



THE PRIMARY CARE COMPANION FOR CNS DISORDERS

Supplementary Material

Article Title: A Psychological-Behavioral Intervention to Improve Physical Activity in Midlife Adults With Low Baseline Physical Activity

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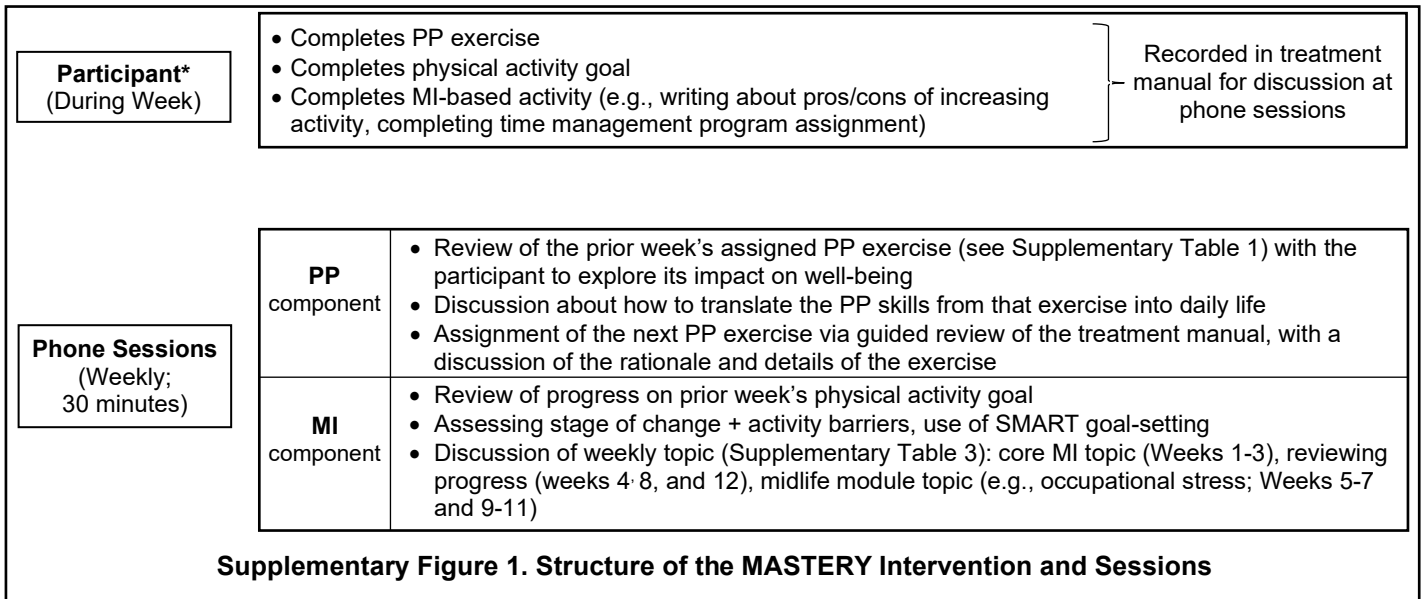
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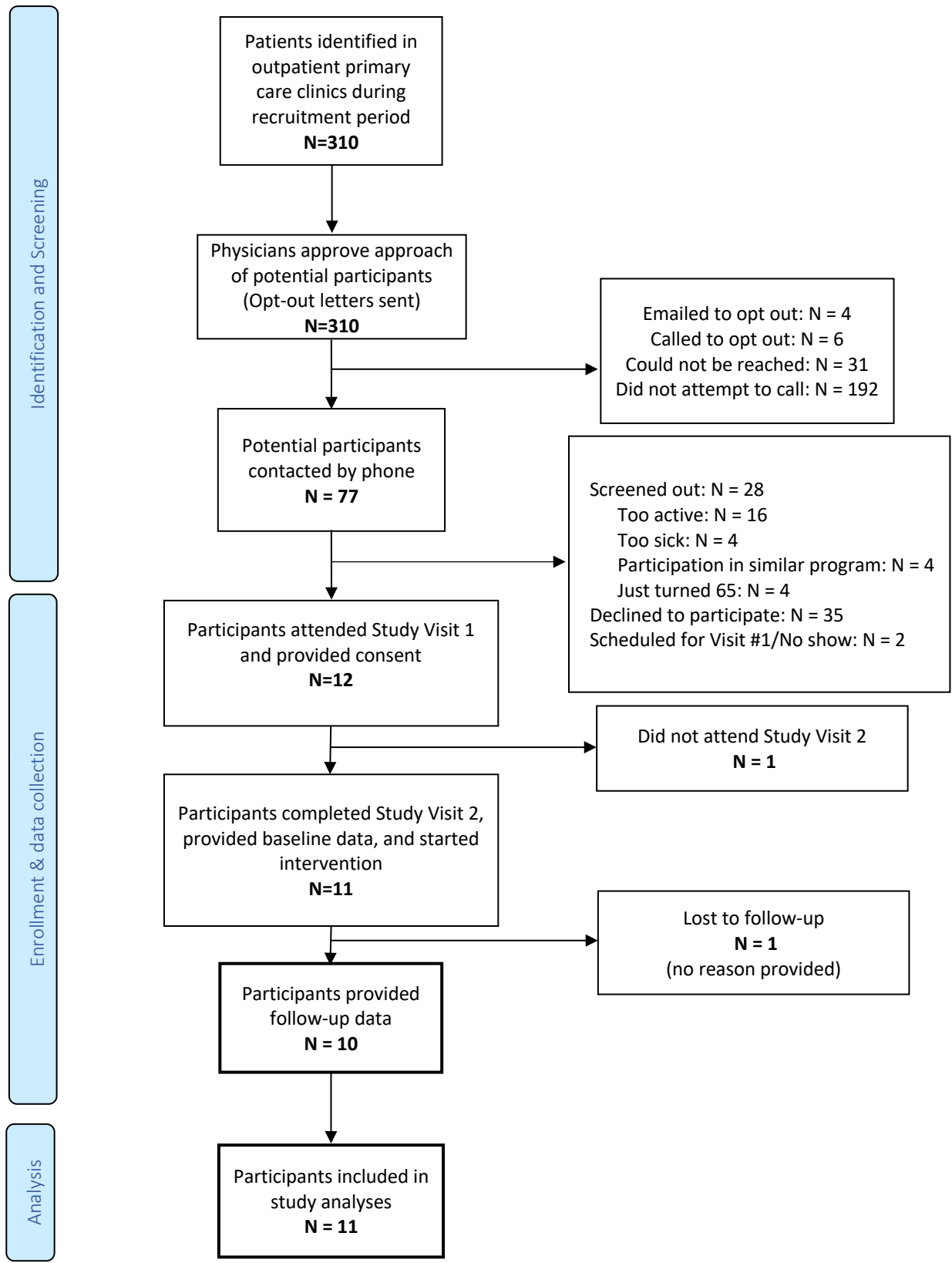
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Disclaimer

