The Rewards of Physical Activity—Rewarding Yourself and Others

**Presenter Guidelines:**

1. This program is designed to be presented at chapter to encourage members to view physical activity as more of a reward and less of a punishment. The program is divided into two parts, to be presented, reviewed, and practiced over five weeks. Part 1 focuses on planning and strategy, while Part 2 involves engaging in strengthening exercises using soup cans at chapter. It has been written as a basic script for you to make the presentation easier—presenter instructions will be in color and italic; everything else can be read aloud to the members.

2. **Materials Needed**

   **For Part 1**—Supply members with paper and pencils or pens, or have members bring their own.

   **For Part 2**—Have each member bring in two soup cans (i.e. the size used by Campbell’s for their condensed soups) to participate in light exercises. You will also need slips of paper on which members will write their names to enter a raffle, a jar in which to place the scraps of paper, and pencils or pens.

3. After greeting the members, begin.

   The benefits of physical activity are rewards in and of themselves: lowered risk for a number of chronic diseases, weight maintenance, even improved mood and mental functioning. But if these rewards were enough to motivate us to get and stay physically active, we would all … well … get and stay physically active!

   Why do we still find exercise so difficult to consistently integrate into everyday life, despite the seemingly endless list of benefits?

   (Take about 2-3 minutes to discuss responses.)

   Realistically, the health benefits of exercise are not always enough to get us moving, and it may take some time to see results. That’s why it helps to have an extra, more immediate reward for which to work.

**Part 1: Rewarding Yourself**

Who here has started calculating the miles or minutes it will take to burn off the calories in a cookie or a piece of pizza while you are eating those foods? Raise your hands.
While it is good always to be aware of how quickly calories can add up versus how long it can sometimes take to burn those calories off, obsessing over calories burned per minute or mile is not healthy or productive. This makes exercise seem like punishment. As a group, let’s reflect on the following questions:

- Do you exercise solely for the purpose of burning calories?
- While exercising, are you constantly focusing on when you will be finished exercising, rather than focusing on the moment itself?

If any of us answered “yes” to these questions, then it’s no wonder exercise seems like punishment! It’s time to change the way we think about physical activity. To help ourselves do this, each one of us will receive points for the time we spend exercising—one point for every minute spent exercising. Points earned may then be “turned in” for incentives of our choice. Incentives that are unique to each of us, such as a new pair of walking shoes or even just the ever-elusive “me time,” will help us to celebrate our successes.

Now, let’s take time to create our own points scale with corresponding rewards for points earned. Take out a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Remember, one minute spent exercising is equivalent to one point. A sample point scale might be:

- **75 Points Earned** = 30 minutes to practice a hobby or relax with a book
- **150 Points Earned** = 60 minutes of uninterrupted “me time” to do something I enjoy
- **300 Points Earned** = New exercise DVD
- **600 Points Earned** = New pair of walking shoes

(Allow members 5-10 minutes to create their individual points scale.)

Who would like to share their points scale with the rest of the group and explain why they chose the rewards they did?

(Encourage two or three members to share.)

Since we will be trading our minutes/points for rewards, we will need a way to track our time spent exercising. Be sure to mark your minutes either in a notebook, your TOPS Journal, or in the TOPS Achievement Log.

**One-month follow-up:**

In one month from today’s meeting, we will hold a follow-up meeting to discuss and evaluate our progress. We will discuss the following points:

- What incentives did we set for ourselves?
- Did we “earn” these rewards or are we well on our way?
- Did setting these rewards help us to incorporate more physical activity?
- Are we starting to look at physical activity as more of a reward and less of a punishment?

(Close the meeting with the following instructions for next week’s meeting, which will be Part 2 of The Rewards of Physical Activity:)

Next week’s meeting will focus on how others may benefit from the physical activity in which we engage. Please bring in two unopened soup cans for the second part of this program. They should be of the size used by Campbell’s for their condensed soups, which is something everyone can hold comfortably in their hand. We will use these soup cans to perform light strengthening exercises for the upper body. Wear comfortable clothes appropriate for gentle movement.

(Review and practice each of the five exercises included in Part 2 of this program prior to demonstrating the exercises next week. You may also choose to bring upbeat music—such as Olivia Newton John’s “Let Get Physical”—and an appropriate playing device.)

