

Participant: mypaa-51

Sent: Saturday, 1 February 2014 01:00 AM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

I turn 50 this year, I am newly married and want to be around to enjoy my new life.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

My depression medication made me feel like I was living in a fog, I wasn't involved with life around me, I felt cut off and desensitised.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

I'm sleeping better, feeling better in myself. Its a journey I've just started, but one I want to continue.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

I went to my doctor and I'm getting support from him and seeing a psychologist. I'm motivated to be more physical.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

I'm hoping it does, I understand endorphins, etc, and I'm looking forward to seeing a big change

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

Honestly, I'm not sure.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I was on anti depressants, at first it made things much better, but after ten years, it was just making me numb. I haven't tried anything else yet.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

I was desensitised to life and emotions.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

The fog of the drug.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Yes, I would try it

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

Forums

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

I think so, it would help to feel less isolated and alone.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Depression envelopes you, mind, body and spirit. Being able to access something where like minded people meet could provide an avenue for hope.

Participant: mypaa-89

Sent: Sat 01/02/2014 06:41 PM

I should point out, I had a misunderstanding with my lover last night, I've had 2 hours sleep, and I feel pretty worthless right now

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

I know that if I am not, I will physically suffer. I don't have a choice.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Generally, it's depression. A feeling of pain and tension, lack of sleep, worthlessness. Then I don't want to do anything.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

I feel better, I sleep better, and I'm less likely to eat junk. I feel more body positive when I exercise. I concentrate better. I'm more patient.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Daily exercise is one of the main things I've been trying. Keeping busy on something practical is one method. That's pretty good, and kind of covers exercise, which is one way to keep busy.

Being aware of and accept feelings without being caught up in them. Mindfulness I guess. I know a lot of my problems come from anxiety. I get anxious when I feel unsafe, confused, and frustrated. If I feel unsafe, I need to figure why, and get myself somewhere safer, or at least manage my risk. Confused is trickier. Simply, I need to get some space and quiet to work through what is confusing me. Frustration, I need to stop focussing on what I can't do, and ask myself what CAN I do now.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

Physical activity does work. It's burning off steam. It's doing something simple so my brain can process things in the background. There's the endorphin effect. It helps with sleep. All those things work. The only challenge I find is, to actually get going when I feel depressed. Also, when I'm busy and stressed, it can be tricky to find time in the day.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I think every little bit helps. For me, I like to aim for a solid 45 minutes of moderate exercise, about 5 days a week. Some days I do a lot more.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I was on antidepressants in my late 20's. That was a bit of a disaster.

I've seen a few counsellors over the years. I think some have helped in some ways, but many have simply been traumatic.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

The anti-depressants had horrendous side effects, and don't really cure anything. The counsellors, have never really worked at all.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

I've been seeking help on and off all my life, and if there's treatment out there, I have never found it.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

I would, and in some ways have done in the past. Calorie King was very helpful for weight loss and exercise in the past. I use a few different kinds of exercise. Cycling, walking, swimming and sometimes weights. Keeping a comprehensive exercise record is tricky at times. There's different metrics for different activities.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

Not many features, really. I think it needs a nice clear, simple focus. If the solid research is 30 minutes, moderate exercise, every second day to improve mood. Then that's all there is to it. The simpler it is, the easier to use. The clearer the message, the easier compliance. Did I do 45 mins exercise today? How was my sleep? How busy was my day? How positive is my mood? I'm personally curious to look at some of the smartphone apps & accessories.

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

I'm not at all sure it could help me. There's potential for it being a simple tool that I use for record keeping. Social media does NOT work for me, when there's no personal connection with the people. Telling my close friends what I am trying to do, and getting positive feedback from them helps. But I don't think any of my friends would need or use such a site.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**
- I don't know.

Participant: mypaa-99

Sent: Fri 14/02/2014 10:50 AM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

Depending on where I'm at in life, different things motivate me to be active. I've had several encounters with eating disorders in the past, so the concept of the ideal body was my motivation to be physically active. More recently, I've put weight back on again since my last experience with anorexia and am determined to get into shape. It's hard to be motivated when eating properly and exercising, as weight is lost much more slowly. I have a friend that I confided in when I felt like I was bored with my life and needed a hobby, and he suggested working out. That's my main source of motivation... to prove to him that I can stick to a workout routine and see it through. I've been working out daily and eating healthily for almost 3 weeks now and although the scales haven't changed dramatically, my body is looking so much better and I can notice my muscles toning up and my waistline slimming down. So at the present moment, just liking what I see in the mirror motivates me to keep active every day.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

I haven't let anything stop me from working out these last few weeks, however some things have prevented me doing as much physical activity as I would have liked to. I've had to travel 6 hours from home and back at one stage, but even on those days I ran before and after I left. The only day since my routine began that I haven't been able to sweat it out properly was when I had a massive hangover last weekend, but I still managed to fit in some yoga. The concept of "no excuses" is easier said than done, but I'm learning to stick to my goals.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