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Supplementary Figure 2. Study Flow Diagram

Supplementary Table 1. PP Intervention Component: Modules and Exercises		
Module 1: Gratitude/positive affect-based exercises		
Week 1	<i>Gratitude for positive events</i>	Participants identify three positive events that have occurred in the past week and reflect on their feelings as they recall and describe these events.
2	<i>Expressing gratitude</i>	Participants write a letter of gratitude thanking a person for their support or kindness.
3	<i>Capitalizing on positive events</i>	Participants identify a positive life event after it has just occurred and then magnify its effect by reflecting on it, writing about it, or sharing the event with others.
4	Gratitude skills application	Participants select a useful PP skill from the prior three weeks, consider how to adapt the skill to daily life, and develop a plan to utilize this skill regularly.
Module 2: Strengths-based exercises		
Week 5	<i>Remembering past success</i>	Participants recall an event in which they experienced success, then write about the event, their contribution to the success, and positive feelings elicited by recalling it.
6	<i>Using personal strengths</i>	Participants undergo a brief assessment of personal strengths, then find a specific new way to use one of their 'signature strengths' in the next 7 days.
7	<i>Using perseverance</i>	Participants plan and then use perseverance to complete a specific goal that week.
8	Strength-based skills application	Participants select a useful PP skill from the prior three weeks, consider how to adapt the skill to daily life, and develop a plan to utilize this skill regularly.
Module 3: Optimism and meaning-based exercises		
Week 9	<i>Enjoyable and meaningful activities</i>	Participants complete three activities: an enjoyable activity alone, an enjoyable activity with another person, and a meaningful activity completed alone or with others.
10	<i>Performing acts of kindness</i>	Participants perform three acts of kindness to others over a 1-2 day period.
11	<i>The good life</i>	Participants imagine and write in detail about a best possible (realistic) future one year from now and consider small short-term steps to take toward such a future.
12	Skills application + future planning	Participants select a PP skill from this module and develop a plan to utilize this skill—and additional skills from the program—this week and beyond (see C10d).

MASTERY

Midlife Activity, Stress Reduction, Time Efficiency, Resilience, and Youthfulness Project



Treatment Manual

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Study Appointments

Note: At each call you will review the previous week's exercise with your Study Trainer

Session 1 (in person) _____

Session 2 (phone) _____

Session 3 (phone) _____

Session 4 (phone) _____

Session 5 (phone) _____

Session 6 (phone) _____

Session 7 (phone) _____

Session 8 (phone) _____

Session 9 (phone) _____

Session 10 (phone) _____

Session 11 (phone) _____

Session 12 (phone) _____

Follow-up Session (phone) _____

**If you need to change your appointment,
call us at 617-724-9142.**

Introduction

What is the goal of this project?

Many people who are between the ages of 45 and 65 experience stress related to juggling multiple responsibilities, including their health. It is likely that you have received recommendations from your doctor that include exercising regularly to maintain health and prevent future complications. Even if you are already physically active, it is not always easy to maintain an adequate level of physical activity given the many directions you are pulled in your everyday life. And, if these recommendations require making big changes in your life, it can seem overwhelming.

One of the best things that people of any age can do is increase their physical activity. Being active can help your mood and your health in many ways, yet it can be a challenge. Many people in midlife find that they sometimes struggle with low energy and low mood, that they already have a lot to keep up with, and that setting and reaching goals can be tough.

