate, integrate, and apply in-group learning to maintain their exercise habits on their own.

Skill 9: Dealing With Challenging Behaviors

This section provides examples of challenging coaching interactions and some suggestions on how to handle them.

Chatty Participants

Some participants can be isolated or lonely, and many times a participant is just excited or relieved to talk to a caring, concerned person. Usually, a couple of moments spent “checking in” help. Something like “How was your week?” can give your participant a moment to connect with you.

Sometimes you will find that it is very hard to keep the group focused on exercise. Participants may want to discuss spouses, jobs, health problems, the past... ANYTHING but exercise. Your role is to keep participants focused on the objective of the session and keep the conversation from “drifting away” from either of you. The best way to handle a chatty person is to keep tight-but-polite boundaries.

Busy Participants

Our purpose is NOT to make people feel guilty if they don’t exercise. Remind participants that physical activity is something they do for themselves, not for you. They do not disappoint or hurt you if they don’t exercise. What kind of job would it be if none of your participants needed your help?

Your goal is to help participants incorporate more activity into their lives and it is okay to acknowledge that sometimes this is difficult. When you communicate your understanding in this way, participants are more likely to open up and “confess” that they can’t find time for physical activity or they don’t like to exercise. This opens the door for you to help them problem solve in new and effective ways. If a participant needs to stop temporarily for some reason, he or she can always rejoin.

Emotional Participants

People get emotional. It’s natural. Sometimes people are disappointed in their physical activity and they turn those feelings toward you. Sometimes, people have experienced a personal loss, a family illness, or another stressor. Your job is to discuss exercise, not to be a counselor; however, you do need to discuss physical activity in a way that still acknowledges and respects the person’s emotions.

Here are some helpful steps for dealing with an emotional person. These approaches depend on the person and sometimes it will be an experiment. Just be willing to try. If your intention to help comes across, people will forgive any awkwardness.

- In a group setting, you might say, “I’m sorry you’re not feeling your best right now. Will you take a little break and I’ll come back to you?” Then speaking to the next person: “Now Mary, tell us about your week.”
Another option is: “I didn’t realize that. Thank you for telling me. I’ll see what I can do.”
- In a one-on-one encounter, you can say, “Goodness! It sounds like you’ve had a rough time lately. Let’s sit down and take a few long deep breaths together. It might help.” Then while

taking noticeable, audible, deep breaths, hold up your fingers to show, “One, Two, Three, Four, Five.”

If it seems appropriate: “I’ll say a prayer for you and your family.”

- Remember that all feedback is helpful, even though the conversation may be uncomfortable.
- It is possible that emotions have escalated as a result of medication interactions, losing a sentimental object, missing a night’s sleep, or forgetting to eat or take medications. Don’t take it personally. There may be events that you aren’t aware of contributing to the person’s emotional state.

Ill or Injured Participants

Participants may become ill or experience an injury beyond the occasional or expected soreness and fatigue that come with starting a new physical activity plan. You are not required to know all about aches and pains, so don’t hesitate to refer the participant to his or her physician. If something comes to your attention during class, use the following questions and guidelines to help you assess and handle the illness or injury appropriately.

- It helps to ask, “Where does it hurt?” If the participant answers with “my knee, hip, or ankle,” it may be an issue of improper form—how the participant is doing the exercise. It may be valuable for the entire class to pause while you observe whether the person was standing or sitting knock kneed during the exercise.
- The next question is, “Does that joint hurt only during exercise or all the time?” The participant may have arthritis, in which case initial exercise may increase discomfort, but with repetition, pain will often decrease.
- If the participant responds to the location of discomfort in a muscle, then you can reassure him or her that this is expected. It is a sign that the muscle has received your request to grow stronger.
- You might ask if the discomfort is sharp or dull. Any sharp pain is a sign to stop immediately.
- If a participant has soreness beyond 24 hours after the class, ask if the person is drinking plenty of water before noon each day. Older adults sometimes avoid drinking water because it keeps them up at night, so water needs to be drunk early in the day. Adequate hydration can help to prevent cramps.
- If a participant is experiencing fatigue and asks for your help, you can recommend recovery periods that include long deep breaths, which send oxygen into the lungs.
- If people arrive to class not feeling well, they might just want to be with others and they should probably not exercise. As a leader, use common sense and do your best to decide the most responsible course of action in that moment. It’s okay for participants to sit down and take a break, or in this case, not to start at all. However, if they risk infecting other patients or hurting themselves or others (for example, with a fall), they should be encouraged to return to their rooms and consult a physician.

Note: If a participant reports any of the following symptoms during or after exercise, the participant should stop exercising **immediately** and call his or her physician:

- Dizziness.
- Nausea.
- Shortness of breath.
- Chest pain (including chest discomfort or pressure, left arm pain, or indigestion or stomach discomfort).
- Tingling in the hands or feet.

Keys to Facilitating During Difficult Situations

- Be nonjudgmental.
- Be empathic.
- Give individualized advice to help problem solve.
- Don't ask "why" or closed-ended questions.
- Don't take the participant's behavior personally.
- Don't interpret (when a paraphrase will do).
- Stick to the "here and now."
- Stick with the topic of exercise.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Give encouragement and praise for the small things.
- Seek consultation **immediately** if a participant talks about depression, alcohol, drugs, abuse of self or another, or suicide.