The biggest thing I have noticed was the huge improvement in my confidence. I think that when you start actively working towards looking better, you start to feel better about how other people see you, too. It's really helped with my social anxiety. I've noticed my skin looking a lot healthier, and my body more streamlined. Physical activity is also a fantastic way to kill time if you're feeling bored or need something to get your mind off things. As well as these benefits, I'm also now able to do a lot more without working up a sweat, which is a great feeling. My asthma has also improved as a result of cardio.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

I've done group therapy and counselling sessions on this in the past, and a lot of methods I found do not work for me. For example, talking about my problems often make me feel worse. Deep breathing makes me feel like an idiot, but can help in situations where I feel my anxiety building. Mindfulness is another technique that I have tried, but I often find it very hard to concentrate and put full effort into it when I'm not feeling my best. Physical activity can help in the short term to relieve feelings of sadness, but I find it doesn't so much help me with angry or irritable feelings. It tires me out physically, and I'm often left feeling sad afterwards.

One thing that does help is taking care of myself. Having a bubble bath with music and champagne, and pampering myself afterwards. Going out to a club and drinking I've found works wonders, even

though it's terrible for you. I find I get a confidence boost from a little flirting and it does lift my mood. I always make sure I do twice as much exercise the day after though, to work off all the calories from alcohol and detox my liver.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

It really depends on the emotion and the situation. If I've had a fight with a family member or received a bad test result, I find running it off really helps. But if the emotions are more complex, for example I'm fixated on somebody and I can't get rid of those feelings, I find that I build up a lot of angry and negative energy that exercise just can't seem to get rid of. However these energies make me work that little bit harder when I work out, so I like to think that I'm using the bad energy in a positive way in the long run.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I don't think it actually matter how physically active you are, as long as you are doing enough exercise to feel satisfied. Exercise every day is good, but as a sufferer of clinical depression I can understand why that's not always possible. For some people, no matter how much they exercise each day they'll still be unhappy. From past experience, when I was feeling low and was very unfit, going for a walk once a week lifted my mood for the rest of the day. But now I'm doing a couple of exercise sessions a day, the relief isn't the same and I still don't feel quite as positive as I used to after exercise.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I've used several different methods of mood improvement. It started off with natural supplements recommended by my psychologist, but I found these didn't really help. I believe she also suggested physical activity daily, but I couldn't find the motivation to do it. Antidepressants were another method I tried, and I found these relieved a lot of the irritability and anxiety I was feeling. However, I would still feel sad at times and found it hard to move forward with my life, so I've recently come off them. I went through an intensive program of group CBT sessions and one-on-one counselling as well as family counselling when I first started taking antidepressants, and this combination helped my mood dramatically.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

The limitations of counselling, for example, were that I lived so far away from the clinic that it was difficult for me to attend sometimes. And now that I'm over 18 years old, I'm not longer eligible for the same program. The limitations to antidepressants are the side effects, mostly. They lower sex drive, and can make it hard to concentrate. The numb feeling is another thing I noticed they caused when I came off them.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

My relationship with my family doctor is one of the main reasons I haven't consulted a GP about other mood altering medications. I have to make arrangements to see another doctor in another town to discuss this, and I feel it's too much time and effort for all the trouble new medications may cause. A lot of the time I dismiss my bouts of depression and hope they go away, which they eventually do as I have fantastic support from my boyfriend and don't feel like I need to try any other methods other than those I already use.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

I do enjoy using websites to track my physical activity and to give me tips on how to improve, so as long as this was an interactive website I would use it. I currently use walk.org which is great for tracking progress, and comparing against others that are trying to be more physically active.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

Perhaps, along with mood tracking, the ability to track physical exercise and diet for the day. It helps see any correlation between the 3. Maybe even sleep tracking. Forums are also a great tool to use, so that would be essential.

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

I think it would help. Being able to see how much exercise I've been doing over the last month or so really motivates me not to skip a day, and seeing other people and hearing their experiences with weight loss and exercise for mood improvement also gives me ideas and aspirations.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

I think rewards are a great way to do it- perhaps have a system with levels based on how much exercise they are able to do with certain privileges. The ability to join support groups online is also a good tool to keep motivated and seek help from those in similar situations when you need it.

