

## SISFFIT307A - Undertake Client Health Assessment

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## Introduction

Once a client has been through a fitness orientation and health screening process the next step is to undertake a client health assessment. This is a step that is often forgotten about in many fitness facilities or it is a step that is done at a later stage. However, in order to effectively write a client training program that is tailored to meet their needs, the health assessment stage is critical.

This stage actually involves doing some physical activity with the client and conducting some test to find out the client's current level of fitness. In doing so it is important to include the following:

- A review of the pre-test screening information,
- Determine the fitness goals of clients,
- Conduct a basic fitness appraisal, and
- Motivate and encourage clients.

## Review Pre-test Screening Information

Before any physical activity takes place it is important to:

- Access and review initial client pre-test screening information according to legislation and regulatory requirements and organisational policies and procedures,
- Advise the client of the relevance of the screening and appraisal process to developing an individualised exercise program,
- Ascertain additional health information about the client prior to fitness appraisal and identify any factors requiring medical clearance according to organisational policies and procedures, and
- Recommend client seek medical or allied health professional assistance, where required before proceeding with fitness appraisal according to organisational policies and procedures.

### 1.1. Access and review initial client pre-test screening information according to legislation and regulatory requirements and organisational policies and procedures.

In SISFFIT301A – Provide fitness orientation and health screening, it outlines how to administer a screening questionnaire. To revise:

When a client is filling out their pre-exercise health screening questionnaire it is recommended that you get them to sit in an environment that is comfortable and free of distraction. It is also recommended that the client is allowed to fill out the questionnaire on their own, therefore, try and avoid hovering around as this makes the client feel rushed and then they may not put as much thought into their responses. The period of time required for a client to fill out a pre-exercise health screening will vary from person to person, but will generally take 10 – 15 minutes.

[Click here to access the Adult Pre-Exercise Screening Tool](#)

[Click here to access an example Lifestyle Questionnaire](#)

[Click here to access a Health Screening Procedure](#)

Before carrying out a health assessment it is important to review any pre-test screening information. This may include:

- lifestyle evaluation,
- fitness goals,
- time availability,
- exercise history,
- a clearance letter from an allied health professional or medical practitioner.
- likes and dislikes,
- medical history,
- medications,
- informed consent,

It is important that this is done in accordance with industry legislation and regulatory requirements and organisational policies and procedures. These legal requirements may include:

- occupational health and safety,
- duty of care,
- privacy,
- anti-discrimination,
- copyright,
- licensing,
- child protection,
- trade practices,
- consumer protection,
- environmental,
- business registration and licenses.

These organisational policies and procedures may include:

- privacy,
- confidentiality,
- medical clearance,
- risk management,
- client record systems,
- collection and use of client information,
- client referral procedures,
- recording appraisal information.

## 1.2. Advise the client of the relevance of the screening and appraisal process to developing an individualised exercise program.

Most people these days are used to filling out health screening forms when they see a physiotherapist, massage therapist, and even the beautician. However, every now and then you will come across someone who has never had to do it before. As a result, it is good practice to get in the habit of always explaining the purpose of a pre-exercise health screening questionnaire to a client when requesting that they do so. Generally, if people understand the reason why they need to do something, they are much more willing to oblige.

From a business perspective, the pre-exercise health screening questionnaire serves many different purposes, including:

- To gather personal and contact information about the client for future contact and marketing,
- To gather medical information from the client to ensure that they are ready to start an exercise program,
- To gather current exercise and nutrition information from the client get an idea of their starting point, and
- To get an understanding about what the client wants to achieve in order to prescribe the most suitable fitness program.

When asking a client to fill out a pre-exercise health screening questionnaire you may like to say something like:

“I will get you to fill out this 2 page questionnaire so that we can get an idea of your current health status, your current exercise habits and your goals so that we can tailor your experience here to maximize your results”

Many people start an exercise program with no real direction. They join a gym or a fitness centre and just try to do 30 – 45 minutes of moderate exercise on all or most days of the week. While this is a good approach for basic health related results, it is unlikely they will ever achieve specific weight or fitness goals. As a result, it is important to discuss the benefits of fitness appraisals and prescribed exercise programs with all clients, in the hope that they will all choose to access these services. These benefits include:

Benefits of fitness appraisals:

- To see where the client is at,
- To gather important information about the clients health status,
- To get an idea of the starting point, and
- To ensure their goals match their actual requirements.

Benefits of prescribed exercise programs:

- To have structured training programs,
- To have a plan that is aligned with the client's goals,
- To keep the client accountable,
- To ensure the Fitness Professional and client are on the same page, and
- To achieve a known outcome.