Resources

Jones CJ, Rose DJ, eds. Physical activity instruction of older adults. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics; 2005. Chapter 8: Goal setting and behavior management.

Chapter 9: Overview of Coaching Session Curriculum

Overview

At the beginning of the STEP program, you will hold nine weekly behavior coaching sessions. For simplicity, we recommend that you hold these sessions in the same block of time as the exercise sessions. Each behavior coaching session has a lesson plan to assist you. This chapter provides a brief overview of these lesson plans.

Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand the purpose and format of the nine behavior coaching sessions using the lesson plans provided.
- Determine what materials you need to lead each coaching session.
- Identify the handouts you will distribute to participants during each coaching session.

Terms

Behavior coaching session: Structured session designed to engage and motivate participants to change their exercise patterns.

Lesson plans: Written outlines of the material you will present during the behavior sessions.

Handouts: Each session has one or more handouts for participants to refer to during class and at home.

Take home challenges: Tasks or activities for the participants to take home and complete; designed to help reinforce class material and prepare for the next session.

Key Points

- There are nine group coaching sessions (including the introductory session) during the first 9 weeks of the STEP program.
- Hold the behavior coaching sessions during the same time block as the strength training exercises. When you have offered all nine behavior sessions, start the cycle over again and hold them outside of strength class for new people or those who might want a refresher.
- It is important for program leaders to be familiar and comfortable with the material in each coaching session and to be fully prepared to conduct each session.

Purpose of Lesson Plans

Each of the nine behavior coaching sessions has a lesson plan. The purpose of each lesson plan is to provide the STEP program leader with the tools to run the coaching sessions successfully. This includes scripts, notes, handouts, and other important information for the participants. Following the scripts and notes contained in each lesson plan will help you cover the material in a way that maximizes the participants' experience and helps them achieve their short-term and long-term exercise goals.

Format of Lesson Plans

Each lesson plan follows the same format and consists of the following sections:

- **Introduction.** An overview of what to expect in the coaching session.
- **Preparation.** A list of activities that the STEP program leader should complete or review before the coaching session. You will also find a list of handouts to photocopy for each session.
- **Session Objectives.** A list describing the **goals** of the specific coaching session.
- **Session Outline.** An outline of the material you will find in the Session Content and Sample Scripts (see below).
- **Session Content and Sample Scripts.** Instructions on how to discuss the session topics and sample scripts for leading the session. You can use the scripts as written or put them into your own words, as long as the main ideas remain the same. The sample scripts have a heading identifying them as sample scripts and should be easy to recognize.

Before each session, you should make sure that you are fully familiar with the topic and the materials for that session. Participants will appreciate your being confident and prepared. In addition, they will get more out of the session if everything runs smoothly and if you seem comfortable with the material you present.

Most sessions involve a review of topics discussed in the previous session, a period of active discussion and problem solving, and a handout or “take home challenge” that will be discussed at the next session. It is best if the same group leader facilitates the full 9 weeks for the same group of seniors; this approach will provide a “group memory” and the leader can tie together discussions from one session to another.

The nine behavior coaching sessions are:

1. Introductory Session
2. Being an Effective Group Member and Motivation for Behavior Change
3. The Faces of Physical Limitation
4. Self-Awareness and Self-Monitoring
5. Examining Our Feelings: How We Think Can Affect How We Act
6. Thoughts and Feelings About Physical Activity
7. Barriers to Physical Activity and the Art of Problem Solving
8. The Value of Social Support and How To Create It
9. Review of Self-Monitoring and Setting Goals

Chapter 10: Coaching Session Handouts

Overview

The following pages contain handouts for each STEP behavior coaching session. These sessions occur in the first 9 weeks of the STEP program. They are designed to assist participants in developing and maintaining behavior changes that will help them adopt and maintain healthier lifestyles that emphasize physical activity.

Objectives

This chapter will:

- Familiarize you with the different types of handouts.
- Allow you to review the handouts for each behavior session.
- Allow you to print the handouts for each session as needed.

Key Points

- The handouts are labeled according to the behavior session in which they are used or distributed.
 - Some handouts are simple introductions and help describe certain aspects of the STEP program (e.g., RPE scale, balance exercises) and should be kept as reference materials.
 - Some are in-class handouts or worksheets to be discussed and completed during the behavior sessions.
 - Others are “Fake Home Challenges” and should be completed at home and discussed at the following session.
- For optimal use of these handouts, it is essential that you or your program leader are familiar with the content and lesson plan for each coaching session and come to the sessions prepared with enough handouts for all participants.
- Two versions of the STEP tracking sheet are available (found in Session #1 handouts): the “weekly” tracking sheet and the “monthly” tracking sheet. It is up to you which tracking sheet you prefer to use at your facility.
 - Some people find it easier to track exercise by weeks. If you choose this method, distribute a fresh tracking sheet to participants on the first day of class and have them start recording their activities the same day. For the next 7 days, participants will use this sheet to track the exercise they do inside and outside of class. When their sheets are full, participants should turn them in and receive one blank sheet apiece. Completed tracking sheets should be stored in a master notebook in the classroom. That way, no sheets will be lost, and both you and the participants can view their progress over time. You can use the tracking sheets in the behavior sessions to talk about differences you see in their exercise patterns from week to week.
 - The monthly tracking sheets are an easy way to view participants’ progress over a longer block of time. Monthly sheets also mean fewer copies have to be made and stored. However, there is a risk of losing valuable information if a sheet is misplaced. If you decide to use monthly tracking sheets, you may want to keep a backup copy for each

participant, transfer the hours into your master notebook each week, or devise another system that works for your staff and participants.