Participant: mypaa-178

Sent: Fri 14/02/2014 04:19 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

Being challenged (competitiveness). If competing I am really motivated to work hard, and have set goals to achieve or beat (such as 100 Pushups challenge) which has small weekly goals. I am motivated by wanting to be physically stronger, able to run father without visibly being overworked, and I'd like to be leaner as appropriate for my body shape.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Overall laziness, lack of motivation to get up or get off the computer. I find it incredibly intimidating to work out near other people (for fear of actually trying and not being good enough, finding small things too hard and being noticed). I had a free week pass to a gym one time, and was just too intimidated by people that knew what they were doing - felt like they knew I wasn't supposed to be there - and left. On another occasion I got changed to try out a treadmill (in the toilet cubicle, not the changing room), took a look at everyone using the treadmills, then changed back and promptly left. It's hard to try and utilise competitiveness as a motivational drive when you don't feel good enough to compete, and won't start out of shame. When I do attempt to work out, the "after burn" of a workout generally lasts for several days, which makes it hard to want to pick up a 3 times a week routine.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

After I start, it gradually gets easier to work more and for longer, and my self esteem feels better after a workout. I don't work out enough/frequently enough to see any physical changes in my body, mostly maintaining the same weight and fitness level. Being physically active can also be a self-inflicted punishment - if I feel like I have been eating badly or need to vent out stress/anger, walking rather than catching a bus or tram serves as a lesson for myself.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Meditation, regular exercise and coping strategies are methods that I am aware of - having seen a counsellor for stress, depression and anxiety on several occasions; but they also require frequent repetition to be a useful coping mechanism, and with the low self-discipline that I have, are ineffective. I think that they would work well if used frequently, but sporadically they only serve as a distraction. Talking to other people, or explaining situations in a way that others can understand help work through problems. Working out puts me in a position where the only thing I can think about is trying to push for a little bit longer, and focusing on breathing.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

See above.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I think you need to be active regularly, and pushing yourself to be unable to be focusing on anything else. Working hard apparently produces endorphines or whatever, but I never really seem to feel happy, I just feel like I have more energy to do more - which ultimately leads to me pushing myself too far and being unable to workout again for a few days. By extension, if you're working out regularly you have a sense of routine and stability in your life that otherwise unfit people most likely don't have, which would be a huge boost to low self-esteem, depression and anxiety.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I have had few experiences with coping mechanisms - both for depression and anxiety. Working out normally is not a pleasant experience for me and I never seem to get any rewards from it, whereas meditation and relaxation techniques for anxiety and panic attacks need to be practised regularly, which I fail to do. I find using a distraction such as a book or happy music will help to improve my mood if I need to.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

They require regular upkeep and practise, which is hard when trying to establish around a busy lifestyle.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

Laziness, I'm only motivated to exercise for the physical benefits (or if I feel that improving my fitness is doable), emotional benefits do not feel like enough of a benefit for the work.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

I would not, as a bigger motivator for me is to improve physical fitness. I occasionally use freetrainers.com for the community of other users in a similar situation and support to keep me accountable whilst still remaining moderately anonymous. I feel that a site like this would promote easily achieved, moderate exercise to people who feel that exercise is not easily achieved.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

I would like such a site to have nutritional information - such as recipes and tips for healthy eating whilst dining out.

As well as workouts and links to challenges that push members at their rate - such as the 100 pushup challenge or exercise challenges set for short periods of time, as they feel more easily achieved and flexible. A website with community features and options for people to share their stories with each other from similar circumstances can work to push each other. If it had other features such as note taking, goal setting and a calendar feature it would work well as a homepage, and less easily forgotten. If the site has to be actively sought out for the one purpose, it does not encourage the establishment of routines, or keep member's goals in the back

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

If the website was useful for several purposes, and was viable to keep as a homepage, it would be useful to keep fitness goals and emotional health an ongoing goal to work on. If the material encouraging emotional health was actually inspiring and made me feel better about myself (and being active) it could be a huge boost for staying positive and working at goals no matter how small.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

As above, being easily accessible, and easily used for more circumstances can work to remind users of the importance of exercise, as well as being an organisational and inspirational tool that they won't easily forget about and fail to use.

Participant: mypaa-218

Sent: Tue 04/02/2014 12:15 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

Being physically active helps me to feel better.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

At the moment back pain and feeling bored and listless and not wanting to do anything

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

More energy, feeling happier, fitter and healthier

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Exercise, involvement in a group activity such as singing in a choir, helping other people. I think they work very well

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

I agree it does work, but being physically active with other people works better

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I think being active with a sense of purpose works better. The more activity the better

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

For me the following helps. Walking with friends, swimming, drumming in a group and gardening

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

Sometimes my motivation is not there and I find it hard to get out of bed

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

No, other than lack of knowledge and motivation

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Yes, I would welcome the ideas

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

Ideas for different ways to get active plus a schedule for people to work too, also connections with other people who have the same issues

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

Yes, as I sometimes needs to be motivated

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Ideas for becoming more active and give us the opportunity to meet similar people who need to become more active.