1.3. Ascertain additional health information about the client prior to fitness appraisal and identify any factors requiring medical clearance according to organisational policies and procedures.

Once the client has filled out their pre-exercise health screening questionnaire, a Fitness Professional will need to go through that completed questionnaire in consultation with the client to clarify and ask further questions about the responses provided. This should take place in the form of a formal interview. There are many benefits of an interview, including:

- To develop rapport;
- To clarify any items that may be not understood;
- To gather further information from the client regarding their current situation;
- To demonstrate a professional and comprehensive approach; and
- To increase the likelihood that the client will be able to adhere to the program and achieve the desired goals.

During this consultation it is important for you to implement the strong communication and interpersonal skills covered in the “Basic Fitness Industry” subject. The purpose of this interview is to go through each of the questions that client answered on the questionnaire to gather as much information about the client as possible in order to prescribe the best form of training program.

During this process it is important for you to make the client feel comfortable and a part of the decision-making process. To achieve these desired goals you should:

- Be professional, polite and courteous,
- Listen and clarify the initial goals of the client,
- Review any previous information gained from initial health questionnaires or referrals, and
- Answer any questions the client may have.

The purpose and benefit of a health screening interview include:

- To ensure the client's health is safe for them to begin fitness testing and undergo an exercise program,
- To identify any underlying medical conditions,
- To identify any contraindications of exercise,

- To identify any specific needs of the client,
- To meet legal requirements of the industry for exercise prescription,
- To gather information that can be used to develop exercise prescription, and
- To set a base line for comparison of subsequent changes in fitness or health.

It is important to gather as much additional health information as possible. This may include:

- medical conditions,
- injuries,
- prescribed medication,
- medical and exercise history, and
- functional limitations.

#### 1.4. Recommend client seek medical or allied health professional assistance, where required before proceeding with fitness appraisal according to organisational policies and procedures.

As a fitness professional have legal limitations to your job role. You will be trained, qualified and insured to prescribe exercise to general population clients. General population clients are people who are

- Over the age of 18 years,
- Under the age of 55 years,
- Not pregnant or lactating,
- Free from injury,
- Free from chronic medical conditions, and
- Not part of a specific population group

Therefore, you have a duty of care when approached by clients who fall outside the 'general population' category, to either refer or seek assistance from another medical or allied health professional who is better trained and insured.

From time to time you will come across a client who will need to get a medical clearance or a referral to an Allied Health Professional (AHP). Examples of AHPs are:

- sports medicine physician or staff specialist
- general practitioner
- physiotherapist
- accredited exercise physiologist
- occupational therapist
- remedial massage therapist
- chiropractor
- osteopath
- accredited practicing dietician
- psychologist
- aboriginal health worker
- diabetes educator

These clients will generally be identified during the screening process. A client needs to be referred to a General Practitioner or Allied Health Professional if they identify as a one of the following specific populations:

- Alzheimer’s Disease
- Arthritis
- Uncontrolled Asthma
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Cerebral Palsy
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Uncontrolled Diabetes
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Musculo-skeletal Pain
- Obesity
- Osteoporosis
- Parkinson’s Disease
- Pregnancy
- Thyroid problems

When you refer a client to get a medical clearance or for further treatment, you want to make the process as easy as possible for the client and you want to get the client to return to the fitness facility and to begin a fitness program.

There are many ways to refer a client and you will find that your fitness facility will already have a policy and procedure in place. It is suggested that you write a referral letter for your client to take along to their medical practitioner or allied health professional. Your letter needs to include:

- A company / business letter head
- The medical practitioner or allied health professional’s contact details (if known)
- The client’s name, address, gender, date of birth
- A detailed reason for the referral ie medical clearance, clinical test, or medical treatment

[Click here to access an example ‘Referral Letter Template’](#)



## Determine the Fitness Goals of Clients

Goal setting is a very important part of the screening and appraisal process. By setting goals with your client you are ensuring that you are both on the same page and that the client has something to work towards. During goal setting,

- Determine the perceived benefits clients expect from the exercise program,
- Discuss the client's habits, cultural expectation lifestyle, family situation, likes and dislikes which might impact on the prescription of an appropriate exercise program,
- Provide relevant information on the impact of poor lifestyle behaviours on health and fitness to the client,
- Consult with the client to develop and document short and long-term fitness goals, and
- Match fitness goals to products and services available in the fitness industry.

### 2.1. Determine the perceived benefits clients expect from the exercise program.

The first step to effective goal setting is to determine the perceived benefits that a client expects from an exercise program. This involves understanding exactly what it is your client hopes to achieve. You might be a state sprinter and be very focused on athletic performance but your client may just be interested in looking good in their swimmers next summer on the beach. Likewise, you might be a sports model and focused on the cosmetic or aesthetic benefits of exercise but your client might have Type II Diabetes and just be focused on health benefits. Common perceived benefits are:

- cosmetic
- health
- social or recreational
- athletic

### 2.2. Discuss the client's habits, cultural expectations, lifestyle, family situation, likes and dislikes which might impact on the prescription of an appropriate exercise program.