Session #1 Handout: Overview of the STEP Physical Activity Program

STEP Schedule and Goals

Week	Behavior Session	Number of Strength Classes	Minutes of Walking per Week	At-Home Balance Exercises
1	1	Intro	0-30	N
2	2	1-2	30	N
3	3	1-2	60	Y
4	4	1-2	60	Y
5	5	1-2	90	Y
6	6	1-2	90	Y
7	7	1-2	90	Y
8	8	1-2	120	Y
9	9	1-2	120	Y
10-end	Optional	1-2	150	Y

STEP begins with a 9-week program. During the 9 weeks, we will focus on the goal of increasing your physical activity to 150 minutes a week with a combination of strength exercises and walking.

You will attend class 1 or 2 times a week, where you will learn both strength exercises and behavior strategies. The behavior sessions will address issues such as motivation and help you overcome barriers that make physical activity difficult.

At the end of 9 weeks, the behavior sessions will start over with Session #1 so that newcomers can participate. As a “seasoned” participant, you should continue your strength classes, walking, and balance exercises, but the behavior sessions will be optional. Feel free to attend any or all of the behavior sessions for continued support, a refresher, or any other reason.

Session #1 Handout: Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

While exercising, you should monitor your RPE, that is, how strenuous the exercise feels to you. This depends on the strain and fatigue in your muscles and your feeling of breathlessness in the chest. Attend to these feelings when you rate exertion, not to the amount of weight you are using or the length of time that has passed.

	6	ABSOLUTE MINIMUM
	7	VERY, VERY LIGHT This requires minimal effort. It is easy and comfortable.
	8	
	9	VERY LIGHT Like walking slowly at your own pace for several minutes.
	10	
WALKING TARGET	11	FAIRLY LIGHT Not especially hard. It feels fine and is no problem to continue.
	12	
	13	SOMEWHAT HARD You are tired but you don't have any great difficulty.
	14	
STRENGTH TARGET	15	HARD You can still go on but you have to push yourself and feel tired.
	16	
	17	VERY HARD You are so tired that you cannot continue much longer.
	18	
	19	VERY, VERY HARD This is as hard as you have ever experienced.
	20	ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM



Staying Healthy Through
Education and Prevention

STEP Physical Activity Description and Expectations Agreement

Congratulations! You are now part of the STEP Physical Activity Program! As a member of the program, you will participate in activities that are designed to enhance your health and prevent physical decline. Staff will teach you how to do the exercises and how to develop a program of ongoing physical activity. The STEP Program consists of walking, strength, and balance and flexibility training.

Expectations for Participation

You will:

- Participate in structured physical activity groups at least **1 time** each week. At the beginning of the program, these sessions will also deal with building the skills that you need to make the program successful.
- Walk on your own or in groups on a regular basis, with the goal of building up to about 30 minutes of walking each day.
- Keep in contact with the staff so that we know how you are doing.
- Report certain changes in your health status to the staff so that we can determine if it is safe for you to continue participating in the exercise program.

These changes include if you have:

- Seen a doctor about a new medical condition
- Changed your medication
- Experienced:
 - Chest discomfort
 - Rapid or irregular heartbeat
 - Shortness of breath
 - Dizziness
 - Swelling of both ankles
 - Increased fatigue

As we strive to develop programs to maximize wellness, we must ensure that safety is a priority!

Your signature below indicates that you understand what is involved in participation in the STEP program.

Signed (participant): _____ Date: _____

Staff: _____ Date: _____

Session #2 Take Home Challenge: Reflect on Physical Activity

Below are three questions about why you want to become a more physically active person. Please take a few minutes to reflect on each question and then write down your thoughts when you get home. The next time we meet, we will discuss your answers and how we, as a group, can motivate each other to embrace STEP and become more active.

1. How do you think you will **BENEFIT** from becoming more physically active?

2. What are **YOUR MAIN MOTIVATIONS** for wanting to become more active? Why do **YOU** personally want to change your exercise habits?

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** make these changes?

Session #3 Handout: Balance Exercises

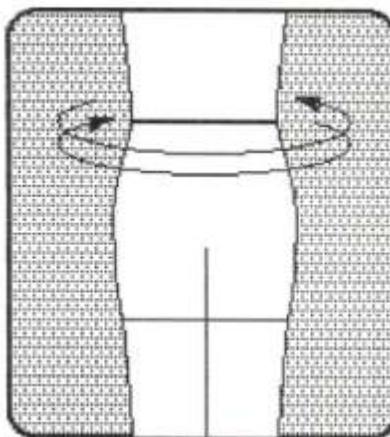
The following exercises are designed to improve your balance and stability on your feet. You should complete them at home using a stable surface that you can grip for support. We suggest a sink and counter in particular.