Participant: mypaa-220

Sent: Sat 15/02/2014 05:26 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

Hardly anything, but usually my husband. Becoming more active at work was a health choice I made 12 months ago because of minor symptoms of ageing (I'm 42, and 106kg but mostly healthy) such as aching hips and knees. This choice was helped by the fact that I was moved to a position at work where I'm mostly standing and walking around rather than sitting. I have struggled with exercise all my adult life. I hate it. I liked dance as a kid, and joined a few classes over the years but I don't have the confidence to join a dance class these days. Apart from that I got an iPhone last year and started using a step counting app and a food recording app. I have found this keeps me a bit accountable, and a 15 minute walk doesn't feel 'pointless' as it would have in the past as it all adds up over the day. About 5 out of 7 days a week I do about 30-40 minutes of walking over a day, accumulative. I have lost about 10kg over the year. I find it hard to exercise on my days off but live in a beautiful sea-side and wildlife reserve area so I'm spoilt for walking locations.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Physical discomfort, fear of exercising in front of others, the fact that my body very stubbornly holds on to weight and exercise doesn't help weight loss unless I work really hard which is unsustainable for me because I don't enjoy it.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Better sleep, better posture, better digestion, but I don't have issues with any of those things really. Sometimes it lifts my mood but not always. When I spend a moody day on the couch I always feel worse about myself for not moving. I have a slightly arthritic finger knuckle which has improved over the past year which may not be from being more active but I wouldn't be surprised if it was.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Medication and counselling together, not just one. CBT helped me become less negative (over 8 years) but ingrained feelings of worthlessness are very hard to shake. Walking definitely helps, as does spending time with friends, sleep, chocolate.....but sometimes if you suggest any of those things to me I will throw them all back at you in a crying tantrum and go hide under the doona. Medication is the only thing that helps, and it only helps by shortening the amount of time I feel that way. Going to work cheers me up I think because it takes my mind off myself and I feel productive and useful again. Having too many days off for me is disastrous.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

If I'm in a good mood to start with it definitely helps me sustain my good mood, but if I'm really low, you can't make me exercise. I've tried and I just end up feeling worse because I just don't have the energy to force myself to do it and then I see myself as useless and pathetic and lazy. I have an enormous and very strong force inside me that I have to fight before I can make myself exercise, or do anything really. It's a constant battle of 'what's the point'??

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

At least 5 days a week, at least 40minutes. I think walking is best but I'm not sure what fit people do. I guess fit people experience endorphins, but I've never been fit. Another thing I've noticed is that it's better if you can be a bit active over several different times in the day. I know people who sit all day at work and then exercise in a 40 minute burst in the evening, and don't get the same mood benefit.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

Proper psychotherapy with **the right therapist** is fantastic, but very expensive and I would love to continue but I can't afford it. They made it much better for patients initially with the 10 free sessions, but after that you have to pay \$140+ per session. My therapist left town a year ago and I haven't seen anybody since. A few years ago I tried St John's Wort, but didn't notice any effect. I tried Fish oil tablets, but then I found out you have to take 8 or 10 a day to notice any change and that just seemed impossible. I notice PMT has a terrible effect on my mood, even though I'm medicated for depression (20mg Lexapro) I become irritable, sad, and even a bit paranoid. This has had a terrible impact on my work. Therapy is a very lonely thing, I can't really explain it to my husband so I just come home and try to act normal!

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

With medication it's too hard to get properly monitored by a physician because unless you're hospitalised all they have to go on is my perception of how I'm feeling. It's not a tangible thing like a broken leg or a rash. There are very few psychiatrists in rural areas so I have never seen one, and psychologists don't really know enough about meds to advise properly. My psychologist was always recommending that I go off the meds. Just seemed stupid to me. I would love to try a different medication but it's too risky with work, it takes so long to notice the effect and what if I end up worse?

Most other methods are too haphazard; not tested properly, different results for different people. For example, I hate that the side effects of depression meds are 'weight loss' for some people and 'weight gain' for others. This tells me that the science isn't really complete.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

If I had \$50,000 I would check in to a mental health facility for 3 months and make them try every medication that exists for anxiety and depression until they find the one that is best for me. Every five years or so! That is like the holy grail. I know without a doubt that exercise helps but depression gets in my way. If I could afford it I would find an excellent Psychiatrist to see once a month. Getting good treatment for my mental health is kind of like a luxury I guess. I don't know of any other treatments.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Yes, although I tend to give up on things after a while. I love the internet and if you could link it to an app I would love that even more. I'm assuming you could log in each day, record your activity, set goals, produce graphs, see your progress, get advice and encouragement, link up with friends from

Facebook, book exercise sessions together, log how you're feeling emotionally, discover new types of exercise to try etc.... If that's what you're thinking I would love that!

