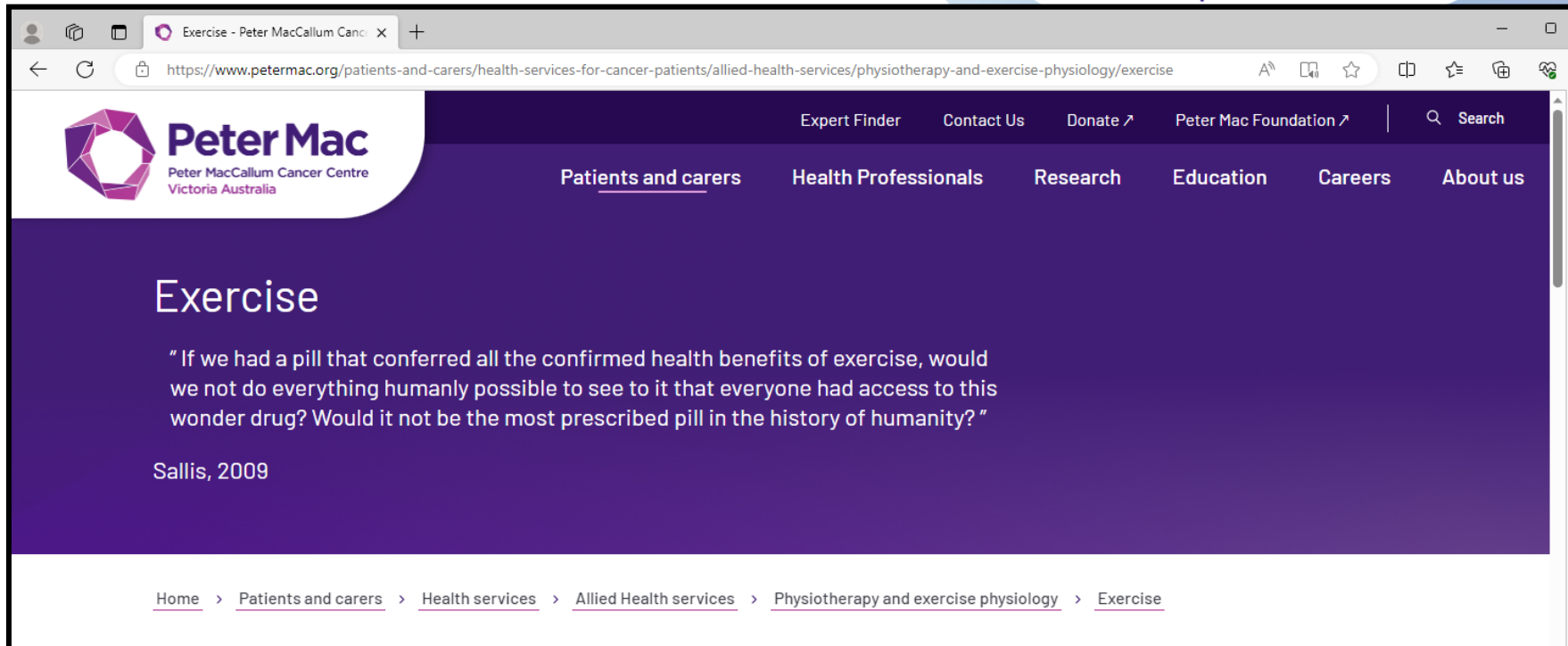


Exercise and Mental Health

Nicolas Oughton
Exercise Physiologist
Mental Health Department
Group Program Brief Intervention Team