No matter your strength or physical condition, you should start at Level 1 and progress gradually through Levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. Your STEP instructor will demonstrate and help you practice all the exercises in class so that you will feel comfortable continuing at home.

LEVEL I BALANCE EXERCISES

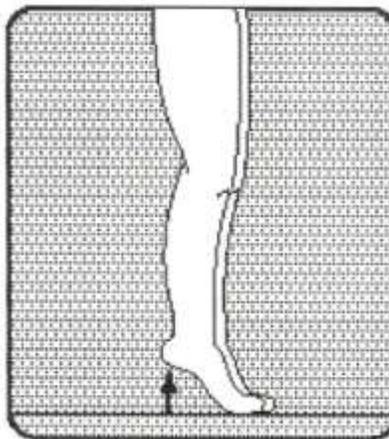
The Sink Hip Circle I

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Do not move shoulders or feet.
4. Make a big circle to left with hips.
5. Repeat 5 times.
6. Make a big circle to right with hips.
7. Repeat 5 times.



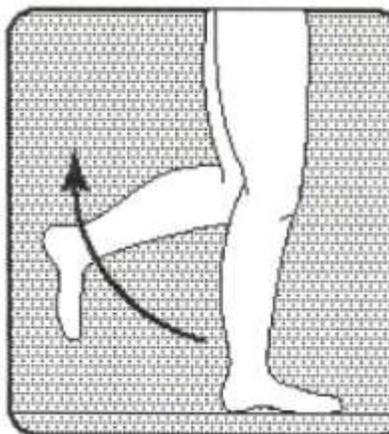
The Sink Heel Raise I

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Raise your heels gently.
4. Hold for count of 5.
5. Then come down.
6. Repeat 10 times.



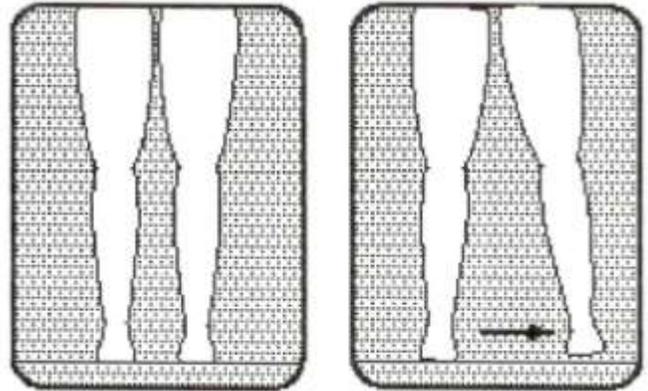
One Leg Sink Stand I

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Stand on your left leg for count of 5.
4. Stand on your right leg for count of 5.
5. Repeat 10 times.



The Sink Side Step I

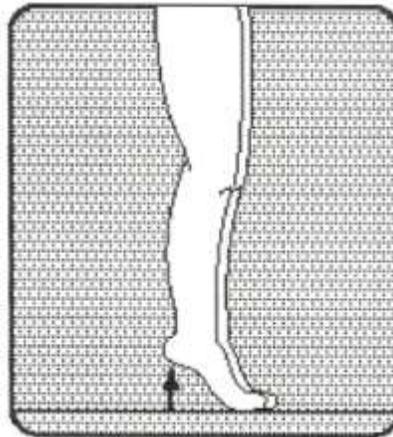
1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Move hands along kitchen sink as you step to left 5 steps.
4. Step to right 5 steps.
5. Repeat 5 times.



LEVEL II BALANCE EXERCISES

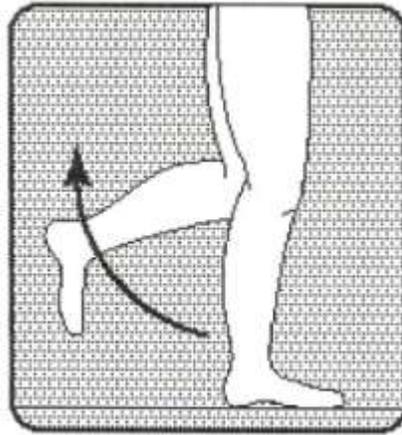
The Sink Heel Raise II

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with one hand.
3. Raise your heels gently.
4. Hold for count of 5.
5. Then come down.
6. Repeat 10 times.



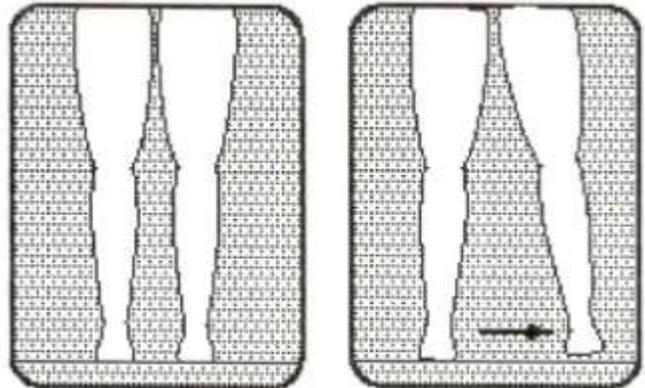
One Leg Sink Stand II

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with one hand.
3. Bend the knee and lift your left leg for count of 5.
4. Bend the knee and lift your right leg for count of 5.
5. Repeat 10 times.