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

1. You have to include a way for people to forgive themselves for not exercising or it could backfire and make it worse. I.e: 'Doesn't matter that you didn't complete your walk today Sarah, you walked for 14 out of the last 22 days, that is fantastic'..... I don't know but that seems friendly! I know this because of the Wii Fit program. It makes terrible comments if you're not doing well and I always have to mute it when I weigh myself. 2. It should ask how you're feeling at the start of each day, using key words or descriptors, so if you're happy it could maybe increase the goal for the day, or feeling bad, be gentler. I would like to see some sort of reward too for exercise goals completed but not sure how that would work, can you send me chocolate? haha 3. It would be really helpful if it could promote the benefits of even just a little bit of exercise, like 15 minutes of stretching or walking to the shop instead of driving. It all helps. Most other exercise forums I've seen have this all-or-nothing attitude and it's very discouraging if you're over-weight, depressed and stuck. Or if you have very little time 4. Some people like me would like to log in each day, but others not so often so there needs to be an option for that. 5. Great colours, not too wordy or clinical. Making it like a game could help keep people interested, you could accumulate points or tokens.....maybe use them for prizes? 6. Customisable personal page where I could store ideas for exercise, variety helps motivation. You could include 20 ways I could reward myself that can be entered at the start, and sent to me as an email when I achieve a goal....ie; "Congrats Sarah you have achieved your goal of ... now go get yourself that \$100 massage!!" You know what I mean?

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

☺ Definitely yes, I'm excited already. Do it now.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Part of my problem with exercise is that it all seems like a waste of time that I don't enjoy and I'm too hopeless to keep doing consistently enough for it be of any real benefit. This website would keep me accountable and reward me for 'good behaviour' which in the long term may just create permanent change in my mind by making exercise a happy thing instead of a sad thing. By seeing graphs or my exercise history I would be reminded of the good that I've done, as a depressed person only sees the bad and always forgets the good. By giving me a reason to get off the couch. The recognition that exercise is very difficult for people with mood issues would do a lot more to help than any GP has ever done. By making me feel proud of small achievements. By reminding me daily how much better I feel when I exercise.

I know very little about web site design but I hope my input helps you and please put me on your list for future feedback or emails, I'm very interested to see how it goes.

Participant: mypaa-256

Sent: Fri 14/02/2014 10:13 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

The idea of improving my fitness, weight loss, and occasionally to relieve stress

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Time. Lack of energy after work. Sometimes apathy brought on by mild depressive episodes

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Initially an improvement to my mood, but not enough to continue to do so

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Exercise, CBT, social activities, medication. I think how well they work is dependent on the individual, unfortunately I don't think there is one answer that will work for everyone

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

Personally, I find that I while I may initially feel better, I don't see a big enough improvement for me to continue to do so. However, I am also aware of other individuals who swear by going to the gym daily and say that if they don't go their mood suffers

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

Again, I think it is individual-dependent. I walked daily for 2 months last year, but stopped because towards the end I was actually getting more tired from needing to get up early to do so, and subsequently became more irritable

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I have used medication, CBT, counselling

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

Accessing a counsellor in times of need can be difficult - my mood isn't always at a low between 9-5, Mon-Fri. Medication masked the problem

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

Finances, time

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

I would if it factored in the fact that people work, and their different lifestyles. I work, standing on my feet all day - all I want to do when I finish is sit, not go walking even though I do know if I am having a bad day it might help

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

A list of different alternatives/suggestions. What exercise is suitable for some is not for others. Also, sometimes having a list of different activities laid out in front of you is helpful when you are so overwhelmed by negative feelings to make a decision on your own. Positive feedback of some form is always helpful, no matter what the situation

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

I think the major drawback would be actually being aware enough to log on to the website when my mood is low. If a person logged on early enough (which would require an individual to be extremely aware of their mood), then it would be helpful. However, if the fact that a person's mood was going down was not picked up by them, there is a distinct possibility that apathy could set in and the website would not be accessed

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Perhaps a checklist to start off with to help people identify if they are at risk of their mood becoming low. Maybe a format somewhat similar to run tracker where their progress with regards to exercise can be seen and have it linked in to fluctuations of mood. Also a site where people could encourage others and suggest different forms of physical activity that worked for them may be beneficial

Participant: mypaa-272

Sent: Fri, 31 Jan 2014 12:20:47 +1000

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

To look good and lose weight

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Usually tired or busy or injured

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

I can run 1klm before couldn't run 100 mt a yr ago

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

I find eating properly healthy if I eat junk I fell depressed get headaches and then I don't want to exercise. So I limit my junk to rare occasions and exercise most days if only a walk round the block

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

Yesterday I did a gym session and felt "high- energetic" all day

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

Constant exercise I have a friend that eats junk chips chocolate and complains she doesn't have the energy and has been classed as depressed and morbidly obese. I usually try to have one day off but probably still walk

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I was put on depression medication a couple years ago but didn't stay on long

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

Not sure

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

Usually mind chatter, "don't do it, it wont help" - I can be very negative.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Yes, ideas.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

One of those fitness health tests to see where you will be in say 10 years or how long you live. Also guided meditation to help people relax not eat junk etc. Links to places to get help exercise through councils, gyms etc.