Under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

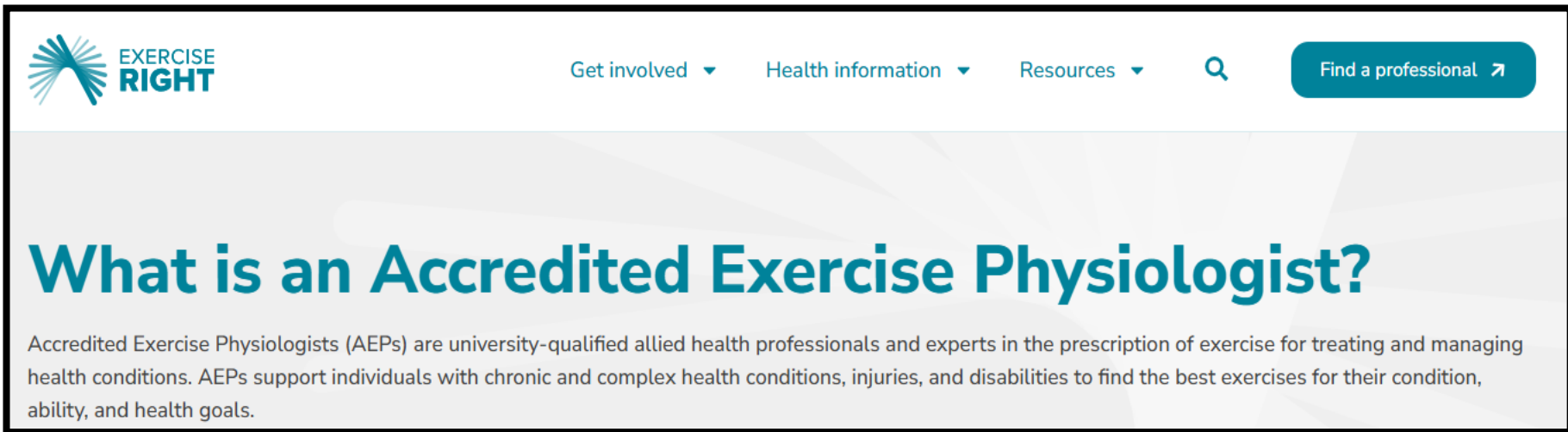


The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following elements:

- Browser Tab:** Exercise - Peter MacCallum Canc...
- Address Bar:** <https://www.petermac.org/patients-and-carers/health-services-for-cancer-patients/allied-health-services/physiotherapy-and-exercise-physiology/exercise>
- Header:**
 - Peter Mac** Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre Victoria Australia
 - Navigation links: Expert Finder, Contact Us, Donate ↗, Peter Mac Foundation ↗, Search
 - Secondary navigation: Patients and carers, Health Professionals, Research, Education, Careers, About us
- Main Content:**
 - # Exercise
 - " If we had a pill that conferred all the confirmed health benefits of exercise, would we not do everything humanly possible to see to it that everyone had access to this wonder drug? Would it not be the most prescribed pill in the history of humanity? "
 - Sallis, 2009
- Footer:**
 - Home > Patients and carers > Health services > Allied Health services > Physiotherapy and exercise physiology > Exercise

What is an Exercise Physiologist (EP's)?

- Specialise in the delivery of exercise interventions for:
 - Prevention
 - Treatment
 - Management
- Mental/Physical Health conditions



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Exercise Right website. It includes the Exercise Right logo on the left, followed by menu items: 'Get involved', 'Health information', and 'Resources'. A search icon and a 'Find a professional' button are on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large teal heading: 'What is an Accredited Exercise Physiologist?'. Underneath the heading is a paragraph of text: 'Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) are university-qualified allied health professionals and experts in the prescription of exercise for treating and managing health conditions. AEPs support individuals with chronic and complex health conditions, injuries, and disabilities to find the best exercises for their condition, ability, and health goals.'

1. Exercise Is Medicine Australia. (2021, August 9). Tools & Forms - Exercise is Medicine Australia. <https://exercisemedicine.org.au/resources/tools-forms/> Website: EIM Exercise-Prescription-and-Referral-Form-2020.pdf cited 08/12/2025.

2. Exercise Right. (2025, October 10). What is an Accredited Exercise Physiologist | Exercise Right. <https://exerciseright.com.au/what-is-an-exercise-physiologist/> cited: 08/12/2025.

