

YMCA Pilot Program - Healthy Balance

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PURPOSE: The YMCA Total Health Initiative, launched in January of 2003, would be enhanced by adding a nutritional component. Healthy Balance was designed as a possible solution. The purpose of the six week pilot program was to measure the effectiveness of incorporating nutrition, exercise and stress reduction in a group setting to produce healthy lifestyle changes in participants.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS: Two groups of ten participants from two different Greater Boston, MA, YMCAs were chosen from completed questionnaires during informational meetings. Participants were asked to set 6 week goals and objectives, attend 6 classes, keep nutrition/exercise journals and make healthy changes in their eating patterns, stress levels and exer-

cise routines. The outcome measure was an exit survey centered around initial goals, utilizing the SMART rule for setting realistic goals (Specific, Measurable, A value, Realistic, Time).

RESULTS: Eighteen participants (90%) completed the six week program. Three participants were YMCA nonmembers. All three became YMCA members along with two family members, for a total of five new memberships. Fifteen participants completed the exit survey. Five participants (33%) indicated they achieved all their initial goals; three (20%) said they achieved most of their goals; and seven (47%) said they achieved some of their goals. No one said that they did not achieve their original goals.

CONCLUSION: YMCA Healthy Balance program is a viable, successful lifestyle changing program. Healthy Balance is also a viable program for attracting new members.

Obesity has been implicated as the second leading preventable cause of death in the United States (1). Two decades ago the incidence of overweight in adults was well under 50%. Today fully two-thirds of U.S. adults are officially overweight, and about half of those have graduated to full-blown obesity (2). The total medical tab for obesity related diseases is \$117 billion a year - and still increasing- according to the Surgeon General. The Journal of the American Medical Association in March of this year reported that poor diet and physical inactivity will soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. (2).

Despite all the latest fad diets; despite all the low carbohydrate, low fat and low sugar foods, obesity is still on the rise (2). Americans spend billions of dollars each year on weight loss products, health club memberships, liposuction and gastric bypass operations. Food and drug companies spend even more trying to find the magic food or drug. Yet our waistline just keeps growing. According to many experts our physiology has remained steady, but our environment has been transformed from scarcity of food to cheap, mass-produced, good-tasting food that is packed with calories. Our environment has also allowed us to live more sedentary lifestyles. Dr. David Katz, of Yale University, announced: "Today's kids may be the first generation in history whose life expectancy is projected to be less than that of their parents" (2).

Obesity may have less to do with genetics and more to do with tax brackets (2). One in 4 adults below the poverty level is obese, compared with 1 in 6 in households with incomes of \$67,000 or more. The reason for higher rates of obesity in lower level incomes - the cost of food. Processed foods are cheaper, tasty, filling, and more accessible.

Pilot programs were completed at YMCA's of Greater Boston; Hyde Park YMCA, Hyde Park, MA and West Roxbury YMCA, West Roxbury, MA. Funding was provided by the Greater Boston YMCAs, and participants paid \$50 for materials.

In January of 2003 the YMCAs of the USA began the Total Health Initiative to deal with the obesity epidemic (3). The YMCA is uniquely positioned to help lead a broad-based national movement to reduce obesity levels through healthy living. The initiative pursues two parallel strategies: a. working to increase YMCAs' effectiveness in directly helping individuals and families live healthier lives; b. and simultaneously working to strengthen YMCAs' capacity to help lead their communities to reduce barriers and increase supports for healthy living. Achieving the Initiative's goals requires adopting the new "Breakthrough Series" methodology for developing, testing, and refining new operational and program strategies. This new methodology is widely regarded as one of the few proven methods for achieving substantial and sustained quality improvement within a large decentralized system like the YMCA. It involves intensive interaction with outside experts and rigorous quantitative evaluation of program and operational changes.

The Healthy Balance Pilot program was designed utilizing the Breakthrough Series methodology. The Greater Boston YMCAs' joined forces with Lifestyle Management Associates to initiate a pilot program that combined nutrition, menu planning, exercise, and stress reduction. The purpose of the pilot program was to quantify healthy lifestyle changes through goal setting over a 6 week period.