We believe that finding ways to increase positive thoughts and feelings can really help people to become more physically active. Research shows that people who experience more positive feelings (such as feeling more hopeful or more grateful) exercise more and have better overall health. This makes sense: when you are feeling happier and more confident, it can be easy to start (and stick to) healthier habits!

What will happen in this project?

In this project, you will complete “positive psychology” exercises designed to increase your mood and self-confidence. These exercises will teach you skills that you can use every day to help you feel more energetic, motivated, and hopeful. In our studies, people who have completed these positive psychology exercises typically find them easy, fun, and helpful. We think having more of these good feelings will make it a lot easier to become more active and to accomplish all of your health goals!

We will combine these positive psychology activities with a specific goal-setting program that will help you set and reach goals related to physical activity, like walking more often. We will help you to track your physical activity, identify places and times to exercise, monitor your progress, and use your resources to most effectively reach your goals each week.

Our goal by the end of this program is that you feel happier about your life and that you have become more active. We think this will have all sorts of benefits for your stress level, your overall health, and the quality of your life.

Introduction

What is my role?

We believe that this program will help people in midlife – but we need your assistance to find out for sure! Based on our experience with these exercises and interviews with patients, we have created this treatment program to safely improve physical activity.

Your participation and feedback will help us to determine whether this program helps you to feel more positive and become more active. If it works well, we may someday make this program available to others in midlife who are expressing concerns about stress level and health. Your participation will help us figure out how we might do that.

So what is this ‘positive psychology’ anyway?

Positive psychology is an area of psychology that focuses on helping people to experience greater life satisfaction through specific activities. These include identifying and using your personal strengths, appreciating pleasant events during your day, performing kind acts for others, and using past successes to accomplish your goals in the future

Is it really possible for a person to experience more positive emotions?

Yes. It appears that almost 50% of a person’s happiness is directly under their own control, and specific activities focused on good feelings can improve well-being. The activities in this program aim to do just that!

This does not mean that it is always easy. Like other activities that can benefit health, positive psychology exercises take practice. Of course, taking specific actions to generate and pay attention to good feelings is not always natural, but these activities get easier and more effective the more you do them. Some exercises will really be a great match for you, while others might be a less perfect fit. With some effort, we believe that you will discover positive psychology activities that you will enjoy and that will provide you with lasting benefit.

In many ways, experiencing more positive emotions is a lot like gaining any new skill, like learning to speak a foreign language. Some people learn how to pronounce new words and acquire foreign accents easily. But with effort and practice, anyone can learn a new language. Similarly, some people have found it a great struggle to experience the positive, but with deliberate and consistent effort it is possible to feel stronger, happier, and more hopeful.

Introduction

How will the program work?

Each week, you will talk with your trainer on the phone for about 30 minutes. Those calls will be divided into two main sections:

1. First, your trainer will review the positive psychology exercise you completed last week. You will discuss how the exercise went and how you can use the positive psychology skill from that week in your daily life. Then, your trainer will introduce the next week's positive psychology skill and make a concrete plan with you to complete the exercise in the next week.
2. Then, your trainer will discuss your physical activity. You will review the previous week's goal, think of ways to help you successfully complete your physical activity goals, and then set a new goal for the upcoming week. Your trainer also will introduce a new topic, like identifying resources to help you get active, or finding new walking routes, to help you continue to be active. An emphasis will be placed on identifying stressors and barriers common in midlife such as difficulties with times management, financial stressors, occupational stressors, and caregiver stressors, all of which can interfere with physical activity. Once these are identified, we will help you figure out ways to overcome these barriers so that you can find the time and energy to be active.

Our hope is that the first part of the calls will help you to feel more motivated, energized, and hopeful about yourself, which will put in you in the best possible frame of mind to think about setting and reaching a physical activity goal.

By the end of the study, we hope that you will:

- Be more aware of positive events in your life.
- Be more able to use your personal strengths and qualities to accomplish goals and feel good about yourself.
- Learn simple but powerful new skills that you can use in your daily life to increase your positive thoughts and feelings.
- Be able to regularly use these skills to develop a habit of happiness.
- Find it easier to make healthy lifestyle choices because you are feeling more positive.
- Learn how to set realistic, specific physical activity goals.
- Develop skills to overcome barriers and challenges in getting and staying active.
- Sit less, move more, feel better, and thrive!

What is important to you?

As we strive to help you become happier, healthier, and more active in the MASTERY program, one of the most important things that we can know about you (and that you can know about yourself) is **what really matters to you** and **what keeps you going through difficult days**.

For some people, it is family—getting to spend time with them, being healthy enough to go on vacation or to play with children, or being well enough to help family members in need. For others, it is other social networks and activities—being able to visit friends, play tennis with a social group, host parties at one's home, or engage in meaningful volunteer activities. And for some, it is continuing to take part in meaningful and engaging work or a great hobby, or being able to keep working long enough to financially support a family.

Knowing what is truly important to you can help motivate you to get more active, do a really great job taking care of your health, and manage your stress. And taking care of your health ultimately may help you to continue to do what really matters to you in your life, for the longest possible time. That can be very powerful, and very motivating. Take a moment to think about the three simple, important questions listed below. We will discuss them now and refer back to them throughout the program.