In order to get a really good idea of your client's expectations and commitment to their new training program you will need to gather some additional information. This information is usually gathered as part of the Fitness Orientation and uses a form like the Lifestyle Questionnaire.

[Click here to access an example Lifestyle Questionnaire](#)

However, you may also gather this information through casual conversation with the client. There are many aspects of their lives that may impact on their chances of adhering to a new training program. Some of these include:

- Habits
  - Are they a morning or afternoon person?
  - Do they need to exercise on the way home from work to avoid getting home and procrastinating?
  -
- Cultural expectations
  - Do they go to church / prayer on a particular day / time?
  - Does their culture / religion have restrictions on where they can exercise / what they can wear?
- Lifestyle
  - Do they drink alcohol?
  - Do they smoke?
  - Do they take recreational drugs?
  - Are they currently sedentary?
  - Do they play organized sport?
  - Do they work?
  - What do they do for work?
- Family situation
  - Are they single / married?
  - Do they have children?
  - How old are the children?
- Likes and dislikes
  - Are there particular exercises / equipment / environments that they dislike?
  - What is their favourite form of exercise?

Once you have identified the factors that may impact on the client's training you can prescribe exercise to cater.

### 2.3. Provide relevant information on the impact of poor lifestyle behaviours on health and fitness to the client.

There are a number of lifestyle behaviours that have a negative impact on health and fitness. These include:

- Smoking
- Drugs
- Excessive or binge drinking
- Sedentary lifestyle

- Diet high in saturated fat, sugar and salt
- Not drinking enough water
- Having insufficient sleep

It is important to be knowledgeable enough and feel comfortable to discuss these lifestyle behaviours with your client. From time to time you will need to provide information to your client on the impact of these negative lifestyle behaviours because client need to be made accountable for their own results, or lack of.

#### 2.4. Consult with the client to develop and document short and long-term fitness goals.

Every client that you come into contact with will be exercising for different reasons. They will all have their own fitness goals. Some common fitness goals include:

- Improved health
- Enhanced appearance
- Increased muscle mass
- Body fat reduction
- Cardiovascular endurance
- Improved flexibility
- Increased strength

#### SMART Goals

During the Health Screening Interview it is important that you encourage your new client to set some goals. Goals are important to overcome any barriers that the client may perceive exist in their life. Common barriers include work, time, family and sporting commitments, financial issues, geographic issues. If the client wants to achieve a result from their new training program then goal setting is essential. Goals can either be long term or short term.

Most people who are starting out on a new training program will have one (1) long term goal. These are goals that will take more than 3 months to achieve. For example, “I will feel proud if I could complete a short course triathlon in 12 months’ time” or “I would feel strong if I was able to bench press my body weight in 6 months’ time” or “I would have more confidence if I could lose 25kg in 11 months”

For many people, it is difficult to stay motivated and focused on a long term goal that may take 12 months to achieve. Therefore, it is important to set a number of short term goals or stepping stones along the way. Short term goals are generally goals that take less than 3 months to achieve and are much easier to stay focused on. For example; “I want to lose 5kgs in the next 8 weeks” or “I want to swim 1km without stopping in 5 weeks”.

Regardless of whether a goal is long or short term, when setting goals they must be SMART.

### *Specific*

Every goal must be specific. Losing weight, toning up, swimming faster and lifting heavier are *NOT* examples of specific goals, however when you ask a client what they want to achieve these are the responses that they will often give you. A specific goal is “I want to lose 5 kg” or “I want to shoulder press 50kg” or “I want to run or swim 2km”. In all of these specific goals there is a specific end point.

### *Measureable*

You need to be able to measure a goal; therefore, it needs an end point. You can measure kg, cm, kilojoules, km, km/h

### *Achievable*

Goals need to be achievable. This is where your knowledge of the human body and its ability needs to be applied. A healthy weight loss occurs at 0.5 – 1 kg per week, lean muscle tissue growth can occur at about 0.5kg per week. You need to ensure that your client is not setting themselves up for failure.

### *Reason*

The client needs to have a reason or an emotional connection to achieving the goal in order for the goal to be achieved. Try and get the client to reveal how they will feel when they achieve their goal.

### *Time*

Goals must have a pre-determined end time. If a goal has no end date, how will you know when you have achieved it?

