

Making the Connection between Intention and Action

It's no doubt that there are both physical, social and mental health benefits of a healthy amount of physical activity. Our society encourages us to engage in physical activity and praises those who do. As you saw earlier, there are also negative side effects of too much exercise or emotion-driven exercise, however society does not seem to recognize this as openly. We live in a no pain, no gain world that tells us you shouldn't rest when you're tired, but rather rest when you're done. Our society tells you that if we don't exercise, we're lazy and making excuses, and we are a better person for getting up and going to the gym even when we don't feel that great. This all or nothing thinking is no doubted harmful. These messages can also be very confusing! Is exercise *always* healthy for us? And how do you know? How do you determine if your intention and actions are healthy? The following examples are common thoughts surrounding exercise and health. Please read each of the following excerpts and answer the following questions.

Statement 1:

Mia: "I go to the gym every day, because I know my health is important."

*"I go to the gym every morning, it's just part of my routine and who I am. My friends know it too, they don't invite me to breakfast because they know where I am. It feels good to be known as the healthy, dedicated one. Some days I don't really want to go, but I know that it's good for me so I go anyway. If I don't feel good I tell myself that my body needs to exercise to be healthy and staying home would be me not taking care of myself, and that motivates me to go. Sometimes I get in a rut where I just **hate** the treadmill but I tell myself that I can't tolerate 30 minutes on the treadmill, I don't deserve to be healthy. If I can't go to the gym because of a trip or it's closed on a holiday, I make sure I don't eat quite as much because I'm not burning those calories and my body doesn't need them."*

Questions:

Can you relate to Mia? If so, how?

Do you think Mia's behavior is disordered? What would society say about Mia's statement?



What do you think the intention is for Mia's behavior?

Is Mia's motivation shame based, self care based, both or neither?

Is Mia's form of exercise healthy for her physical body? Mental health? Social health?

Mia seems to care about her health; can you see any ways that her behavior is not healthy?

What advice would you give Mia about her relationship with exercise?



Jill: “I need to exercise but I hate it. I dread even thinking about it, so I have to motivate myself to go because I know I’ll feel better afterward knowing I am working towards my weight loss goal.”

“I have never really liked exercise, which I know is bad. I should. I go through phases where I try a new class and I am excited by something new and there is hope that I am going to lose weight and look like I’ve always wanted to. I try to go to workout classes because I usually won’t quit because there are a lot of other people in the class and it’s embarrassing if I do. I stare at the clock the whole time but during the last 5 minutes I start to feel accomplished when I think about all the calories I burned. I wish that I liked exercise because it would take such less effort to go, but I guess that’s just who I am. I like walking, but it doesn’t burn enough calories so I don’t do it.”

Questions:

Can you relate to Jill? If so, how?

Do you think Jill’s behavior is disordered? What would society say about Jill’s statement?

What do you think the intention is for Jill’s behavior?

Is Jill’s motivation shame based, self care based, both or neither?

Is Jill’s form of exercise healthy for her physical body? Mental health? Social health?

Jill seems to care about her health; can you see any ways that her behavior is not healthy?



What advice would you give Jill about her relationship with exercise?

Engaging Stage Worksheet: My Values

Living with a chronic condition like diabetes can feel burdensome. It impacts every part of your life and your relationships because it's so much a part of your daily life and routine. Managing diabetes requires time, energy and preparation. This can be tremendously difficult and emotionally taxing.

In many ways, this exercise is about exploring values.

- ★ Values represent what you care about and which things are important to you.
- ★ Our values connect us to our emotions and to our relationships with other people.
- ★ As you are learning in treatment, experiencing the full spectrum of emotions can be a challenging task, but one that is most worthwhile task for you to do.
- ★ Values-based exercises also help you to clarify what you want your life to be like, and how you want to be in your life.



Part 1

- The first part of this worksheet will help you to explore how exercise has been a part of your life; and identify parts that are important to you.

Part 2

- In the second part of the worksheet, you will specifically identify exercise behaviors you engage in that are important to address in treatment.

Part 3

- In the third part of the worksheet, you will explore these behaviors, and start to think about actions that align with your values.



Part 1

- Take a look at the table below. Try to think of activities or goals in each category of what you want to keep doing (or start doing) and then how your current relationship with exercise impacts this.

Areas of living	What is important to you?	How does your current relationship with exercise impact this?
Social Relationships	1. Going out with friends 2. 3.	I won't go if it interferes with my regular Pilates class time
Work and Education	1. Being productive at work and attentive in meetings 2. 3.	I am often distracted and anxious about going to the gym after work
Physical and Mental Health	1. Having a good mood 2. 3.	I have to exercise every morning because if I don't I am anxious about everything I eat and obsess over when I can exercise next.
Recreation	1. 2. 3.	
Spirituality	1. 2. 3.	
Intimate Relationships	1. 2. 3.	



Part 2

- Now, you will take the "impact" column from the table above and transfer the contents into the table below. Then, please articulate the actual behavior or strategies you use to "solve" the problem or ease the impact.

Areas of living	Impact of Disordered Exercise	How I Manage
Social Relationships	I won't go with my friends if it interferes with my regular Pilates class time	I ask them to meet at a different time, or just tell them I can't go because of an "appointment"
Work and Education	I am often distracted and anxious about going to the gym after work	I sign up for workout classes ahead of time so I hold myself accountable to actually go
Physical and Mental Health	I have to exercise every morning because if I don't I am anxious about everything I eat and obsess over when I can exercise next.	I do whatever it takes to go to the gym every day, so I can eat whatever I want without worry
Recreation		
Spirituality		
Intimate Relationships		



Part 3

- Please choose the top three behaviors from the "How I manage" column that you are most ambivalent to change.

1	2	3

For each behavior, answer the following questions:

Do these behaviors align with my values?

1	2	3

What would be a way to change your current behavior to align with your values?

1	2	3