Exercise Physiologist at SVHM



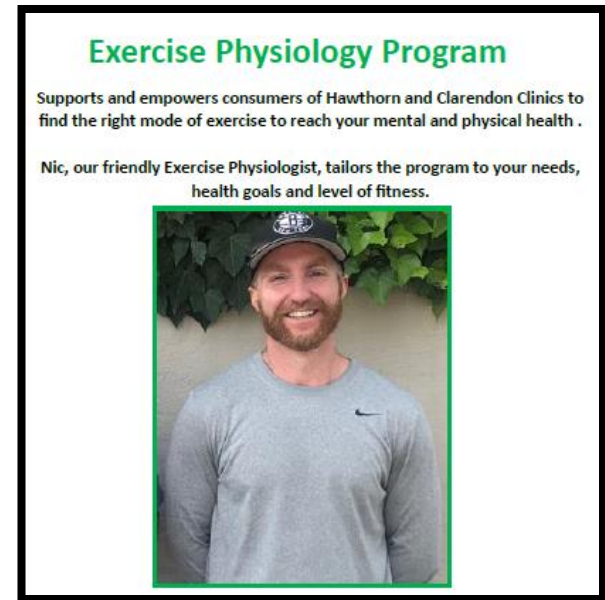
Empower consumers to find the right mode of exercise for them & support them to reach their health goals (1:1/groups).

Modes of exercise:

- Body weight exercise (such as Pilates)
- Resistance training (such as weight training)
- Aerobic exercise (such as walking, jogging)
- Sport based training sessions

Locations:


- Clinics (Hawthorn and Clarendon)
- Local parks within Boroondara/Yarra
- Telehealth
- YMCA's
- St Vincent's Physiotherapy Department – GEM & Bolte



Exercise Physiology Program

Supports and empowers consumers of Hawthorn and Clarendon Clinics to find the right mode of exercise to reach your mental and physical health.

Nic, our friendly Exercise Physiologist, tailors the program to your needs, health goals and level of fitness.



Exercise Physiology Groups – 2026

- GYM Group
- Rally4Ever Tennis Group
- Rally4Ever Pickleball Group
- Kicking Goals for Wellbeing
- Good to Go 4 Hydro



RALLY4EVER
Free & fun tennis

COME & JOIN US
ALL LEVELS WELCOME

**POWLETT RESERVE
TENNIS CENTER**

11:30am-12:30pm
Every Thursday
in School Terms

Racquets supplied 

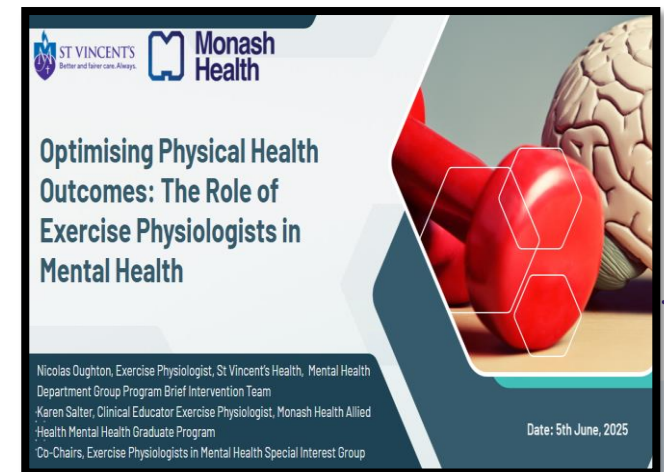
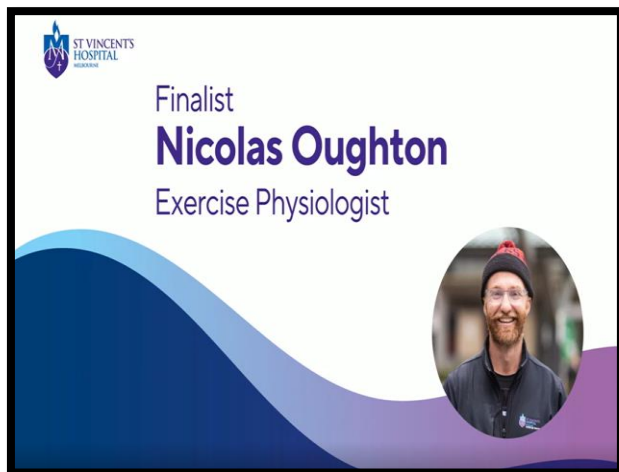
ADDRESS: 153 SIMPSON ST. EAST MELBOURNE
VICTORIA 3002 M : 03 9417 3682