The Sink Side Step II

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with one hand.
3. Move hand along kitchen sink as you step to left 5 steps.
4. Step to right 5 steps.
5. Repeat 5 times.



Step Forward II

1. Stand with right side toward kitchen sink.
2. Hold onto the sink with your right hand.
3. Step forward with your left leg; shift your weight forward over the left leg.
4. Do not step forward with the right leg.
5. Return the left leg to the starting position.
6. Repeat on opposite side.
7. Continue to alternate each leg.
8. Repeat 10 times.



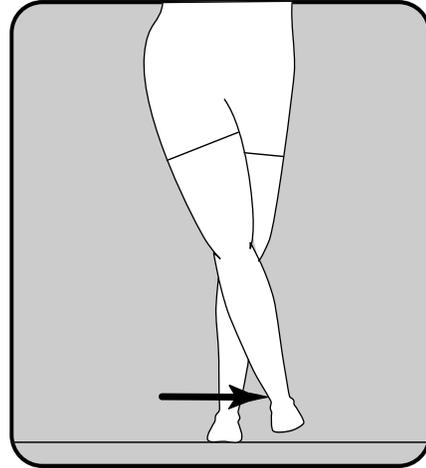
Step Backward II

1. Stand with right side toward kitchen sink.
2. Hold onto the sink with your right hand.
3. Step backward with your left leg; shift your weight backward over the left leg.
4. Do not step backward with the right leg.
5. Return the left leg to the starting position.
6. Repeat on opposite leg.
7. Continue to alternate each leg.
8. Repeat 10 times.

LEVEL III BALANCE EXERCISES

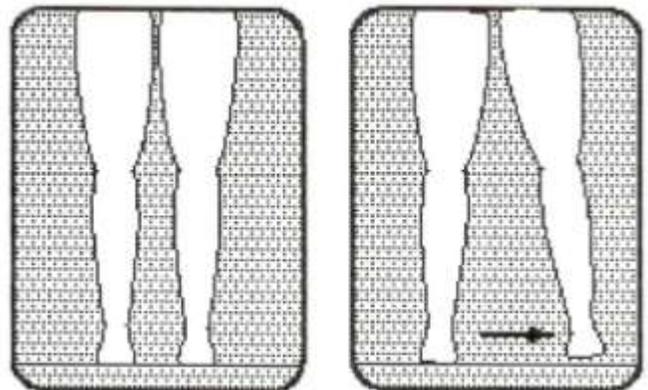
The Sink Leg Cross III

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Move hands along kitchen sink as you step.
4. Cross left foot in front of right foot.
5. Take a side step with your right foot, passing it out from behind your left foot.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 three times.
7. Now, cross right foot in front of left foot (reverse directions).
8. Take a side step with your left foot, passing it out from behind your right foot.
9. Repeat steps 7 and 8 three times.



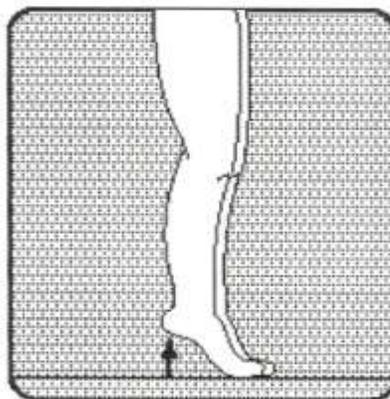
Sink Side Step III

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Do not hold onto sink.
3. Step to left 5 steps.
4. Step to right 5 steps.
5. Repeat 5 times.



The Sink Toe Stand III

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Do not hold onto the sink.
3. Go up on your toes.
4. Hold for count of 5.
5. Then come down.
6. Repeat 10 times.



Step Forward III

1. Stand with right side toward kitchen sink.
2. Balance with fingertips of the right hand.
3. Step forward with your left leg; shift your weight forward over the left leg.
4. Do not step forward with the right leg.
5. Return the left leg to the starting position.
6. Repeat on opposite side.
7. Continue to alternate each leg.
8. Repeat 10 times.



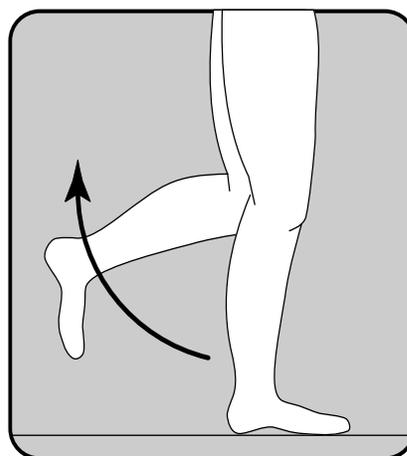
Step Backward III

1. Stand with right side toward kitchen sink.
2. Balance with fingertips of the right hand.
3. Step backward with your left leg; shift your weight backward over the left leg.
4. Do not step backward with the right leg.
5. Return the left leg to the starting position.
6. Repeat on opposite leg.
7. Continue to alternate each leg.
8. Repeat 10 times.