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

Ideas, new ideas I get bored easy

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Sometimes the shock factor works, guided help buddy system maybe.

Participant: mypaa-281

Sent: Sat 15/02/2014 11:55 AM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

PT

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Lazy/ennui/depression

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Better sleep, more energy, able to do more eg climb,bend,lift

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

drugs (not for me), herbs (some benefit), B3 (really helps)HTP (some) exercise (really helps)

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

I like it...yes..just need motivation.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

Daily is best...3 x a week helps

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

Yes

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

super sensitive to drugs.forget to take drugs/herbs.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

cost...inertia

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

perhaps. There are other sites similar..however they usually only promote 1 avenue.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

not sure. access /links to in depth information.

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

Probably not. I actually need someone to be there with me...hence the PT~who comes to me.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

THAT is the million \$\$\$ question. Most people with those types of problems need to have someone there to help. Maybe link people close together (geographically) and help them connect "physically".

Participant: mypaa-374

Sent: Fri 14/03/2014 08:20 PM

What motivates you to be physically active?

I love being outside, particularly cycling along the banks of the river. It's peaceful, scenic and it allows a kind of meditation

2) What stops you from being physically active?

I have difficulty getting out the door if I don't go out first thing. There are so many other chores that must be done that if I stop to think about them I never get out the door

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Calmer, happier, fitter, less anxious, less tetchy

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Physical activity is my main method whether it's cycling, walking, gardening, renovating, cooking, yoga, gym classes, etc. Music is ok, but can also trigger feelings of sadness as songs are often associated with people and places.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

Physical activity is THE BEST way of getting on top of emotional issues and yes, it works well.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

Very - see 4 above

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

Therapy sessions with a psychologist

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

Finding the right therapist is the most difficult part. I still haven't.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

Experience with several psychologists. "How does that make you feel" is not a question I ever want to hear again!

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**
- **What features would you like such a website to have?**
- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**
- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

I think a very interactive App would be better. Not sure what, but maybe along the lines of MapMyRide with places to store activity info, regular feedback/messages/suggestions from therapists to encourage getting out there and doing it.

Participant: mypaa-375

Sent: Fri 14/03/2014 05:25 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

To lose weight, have a clearer head space, reduce fibromyalgia issues - reducing back pain, improve sleep and reduce stress/anxiety.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Time, motivation.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Feeling more upbeat, less tired, can get a better night sleep

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Take up yoga or meditation especially as it clears the mind and reduces 'chatter' in persons head.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

I believe that it does work as over the summer I have swam regularly which has improved my sleep patters, toned my body, helped me feel more emotionally better within myself such as doing more work and being motivated.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

At least 30 minutes per day or at least 5 out of 7 days of the week.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

Yes as said before I have been swimming daily and it has helped with my studies and has increased my moods. I feel better and healthier at times I have increased my head space and felt lighter.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

Not being motivated all the time to keep on top of the progress.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

Giving up on exercise as it doesn't fit in with times of my lifestyle.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Yes as it would help me feel motivated and keep on track of my fitness routines.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

Have exercise apps, videos and chats to help follow up on members routines.

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

Yes I would feel reliable and would be more involved when doing my exercises as I could have a guide that is easily accessible.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Encourage chat or forums and have expertise that specialise with data backing up people who suffer from low moods and how staying active helps.

Participant: mypaa-489

Sent: Thu 27/03/2014 11:18 AM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

Nothing really, as I am not physically active, even though I know I should be.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Being too lazy to get out and get started.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

I am not active, so this question is irrelevant to me.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Physical activity is supposed to help, but I haven't tried it, so I don't know if it is true. When I am down, I really don't feel like doing anything, including exercise.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

I think one needs to change ones attitude in order to get motivated. Being physically active doesn't sound like it would help to make me feel better when I am down

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I would imagine one would have to be very physically active in order to reduce negative feelings. Probably much physical than what I would be prepared to put in.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I have tried various anti depressants, but have not really had any success with any of them.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

They take a long time to kick in, which is bad when I am depressed, I need something that will make me feel better fast

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

No, but then I haven't had any other options suggested to me.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

No I probably would not use it. I prefer to talk face to face with someone.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

To be able to connect with someone to talk to on a one to one basis.

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

I don't think so. I would be more likely to get active if I had an actual person tell me I need to get active. A web site is not enough to motivate me.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

By suggesting someone you could get in touch with who will come and support you and encourage you to get active.