METHODS

Subjects

The Hyde Park YMCA, MA, and the West Roxbury YMCA, MA, were chosen as the test facilities for this pilot program. Informational meetings were held at both facilities (4 meetings) for a total of 32 attendees. All attendees completed a questionnaire which included the "Stages of Readiness to Change" profile (4). Participants included 18 females and 2 males. Ages ranged from 30 to 65. All individuals that attended the informational meetings received phone calls. Individuals not chosen for the

program asked to be placed on a waiting list and will begin the program in January of 2005. Individuals chosen for the program were provided with details about the first class.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Participants were chosen based on their Readiness to Change Profile (4), age, ability to attend classes, and similarity of goals. The ages of the excluded individuals were 13 to 25 years. The Hyde Park class included two males and eight females that were able to attend evening classes, and with similar goals of wanting to exercise, lose weight and eat healthier. The West Roxbury group included ten females that attended a morning class and had similar goals of losing weight, eating healthier, etc.

Staff

All staff members were specially trained as Nutrition Manager Consultants. These trained professionals provided a wellness program that incorporated exercise, nutrition, and stress reduction. Nutrition Manager Consultants are certified fitness professionals, certified Nutrition Specialists, and then trained as Nutrition Manager Consultants by Dr. Jane Pentz of Lifestyle Management Associates (see Discussion). Dr. Pentz has a Ph.D. in nutritional biochemistry from Tufts University, and a minor in exercise physiology. Dr. Pentz also monitored the entire program to ensure a safe and effective program. All staff members received Instructors Manuals, which "scripted" all classes, along with participant handouts. See enclosed binder for manual and participant handouts.

Intervention

Participants were asked to attend weekly classes for six weeks. Family members were invited to accompany participants to the first class; participants were asked to sign a legal agreement, a responsibility clause, set goals and objectives in both areas of eating and exercise. The fallacy of dieting was discussed along with the importance of participant accountability for making healthy lifestyle changes. Participants were provided with a copy of Dr. Pentz's book, "If You Don't Take Care of Your Body Where Are You Going to Live", a copy of Dr. Pentz's *Lifestyle Journal*, and a copy of the *Education Edition* software designed to analyze participants eating patterns. Discussion during the class centered around entering information into the journals: foods eaten, mood when eaten, and exercise. Discussion also centered on estimating portion sizes. The homework assignment included reading pages in Dr. Pentz's book. Participants set up appointments with staff members for the following week to have their body composition analyzed and discuss goals and objectives. Class two centered around demonstration of the diet analysis software (*Educational Edition*). Participants spent part of the class practicing on several lap top computers. Discussion next centered on label reading and the homework assignment. The homework assignment for the following class was to enter foods eaten and bring printouts to the third class. Class three centered on analysis of the computer printouts and changes required to make healthier eating choices. Discussion also centered on cardiovascular and muscle strengthening exercise. Classes four and five were similar in that discussion centered around individuals making changes in their eating patterns and exercise regimen. Educational components consisted of

discussion centered on supplements and stress. The final class centered on the holidays and eating out; participants were asked to complete an exit survey.

Outcome Measures

Initial body composition measures included percent body fat, waist to hip ratio, and body mass index. Since the pilot program was only 6 weeks, exit body composition measures were deemed inappropriate. Weight was not an appropriate measure either since participants were including resistance training in their exercise programs (see appendix). Participants will be re-measured at week 12. Outcomes include participants perceived accomplishment of original goals and objectives.

RESULTS

Twenty individuals began the program. Two individuals dropped the program within the first two classes for unknown reasons. Repeated messages went unanswered. Eighteen participants attended classes for the entire program.