LEVEL IV BALANCE EXERCISES

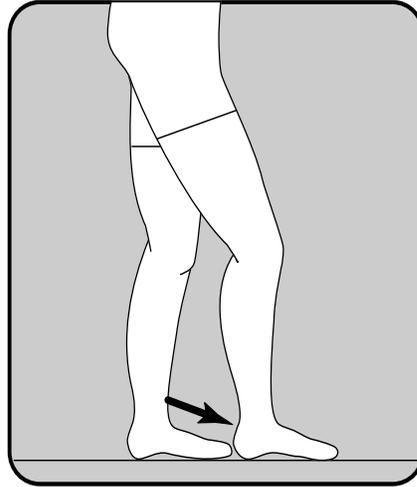
One Leg Sink Stand IV

1. Stand facing kitchen sink.
2. Do not hold onto the kitchen sink.
3. Stand on your left leg for count of 5.
4. Stand on your right leg for count of 5.
5. Repeat 10 times for each leg.



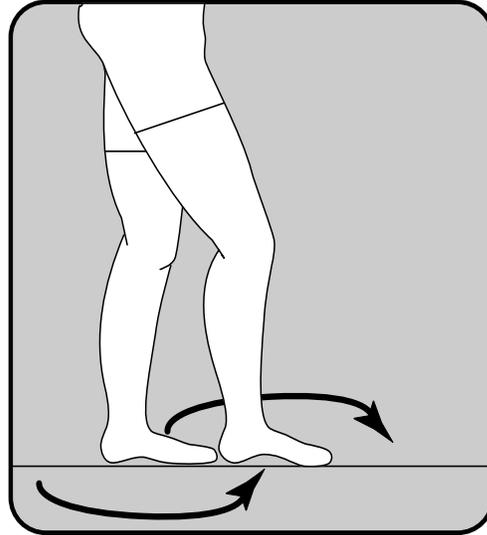
Tandem Walking IV

1. Stand with left side toward kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with left hand.
3. Move hand along kitchen sink as you step.
4. Place right heel directly in front of toes of left foot.
5. Now place left heel directly in front of toes of right foot.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 three times.
7. Turn around.
8. Hold with right hand.
9. Repeat steps 4 and 5 three times.



Cross-Over Walk IV

1. Stand with left side toward kitchen sink.
2. Hold on with left hand.
3. Move hand along kitchen sink as you step forward.
4. Cross left foot over right foot.
5. Cross right foot over left foot.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 three times.
7. Turn around.
8. Hold with right hand.
9. Repeat steps 4 and 5 three times.



Modified Step-Up IV

1. Stand with your right side toward the sink.
2. Hold onto the sink with your right hand.
3. Have a step stool or large book (such as a phone book) on the floor in front of you.
4. Lift the right foot up and tap it on the stool/book.
5. Lower the right foot back to the floor.
6. Repeat with the left foot.
7. Alternate right and left steps.
8. Repeat 10 times.

LEVEL V BALANCE EXERCISES

Walk With Head Turns V

1. Stand with right side toward sink.
2. Hold on with the right hand.
3. Move hand along sink as you step.
4. Take 5 steps forward.
5. While stepping forward, turn your head to the right and then to the left one time.
6. Turn around.
7. Hold the sink with the left hand.
8. Repeat steps 4 and 5.
9. Repeat entire sequence 5 times.

Forward Lunge V

1. Stand with one side to kitchen sink.
2. Place one hand on the sink, one on your hip.
3. Lunge forward with right foot.
4. Return to start position.
5. Lunge forward with left foot.
6. Return to start position.
7. Repeat 10 times.



Side Lunge, Hands on Hips V

1. Stand near kitchen sink.
2. Put your hands on your hips.
3. Lunge to side on left foot.
4. Return to upright position.
5. Lunge to side on right.
6. Return to upright position.
7. Repeat 10 times.



Step Backward and Forward V

1. Stand with your right side toward the kitchen sink.
2. Balance with fingertips of your right hand.
3. Step backward with your left leg, shift your weight backward over the left leg, and pause.
4. Step forward with the left leg, past the right leg.
5. Shift your weight forward over the left leg.
6. Return the left leg to the starting position.
7. Repeat on opposite leg.
8. Continue to alternate each leg.
9. Repeat 10 times.



Modified Step-Up V

1. Stand with your right side toward the sink.
2. Balance with fingertips of your right hand.
3. Have a step stool or large book (such as a phone book) on the floor in front of you.
4. Lift the right foot up and tap it on the stool/book.
5. Lower the right foot back to the floor.
6. Repeat with the left foot.
7. Alternate right and left steps.
8. Repeat 10 times.

Session #3 In-Class Worksheet: Strategies for Reducing Physical Decline

Everyone experiences physical changes as they age. You may move more slowly, have trouble getting up out of a chair, or have other problems moving around. BUT you should be able to keep living the life you want to live. There is a difference between slowing down and ~~declining~~.” Think about some strategies you can use to prevent ~~decline~~.” Write them down and bring this handout to class for discussion.