## 2.5. Match fitness goals to products and services available in the fitness industry.

In order to get a client to commit to an exercise program you need to get them to develop an emotional connection with their training. People who are more emotionally connected to a person, activity or service are more likely to stay with it for a long time. The best way to help a client become emotionally connected is to outline all the benefits of the product or service that they are interested in. Some general benefits of all types of exercise include:

- General fitness and wellbeing
- Ability to better deal with stress
- More stable moods
- Better overall mental health
- Better sleeping patterns
- More control of body weight
- Increased energy and stamina
- Increases kilojoule expenditure

Each different type of physical activity also has specific benefits. Below are some common fitness services and activities found in fitness centres and the benefits of each:

- Resistance Training
  - Increased strength
  - Increased tone
  - Increased bone density
  - Improved posture
  - Enhanced performance of everyday tasks ie carrying groceries and other heavy loads
- Cardiovascular Training
  - Lowers blood pressure
  - Increases HDL cholesterol
  - Decreases total cholesterol
  - Increase heart function
  - Decreases resting heart rate
  - Increases aerobic capacity
  - Decreases body fat
- Stretching
  - Increases range of movement at a joint
  - Enhances muscular coordination
  - Increases blood flow (circulation) around the body
  - Decreases risk of injury
- Yoga / Balance Classes
  - Increases range of movement at a joint
  - Enhances muscular coordination
  - Increases blood flow (circulation) around the body
  - Decreases risk of injury
  - Increases flexibility
  - Increases coordination
  - Increases balance
  - Increases ability to relax
- Pilates
  - Increase posture and core strength
  - Increases flexibility
  - Decreases muscle imbalances
  - Decreases risk of injury
  - Increases lung capacity from deep breathing
  - Increases blood flow / circulation
  - Increases balance
  - Increases coordination
  - Increases muscular strength in shoulder and pelvis stabilizing muscles

- Spin Classes
  - Increases muscle tone in legs
  - Increases cardiovascular endurance
  - Increases muscular endurance in the legs
- Boxing Classes
  - Increases cardiovascular endurance
  - Increases muscular endurance
  - Increases coordination
  - Increases balance
  - Increases social interaction
- Aerobics / Step Classes
  - Increases cardiovascular endurance
  - Increases muscular endurance
  - Increases coordination
  - Increases balance
  - Increases social interaction



## Conduct a Basic Fitness Appraisal

Now that you have gathered lots of information about your client and together you have set some long and short term goals, you can go ahead and conduct a basic fitness appraisal. In doing so, you will need to:

- Select appropriate tools and appraisal methods according to the clients' current fitness capacity.
- Organise fitness assessment equipment required for the appraisal as appropriate.
- Conduct basic fitness appraisals ensuring the safety of the client according to organisational policies and procedures.
- Explain the results of the fitness appraisals to the client and recommend an appropriate exercise program.
- Record recommendations for the client's exercise program according to organisational policies and procedures.
- Develop a client profile that can be used to develop an individualised exercise program.
- Identify signs of poor exercise tolerance and reason for discontinuation of a fitness appraisal.
- Use energy, water and other resources effectively when cleaning, preparing and maintaining equipment and activity areas to reduce negative environmental impacts.

### 3.1. Select appropriate tools and appraisal methods according to the clients' current fitness capacity.

Firstly, you will need to select the appropriate appraisal methods. This means deciding what methods you are going to use to monitor or appraise your client. These may include:

- Heart rate response
- Pulse response
- Blood pressure response
- Respiration rate response
- Skin colour response
- Rate of perceived exertion
- Exercise form
- Work output

You will also need to decide which type of fitness appraisal you are going to use:

- Cardiorespiratory endurance
- Strength
- Body composition
- Skinfolds
- Blood pressure
- Range of movement
- Waist to hip ratio
- Girth measurements

Both the appraisal method and type of fitness appraisal will determine which formal fitness tests you are going to conduct. Some common formal fitness tests are:

- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Blood pressure
- Queens College Step Up Test
- Skinfold Test
- Wall Sit Test
- Estimating 1RM Strength Test
- Push up Test
- Sit up Test
- Sit and Reach Test
- Sub-maximal Walking Test

### 3.2. Organise fitness assessment equipment required for the appraisal as appropriate.

Once you have decided on the fitness tests that you are going to conduct, it is time to plan and organise all the equipment that is required. This will show your clients that you are professional and take pride in your work. Common fitness assessment equipment may include:

- Tape measure
- Stadiometer
- Scales
- Sit and reach box
- Bicycle ergometer
- Spiromter
- Sphygmomanometer
- Stop watch
- Bio-impedance machine
- Camera
- Goniometer
- Stethoscope
- Dynanometer
- Skinfold calipers
- Step up

### 3.3. Conduct basic fitness appraisals ensuring the safety of the client according to organisational policies and procedures.