What are some of the things you care most about in life?

What are some of the things that bring you joy or satisfaction in life?

What are your reasons for getting more healthy and being more active?

Tips for Using Positive Psychology

1. Focus on the present and be nonjudgmental.

During some of these exercises, it may be easy for negative or anxious thoughts creep in. This is completely natural! An important skill is to **return your focus to the moment** and to the positive exercise that you are completing. If you notice yourself “heading negative,” it can be very helpful to nonjudgmentally “turn your mind” back to the moment and the exercise.

2. Try something new.

When performing these exercises, thinking about or doing something **out of the ordinary** can be more powerful than something routine. For example, if you write a letter of gratitude, you may get more out of it by thanking someone you have not thanked before. Doing something **new** and **different** can give you a burst of positive feeling and feel more deeply meaningful.

3. Name positive emotions.

We will help you **develop a greater vocabulary** for positive emotions. Instead of just feeling “good,” we think that understanding and labeling your good feelings more specifically (like “satisfaction” or “joy” or “pride”) will allow you to more fully recognize and savor the positive events and feelings in your life.

4. Develop new skills.

Over the course of this program, we will help you to **develop useful skills**, such as becoming more aware of positive things in your life, expressing gratitude more regularly, or identifying new ways to use your strengths. You will use these skills as part of the study exercises, and we hope that you will be able to start using these skills in your everyday life too. You can also make a list (**page 154**) of **My Favorite Skills** and how you will use them.

5. Be willing to give them a try!

You still may feel skeptical. **Give the exercises a try!** You may surprise yourself by getting more of a boost than you expected. It will also help to hear what worked or did not work for you, so we can continue to refine the program to be most effective for people like you.

6. Consider how to use your new skills in daily life.

We hope that feeling **happier**, more **confident**, and more **optimistic** will give you the boost you need to get more active. As we mentioned, research shows that people who experience more positive feelings exercise more and have better health. We encourage you to **see if your positive feelings help you feel more motivated** to get and stay active, and to do an even better job managing your heart problems.

Twelve Positive Thoughts and Emotions

Gratitude: Feeling thankful about something—a person, event, or place—or just being happy to be alive.

Love: An all-encompassing positive feeling—whether romantic, friendship-based, or a more general fondness—that can be directed at another being or oneself.

Hope: A feeling that things can turn out for the best, and that possibilities for positive outcomes exist.

Determination: A feeling of commitment to accomplish a goal, even in the face of obstacles. This can be a really important quality for those in midlife who face numerous challenges every day!

Acceptance: A willingness to live with a difficult or unpleasant situation in a positive manner.

Pride: A sense of satisfaction or pleasure resulting from something a person has done or created.

Relief: A feeling of reassurance and relaxation following decreases in anxiety or stress.

Serenity: A more relaxed and sustained version of joy—feeling a deeper sense of peace and contentment.

Interest: A positive feeling arising from being engaged in, or curious about, something or someone.

Connectedness: The state of being close to another person or other people with mutual trust and support.

Inspiration: A feeling that comes when a person or event leads someone to feel a deep desire to do something positive.

Joy: An intense feeling of great happiness, delight, or elation.



Positive Psychology

Part One: Gratitude-based Activities

Part Two: Strength-based Activities

Part Three: Meaning-based Activities



Part One: Enhancing Gratitude

Session One: Gratitude for Positive Events

Session Two: Expressing Gratitude

Session Three: Capitalizing on Positive Events

Session Four: Using Gratitude in Daily Life

Session One

Positive Psychology Gratitude for Positive Events

Gratitude for Positive Events

Introduction

In this part of the MASTERY program, we will focus on three different positive concepts: gratitude, strengths, and meaning. For the first three weeks of the program, we will focus on developing skills related to gratitude—feeling thankful for people, places, or things. We will help you find ways to be more aware of (and grateful for) positive things in life, express gratitude to others, and then integrate these skills into your everyday life. Over the next four weeks, you will complete the activities in the box below.

Enhancing Gratitude

- ❑ *Gratitude for positive events* → Developing awareness for positive events.
- ❑ *Expressing gratitude* → Developing a habit of expressing gratitude to others.
- ❑ *Capitalizing on positive events* → Boosting positive feelings from positive events by reflecting on them or celebrating them in some way.
- ❑ *Using gratitude in daily life* → Focusing on gratitude in your everyday activities.

In the first part of this session, we will focus on identifying and savoring positive events that occur in your life. It can often be easy to focus on the negative events going on in life. This makes sense to some degree: focusing on challenges or negative events can help you to learn from them and avoid them in the future. However, a single-minded focus on the negative can lead you to miss out on the positive things in life and can affect your health and well-being.

Most of us are not *nearly* as good at savoring and appreciating positive events as we are at analyzing bad events, so this is a skill that needs practice. The good news is that as you become better at focusing on the good in your life, it will become easier to feel even more grateful for what you have and more hopeful about the future.

We know that having to manage your various responsibilities might sometimes make it hard to feel grateful or to remember good things on a regular basis. Our team will work to help you develop an ability to more easily think about the good in life, even with multiple responsibilities and a busy schedule!

