

Facilitator Manual for an Online Physical Activity Intervention

This manual can be used to deliver a 10-week mental health informed physical activity (PA) intervention for first-responders and their selected support partner. The intervention uses both a Facebook group and a Fitbit/companion app to facilitate social support, with the aim of increasing participants PA levels. The Facebook group allows members to receive information and to contribute to weekly conversations on pre-specified topics related to physical activity. The Fitbit should be used as a way to encourage participants to set daily goals and track their PA levels. The content of each week varies slightly, based on participant responses, however this template can be used to inform the general structure. Participants also have the option to join a group video call run by the facilitators. This call is scheduled at two different times per week to maximize potential participation. The content is repeated between calls (i.e. participants only need to attend once per week). The topic for the video calls matches the topic for the Facebook group which is outlined in the table below. Participants are able to ask questions and participate as much as they feel comfortable.

This online intervention builds on previous research demonstrating that PA is a useful strategy for promoting health outcomes among first responders experiencing poor mental health, and secondly, that Facebook can be used as a safe, feasible and effective online platform to deliver physical activity interventions for people experiencing poor mental health. Involving a support partner is designed to positively influence healthy lifestyle behavior change in a variety of ways. The support partner may be anyone with a close personal relationship with the first responder e.g. a life-partner, close friend, family member or carer.

The aims of the program are:

1. To promote participation in physical activity
2. To keep participants engaged in the program
3. To promote self-management and increase self-efficacy
4. To facilitate social support – from the group, friends/family

Week	Content	Behaviour change techniques as per Michie's taxonomy ¹
1. Welcome and introductions	<p>Post 1: Facilitators and peer-support members introduce themselves including their profession and role in the group and provide a brief description of the program</p> <p>Ask participants to introduce themselves. Prompt with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which service (police, fire, paramedic)? • Currently serving or retired/medically discharged? • Why did you choose your support person? <p>Ask support partners to introduce themselves. Prompt with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship to first responder • Occupation • Expectations of the program- How can you see them program helping your partner and/or yourself? <p>Post 2: Introduce participants to the FitBit activity tracker and provide instructions for use including link to the Fitbit support website. Provide participants with</p>	<p>Social support (3.1)</p> <p>Comparison of outcomes (9.3)</p> <p>Antecedents (12.5) Comparison of behavior</p>

	<p>felt at these times? Post whether you notice any of these connections during the week.</p> <p>Post 3: Ask participants to post what most impressed them about their partner this week or how their partner supported them.</p>	<p>Social support (3.1) Reward and threat (10.4)</p>
4. Barriers	<p>Post 1: Ask people to identify their greatest barriers to getting active. Use the poll setting on Facebook so participants can vote e.g. fatigue, lack of motivation, fear of injury, lack of time etc.</p> <p>Post 2: Prompt question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies can you think of to manage the challenges discussed? • Would it help to have support from family / friends to ensure you exercise regularly? How? Exercise together? • How have you overcome any of these barriers this week? • Suggest solutions for each other. How can you help others in the group overcome their barriers? Video link: https://www.owls.org.uk/what-we-do/ <p>Post 3: Highlight someone successful – e.g. most steps between partners</p>	<p>Goals and planning (1.2, 1.4)</p> <p>Comparison of behavior (6.2) Reward and threat (10.4)</p>
5. Support	<p>Post 1: Discuss the importance of a support network and ways that others can help you exercise.</p> <p>Suggest ways to provide support to your partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical support e.g. transport to gym • Effective communication e.g. verbal encouragement, praise and recognition. • Model health behaviours • Exercise together e.g. a gym class, walk around the local park <p>Post 2: Ask each pair to exercise together at least once this week. Prompt question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post what exercise you did with your partner • Post a photo of you doing it- it doesn't have to be of yourself- can even be the place you went together e.g. the park or golf course. 	<p>Social support (3.2, 3.3) Comparison of behavior (6.1, 6.3) Identity (13.1)</p> <p>Goals and planning (1.1) Feedback and monitoring (2.1)</p>
6. Sedentary behaviour	<p>Post 1: Explain sedentary behavior and the risks associated, including increased risk of poor physical and mental health.</p> <p>Attach the video link- 'Can you limit you sitting and sleeping to 23.5 hours a day?' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HlGo</p> <p>Post 2: Provide examples of ways to incorporate PA into everyday life. Also explain the benefits of breaking up sitting time e.g. anthropometry and biochemistry. Breaks in sedentary time can positively influence metabolic markers. Breaks in sedentary time can include transitioning from sitting to standing, or from</p>	<p>Natural consequences (5.1, 5.2)</p> <p>Shaping knowledge (4.1) Identity (13.2)</p>