Participant: mypaa-494

Sent: Sat 15/03/2014 11:24 AM

What motivates you to be physically active?

Not putting on weight and staying reasonably fit.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Lack of time and a sedentary job

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Even if I have a bad day I feel like I've done something positive for myself. Time to think. Remain at a healthy weight.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Good sleep routines, healthy diet. Both these are key to improving moods.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

Yes being physically active makes you feel better emotionally. It's a positive thing to do.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I like to do some physical activity every day otherwise I feel lazy and that I have not done my body a good turn.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I have tried the odd herbal treatment.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

I'm not sure that herbal treatments are effective long term and not sure that they actually do anything much. They are expensive to take long term as well.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

No nothing has stopped me. I just choose not too.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**
- **What features would you like such a website to have?**
- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**
- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Personally I wouldn't use a website. I would prefer to spend half an hour walking or reading than sitting at a computer that can tell me I should spend half an hour walking or reading. Others may like the idea though. Maybe if the website had local content as to where/how people could access activities extra in their area it might be more useful.

Participant: mypaa-506

Sent: Fri 14/03/2014 01:10 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

Need to remain as fit as possible as I age

2) What stops you from being physically active?

Mental condition that leads to procrastination through fear of failure

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

Feeling of well being

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Focus on positive thoughts, avoid stress, deep breathing

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

Yes

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

Moderately

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

Yes

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

How much medication can be take before the laws of diminishing returns kicks in, there's only a small amount of stress I can tolerate therefore higher levels still have high negative impact

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

No

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Not sure, would need to see what's offered and what's required

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**

No opinion

- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

No opinion

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Be interactive, work on small measurable steps so participants see improvement, have some sort of 'let's try again process to avoid disappointment when things don't go according to plan

Participant: mypaa-523

Sent: Fri 28/03/2014 11:30 PM

1) What motivates you to be physically active?

I'm motivated to be physically active by the idea of being fit and healthy. The thought of being able to run, or dance, or do other physical things, and actually be able to do it and enjoy it, makes me want to get fit. The other thing that motivates me is if it has a purpose. For example, if I have a place to be and it's within walking distance, I will really enjoy the walk.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

The biggest thing that stops me from being physically active is that I really, really don't feel like it. The thought of deliberately going and doing something for no purpose other than the sake of doing it, that is no fun, horrifies me enough that I don't bother. It seems a huge effort to force myself to do something I find unpleasant, in the little time I have to myself, where I could be doing something else that I would enjoy instead.

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

If I'm doing some sort of physical activity that I enjoy, then I get pleasure out of it - it's fun. Also, I've found that if my head's buzzing after a day at work, I'll walk the 15 minutes to the next bus stop (rather than waiting for the one that stops just outside my office), and after the walk I feel much better about everything, like walking off the stress.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

Just above I mentioned walking to the next bus stop from work - I find that incredibly effective, because I feel like I'm leaving (physically and mentally) my stress behind as I walk away from it. Other than that, I think talking and connecting and even just being around people that you like and trust works well to improve mood. Getting enough sleep definitely helps, too.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

I've heard that it does, but I don't think I've ever been physically active consistently enough to experience that for myself. As far as one off or occasional physical activity, if I've deliberately done some exercise for the sake of my health, I usually end up feeling worse, because I don't enjoy it at all and it's unpleasant and makes me feel exhausted, which makes it clear that it's not something that I'll be able to keep up, which makes me feel like a failure.

I think my example above about walking from work doesn't work because of the physical activity itself, so much as that I'm creating psychological distance between myself and the work I've been doing all day, as well as the mild physical exertion providing a sort of distraction, allowing me to think but forcing me to remain present, so not allowing me to think too hard.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I would say not a whole load - probably the recommended amount of 30 minutes per day would be enough to have some effect.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

I don't think so...

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

It's really much easier to uphold the status quo than to try anything new, and especially when you're not feeling good, you don't really have the energy to seek out and try things. I think it's mostly the fear that it wouldn't work anyway, or I wouldn't be able to keep it up, which would make me feel hopeless.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**

Probably not. I'm very busy and stressed, mostly through circumstances that I can't really control, so something like that is just another commitment; another thing I have to worry about, and I just don't think I have room in my head for that.

- **What features would you like such a website to have?**
- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**

I have trouble believing that it could - based on past experience, I've not yet managed to find anything that motivates me to actually keep it up, because so far I haven't really found a physical activity that I enjoy doing.

- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

It would really have to break through that barrier of low mood, which would be really difficult. Certainly nothing that is overwhelming at all (I once tried to start an 'absolute beginners' plan for running - ha! - I almost threw up in the first two minutes and decided never to do that again). So, baby steps, and nothing that you can fail at. I want to say suggest things that are fun to do, things that create pleasure, but there could still be an issue with motivation to do them in the first place. I think having support and encouragement from others really helps some people, but I hesitate to say that because that doesn't work for me at all.