Gratitude for Positive Events

Instructions

This week, we will focus on being more aware of—and grateful for—the positive events in life. For this exercise, please think about three positive things that happened over the past week. Then, use the space on the next pages to write about the events. The things you list can be relatively small in importance (“I enjoyed my lunch today”) or relatively large in importance (“My daughter came to visit”). They can be related to physical activity or be entirely separate.

Please follow these instructions:

- Give the event a title. (e.g., “my sister remembered my birthday”)
- Write down exactly what happened in as much detail as possible, including what you did or said, and if other people were involved, what they did or said.
- Record how this event made you feel at the time. Use the most specific positive emotional words that you can think of to describe how you felt: Joy? Satisfaction?

Tips for completing the exercise:

- The goal of the exercise is to remember the good event and then enjoy the positive emotions that come with it. Focus your energy on this goal!
- If you are having trouble thinking of specific positive emotions, please refer to the list of positive emotions (page 10).
- You may find yourself wanting to write something like “I felt less stressed.” It’s good to note this, but try to describe the feeling or thought using positive emotions and words. So, for example, instead of writing “I felt less stressed,” you might write “I felt a little bit of relief.”
- Focus on the positive. If you find yourself focusing on negative feelings or emotions, turn your mind from the negative feeling and refocus yourself on the good event and the positive feelings that came along with it. This can take effort, but it gets easier with practice and can make a real difference in how you feel.

Gratitude for Positive Events

Exercise

Positive event #1:

1. Event title: _____
2. What happened? What did you do or say, and if other people were involved, what did they do or say?
3. What positive thoughts and emotions did you experience at the time of the event? (Be as specific as possible and give as much detail as you can).
4. What specific positive thoughts and emotions do you have now as you look back on the event?

Gratitude for Positive Events

Positive event #2:

1. Event title: _____
2. What happened? What did you do or say, and if other people were involved, what did they do or say?
3. What positive thoughts and emotions did you experience at the time of the event? (Be as specific as possible and give as much detail as you can).
4. What specific positive thoughts and emotions do you have now as you look back on the event?

Gratitude for Positive Events

Positive event #3:

1. Event title: _____
2. What happened? What did you do or say, and if other people were involved, what did they do or say?
3. What positive thoughts and emotions did you experience at the time of the event? (Be as specific as possible and give as much detail as you can).
4. What specific positive thoughts and emotions do you have now as you look back on the event?

**Please think about how you can use this skill
(being more aware of positive things) in your daily life.**

Supplementary Table 2. MI Intervention Component: Modules and Exercises	
<i>5A's model (all sessions)</i>	Interventionists will: (a) <u>Ask</u> about progress on the prior cognitive (e.g., pros/cons of becoming active) or physical activity goal, (b) <u>Advise</u> about the benefits of physical activity on health and function, (c) <u>Assess</u> the participant's stage of change and barriers/facilitators to change, (d) <u>Assist</u> with setting a goal, and (e) <u>Arrange</u> the next phone session. All sessions (including midlife modules) include this content.
<i>Core MI Module</i>	<i>Week 1: Introduce Moving for Better Health: importance & confidence and activity tracking</i>
	<i>Week 2: Outline 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals</i>
	<i>Week 3: Discuss physical activity barriers and problem-solving tips</i>
	<i>Week 4: Reflect on initial progress and complete walkability audit to identify new routes</i>
<i>Midlife Time Management Module</i>	<i>Week 5: Barriers: Time management 1 (breaking down physical activity into smaller chunks)</i>
	<i>Week 6: Barriers: Time management 2 (scheduling physical activity with organizational tools)</i>
	<i>Week 7: Barriers: Time management 3 (prioritizing activity and minimizing distractions)</i>
	<i>Week 8: Review/reflect on progress and consider realistic post-intervention goals</i>
<i>Midlife Module Chosen by Participant</i>	<i>Week 9: Barriers: Midlife module (occupational, financial, or caregiving stress, or stress reduction)</i>
	<i>Week 10: Barriers: Midlife module (session 2 of selected module)</i>
	<i>Week 11: Barriers: Midlife module (session 3 of selected module)</i>
	<i>Week 12: Review/reflect on progress and develop a plan for activity over the next 3-6 months</i>

Session One

Goal Setting

Moving for Better Health

Moving for Better Health

Setting Goals to Get Moving

In the Goal Setting part of the MASTERY program, we will work together to help you set and reach goals for walking and other forms of physical activity. Being active is one of the best things that you can do for your overall health.

Did you know that physical activity can...

- ✓ Improve your mood and reduce stress levels
- ✓ Help you sleep better and boost your energy
- ✓ Improve your immune system
- ✓ Grow new brain cells and improve your focus and memory
- ✓ Increase your muscle mass
- ✓ Strengthen your bones
- ✓ Strengthen your heart
- ✓ Improve your blood sugar regulation
- ✓ Help you lose weight
- ✓ Possibly decrease the amount of medication you will need for your heart problems
- ✓ Help you look younger
- ✓ Lower your blood pressure
- ✓ Help you live longer

In this program, we will provide you specific skills in setting physical activity goals that are right for you—reachable, realistic, and safe. We will work to:

- ✓ **Keep track of your progress.**
- ✓ **Set reachable and specific activity goals** and adjust them based on your own experience and symptoms.
- ✓ Identify barriers to being active, and **help you find ways to overcome challenges to getting and staying active.**
- ✓ **Help you identify resources** (people, equipment, new routes, and education) that can help you to become a more active person.