Strategies To Reduce Our Risk of Physical Decline:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Session #3 Take Home Challenge: Brainstorming About Physical Limitations

1. Regarding my physical function, I have noticed that...
2. These changes make me feel...
3. I have learned in STEP that physical activity can...
4. I have decided to do the following things to reduce my risk of physical decline...

Date: _____ Activity: _____

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

Very Neutral Very

Bad Good

Before: _____ During: _____ After: _____

.....

Date: _____ Activity: _____

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

Very Neutral Very

Bad Good

Before: _____ During: _____ After: _____

.....

Date: _____ Activity: _____

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

Very Neutral Very

Bad Good

Before: _____ During: _____ After: _____

.....

Session #6 Handout: Changing Negative Thoughts to Positive Thoughts

It takes practice to change our negative thoughts into positive ones. Here are some examples of different types of negative thoughts and suggestions on how you can modify them into positive thoughts and realistic goals.

Are any of these thoughts familiar?

Negative Thought Types	Positive Refocusing
<p>Good or Bad</p> <p>–“What did I do today? Nothing. I didn’t even walk today. I’ll never get in shape.”</p>	<p>Create a Balance in Your Day</p> <p>–“So I slipped up. It’s just ONE day. Tomorrow I will put my shoes by the front door to remind myself to walk.”</p>
<p>Excuses</p> <p>–“It’s too cold to take a walk today.”</p> <p>–“I don’t have the will power or the energy to do this.”</p>	<p>Be Creative- It’s Worth a Try</p> <p>–“I will walk at the mall today.”</p> <p>–“The sooner I go for a walk, the more energy I will have. It takes effort to change! Get going, Self!”</p>
<p>Should</p> <p>–“I am sick of handouts and completing my physical activity chart. Why do we do this anyway?”</p>	<p>Take Charge- It’s Your Health!</p> <p>–“Completing my activity charts will help me keep track of my physical activity behaviors. This will keep me safe AND help me improve.”</p>
<p>Not As Good As</p> <p>–“Barry walked five times this week and I only walked three times.”</p>	<p>I Am Not Barry!</p> <p>–“This is not a competition. I will progress at a rate that is safe for me and in line with my goals.”</p>
<p>Give Up</p> <p>–“I cannot keep up with all this. I might as well forget it. I’ll never be an independent exerciser.”</p>	<p>Reach Out to Support System</p> <p>–“Whenever I feel like giving up, I will call one of my social support buddies and ask for some help.”</p>

Session #6 Handout: Talking Back to Negative Thoughts

We're all guilty of negative self-talk. It's hard to avoid when you're feeling down. But saying negative things to yourself won't help you work toward your fitness goals—don't damage your own self-esteem! Here are some strategies for “talking back” to negative self-talk and converting it into positive, supportive feedback.

Strategies for Talking Back to Negative Thoughts

1. Catch yourself in the act when it comes to negative thoughts. Practice recognizing when you're heading down a negative path and...
2. ...Shout to yourself internally, “STOP!” Try to picture a huge red stop sign in your mind. This is a signal to take a step back. Challenge yourself to shut down those thoughts. Only you have control over them and you can change.
3. Reflect on the underlying meaning of the negative thought. Does it relate to a goal that seems out of reach? Let yourself know that it is o.k. if you wavered from the path to good health. Learn from it and move on with positive thoughts instead.
4. Now, talk back to that negative thought using a positive thought that relates to an attainable, realistic goal. Do this as many times as you need. Get in the habit of supporting yourself with positive self-talk. Being your cheerleader and allowing yourself to make mistakes is an important part of the process.

Session #6 In-Class Worksheet: Practice Changing Negative Thoughts to Positive Thoughts

Write down three examples of negative thoughts you have about your fitness goals. Say one of those thoughts in your mind and then say, “STOP!”

Now write down a response to that negative thought. Admit that maybe you didn't reach your goal this time, but add a positive thought about what you will do moving forward to make sure you reach your goals.

Negative thought related to a goal that seems out of reach	STOP!	Positive thought related to a goal that you can reach
		
		
		

Session # 6 Take-Home Challenge: Increasing Positive Self-Talk

Below the dashed line, write down four positive thoughts or feelings about your commitment to modify your behavior, how physical activity makes you feel, or what you have to gain physically and mentally from this program.

My Positive Thoughts

Cut on the dashed line and put this sheet in your wallet or purse or somewhere you will see it everyday. Look at it when you need a positive reminder about physical activity.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Additional Techniques for Bolstering Positive Thoughts

- Take time to remember your accomplishments and what they mean to you and your health.
- Take 10 minutes at the beginning of each day to think about how you can help yourself maintain your physical activity program. Think about all of the health benefits that you will receive.
- When you are feeling down, take time to think of the things we take for granted, like nature, the laughter of children, or peace. Think about things that bring you happiness or joy and remind yourself that your goals are worth a little struggle.

Session #6 Take-Home Challenge, continued

Before the next session, take some time to answer these questions:

Did you practice *talking back* to your negative thoughts and bolstering your positive thoughts?

YES

NO

What effect did this have on your physical activity behavior throughout the week?

Did you try any of the techniques for bolstering positive thoughts?