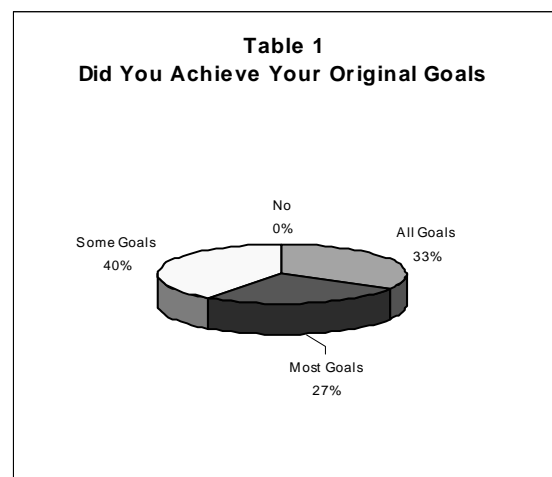
Program Adherence

Most participants exercised at least one hour three times per week and incorporated resistance training at least twice per week. Eight participants were not exercising cardiovascularly when the program began and worked up to an average of ninety minutes to two hours per week. Ten participants were not incorporating resistance training and worked up to at least two times per week.

All participants set weekly goals to increase exercise and make small changes in their eating patterns.

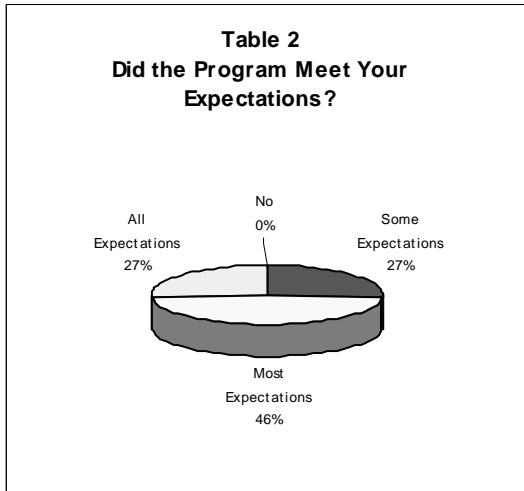
Exit Survey (see appendix for entire questionnaire)

Fifteen participants completed the exit survey. Participants were asked to write down their original goals as written in their journals. Participants were then asked if they achieved their original goals. Five participants (33%) indicated they achieved all their initial goals; four (27%) said they achieved most of their goals; and six (40%) said they achieved some of their goals. No one said that they did not achieve their original goals.

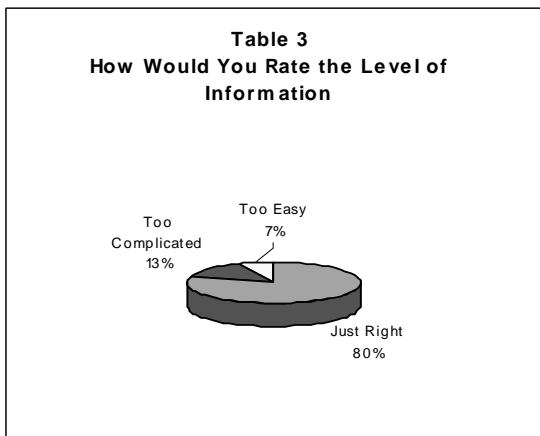


When asked if the program helped them attain their goals, seven participants (47%) answered somewhat, while eight participants (53%) said yes the program helped them attain their goals. No one said that the program did not help them attain their goals.

When asked if the program met their expectations, four participants (27%) said the program met their expectations some-what, while seven participants (46%) said the program met most of their expectations, and four participants said the program met all of their expectations (27%). No participant said that the program did not meet their expectations.