We will work with you **at your pace** to help you set goals that make sense for you and then work to achieve them. **You will always set your own goals in this program.** We are just here to help, and will help you every step of the way.

We think that by working together, you will be able to set and achieve your goal of being more physically active. We believe that this will help you to be healthier and feel better!

Moving for Better Health: Worksheet

As a first step towards becoming more active, we would like you to think about what you already do to be active and what you would like to accomplish during the program.

1. Which kinds of physical activity did you like to do earlier in your life, and what do you like to do now?
2. What physical activity goal would you like to set for the MASTERY program?

My overall activity goal:

- ✓ **Type** (for example, walking):
- ✓ **Frequency** (for example, 5 times a week):
- ✓ **Duration** (for example, 30 minutes):
- ✓ **Intensity** (for example, medium effort):

3. Importance and confidence ratings:

On a scale of 0-10 (0=not important, 10=very important) how **important** is it that you increase your physical activity? _____

On a scale of 0-10 (0=not confident, 10=very confident) how **confident** are you that you can increase your physical activity? _____

Tracking Your Activity

One way to help you monitor your progress towards reaching your physical activity goal is to track your physical activity on a regular basis. Tracking helps give people a real and clear sense of how and what they are doing with their physical activity. This information will really help you (and help us help you) to make physical activity progress!

Ways to track your activity:

- ✓ Keep a journal of when you are active over the course of the week. You can write down the type of activity you perform, as well as the amount of time you spend performing the activity.
- ✓ Use a step counter, or pedometer. These devices keep track of the number of steps you take over the course of a day. Step counters can be worn on your belt or pocket, or on your wrist.
- ✓ Download an “app” on your smartphone. These apps can use the sensors in your phone to keep track of the number of steps you are taking.
- ✓ Use a smart watch. This can also keep track of your activity over the course of the day.

This week, we will ask you to write down your activity at the end of each day or week on the sheet provided in this manual. You can track your activity pretty easily, especially if you use a step counter or other device. For example, you can track by taking a few minutes each day to write down how many steps you took, or what physical activities you performed that day.

When you write down your activity, think about patterns related to when you are active, when it is hard or easy to be active, and how it feels to be active.

We have provided you with an Omron pedometer (see following page for instructions) to aid in your activity tracking.

Tracking Your Activity

Your Omron Pedometer

As part of this program, you have received an Omron pedometer, and we will ask that you use it (or another pedometer, if you already have one) throughout this program. Here are some tips for how to use it:



Tips for using your pedometer:

- ✓ When you haven't touched the pedometer for a while, the screen shuts off. Don't worry, it is still counting your steps! Just press any button to turn the screen on again.
- ✓ The pedometer will probably work best if you clip it to a belt, waistband, or pocket.
- ✓ Please do not wear this into the shower or pool, and please do not put it in the laundry. It is not waterproof!
- ✓ If you have any problems with your pedometer, please feel free to call us at 617-724-9142. We are happy to help sort out any problems you are having! And if you lose it, or it gets damaged, we can get you another one!

Tracking Your Activity: Tracking Sheet

Date	What activity did you do? How much time did you spend performing the activity?	# of Steps
Total		

Did you notice any patterns to your physical activity?

What made it easier for you to be active?

What made it more difficult to be active?

Session Two

Goal Setting

Setting a SMART Physical Activity Goal

Setting a SMART Activity Goal

This week, we will talk about a great way to set physical activity goals. Maybe you are already making good progress on getting more active, or maybe you have had some challenges. Either way, we will work with you to help figure out a goal that best fits your circumstances.

One tool we will use for setting physical activity goals is the “SMART” goal-setting system. Setting a goal using the SMART system will give you the best chance of reaching your goal by making it specific and realistic. You are probably already accustomed to having specific goals for things like your blood pressure, and we can use the SMART system to help set great specific activity goals.

This Week's Goal:

- ✓ Learn about the five-step SMART system of developing a goal.
- ✓ Set a goal related to your physical activity, and review whether it is a SMART goal.

Setting a SMART goal

S = Specific	It is easier to reach a goal when you know <u>exactly</u> what you want to do. Your goal should answer: What, Where, When, and How?
M = Measurable	Choose a goal with <u>measurable progress</u> (like a number of steps), so you can see the change occur. How will you know when you reach your goal?
A = Attainable	Identify goals that are <u>within your reach</u> . Taking small steps is a <u>good way</u> to set attainable goals.
R = Relevant	The goal needs to be <u>something you are willing to work towards</u> . If it means something to you, you will be more likely to stick with it!
T = Time-based	Set a <u>timeframe</u> for the goal: for next week, in three months, in one year. Putting an end point on a goal gives you a clear target to work toward. We'll pick one week today.

Examples of SMART goals:

- ✓ Good goal: *I plan to start walking twice per week.*
- ✓ Better goal: *I plan to start walking twice per week in my neighborhood with my close friends.*
- ✓ **SMART** goal: *I plan to take two 30-minute walks around my block this week on Monday and Wednesday mornings.*

Setting a SMART Activity Goal: Tracking Sheet

Goal for this week:

Is your goal SMART?