YES

NO

**If yes, how did this make you feel about physical activity and exercise.
If no, why not?**

Session #7 In-Class Worksheet: Examining Your Week of Physical Activity

Use the questions provided below to think about and assess your physical activity and exercise participation for the past week. Please be as thorough as you can. When you come to class, we will review your thoughts and discuss any barriers that you encountered.

How many days were you physically active in the past 7 days?

How long were you physically active for each session?

What type of physical activity did you do?

What physical activity did you enjoy the most?

What were some barriers to physical activity that you encountered this week?

How did you deal with these barriers?

Session #7 Take Home Challenge: Barriers to Physical Activity and Countermeasures

Ask yourself: What got in the way of my physical activity program this week and what can I do to prevent a lapse? (*If there were no barriers this week, brainstorm about possible future barriers and how to overcome them.)

List the Barriers and Counteractions in the boxes below.

Physical Activity Barriers	Physical Activity Barrier Counteractions

Session #8 Handout: Social Support

What kind of support do you need?

Someone to listen to you

It's important to be able to share your thoughts and feelings with others. It's also important to have someone who can be open and honest with you. Find one or two people with whom you can share both positive and negative aspects of your life. Find someone who is willing to listen rather than always trying to give you advice. Who will listen to you and avoid being judgmental when you're struggling or get off track?

Someone to participate with you

It's often easier and more enjoyable to make lifestyle changes when others participate with you. Will it help if a family member or friend makes some changes with you? Try to find others with similar interests and needs as you (e.g., an exercise or lunch partner who is committed to making healthy changes).

Someone to encourage you

It's easier to make changes when others are encouraging and supporting you. Having someone to encourage you can be helpful when you slip up or don't reach your goals as quickly as you would like. Who can provide the encouragement you need when you get discouraged? It's important to feel that others are proud of your successes. Who will be excited about your success?

Someone to provide knowledge

To achieve your goals, you may need to build some relationships with people who have knowledge and experience in the areas in which you're trying to make changes. Who can help provide the knowledge and skills you need for success? Talking with someone who has already been successful with weight management or lifestyle change can often be helpful. So can turning to your session coaches, who are always happy to help!

Someone to assist you

Successful change may require you to reorganize the ways you spend your time. You may also find that you need others to help you get things done. What help do you need to free up time to exercise, attend a group meeting, or cook a healthy meal? Who can help you around the house or at work so you can make time for things you need to do to achieve your physical activity goals?

Session #8 In-Class Handout: Keys to Successful Partnerships

COMMUNICATION is the key to building supportive relationships. Let your family and friends know your thoughts and feelings. Be clear with them about how and when they should provide support. They need to hear from you that you really want to achieve your goals, you're committed to success, and you want them behind you.

CHOOSE good partners. And more than one! One person may not be able to provide all the support you need, so reach out to more than one person. You could choose someone who is making the same changes you are and support each other. Or maybe choose someone who is healthy and whom you look up to for their active lifestyle. Most important, choose someone who is a good listener, who can support you and encourage you when you're down.

ASK for the **specific** help you need and develop a **plan** together. Never expect others to know how to provide the support you need. Not being specific about your needs is one of the most common roadblocks to obtaining helpful social support.

Session #8 In-Class Worksheet: Building a Supportive Team

Use the following worksheets to help you build your support team. Start by thinking about what goals you need help achieving. Next, determine the specific types of support you will need to achieve your goal. Think about specific family members, friends, and coworkers who can best provide the type of support you need. The final step is to make specific plans to ask for the support you need. If you don't finish the chart in class, take time to complete the chart at home. It will be a valuable tool for you.

What do I need help with?	What type of support do I want?	Who can help me?	How can they help?	How will I ask for help?
		Name: Phone:		
		Name: Phone:		
		Name: Phone:		

What do I need help with?	What type of support do I want?	Who can help me?	How can they help?	How will I ask for help?
		Name: Phone:		
		Name: Phone:		

Session #8 Take-Home Challenge: Ask for and Reflect on Social Support

In the space below, write down the name of the person or group you plan to lean on for social support this week based on the Supportive Team chart you completed. At the end of the week, reflect on how it went. For instance, was it a good or bad experience? Would you reach out to them again? Then take a few minutes to look at your chart and identify another person whom you would like to reach out to this week.

Please think about the questions below after Session 8 and before your next strength class:

1. What group or person would you like to reach out to for support this week?

Write your new social support here:

2. What specific challenge do you need support to overcome?

3. How can this group or person support you and help you reach your goal for the week? (Be specific. They will need to know exactly how they can help.)

After your strength class(es) and before Session 9:

4. Did you successfully meet your goals for the week?

Yes

No

5. What did you think about trying a new form of social support (in terms of positive experiences, negative, ease of access, etc.)?

6. Do you think that you would try to use this social support network again if you wanted to or needed to in the future?

Yes

No

Session #9 In-Class Worksheet: Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

Please fill out the entire goal sheet below. Be as thorough as you can.

My long-term physical activity goal is to:

2. My Physical Activity Goals for this week are:

(A) Frequency: _____

(B) Intensity: _____

(C) Time: _____

(D) Type: _____

3. What days do I plan to be physically active outside of class?

4. How many minutes will I be physically active outside of class?

5. Where will I be physically active? What activities will I do?

6. I plan to achieve my Physical Activity Goals by (what day):
