

Motivating Older Adults to Engage in Physical Activity

Debra J. Rose, PhD
Center for Successful Aging, Cal State Fullerton



Physical Activity Serves Multiple Roles

■ Primary

- Prevent onset of pathology and system impairments

■ Secondary

- Slow progression of disease and system impairments

■ Tertiary

- Restore function to level that allows greater autonomy in performance of ADLs.



- Reduced risk of disease
- Weight Control
- Increased physical health
- Improved mental health and mood
- Increased lifespan
- Reduced fall risk



What are the Benefits?

Are Older Adults Physically Active?

- 39.3% meeting recommended levels
- 36.9% insufficient
- 23.7% inactive
- 32.7% no leisure time activity



CDC, 2007

Research Findings

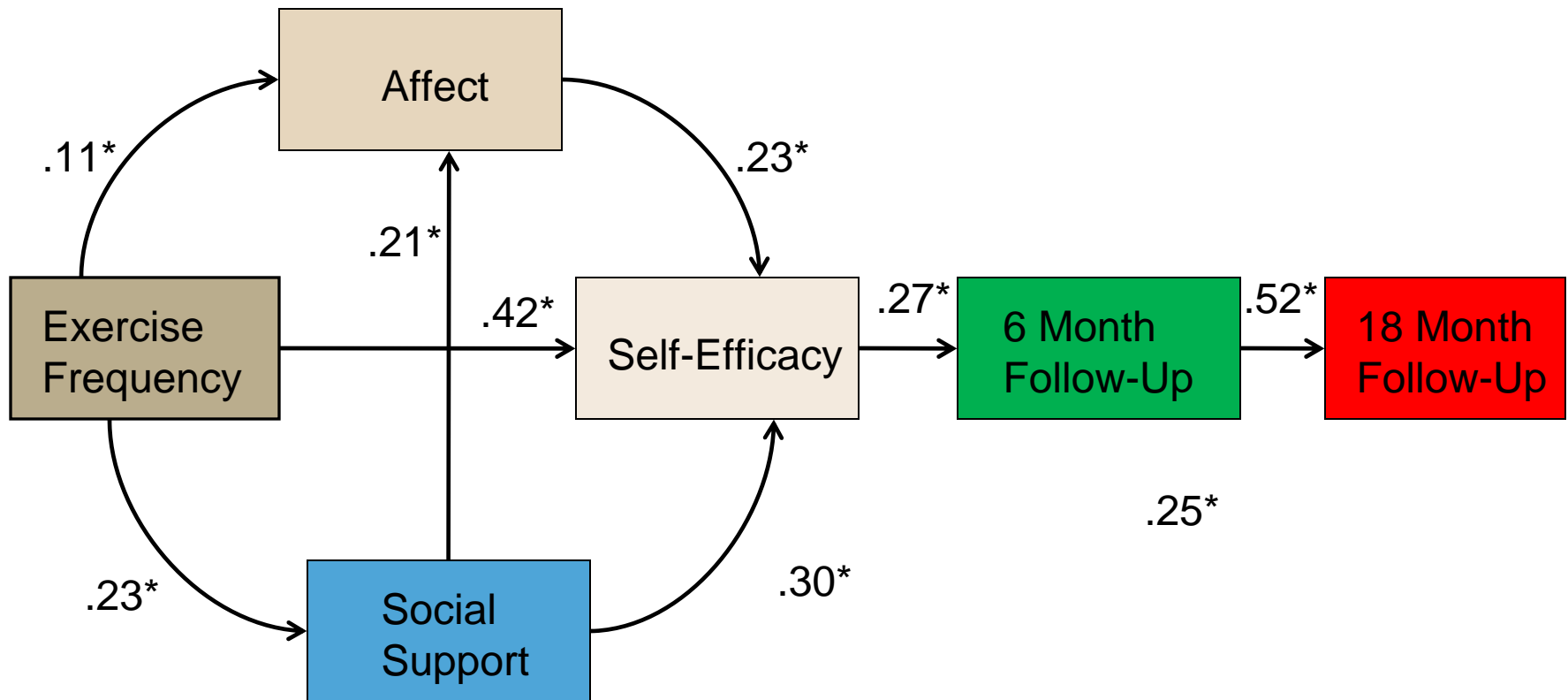
- Multiple component interventions have been effective in increasing physical activity in the **short-term**.
- Cognitive-behavioral interventions particularly effective.
- Interventions have been less effective in promoting long-term engagement in physical activity.
- Need for more and **better** research on this issue.