CONTACT: COACH: WILL

 Together we're rallying for mental
wellness & social connection 

Exercise Physiology 2025 Achievements

- EquallyWell Victoria (2nd Edition) - Contributed Priority area 3: Improving metabolic health – physical activity
 - Co-Presented Safer Care Victoria – Victoria Equally Well Forum 2025
- St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne – Excellence and Service Awards – Finalist – Values – 2025



Community Exercise Opportunities!

- Rally4Ever – www.rally4ever.org
 - FREE Tennis/Pickleball programs
- YMCA Open Doors Program
 - 3 month FREE access to chosen YMCA Victoria Facility
 - Website: [YMCA Open Doors | Community Support Program | Y Victoria](#)
- Reclink Connect
 - Website: [Reclink | Reclink Connect](#)
 - Reclink memberships are also available



Why Exercise? – Mental Health

- ↓ symptoms associated with SCZ
 - ↑ management of negative/positive symptoms
- ↓ symptoms of stress/tension, depression and anxiety ↔ ↑ resistance
- ↑ self esteem, mood and energy levels (↑ motivation)
- ↑ quality/quantity of sleep
- ↓ cravings and withdrawal symptoms
- ↑ Psychosocial functioning
 - ↑ADL's, ↑ social/occupational functioning
- ↑ Cognition
 - ↑ Social cognition, working memory, concentration and attention
- ↓ Loneliness/ ↑ social connection
- ↓ hospitalisations
- ↑ engagement with treatment/MH services
- MUCH MORE...

Why Exercise? – Physical Health

- ↓ risk, prevent and manage Physical Health conditions
 - ↓ Cardio Metabolic risk
 - (eg: ↓ LDL / ↑ HDL Chol, ↓ Trig, ↓BG, ↓ BP...)
- ↓ other potential risk factors
- ↓ risk of new diagnosis
- ↑ physical function/fitness/muscular strength
- ↑ life expectancy
 - not only on “adding years to life”, but also “adding life to your years”
- ↓ hospitalisations / ↓ economic burden on health system
- ↓ pain symptoms
- Weight management (loss/prevent/gain)
- MUCH MORE...



What can't you influence/change about your physical health?

A: Smoking

B: Age

C: Diet/Alcohol

D: Exercise



What can't you influence/change about your physical health?

A: Smoking

B: Age

C: Diet/Alcohol

D: Exercise

Lifestyle... - Modifiable.



JOINT POSITION STATEMENT

ADDRESSING THE PHYSICAL HEALTH OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

The poor physical health of many people living with mental illness is due, in part, to the side effects of medication, a range of lifestyle factors, and inadequate management of chronic disease. **Importantly, lifestyle factors such as poor diet, low levels of physical activity, smoking, and substance misuse are modifiable and offer a way for health professionals to assist people living with mental illness.** The provision of multi-disciplinary care to address modifiable lifestyle factors is therefore an important component of holistic care for many people with mental illness and can improve both their physical and mental health outcomes.

Medical treatment, dietary and exercise interventions can provide a range of physical, social and mental health benefits for people living with a mental illness.



What is the biggest motivator for someone who lives with severe mental illness to exercise?

A: Reduce Stress

B: Reduce Weight

C: Improve Mood

D: Increase Fitness Levels



What is the biggest motivator for someone who lives with severe mental illness to exercise?