Perhaps a program that also helps people improve their low mood in a non-physical way, and at the same time makes them aware of how low mood may be affecting their motivation to be physically active, and then with that in mind, gentle encouragement to be physically active.

Participant: mypaa-532

Sent: Mon 17/03/2014 09:31 PM

What motivates you to be physically active?

I suffer from Rheumatoid, Osteoarthritis, Osteoporosis and other serious health problems. I will be eighty years old in May this year.

Use or lose it, is a concept I attempt to apply to minimise my joints becoming stiff and painful. I also use it broadly to help cope with my other health problems. We try to enjoy life as best as we can despite our limitations.

2) What stops you from being physically active?

The following can make it difficult for me to want to be physically active:

- fatigue caused by some of my health problems,
- pain from arthritis,
- anxiety personality plus bouts of depression

3) What benefits do you experience from being physically active?

- some pain reduction,
- more energised,
- more relaxed and positive attitude,
- less likely to fall and slip - important for people of my age (especially if you have osteoporosis),
- greater social interaction when other people are involved.

4) What are some methods that you are aware of to help improve mood and reduce feelings of sadness or irritability and how well do you think they work?

The following activities help improve my mood and to feel calmer and less negative-

- My wife and I workout at a Gym three times a week at a level we feel is suitable for our age and conditions.
- We go dancing once or twice a week.
- We visit a very large local Shopping Centre about four times a week and walk about a kilometre each visit.

5) What do you think of being physically active as a way to feel better emotionally? Does it work?

The short answer is yes but with the qualification that I have to be able to motivate myself to be active which is not easy if you are depressed etc.

Also refer (4) above.

6) How active do you think you need to be to improve your mood and reduce negative feelings?

I find that if I can do some activity daily, my mood and negative feelings are not as intense. About one to two hours of activity is manageable for me. A longer period can result in tiredness and pain which does not improve anxiety, mood etc. The type and intensity of the activity are significant factors. My problem is motivating myself to be active every day.

7) Have you had any experiences with using various treatments to improve your mood?

In my early twenties and two years ago I had professional counselling. At the end of this month I will be seeing a counsellor again. Both my wife and I do not hesitate to get assistance as necessary to help cope with whatever is worrying us. Can be expensive but it does help.

Years ago I was prescribed Amytal but only took it for a short period. It had a minor impact upon my anxiety and I sought other means such as dancing. The combination of physical activity and music had a positive effect for my mood problems etc.

8) What are limitations of the treatments that you may have tried?

I prefer to avoid using medications as I don't like the side effects or a possibility of dependency upon them.

Over the years we have joined gyms and had trainers to help us. For many reasons eg cost, time, illness, boredom have resulted in us dropping out after about eighteen months. Hopefully we will persist with our current gym. Gyms are costly in time and money.

Counselling is costly and can be time consuming. Also finding a suitable counsellor can be daunting.

9) Has anything stopped you from trying other treatments to feel better emotionally?

I cannot recall any other treatments which I could have or wanted to try.

10) We are interested in developing a website to promote physical activity for people who want to improve their mood and reduce feelings like sadness, irritability and fatigue.

- **Would you use a site like this? Why or why not?**
- **What features would you like such a website to have?**
- **Do you think a website like this could help you get motivated to be physically active? Why or why not?**
- **How could a physical activity website specifically be designed to help people who have problems with low moods become more active?**

Would I use it – maybe. Naturally it would depend upon how applicable it would be for my needs. In my case I don't require information about the benefits, the how etc – I belong to the converted. I have books and magazines on the topic.

Motivation and consistency are my problem areas as they are for nearly every person I have met at gyms. If you can find a way to resolve this it would be great and also make you wealthy.

If a person is feeling low, depressed etc, the problem is will that person at that moment of need actually check out a website. From my experience it is only a maybe but more likely he/she won't. Some might look at it when they feel more positive but often you don't want to revisit that dark place.

Some years ago there was a program called "Life Be In It" promoted by the government. This was successful because of it was catchy and humorous whilst delivering its message. It would help your website if it had a similar Hook to get people to visit your site.

Further to my previous email, the following might be of some interest to you.

My wife is a Type 2 Diabetic on insulin and other medications. Her team of health professionals are doing good work in helping her manage her diabetes. She is one of the "lucky" ones in that she is aware of her illness. Hundreds of thousands of others are unaware that they have this illness. A young person we know was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes and was put on medication.

A healthy diet and physical activity has reduced her weight such that her glucose levels are now in the normal range and off medication.

Your website may be another way to target those people who are unaware or are in denial about their diabetes and help them avoid the insidious consequences of diabetes ie blindness, heart disease, kidney problems and amputations.