

Advice for telehealth/coaching conversations to increase engagement in being physically active

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Rapport and empathy

- Establishing rapport is one of the most important factors in coaching.
- During isolation many people are feeling anxious about their own health, particular older people and those with chronic health conditions. Most people are missing being out and about seeing friends and family face to face. Some express a sense of loneliness and frustration at being stuck inside, and not knowing when things will change is difficult. Asking how they are coping with the restrictions and allowing time to talk helps in building trust. Be empathetic. Let them know that many people are feeling the same.
- The below questions are a general guide. The aim is to have a flowing conversation rather than going through each question systematically. It's important not to be directive, but instead investigate and allow time for the person to have their own ideas.

Previous physical activity levels

- How often did you normally go out and about?
- Most days of the week?
- In a usual day how much walking did you do - walking at the shops, carrying shopping, using public transport and walking to and from stops.
- What activities were you involved in?
- Did you do any exercise classes? Are you missing these?

Current physical activity levels and suggestions

- Do you feel you're keeping active during isolation?
- How much of the day do you spend sitting?
- Are you getting some walking or exercise into your day?
- Have you made any changes to keep up activity levels? *If yes, Investigate this further and provide positive reinforcement.*
- *If not, it might help to explain three possible scenarios.*
 1. If we don't make any attempt to keep active during isolation we will lose some of our fitness, strength and balance.
 2. If we make some effort we can maintain what we've got.
 3. If we use the time to focus on being more active we could improve our fitness, strength and balance at the end of isolation.
- Do you have more time on your hands in the current situation? Could you use some of this time to focus on being active?
- What would be the best way for you to be more active? *If nothing comes up offer some suggestions. It is better to elicit and expand on their ideas as they arise rather than giving all examples at once.*
- Do you feel ok about going out for a short walk? *(some families have 'banned' older people from going out!)*
- Do you have a garden you could walk around? Do you have a driveway you could walk up and down? *Some have been inspired by the 99 year old veteran raising money for the NHS by walking 100 lengths of his 25m garden.*

- Could you get things off your 'to do' list – perhaps doing some clearing out, gardening, housework that you don't normally get to
- Could you do some of the exercises that you've done in a class?
- Would you consider looking at online exercise? Perhaps something new? eg Tai Chi, dance, yoga or Pilates if able.

Goals

- Research has shown that people who write down their goals are twice as likely to achieve them. Decide where you'd like to start and set small goals that you feel confident you can achieve. Review these every week or two.
- Be specific, for example on Mon, Wed and Thurs I will go for a 15 minute walk after breakfast.
- It's important that you start off with small amounts of exercise or walking if you haven't done any for a while. The aim is to feel good when you finish, not exhausted. If it is pleasant or even enjoyable you're more likely to keep it going.

Strengths

- What strengths do you have that will help you to make these changes? *Sometimes this is difficult to answer. If nothing comes up, ask*
 - Do you see yourself as a determined person?
 - Do you like routine?
 - Are you an organised person?
 - Do you have people in your life who will encourage you?
 - What sort of changes have you made in the past? (eg starting a new activity, giving up smoking, losing weight, getting fit)

Barriers

- What would stop you from being more active? *This is usually easier to answer. Common answers are*
 - *Laziness*
 - *Feeling unwell*
 - *Weather – too hot/cold/windy/wet*
 - *Procrastination*
 - *Lack of motivation*
 - *Not enough time – likely to be less so now*
 - *Carer responsibilities*

Working around barriers

- What could you tell yourself if one of these barriers comes up?
- For example
 - if you don't feel motivated, could you go for a shorter walk than usual?
 - If you're procrastinating, remind yourself that you'll feel better if you just get on and do it now. Reward yourself with something after.
 - If it's raining could you be active indoors instead of going for a walk?

How will you remember to be active?

- Do you use a to-do list? Could you add physical activity to this?
- Do you like routine? Is the morning or afternoon better for you?
- Could you link exercises with day to day activities. Is there anything you can think of?
- For example, for some people it works to
 - get up from the tv during ads to do some balance or strength exercises
 - do standing exercises for balance and strength when the kettle boils
 - link meal times with going for a walk – either before or after
- Do you have family or friends who might encourage you? Let them know your plans.
- Might a phone reminder work?

Planning

- Planning is important to stay on track. Do you use a diary for appointments? Could you mark out time in your diary for exercise or walking and tick it off after.
- It can help to set an intention the night before about what you will do the next day. Commit yourself and follow through with your plan.
- Lay clothes out the night before if you're going for a walk.

Keeping track

- It's great to be able to see your progress.
- Some people like to keep track on how they're doing by noting it on a calendar or in a notebook. Might this work for you? Hopefully you will gradually start walking further or slowly build up the number of exercise reps you do. Looking back, you'll see the improvements.

Using technology

Do you use an activity tracker or phone app to measure steps? *Offer suggestions if interested.*

Giving yourself a reward (avoiding procrastination)

- What do you enjoy most in the day?
- Could you do some physical activity before doing this?
- For example go for a walk or do exercises at home before
 - reading the paper
 - having a coffee
 - looking at social media
 - phoning a friend
 - working on crafts or hobbies
 - watching a favourite tv show

The bigger picture

- It's good to remind yourself why it's important to be active.
- Being active is not only good for your physical health, but also for your mental health. Getting out for a walk in fresh air or being active at home can change your mood and give you a sense of satisfaction and achievement.
- Maintaining or improving your balance, joint mobility, muscles strength and overall level of fitness is good for you! Keeping on moving and working on being active will have you ready to get back to normal activities when things change and we can all get out and about.