Once you have organized all the equipment you are going to use, you can now conduct the fitness tests ensuring the safety of the client. It is important to following testing protocols carefully as per the formal fitness test or organisational policies and procedures. Examples of these can be found below:

[Click here to access an example Body Mass Index Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Blood Pressure Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Estimating 1RM Strength Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Push Up Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Queens College Step Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Sit and Reach Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Sit Up Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Skinfold Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Sub-maximal Walking Test Procedure](#)

[Click here to access an example Wall Sit Test Procedure](#)



It is also a good idea to have a fitness test recording sheet set up to record the client’s results at the end of each test.

[Click here to access an example Fitness Testing Recording Form](#)

### 3.4. Explain the results of the fitness appraisals to the client and recommend an appropriate exercise program.

Once all the fitness tests are completed and you have recorded all the results on a Fitness Testing Recording Form you can now go through the results with your client and recommend an appropriate exercise program. It is important that you give feedback effectively so not to discourage the client. You can do this by using the sandwich approach:

Tell them something positive  
Tell them where they need to improve  
Tell them something positive

At this stage you can give them a general idea of an appropriate exercise program. This does not mean you have to write a detailed program and deliver it on the spot but you can give them a brief overview of their exercise program, including:

- Motivational strategies you are going to implement with your client.
- Reinforcing some realistic goals
- Outlining the phases
- Giving some specific exercises
- Highlighting the expected outcomes

### 3.5. Record recommendations for the client's exercise program according to organisational policies and procedures.

Once the fitness tests have been completed and the results recorded for your client, you can now decide on some general recommendations for the client’s program. This does not mean that you go ahead and write a detailed program but just record some general guidelines. For example, if a male client obtained the following results:

Test	Queens College Step Test	Estimated 1RM Strength Test (legs)	Estimated 1RM Strength Test (chest)	Sit and Reach Test	BMI
Score	28	1.55	0.80	-12	27.5
Rating	Poor	Fair	Fair	Poor	Overweight

This client has received below average results in all fitness tests therefore they need an exercise program that is going to focus on:

- Increasing cardiovascular fitness
- Increasing full body strength
- Increasing flexibility
- Decreasing BMI ie losing body fat

On the other hand, if a female client obtained the following results:

Test	Queens College Step Test	Estimated 1RM Strength Test (legs)	Estimated 1RM Strength Test (chest)	Sit and Reach Test	BMI
Score	60	1.20	0.50	-12	20.2
Rating	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Poor	Healthy

This client has received below average results in the sit and reach and strength test therefore they need an exercise program that is going to focus on:

- Increasing full body strength
- Increasing flexibility

### 3.6. Develop a client profile that can be used to develop an individualised exercise program.

The next step is to use the information that you have collected to develop a client profile that can be used to develop an individualized exercise program. How this is done will depend on the organisational policies and procedures of your workplace.

An example of a client profile can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

Using this client profile you can now enter some information that you have collected that will help in designing their program. This includes:

- Client’s Name
- Trainer’s Name
- Date
- Limitations
- Goals
- The days of the week they are going to do resistance training and cardio training
- Selecting the client’s stage of behaviour change
- Listing the reasons for discontinuation.

### 3.7. Identify signs of poor exercise tolerance and reason for discontinuation of a fitness appraisal.

There are a number of signs of poor exercise tolerance. It is important to be able to recognize these and know when a fitness appraisal needs to be discontinued. Some of these common signs are:

- Shortness of breath
- Pallour
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Swelling of the ankles
- Redness
- Unusual heart rate response
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Leg cramps
- Claudication
- Loss of coordination

### 3.8. Use energy, water and other resources effectively when cleaning, preparing and maintaining equipment and activity areas to reduce negative environmental impacts.

This day and age we all have a responsibility to be environmentally aware in our personal and professional lives. It is important to use energy, water and other resources effectively when cleaning, preparing and maintaining equipment and activity areas to reduce negative environmental impacts. Some strategies may include:

- Filling a bucket and not leaving the tap running when cleaning
- Turning off lights when leaving a room
- Being aware of sand / dirt erosion when training outdoors
- Minimising noise pollution when training outdoors
- Turning off electrical cardiovascular equipment when not in use
- Choosing self-propelling cardiovascular equipment

## Motivate and Encourage Clients

Whilst conducting any fitness appraisals or exercise with clients you will need to know how to effectively motivate and encourage clients to perform at their best. In doing so, you will need to know how to:

- Determine the client's level of commitment to the exercise program.
- Apply motivation techniques to help the client identify barriers to adherence and to set effective and manageable exercise goals according to fitness levels.
- Assist the client to identify behavioural changes to improve long-term adherence to an exercise program.
- Advise the client on techniques that may increase their adherence to exercise.
- Recognise and use the factors that encourage people to adhere to exercise programs when instructing clients.
- Recognise and apply common reasons for discontinuation of exercise programs when settling program guidelines.
- Discuss habits, lifestyle, family situation likes, dislikes which might impact on writing an appropriate exercise program with the client.
- Use the physical and the psychological characteristics that apply to each stage of fitness, stages of change and the most appropriate form of motivation at each level when instructing clients.
- Direct clients to understand and overcome their own barriers to the continuation of an exercise program.
- Identify the steps involved in establishing a behavioural change that results in their long term adherence to an exercise program to the client and use when instructing clients.
- Take into account people's idiosyncrasies, cultural and social differences, behavioural patterns and industry standards when instructing clients.

### 4.1. Determine the client's level of commitment to the exercise program.

The next step is to determine the client's level of commitment to the exercise program and more importantly to achieving their goal. Questions like:

- How much do you want this?
- How important to you is it that you reach your goal?
- Between 1 – 10 how important is this to you?
- How will you feel once you have reached your goals?
- How will it make you feel if you do not reach your goal?
- What are the implications of you not reaching your goal?

These types of questions will spark feeling and emotion in the person and give them a real sense of purpose and connection to their goals and exercise program.

#### 4.2. Apply motivation techniques to help the client identify barriers to adherence and to set effective and manageable exercise goals according to fitness levels.

One method to identify any potential barriers that may arise once an exercise program has begun is to ask the client to list these during the health screening process. While this will work for some clients, if they have never started an exercise program before they may not even know and therefore respond with 'nothing'.

To save time, the fitness centre you work at may have a list on their health screening form and then ask the client to tick the factors that may be barriers in their lives. For example:

Place a 'X' in the boxes to indicate which of the following may be barriers in your reaching your goals?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Time management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport
<input type="checkbox"/>	Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family commitments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	Illness or injury
<input type="checkbox"/>	Travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Energy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please specify		

Once the client has identified all of their potential barriers, encourage them to talk about why these are in fact barriers and why they would prevent them from adhering to an exercise program and therefore, reaching their goals. Often, just getting the person to verbalise this will allow them to realize they are just making excuses. This information can be used a little later on, however, now it is time to discuss setting goals.

#### 4.3. Assist the client to identify behavioural changes to improve long-term adherence to an exercise program / 4.5. Recognise and use the factors that encourage people to adhere to exercise programs when instructing clients / 4.8. Use the physical and the psychological characteristics that apply to each stage of fitness, stages of change and the most appropriate form of motivation at each level when instructing clients.

There are a number of reasons why people choose to commence and stay with a long term exercise program. Some of these reasons are:

- To prevent disease or illness
- There is a family history of lifestyle diseases and illnesses
- To secure and keep a job ie Army, Fire Brigade
- To manage a disease or illness ie obesity or type II diabetes
- To manage or maintain weight
- They grew up exercising and it is engrained as an important part of life
- To be fit enough to keep up with children
- To be social

Unfortunately, not all people sharing this motivation and therefore you will be required to try and change the behaviours of your clients. To do this it is important to understand the theory of behaviour change. It is one thing to be able to understand the theory of behaviour change but it is another to be able to use the physical and psychological characteristics that apply to each stage and to be able to utilise the most appropriate form of motivation at each stage when instructing clients. Let's take a closer look at each of the stage of behaviour change.

### *Pre-Contemplation*

#### **Physical and Psychological Characteristics**

- No participation,
- No intention to begin,
- Sedentary lifestyle,
- The person has more reasons for not exercising than they do for exercising,
- They don't want to make changes to their lifestyle,
- They don't recognise that they have a problem,
- They are pessimistic about their ability to make change,
- They deny negative effects of their current habits, and
- This is referred to as 'denial' stage.

#### **Most appropriate form of motivation**

- It is nearly impossible to motivate someone who is in the pre-contemplation stage,
- It may take a dramatic event or an emotional trigger for them to be motivated to move into the next stage, and
- Strategies that may be useful, include:
  - provide advice on reasons to exercise,
  - engage the person in discussion about fitness, health and lifestyle, and
  - look for reasons to increase exercise or movement.

### *Contemplation*

#### **Physical and Psychological Characteristics**

- No participation,
- There is an intention to begin participation,
- People can stay in this stage for years without taking action,
- They are thinking about starting an exercise program,
- They recognise it is something that they need to change but it is not high on their list of priorities, and
- They are in the process of weighing up the costs with the benefits.