Specific Measureable Attainable Relevant Time-based

Explain:

Date	What activity did you do? How much time did you spend performing the activity?	# of Steps
Total		

Did you meet your SMART goal this week?

Session Nine

Goal Setting

Caregiver Stress 1

Caregiver Stress Part 1

This week we will start discussing a specific area of stress in your life, caregiver stress. Caregiver stress can be a barrier to many different activities, including physical activity. This week, we will discuss the ways in which caregiver stress may be interfering with your ability to be active or stay active.

Caregiver stress can feel overwhelming at times, particularly since you may be the caregiver to multiple people. Take a look at the list below with examples of common caregiving situations that can be stressful. Which ones are relevant to you? Do you have caregiving duties that are not listed?

Examples of common caregiver situations:

- ✓ Elderly relative with dementia
- ✓ Family member with medical problems
- ✓ Adult family member with mental health issues
- ✓ Child with behavioral issues
- ✓ Child involved in bullying
- ✓ Child with mental health issues

Research has shown that high levels of stress can negatively affect physical and mental functioning. For examples, stress can result in **psychological strain** (e.g., feeling dissatisfied or even depressed), **physiological strain** (e.g., increasing blood pressure), and/or **behavioral strain** (e.g., sleep difficulties, using substances more than normal). Research shows that this strain can actually lead to increased risk for cardiac problems. Therefore, it is not something to be ignored!

Given the amount of strain that can result from caregiver stress, it can be quite difficult for people experiencing such strain to imagine having the time and energy to be physically active! Consider the questions on the following page.

Goals for this week:

- ✓ **Brainstorm** specific caregiving stressors that you are experiencing.
- ✓ **Specify** ones that interfere with physical activity and ones that do not.

Caregiver Stress Part 1: Worksheet

Please answer the following questions.

1. What specific caregiver stressors did you identify?

2. How are these stressors affecting you psychologically, physiologically, or behaviorally?

3. Which of these stressors are specifically interfering with your ability to be physically active or to increase your level of activity?

Caregiver Stress Part 1: Worksheet

Physical activity goal for this week:

Is your goal SMART?

- Specific Measureable Attainable Relevant Time-based

Date	What activity did you do? How much time did you spend performing the activity?	# of Steps
Total		

Did you meet your goal this week?

Session Ten

Goal Setting Caregiver Stress 2

Caregiver Stress Part 2

This week we will discuss active coping strategies for your caregiver stressors. Often when stressors feel overwhelming, it can be easy to avoid them in an effort to reduce your immediate stress level. However, research indicates that more active forms of coping are more effective in the long-term.

The good news is if you struggle with juggling your caregiving duties and finding time for physical activity, you have already learned some Time Management strategies that may be helpful for you in overcoming this barrier (e.g., scheduling, exercising in smaller chunks throughout the day, etc.).

With respect to the specific occupational stressors that you identified for this week, have you tried any active coping strategies?

Much like we did several weeks ago for more general barriers to physical activity, let's think about ways of active problem-solving for your specific stressors. Here are some examples of websites that may provide you with helpful hints for methods of active coping with respect to common caregiver stressors:

- Caring for someone with dementia: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving>
- Caring for someone with an illness/medical condition: <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/caregivers.html>
- Caring for a child with behavioral issues: <https://chadd.org/for-parents/overview/>; <https://chadd.org/understanding-adhd/adhd-fact-sheets/>
- Caring for a child who is being bullied: <http://www.thebullyproject.com/parents>
- Caring for a child with depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns: <http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/36>; <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/parents-guide-to-teen-depression.htm/>

Caregiver Stressor	Active Coping Methods How can you reduce stress related to caregiving?

Caregiver Stress Part 2

We also acknowledge that it's not possible to remove all stress related to caregiving in a few short weeks. For that reason, this week we will talk about ways to take care of yourself that can help reduce stress levels in general. These strategies can help you better manage the challenges that inevitably will arise and can help you feel more relaxed and in control of your emotions in general.

Reactions	Tips for changing your stress reactions
Thoughts	Identify the thought patterns that can make stress worse, and ask yourself: - Are you deciding right away that it is going to turn out really badly? - Are you looking only at the bad parts and not seeing the good? - Are you worrying about problems that are really not yours?
Emotions	Figure out your emotional reactions to stress and talk about them.
Body	Try deep breathing and relaxation exercises.
Behaviors	Decide what you can change about the stressor and take action: - Can you change your job or work schedule? - Can you avoid difficult people or unpleasant situations? - Can you spend more time with friends and family?

We hope to help you start making changes in how you react to stress, and to learn ways to help you relax. Here are some general ideas concerning how you can start to practice relaxation and reduce the stress levels in your life.

Tips on relaxation...