**Part 2: Rewarding Others**

Most of us know that resistance training—also known as strength training—is vital to building and maintaining muscle mass and keeping our metabolic furnaces firing. But you may not know that aerobic and resistance exercises are beneficial in controlling blood sugar. In fact, combining aerobic activity with resistance training has a greater impact on controlling blood glucose than either one of these activities alone. A study published in the September 18, 2007 *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that participants who did both aerobic and resistance exercise had more success with improving blood glucose control.
than the exercisers who focused solely on either aerobic or resistance training.

So there you have it—exercise is good for you! No big shock there. But what if our time spent being physically active was beneficial to not only us but to others as well? What if we could use the time we spent exercising to help others in need? Over the next few weeks, we are going to accomplish just that. I hope all of you brought your soup cans because today we are going to use those cans to perform light strengthening exercises for the upper body.

(Instruct members to take out their soup cans.)

We will be performing this series of exercises for the next three weeks, so remember to bring your cans to each meeting. All who participate over the next three weeks will be eligible to receive all of the soup cans used for these exercises. You may then choose to donate these food items to a local charity of your choice, a food pantry, or a friend or family in need. Please know, however, there is no obligation to donate.

I would like all who are willing to participate in these exercises to write their name on a slip of paper. We will then draw a name at the follow-up meeting, three weeks from today, to determine the winner of all of the cans. Alternatively, we may choose to draw two names, for two winners, and divide the cans evenly.

(Have members who are willing to participate write their name on a slip of paper. Pass the jar around and have members place their name in the jar. Be sure to bring the jar back to the follow-up meeting for the name drawing."

Let’s begin the exercises. For each exercise, we will start with one set of ten repetitions, unless I tell you otherwise. If you are unable to perform ten repetitions, only do as many as you are able. Each of these exercises may be performed either while you are seated or standing, except for the one called “Seated Row,” which must be performed while you are seated.

**Bicep Curls:** Hold your cans straight down at your sides, with palms facing in. Slowly curl your right arm up and toward your right shoulder, rotating palm up while beginning to curl and exhale. Slowly lower and repeat with your other arm.

(Count from one to ten for the repetitions, slowly and steadily.)

**Triceps Extension:** Using your right hand, hold the can slightly behind your right ear with your right elbow pointing up. Use your left hand to keep your upper arm stable. Straighten your right arm above your head while holding the can and exhale. Slowly lower, inhale, and repeat 5 times. Repeat this with your other arm.
**Shoulder Press:** Hold your cans at shoulder level with palms facing in. Press your arms up to straighten them, rotating palms forward at end of movement and exhale. Return to your starting point and inhale. Then repeat.

*(Count from one to ten for the repetitions, slowly and steadily.)*

---

**Seated Row:** Sit on the edge of a sturdy chair and lean slightly forward, keeping your back straight. Hold the cans with your arms extended, palms facing inward against your knees. Contract the back to pull the elbows in to about torso level in a rowing motion and exhale. Slowly bring your arms back to your starting point, inhale, and repeat.

*(Count from one to ten for the repetitions, slowly and steadily.)*

---

**Lateral Shoulder Raise:** Hold your cans straight down at your sides, with palms facing in. Raise both arms out from your sides to shoulder level and exhale. Return to your starting point and inhale.

*(Count from one to ten for the repetitions, slowly and steadily.)*

---

*(Presenter: You may choose to repeat this series of exercises, if your group desires.)*

---

**Closing the Meeting**

*(When finished with the exercises, close the meeting by offering the following final thought:)*

Remember these simple exercises and feel free to practice them at home. Hopefully, by now we are all well on our way to shifting our impression of exercise as a painful and tedious experience, to one that is energizing and rewarding to ourselves and others. There are plenty of other ways to benefit others through physical activity, from signing up for a charity run/walk to keeping active so that we can play with our children and grandchildren.

How are we doing with our point scales from Part 1 of this program? Remember, in three weeks from today’s meeting we will hold our follow-up meeting for and review how our point scales are helping us “reward” ourselves for our efforts. At that time, we will also draw a winner of the soup cans.

As we close today’s program, let’s all remember that the rewards we reap from physical activity are far better than anything we will find in any diet pill or potion—they even stretch beyond improved numbers we will see on a scale or chart. Exercise improves our quality of life, and we simply can’t ask for a greater reward than that.