A: Reduce Stress

B: Reduce Weight

C: Improve Mood

D: Increase Fitness Levels

Most Common Motivators

Psychological Medicine (2016), 46, 2869–2881. © Cambridge University Press 2016
doi:10.1017/S0033291716001732

REVIEW ARTICLE

Motivating factors and barriers towards exercise in severe mental illness: a systematic review and meta-analysis

J. Firth^{1*}, S. Rosenbaum², B. Stubbs^{3,4}, P. Gorczynski⁵, A. R. Yung^{1,6} and D. Vancampfort^{7,8}

Our results show that the primary incentive for engaging in exercise was to improve physical health (Fig. 2). Specifically, weight loss was the single most popular reason for participating in exercise, comparable to the motivating factors identified by the general population (Sherwood & Jeffery, 2000), and unsurpris-

(b) that improvements in mental and physical health outcomes in response to exercise interventions are often achieved independent of weight loss (Firth *et al.*

- Benefits on Mental/Physical Health occur
 - ↑ ↓ Weight Loss (WL)

Exercise is NOT all about WL

- Most common theme
 - One of the most distressing side effects of treatment/medication
- Team approach + ↑ motivation/support
 - My Goal = ↑ Cardiorespiratory fitness/muscular strength
- ↑ Mental, Metabolic, Cardiovascular Health = ↑ ↓ WL
 - Changes in +/- symptoms can occur ↑ ↓ WL
 - Cannot measure success of intervention just through WL
 - Health services/Clinician's need to send a different message...

Top 3 - Most common Motivators Influencing PA Participation

1. ↓ Weight
2. ↑ Mood
3. ↓ Stress

What can **YOU** do as Clinician's?

Send a different message - Not all about WL...
Exercise!!

- EVERYONE can Exercise ↔ consider safest way...
- Exercise = Evidence based TREATMENT for Mental/Physical Health!

Education:

- It might not be enough ↔ wrong place/time can be ineffective
 - NEVER Give UP on the consumer ↔ Behaviour change is HARD (motivational interviewing...)

Refer:

- Allied Health Professionals (eg: Physiotherapist, Dietitian, Exercise Physiologist)
- Physical Health Nurse & GP
- **YOU MUST LEAVE YOUR OWN PERSONAL BIAS AT THE DOOR**



If using exercise alone, how much moderate intensity aerobic exercise is recommended for “clinically significant” weight loss (time per week)?

A: 300-420 minutes

B: 150-300 minutes

C: 150 minutes

D: <150 minutes



If using exercise alone, how much moderate intensity aerobic exercise is recommended for “clinically significant” weight loss (time per week)?

A: 300-420 minutes

B: 150-300 minutes

C: 150 minutes

D: <150 minutes

Recent Research – Exercise and Sport Science Australia (ESSA) 2021



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport

Journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jsams



JSAMS
Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport

Review

Physical activity in the management of obesity in adults: A position statement from Exercise and Sport Science Australia

Nathan A. Johnson ^{a,b,*}, Rachele N. Sultana ^{a,b}, Wendy J. Brown ^c, Adrian E. Bauman ^d, Tim Gill ^b

^a Discipline of Exercise and Sport Science, Sydney School of Health Sciences, Sydney University, Australia
^b Boden Collaboration for Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise and Eating Disorders, Sydney University, Australia
^c School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences, University of Queensland, Australia
^d Prevention Research Collaboration, School of Public Health, Sydney University, Australia

ABSTRACT

This Position Statement examines the evidence for physical activity in weight and adiposity loss, prevention of weight and adiposity gain, and in weight regain in adults, and provides guidance on implications for exercise practitioners. Research evidence indicates that >150 min but preferably 300 min per week of aerobic activity of at least moderate intensity is required to prevent weight and adiposity gain, and at least the upper end of this range of activity to prevent weight regain after weight loss. For meaningful weight and total adiposity loss, a minimum of 300–420 min per week of aerobic activity of at least moderate intensity is required. The evidence around the volume of aerobic physical activity required to reduce central adiposity is emerging, and research suggests that it may be substantially less than that required for weight loss. The impact of high-intensity physical activity and resistance exercise for weight management is uncertain. During consultations for weight management, exercise practitioners should advise that metabolic and cardiovascular health benefits can be achieved with physical activity at any weight, and irrespective of weight change.