- ✓ Make sure you have enough rest.
- ✓ Exercise to de-stress and give yourself more energy.
- ✓ Take time for relaxation and vacations.
- ✓ Practice deep breathing and relaxation exercises, meditation, or yoga.
- ✓ Laugh and use your sense of humor or another personal strength.
- ✓ Use a gratitude exercise to increase motivation and positive emotions.
- ✓ Have fun by doing things that you enjoy with your family and friends.
- ✓ Consider your limits and take on one task or project at a time.
- ✓ Research and learn more about your specific caregiver stressors.
- ✓ Learn to ask for help.
- ✓ Talk about your needs and emotions to somebody you trust.

Goals for this week:

- ✓ **Continue to brainstorm** active coping methods for your stressors.
- ✓ **Choose one** relaxation/stress-reducing technique and try it.

Caregiver Stress Part 2: Worksheet

Please answer the following questions.

1. If you needed more room than the table presented on page 132, what additional stressors and active coping strategies did you identify?

2. What relaxation technique did you try did you try this week?

3. Did you find the relaxation technique helpful? Will you continue to use it?

Caregiver Stress Part 2: Worksheet

Physical activity goal for this week:

Is your goal SMART?

Specific Measureable Attainable Relevant Time-based

Date	What activity did you do? How much time did you spend performing the activity?	# of Steps
Total		

Did you meet your goal this week?

Session Eleven

Goal Setting

Caregiver Stress 3

Caregiver Stress Part 3

This week will be the final week that we introduce a new topic related to caregiver stress. Research has identified social resources as being particularly important in reducing stress levels, and especially stress related to midlife (e.g., financial, occupational, caregiving). Social support can also make a huge difference in how successful you are in getting active and staying active. We will explore social resources for both physical activity and caregiver stress.

Social Resources for physical activity come in many different forms:

- ✓ **Exercise partners.** Having someone with whom you can walk outside, go to the mall, go to the gym, or go for a bike ride with can make a huge difference. Having a partner can make the activity more enjoyable. Having a scheduled time to be active can keep you from putting off the activity and keep you on a regular schedule. In addition, as you become more and more active, you and your partner can see your progress together!
- ✓ **Supportive family and friends.** Even if they do not exercise with you, having friends and family who encourage you in your efforts to get more active and take great care of your health can be a real plus. They can provide encouragement when you are wavering in your resolve to go for a walk after a stressful day, they can celebrate your success in becoming a more active person, and they can support other parts of your healthy lifestyle plan, like healthy eating.
- ✓ **Other groups.** Support groups to help promote exercise can be helpful. And group exercise classes—at the gym, the YMCA, or elsewhere—can not only be a “neighborhood” resource, but also a source of support and togetherness.
- ✓ **Your medical treatment providers.** Your doctors and other care providers can serve as an important resource as you work toward becoming a more active person. They can provide you with information about safe and healthy activities, education about the benefits of exercise, and resources at the clinic or hospital. Because they know you personally and know your personal medical situation, they will be able to give you specific and useful advice. Plus, they will be some of your biggest cheerleaders when you succeed!

Caregiver Stress Part 3

In terms of social resources for caregiver stress, these, too, can come in many different forms.

Social Resources for caregiver stress can include:

- ✓ **Friends and family members.** Being open with family and trusted friends about your caregiving stressors can be helpful in a number of different ways. Firstly, friends and family can offer emotional support, which can help you cope with this type of stress. Secondly, family and friends may be experiencing (or may have experienced) a similar type of stress and may be able to offer you helpful advice on what to do. Thirdly, family and friends might also be able to relieve some of your burden by helping with caregiving directly.
- ✓ **Therapists/Counselors.** While it may not be immediately apparent how therapists or counselors can help you with your caregiving stress, research has shown that various relaxation techniques can be quite helpful in reducing overall stress levels. Skills-based psychological treatment also can help you employ problem-solving strategies to use for your caregiving difficulties and target negative thinking that might be getting in the way of you meeting your goals or even reaching out for more help. Lastly, therapists or counselors can help you improve your communication skills so that you feel confident in voicing your problems and asking for what you need in an effective way.
- ✓ **Support groups/online forums.** Similar to the resources already discussed, support groups or online forums can provide emotional support and a chance to connect with others who are experiencing similar types of stress. If attending a support group in person is either not feasible or not desirable, there are online forums where you can interact with others in chat rooms and discussion threads.
- ✓ **Refer to Appendices 1-6 for more detailed information on resources for caregiver stress, including social resources!**

You may already be aware of some of these social resources in your life and how they can help you to be active and reduce stress. Sometimes, they may already be there, but you never thought to reach out to these people for help. In other cases, it may take some figuring out—like finding an exercise partner or reaching out to a counselor/therapist. Let's look together at your current and potential social resources on the next page.

Caregiver Stress Part 3

First, consider people (or groups of people) in your life who already are, or could potentially be, resources for either physical activity or caregiver stress (or both!). Then think about how you can use these resources and make a specific plan to achieve this.

Use the table below to help you brainstorm people or groups whom you can contact to feel more connected, more motivated, and more supported. At the end of the week, use the bottom half of the table to report how you utilized your social resources.

Social Resources
How I used my resources this week:

Caregiver Stress Part 3: Worksheet

Physical activity goal for this week:

Is your goal SMART?

Specific

Measureable

Attainable

Relevant

Time-based

Date	What activity did you do? How much time did you spend performing the activity?	# of Steps
Total		

Did you meet your goal this week?