	<p>standing to gentle exercise/walking.</p> <p>http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/3568627.htm</p> <p>Post 3: Follow-up on participants goals. If participants need to reassess or modify their goals, provide education on how to do so.</p> <p>Educate participants that setbacks are expected. It is normal to experience fluctuations in motivation. Enforce that something is better than nothing. If you don't have the motivation to go for a jog, just go for a walk around the block and get back on track of towards desired goals tomorrow.</p>	Goals and planning (1.5)
7. Aerobic exercise	<p>Post 1: Provide the PA guidelines (150 mins of moderate intensity aerobic or at least 75 mins of high intensity/combination) ensuring the focus is on increasing PA, by even a small amount. Provide education on the difference between moderate vs vigorous PA.</p> <p>Explain that this sounds like a lot, but it can be broken down across the week. For example, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. It can be as simple as going for a 30min walk 5x week.</p> <p>While stating the PA guidelines, it's also important to emphasize that these guidelines might be unrealistic for some people at the current time and explain that something is better than nothing.</p> <p>Post 2: Explain the importance of making exercise fun and finding something that participants enjoy. Post the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SByymar3bds</p> <p>Ask participants to post personal examples of aerobic exercise they've done this week. To increase motivation from the facilitators could post a picture or video of themselves doing an exercise (social modelling). How did you make exercise fun this week? Post a picture or video of you doing it- get creative.</p> <p>Post 3: Explain that 'active minutes' on the FitBit app corresponds to moderate to vigorous activity. Try to make up 30 active mins per day. Highlight someone successful – e.g. most active mins between partners</p>	<p>Shaping knowledge (4.1)</p> <p>Self-belief (15.1)</p> <p>Demonstration of behavior (6.1)</p> <p>Comparison of behavior (6.2)</p> <p>10. Reward and threat (10.4)</p>
8. Resistance exercise	<p>Post 1: Provide participants with the exercise guidelines (minimum 2 days/wk, 8-12 reps, 8-10 exercises). Explain that resistance exercise doesn't need to be in a gym. They can be done with some resistance bands at home, or by using local exercise equipment at parks. Also provide education around exercise safety (e.g. the importance of adequate warm-up).</p> <p>Post 2: Post instructional videos for participants on various simple resistance exercises using appropriate instructional examples (e.g. YouTube videos of squats, wall push-ups etc).</p> <p>Discuss the importance of progression and provide feedback on ways to do this. Use the FITT principle (frequency, intensity, time, type) to come up with ways to modify exercises.</p>	<p>Shaping knowledge (4.1)</p> <p>Identity (13.2)</p> <p>Demonstration of behavior (6.1)</p>

	<p>Post 3: Create a fun challenge for the participants. E.g. post a photo of yourself and/or your partner doing squats somewhere creative, lift your kid in the air, do some bicep curls with baked beans etc.). Post this creative example of an initiative in Russia where people had to squat to receive a free train ticket: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaPNDbGKr7k</p>	
9. Healthy eating	<p>Post 1: Facilitator to introduce themselves, including their profession. Provide education around the benefits of improving nutrition for physical and mental health. Highlight that the focus should be to nourish the body with important nutrients rather than focusing on cutting out food or strict dieting. Discuss components of healthy eating, e.g. food groups, components of a healthy meal and example day of eating.</p> <p>Post the following links: http://nutritionaustralia.org/sites/default/files/HealthyEatingPyramid.jpg https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pOLb3H3BjQ</p> <p>Post 2: Discuss the importance of creating a healthy food environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants and support partner to get involved with shopping and food preparation/cooking. • Participants to sit with support partner, family or friends, at a dining table for meals without distractions (e.g. TV turned off). This will assist in making meal times an enjoyable social occasion. • Participants and support partners to limit instances of 'eating in secret' e.g. hiding food, eating in the bedroom alone. <p>Post 3: Create a fun challenge for the participants. E.g. participants and/or support partner to post photos of nourishing meals that they have made at home.</p>	<p>Natural consequences (5.1, 5.2) Shaping knowledge (4.1)</p> <p>Comparison of outcomes (9.1)</p> <p>Antecedents (12.1)</p>
10. Review program/ congratulations	<p>Post 1: Discuss strategies to maintain physical activity once the program has finished. Prompt questions: What programs have you used in the community? E.g. Park Run, yoga for PTSD Have these been helpful? What strategies have been most useful to keep you motivated through this program? What tools will you use to keep you motivated now that this program has finished?</p> <p>Post the following link- make health last https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo6QNU8kHxI</p> <p>Post 2: Celebrate progress (no matter how small) and remind participants that their participation in research will also help others. Discuss the goals individuals have worked on and what has been achieved.</p>	<p>Goals and planning (1.9)</p> <p>Reward and threat (10.4) Self-belief (15.3)</p>

1. Michie S, Richardson M, Johnston M, et al. (2013) The behavior change technique taxonomy (v1) of 93 hierarchically-clustered techniques: Building an international consensus for the reporting of behavior change interventions. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 46(1): 81-95.