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Objectives of the management of people with overweight and obesity

The main goal of intervening in people with overweight or obesity is to achieve improvements in overall health, with enhanced quality of life. Successful intervention should also reduce the risk of comorbid chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, improve mental health (e.g. decreased depression and anxiety) and reduce musculoskeletal limitations (e.g. lower back pain, osteoarthritis). These outcomes can often be achieved with or without weight loss.

Improvements in cardiometabolic health within people with obesity can be achieved with increased levels of physical activity, even without weight loss.



What is the most beneficial mode of exercise for someone who lives with Mental Illness?

A: Swimming

B: Running

C: What the person enjoys!

D: Resistance Training



What is the most beneficial mode of exercise for someone who lives with Mental Illness?

A: Swimming

B: Running

C: What the person enjoys!

D: Resistance Training

Exercise & Mental Health – An eBook by ESSA

- Different modes of exercise = Different physiological effects on MH/PH

- Resistance Training vs. Aerobic Exercise vs. Body Weight Exercise

Mental health



What is mental health?

Mental illness can have an impact on a person's cognitive, behavioural and social functioning. Those with a mental illness often struggle to engage in their regular work, social and physical activities to full extent which further impacts the illness as social isolation then often occurs. Mental illness includes anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and personality disorders.

How does exercise help with mental health?

There is mounting evidence that suggests exercise is an effective treatment method for people suffering from acute and chronic mental illness, with some studies suggesting that exercise is just as effective, if not more effective than pharmacological intervention in alleviating depressive symptoms.

Exercise can make a big difference in mood and needs to be a fundamental part of mental health treatment. Even one workout a week is known to have great benefits.

Exercise can also counteract the side effects of some medications such as reducing the risk of falling by strengthening muscles and helping control body weight and blood pressure.

Things to remember

- Higher doses of exercise may be more effective at improving mental illness but people may be less likely to stick to them. As such, start slowly and build up gradually e.g. if you have not been exercising at all, start with a 10-15 minute walk each morning, and gradually increase this to 30 minutes per day.
- Set short-term realistic goals for exercising each week (e.g. 3 x 20 minute walks per week); plan to exercise at specific times of the day that fit in with your lifestyle and write your plan down.
- Remember that it can take time for the benefits of exercise to occur. Most exercise studies have shown a significant reduction in depression after eight weeks or more.
- It can be helpful to work with an appropriately educated professional such as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist who understands the complexity of the challenges faced with mental health conditions, and has the skills and knowledge to help individuals manage their condition and any barriers they may come up against.

What type of exercise is best for patients with mental health issues?

Exercise Right recommends trying a variety of different types of activities and **choosing one that you enjoy the most**.

- Aerobic exercise and weight lifting have been shown to be effective in treating mental conditions such as major depression.
- You don't have to join a gym –activities such as swimming, walking the dog, jogging whilst listening to music, riding a bike, gardening, bushwalking, yoga and weight-lifting can all be beneficial.
- Thirty minutes brisk walking a few times a week is a good general starting point, and can be built on from there.

My final take homes...

- **Exercise is Evidence Based Treatment**
 - Need a lot of data to nullify its results on Mental/Physical Health
- EP's don't own exercise...
 - Everyone can EXERCISE! = FIND safest way...
- We ALL should encourage EVERYONE to be active
 - Exercise is EVERYONE's responsibility
 - Eg: Why not have a throw/kick/walk?
- Different modes = Different effects MH/PH
- Benefits of exercise can occur ↑ ↓ Weight Loss
 - We need to send a different message to consumers as MH services
- Show consumers what they can do, not what they can't...