### **Most appropriate form of motivation**

- Setting goals and visualising results can be powerful in getting someone out of this stage,
- Getting the person to focus on how it would feel to reach their goal – lose weight, get fit so that the benefits outweigh the cost,
- Being supportive and encouraging,
- Highlighting the benefits of exercising, and
- Assisting in building self confidence.

### *Preparation*

#### **Physical and Psychological Characteristics**

- Occasional participation,
- Sporadic / not regular,
- The person intends on starting a fitness program in the very near future they may have past experience in fitness or exercise,
- They may make minor adjustments to their behaviour,
- They person makes contact with someone from a fitness centre,
- They acknowledge that a change is required,
- They acknowledge that their current lifestyle choices are unhealthy.

### **Most appropriate form of motivation**

- Getting the person to commit to making an appointment with a Personal Trainer,
- Getting the person to committing to buying a gym membership,
- Assist the person in planning when and where to exercise,
- Making a date to start,
- Highlighting positive reasons and benefits of exercise,
- Provide information (articles, flyers, websites) about exercise, and
- Following up with the person once they have made contact.

### *Action*

#### **Physical and Psychological Characteristics**

- Regular participation for up to 6 months,
- People at this stage are at the greatest risk of relapse,
- Exercise is not habitual yet,
- Excuses for not exercising are common, and
- Requires continual external motivation and encouragement.

### **Most appropriate form of motivation**

- Getting the person to write down SMART goals,
- Encouraging them to write a contract,
- Teaching visualisation,
- Finding an emotional trigger,
- Building a support group,
- Requires continual support,
- Encouraging with positive feedback, and
- Teaching strategies to deal with lapses.

### *Maintenance*

#### **Physical and Psychological Characteristics**

- Regular participation for 6 months,
- Successful, sustained lifestyle modification,
- Exercise patterns are regular, and
- The person has learnt to deal with lapses in participation.

### **Most appropriate form of motivation**

- People at this stage don't need a lot of external motivation as their motivation is internal,
- Monitoring and changing their exercise program to match the person's fitness requirement,
- Adding variety to training sessions to avoid boredom, and
- Reassess and modify short and long term goals.

#### **4.4. Advise the client on techniques that may increase their adherence to exercise**

There are a number of techniques that can be implemented to increase a client's adherence to exercise.

Some of these strategies include:

- Effective goal setting
- Making exercise fun and convenient
- Choosing a comfortable training environment
- Start small / easy and progressively make it harder
- Exercise with a friend or in a group
- Employ a Personal Trainer
- Increase your incidental exercise ie walking to work instead of taking the bus or walking upstairs instead of using the lift



#### 4.6. Recognise and apply common reasons for discontinuation of exercise programs when settling program guidelines.

There are many reasons why people discontinue or do not adhere to their exercise program and as a Fitness Professional you will hear them all at some stage. Some common reasons include:

- I don't have enough time,
- It is too expensive,
- The opening / class times don't fit in with my lifestyle,
- I have to look after the children,
- I am too busy and tired,
- It is too far for me to travel,
- It is difficult for me to get here because I don't have a car,
- I keep getting sick,
- My dog is sick, and
- The list goes on.

What you will find is that these are not actually 'reasons' but 'excuses'. If someone really had the desire to start and stick to a training program, and it was important enough to them, they will overcome any obstacle or barrier to make it happen. Therefore, the best way to avoid the excuses is to recognize and deal with any objections right at the beginning when setting program guidelines. If you put all the excuses / objections / reasons on the table and guide the client to establish their own level of importance for adhering to an exercise program right at the beginning, you are making the person accountable for their future actions and therefore increasing their chances of adhering to their new program.

#### 4.7. Discuss habits, lifestyle, family situation likes, dislikes which might impact on writing an appropriate exercise program with the client.

Now that your client has identified their perceived barriers and their goals, it is time to reflect on and discuss the external factors that have to be taken into consideration when writing a program. These things are:

- Habits
- Lifestyle
- Family situation
- Exercise likes
- Exercise dislikes

If you can eliminate these aspects as barriers and prepare an exercise program that fits into their lifestyle, your client will have greater success at adhering to their exercise program.

### **Habits**

You need to gather information about the clients exercise habits, for example:

- What time of day you like to train?
- Do you like to train in the morning, shower at the gym and go straight to work?
- Do you like to come straight from work before going home in the evening?
- Do you like to train at lunchtime and therefore have limited time?
- How many time a week do you like to train?
- Do you prefer to do cardio in the morning or afternoon?
- Do you prefer to train indoors or outdoors?
- Do you prefer to train alone, with a partner or in a group?

### **Lifestyle**

You need to gather information about the client's lifestyle, for example:

- What do you do for a living?
- Do you have an active job?
- How do you spend your weekends, quiet time at home, partying, travelling?
- Do you travel for work?