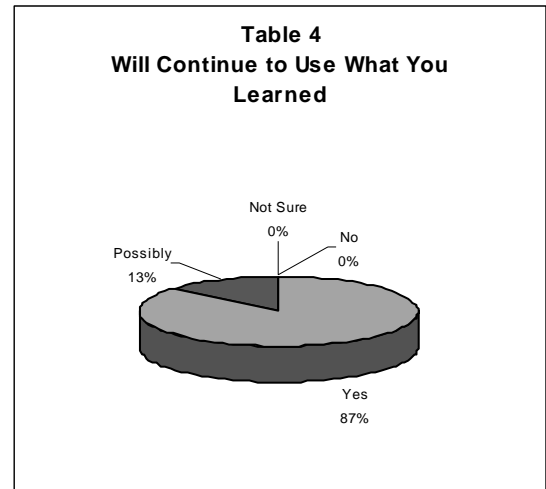


When asked if interested in attending future meetings, 87% of participants said yes (13) and 13% said possibly (2); no one said they did not want to attend future meetings. When asked if they received their money's worth, 87% said yes (13 participants), and 13% said mostly (2 participants). No one said they did not receive their money's worth. When asked if they were provided with the tools necessary to make lifestyle changes, 80% (12 participants) said yes, and 20% said mostly (3 participants). No one said that they were not provided with the tools necessary to make lifestyle changes. Eleven participants (73%) indicated that the staff was very organized, while three indicated that the staff was organized (20%), and 1 indicated that the staff was adequate (7%). When asked about staff presentation and communication skill, 80% (12 participants) indicated that the staff was excellent, 7% (1 participant) said the staff was superior, and 13% (two participants) indicated that the staff was adequate. Twelve participants (80%) indicated that the level of information was just right, while 2 participants (13%) said the level of information was too complicated, and one participant said the level of information was too easy (7%).

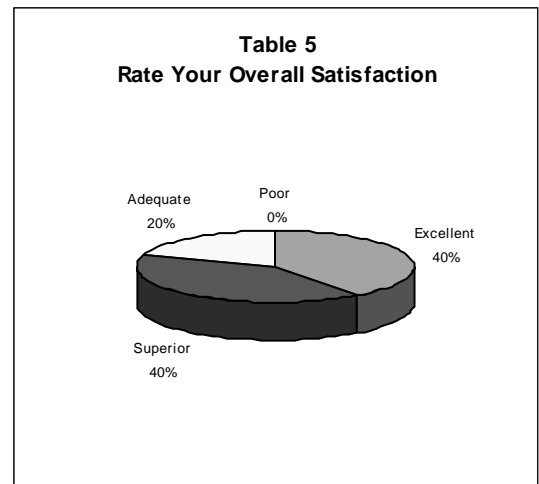


When asked if they would continue to use what they learned to make lifestyle changes, 87% (13 participants) answered yes, while 13% (two participants) indicated possibly. No participant indicated that they would not continue to use what they learned

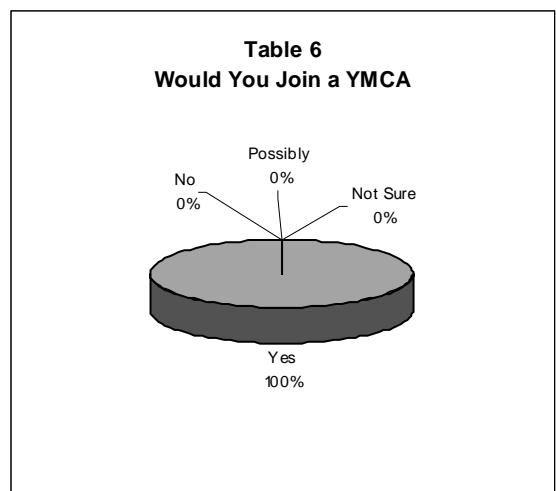
to continue to make lifestyle changes.



Six participants (40%) indicated that their overall satisfaction with the program was excellent, another six participants (40%) indicated superior, and 3 participants (20%) indicated adequate.



Three participants were non members. When asked if they would be joining the YMCA, all three indicated yes. All three did join, along with two other family members, for a total of five new memberships.



Participants were asked for suggestions to improve the program. Suggestions included more individual time, more help with the diet analysis software, more "user friendly" software, and extending the program to eight weeks.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this 6 week program was to determine if the Nutrition Manager Program, utilizing Nutrition Manager Consultants and the Educational Edition software, could be restructured to a group setting. The program, developed by Dr. Pentz, and Lifestyle Management Associates, was originally developed for trained professionals to work with individuals in a one-on-one setting. Ann Glora, of the Hyde Park YMCA, contacted Dr. Pentz and asked her to consider developing a group program utilizing the same principals.

