

Negative emotions outweigh intent to exercise at health clubs

December 17 2009

Time and time again, it has been documented that regular exercise has many health benefits including lowering risks associated with the comorbidities of obesity. With only 30% of Americans trying to lose weight meeting the National Institutes of Health exercise guidelines of 300 minutes/week, a study in the January/February 2010 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* explores the paradox that exists—an antidote for obesity and its comorbidities is exercise, but the majority of obese Americans do not exercise. Investigators explore and compare the barriers associated with regular exercise in health clubs between overweight and normal weight individuals.

Researchers at The George Washington University Medical Center examined overweight individuals' intent to exercise at health clubs by administering an online survey instrument based on Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior. This theory is based on (1) one's attitude toward the behavior in question, (2) the perceived social pressure (subjective norm) to perform the behavior, and (3) the ease or difficulty with which one can actually perform the behavior (perceived control). Of the 1,552 individuals surveyed, 989 were classified into the overweight category.

The researchers found overweight individuals believed exercise improved appearance and self image more than normal weight individuals. In addition, overweight individuals felt more embarrassed and intimidated about exercising, exercising around young people, exercising around fit people, and about health club salespeople than individuals of normal weight. Overweight and normal weight individuals

felt the same about exercising with the opposite sex, complicated [exercise equipment](#), exercise boredom, and intention to exercise. The study interestingly found that the demographics of older age and overweight Caucasians (versus overweight non-Caucasians) had more of an effect on exercise intent than did weight. Most notably, the heavier the subject's weight, the lower his or her perception of health. In other words, for the overweight, sedentary person, the negative emotions associated with health club exercise may be stronger in controlling regular exercise than the intellectual facts.

Writing in the article, the authors state, "One of the most noteworthy findings of this study was that OW [overweight] and NW [normal weight] subjects did not differ in their overall attitude toward exercising at a health club. This similarity in overall attitude of the OW and NW to club exercise is somewhat surprising, in that it is often assumed that OW people do not exercise as much as NW people because the 2 groups have different attitudes about exercise.

The behavior theories that propose that attitude drives the intent to exercise describe attitude as an evaluation of positive versus negative. If this is the case, then, it is important to minimize the negative and maximize the positive in order to promote the desired behavior. Thus, it would be wise for exercise professionals and commercial health clubs to help OW people feel more comfortable around those who are different from themselves and to minimize the intimidating aspects of the exercise environment, while promoting the benefits of exercise to personal health and wellbeing.

Regardless of which subset of the OW population is the target for increasing health club exercise, the ultimate goal is to increase the number of positive beliefs the individual has concerning exercising in a health club...Accordingly, individual beliefs about health club [exercise](#) should be evaluated for each new client. If a plan to increase the positive

beliefs and reverse the negative beliefs is constructed and followed, the likelihood of retention of that client will be augmented."

More information: The article is "Attitudes of Overweight and Normal Weight Adults Regarding Exercise at a Health Club" by Wayne C. Miller, PhD; Todd A. Miller, PhD. It appears in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, Volume 42, Issue 1, (January/February 2010) published by Elsevier.

Provided by Elsevier

Citation: Negative emotions outweigh intent to exercise at health clubs (2009, December 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-12-negative-emotions-outweigh-intent-health.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.