Possible Long-Term Predictors Studied

- **Self-efficacy**
- **Social support**
- **Value**
- **Exercise frequency**
- **Exercise-related affect**



Predictors of Long Term Adherence



McAuley et al. (2003). Preventive Medicine

Changing Behavior

- **Success is dependent on changing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors**
 - **Older adults**
 - **Health professionals**
 - **Communities**



Changing Behavior

- **Lifestyle changes will only occur if older adults:**
 - Perceive it is within their ability to change
 - Have the resources available to implement change
 - Perceive changes will benefit them
 - Think benefits will outweigh cost or effort to overcome barriers



Practical Strategies?

- Raise General Awareness
- Promote benefits in terms of positive self-identity
- Vary methods for engaging older adults



Raise General Awareness

- Benefits of participation in activities aimed at prevention
- Promote positive, realistic beliefs about possibilities for preventive action
- Do not limit to older adults
- Emphasize the positive.
- Emphasize the functional relevance of the activity.



Promote Benefits = Positive Identity

- Programs viewed as improving skills or abilities valued by older adults likely to be more popular
- Emphasize positive benefits: Increased independence, confidence, social involvement
- Strength and aerobic training valued for its potential to:
 - Maintain functional abilities and avoid disability
 - Enhance general health, mobility, and appearance
 - Be interesting, fun, and sociable

Vary Type of Social Engagement Forms

- Uptake may be enhanced by use of:
 - Personal invitations from health care professionals
 - Positive media images and peer models to illustrate social acceptability
 - Emphasizing benefits and safety of program
 - Ongoing support, encouragement, and approval.



Tailor Program to Needs, Preferences and Capabilities

- Tailored personal approach (even in groups) preferred
- Need to consider individual's lifestyle, values, cultural and religious beliefs
- Environmental determinants also need to be considered



Encourage Self-Management

- Older adult should be encouraged, where possible, to select among:
 - Different programs
 - Different formats of same program
 - A range of program goals
- Selections may involve:
 - Type of exercise
 - Group vs. Individual
 - Community center vs. home
 - Frequency, intensity, duration
 - Mode of presentation



Use Range of Methods for Changing Health Behavior

- **Potentially important ingredients include:**
 - Creating supportive partnership with therapy provider
 - Provide good practical support (i.e., access and supervision)
 - Promote belief that program is necessary and effective
 - Build confidence in ability to successfully complete program
 - Provide skills for developing and maintaining new behaviors (e.g., goal-setting, planning, self-monitoring, reward)
 - Tailor program to individual needs.

Marketing The Program

- Marketing of physical activity programs must focus on dispelling the myths and emphasizing the positive!
- The program must be tailored to the needs, preferences, and values of those targeted.
- Incorporating activities and/or methods designed to elevate self-efficacy will be important for long-term adherence.
- If the program does not lead to a change in beliefs, attitudes, and behavior then it is unlikely to lead to a long-term reduction in fall risk.

Program Examples



- Active Living Every Day
- CHAMPS II
- Exercise for Life!
- First Step to Active Health
- Fit 4 Life!
- Get Fit for Active Living.

The Bottom Line?

- Promote immediate benefits of program that fit with a positive self-identity.
- Encourage older adults to take an active role in deciding which program is “right” for them.
- Ensure program is designed to meet the needs, preferences, and capabilities of older adults.
- Long term success lies in changing the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of older adults!

Thank You!