Dr. Pentz has been training health and fitness professionals for over a decade. Fitness and health professionals are the ideal professionals to combat obesity, misinformation, and improve client success. These professionals already have a knowledge of fitness and simply need to incorporate the nutrition and stress reduction components. However, these highly trained professionals have often been told that nutrition should be left to “dietitians”. As Dr. Pentz points out, fitness professionals are perceived by the public as the experts in exercise, nutrition, and overall fitness. Dr. Pentz worked in a large health club for several years. Members would go to the personal trainers for nutrition advice, even though she possesses a Ph.D. in nutritional biochemistry and is a licensed dietitian in the state of MA. Margaret Moore, of wellcoaches.com, also believes that fitness professionals are also the ideal professionals to work with the public to make lifestyle changes. She witnessed a pilot program in Seattle, WA. The program was a physician referred obesity clinic. Each patient was provided a physician, a psychologist, a dietitian, and a personal trainer. The professionals that helped bring about the most lifestyle changes in participants were the personal trainers. According to Ms. Moore, “fitness professionals often have personalities better suited to coaching individuals than other health professionals”.

Trained professionals must become involved in providing sound information to the public if we are to win the war on obesity, believes Dr. Pentz. All states have licensure laws that allow individuals in health food stores to provide nutrition information with absolutely no nutrition background; and there are no laws concerning writing books on nutrition. “Anyone can write a “crazy diet book” based on opinion only and sell millions of copies. Also, as Dr. Pentz points out, research in nutrition is now being funded by organizations that sell supplements and diet books; results are being published in respected, peer reviewed journals. Researchers are required to indicate funding in the original research only. Hence, the public is being misled in believing that there is “good science” behind these diets and supplements.

Lifestyle Changes

Clearly, dieting does not produce long term health or weight loss (see appendix). What does produce long term results - lifestyle changes - changes in food patterns and exercise, along with stress reduction. The results of this pilot program clearly indicate that all participants made healthy lifestyle changes. All participants indicated that they achieved all, most, or some of their original goals. No participant said that the program did not meet their expectations. All participants indicated they would be interesting in attending future meetings. All participants indi-

cated that they were provided with the tools necessary to make lifestyle changes; and all participants indicated that they would continue to make lifestyle changes.

Both the Hyde Park and West Roxbury YMCAs have a waiting list for the next program (seven for the Hyde Park program and five for the West Roxbury program). Future programs at these facilities will cost \$199. Other YMCA's will be charging anywhere from \$199 to \$399 (depending on area). The Rye YMCA (Rye, NY) will be launching the program in January at the higher prices.

Memberships

Three participants were nonmembers. When asked if they would be joining the YMCA, all three indicated yes. All three did join, along with two other family members, for a total of five new memberships.

Clearly, this program will provide added income, along with increasing membership rates.

Limitations

Sample size was small, and duration of the program was short due to time constraints. Body composition changes could not be accurately assessed in six weeks. All participants will be re-measured at week 12. Only 15, or the 18 participants completed exit surveys.

Future Programs

Future programs will be extended to eight sessions. All participants will continue to be screened using the “Readiness to Change Profile”. All participants will receive more individual time through three individual consultations during the program. The Educational Edition software will be restructured to be more user friendly.

All participants indicated that they wanted to continue in some form with the program, and several volunteered their time to assist in future programs.

In addition to continuing programs at both the Hyde Park YMCA, and the West Roxbury YMCA, other YMCA facilities have indicated beginning a similar program in January of 2005. Results from the 12 week measurements in this program and future programs will also be analyzed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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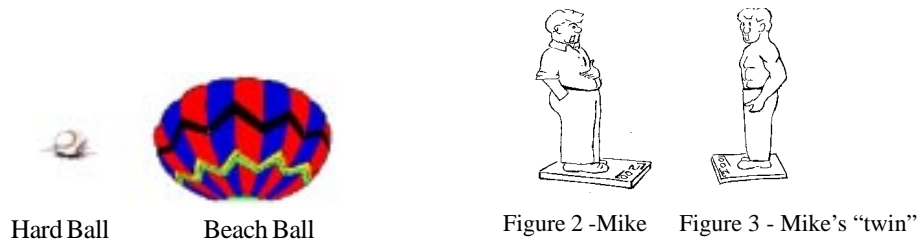
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WHY DIETS DON'T WORK