### **Family Situation**

You need to gather information about the client's family situation, for example:

- Who else is there in the household to consider?
- Spouse?
- Children?
- Parents?
- Pets that need walking? What breed? How many?

### **Exercise Likes**

You need to gather information about the client's exercise likes, for example:

- What type of exercise do you like?
- What specific exercises do you like?

### **Exercise Dislikes**

You need to gather information about the client's exercise dislikes, for example:

- What type of exercise do you dislike?
- What specific exercises do you dislike?

#### 4.9. Direct clients to understand and overcome their own barriers to the continuation of an exercise program.

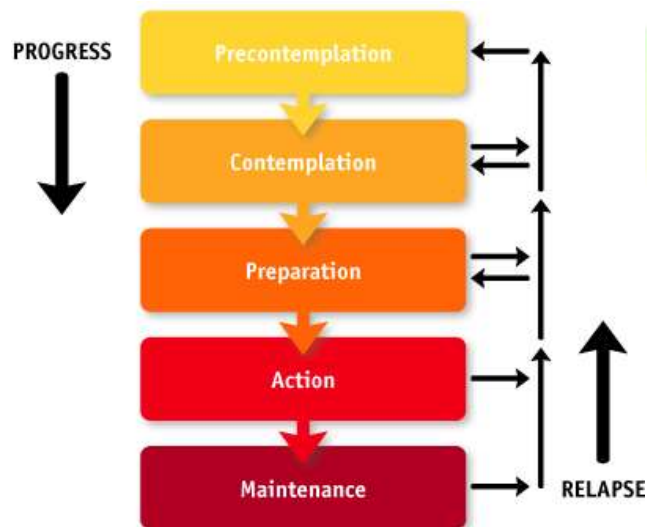
Now that you have identified all the potential barriers, set some goals, programmed around many of the objections and established the level of commitment from the client, you still need to encourage the client to look at their perceived barriers in their life and develop strategies to overcome them when they arise. The best way to do this is to give them some scenarios. For examples:

- If you are tired when you get home from work then train in the morning when the family is still in bed,
- If money is tight, instead of committing to Personal Training, do group exercise classes or exercise outdoors,
- If you don't like crowds and it frustrates you when you can't find a park to go to the gym, organise yourself to train in the quieter times,
- The dogs whine and carry on in the morning to be walked, so walk / run them in the morning and then do your weights session at the gym in the afternoon, and
- Catching public transport is difficult in the morning, so train in the afternoon on the way home from work when the bus goes right past the gym.

If the desire and will is there to commit to an exercise program and achieve a goal, then there are no reasons, just obstacles that can be planned around.

#### 4.10. Identify the steps involved in establishing a behavioural change that results in their long term adherence to an exercise program to the client and use when instructing clients.

To understand the psychology of exercise adherence at a deeper level, the Behaviour Change Theory was developed. This model / theory suggests that there are five (5) stages through which individuals pass to reach a level at which the behaviour is likely to be maintained. These stages include:



As a Fitness Professional you need to be able to identify which stage of behaviour change a client is at in order to progress them through of the next stage and ultimately to the 'maintenance' stage. A short description of each stage includes:

1. Pre-contemplation – no participation and no intention to begin
2. Contemplation – no participation but an intention to begin
3. Preparation – occasional participation
4. Action – regular participation for up to 6 months
5. Maintenance – regular participation for 6 months

There is one (1) additional stage that needs to be acknowledged and that is:

- Relapse – slipping back through any of the stages

#### 4.11. Take into account people's idiosyncrasies, cultural and social differences, behavioural patterns and industry standards when instructing clients.

With the many social and cultural differences in Australia it is important for Fitness Professionals to consider these factors when motivating and encouraging clients during fitness activities. When planning and implementing fitness programs the Fitness Professional should considered the following:

##### **Cultural Differences**

Within different ethnic background there are many situations that may suit one background but not another. For example 'military style' or group fitness training that involves yelling, loud music and large groups training together may not suit particular cultures who prefer quiet and less vocal training methods. For this reason it is important to understand the cultural diversity of clients when prescribing physical activity.

##### **Social Differences**

Age and gender also need to be considered. Younger clients will have different requirements in terms of exercise, music and location preferences to older clients as will female clients will have different preferences to male clients. E.g. Female clients may feel uncomfortable training in the main free weight section of a gym where a majority of clients performing exercise are serious male weight lifters.

When considering the cultural and social difference of clients the following may need to be modified from general everyday methods to meet client's needs:

- Mode of greeting and fare welling
- Mode of Conversation
- Body Language
- Body Gestures
- Formalities of Language
- Clothing