Dieting doesn't work for many reasons. First, no one can sacrifice forever. Caloric restriction, in and of itself, leads to binge-eating episodes. Second, low calorie diets produce tired, cranky people. Third, low calorie diets utilize lean muscle as an energy source—hence fat burning machinery is lost. The scale goes down but is destined to go right back up. When the weight is gained back it's all fat. The only known method of permanent weight loss is exercise and healthy eating.

All diets are a “big fat lie”. The diet industry is a \$54 billion industry with a 95% fail rate. Despite all our “diet foods” we are still getting fatter. Despite all the money spent yearly on dieting, 66 percent of Americans are overweight today compared to 58 percent in 1983. If this weight increase were considered a disease, it would be an epidemic.

So why doesn't dieting work? All diets look at scale weight. The following objects weigh the same.



Weight does not determine size. You can think of the hard ball as muscle and the beach ball as fat. Both objects weigh 4 ounces. As you can see they are very different in size. Mike and his twin brother both weigh the same. Again, as you can see the scale does not indicate size.

We are going to ask you NOT to weigh yourself during this program, but rather we will weigh you at the beginning and at the end of 12 weeks. We will be performing body composition at the beginning of the program and at 12 weeks. The goal is to become the HARD BALL not the beach ball.

Exit Survey

1. Did you achieve your original goals?

	HP	WR	Total	
yes, all of them	0	5	5	33.3%
yes, most of them	1	2	3	20%
yes, some of them	6	1	7	46.7%
no	0	0	0	0%

2. Did the program help you attain your goals?

	HP	WR	Total	
yes	1	7	8	53.3%
somewhat	6	1	7	46.7%
no	0	0	0	0%

3. Did the program meet your expectations?

	HP	WR	Total	
yes, all	0	4	4	26.7%
yes, most	3	4	7	46.7%
yes, some	4	0	4	26.7%
no	0	0	0	0%

4. Are you interested in participating in future weekly meetings?

	HP	WR	Total	
yes	6	6	12	80%
possibly	1	2	3	20%
no	0	0	0	0%

5. Do you feel that you "received your money's worth" out of the program?

	HP	WR	Total	
yes	6	7	13	86.7%
mostly	1	1	2	13.3%
no	0	0	0	0%
not at all	0	0	0	0%

6. Did we provide you with the tools necessary to make lifestyle changes?

	HP	WR	Total	
yes	5	7	12	80%
mostly	2	1	3	20%
no	0	0	0	0%
not at all	0	0	0	0%

7. Was the staff organized?

	HP	WR	Total	
very organized	6	5	11	73.3%
organized	1	2	3	20%
adequate	0	1	1	6.7%
not organized	0	0	0	0%

8. How would you rate the presentation and communication skills of the staff?

	HP	WR	Total	
excellent	6	6	12	80%
superior	0	1	1	6.7%
adequate	1	1	2	13.3%
poor	0	0	0	0%

9. How would you rate the level of information?

	HP	WR	Total	
just right	6	7	13	86.7%
too complicated	1	0	1	6.7%
too easy	0	1	1	6.7%

10. Do you believe that you will continue to use what you've learned

	HP	WR	Total	
yes	4	8	12	80%
possibly	3	0	3	20%
not sure	0	0	0	0%
no	0	0	0	0%

11. How would you rate your overall satisfaction?

	HP	WR	Total	
excellent	2	4	6	42.9%
superior	2	4	6	42.9%
adequate	2	0	2	14.3%
poor	0	0	0	0%

12. If you are not a YMCA member, will you be joining the YMCA

	HP	WR	Total	
yes	0	3	3	20%
possibly	0	1	1	6.7%
not sure	0	0	0	0%
no	0	0	0	0%
not applicable	7	4	11	73.3%