



## **Sport and exercise psychology**

*Adherence: Getting people active and sticking to it*

### **Narrator**

Despite the abundance of information promoting the health benefits of exercise and an active lifestyle, it's still quite difficult to get people to take up sport and regular physical activity.

Even when you've got people into a gym, keeping them there is another matter. Over half of those who start exercise programmes will give up after six months.

### **James Wilson, Personal Trainer**

Up, up, up, up. Okay well done, take a breather, take a breather.

### **Anoushka Mistry, Personal Trainer**

Ready? Good, and again, once more time.

### **Professor Adrian Taylor, Exercise Psychologist, Exeter University**

It's an increasing challenge to help people become more physically active and remain physically active in our sedentary world that we live in. Our environment is certainly contriving against us to be active. We're short of time, we often don't allocate resources or money to doing exercise programmes. So, there's a whole range of other things against us for being physically active.

### **Dr Gaynor Parfitt, Exercise Psychologist, Exeter University**

Typically, the drop-out rates are still 60%, 50-60% of all those people that commence an exercise programme are likely to drop out. And there are a number of potential reasons for that. And, as an exercise psychologist, we're looking at that very much from how the environment is being structured in the first instance, and what support is there in the environment to help people to adhere from day one.

### **Narrator**

Successfully helping people to make a change in behaviour and adhere to exercise brings benefits to everyone concerned.

### **Anoushka Mistry**

Okay, right, we're going to work on the inner thigh muscles next.

### **Nila**

Yes.

### **Anoushka Mistry**

Okay, what I want you to do is push against me. Not that much.

Oh, it's just, it's really rewarding, when you see people change so much, from the point of somebody that's really introvert and very self-conscious, and not a very confident person, and then you see the change they go through, through their training, because they feel better about themselves. And I love that.

Can you feel that, through the back?

### **Nila**

Oh yes.

### **James Wilson**

Just seeing someone getting fit and healthy and maybe recovering from an injury or something like that, it's a massive buzz for me, actually, a massive buzz.

Okay, we're going to do them in threes, yeah?

**Sher**

Okay.

**James Wilson**

So, stand on one leg for us.

**Sher**

Yep.

**James Wilson**

And then we're going to go, one, two, three, and hold. Yeah? And then go for the other side.

**Dr Gaynor Parfitt**

Individuals, when they want to start to change physical activity and become adherers to physical activity, need a variety of factors to help support that change. And certainly a personal trainer is going to be someone that can provide that initial support, motivation, competence, information, knowledge, that will help someone to start to make that first change.

**Anoushka Mistry**

That's it. So both feet – that's it, take your time, straighten your back leg. That's it.

**Nila**

Whoops, hang on.

**Anoushka Mistry**

It's alright, take your time.

**Nila**

When I first joined, I used to just come in here, use a few machines and go home, and I thought, 'yes, I've done my bit for exercising.' It was only when I started with the personal training that I realised that structured training is much more beneficial than just aimlessly working on some machines on my own.

**Anoushka Mistry**

That's better with your alignment. And you get more of a stretch through the calf muscle.

**Nila**

Yes.

**Anoushka Mistry**

You need to keep motivating them and reminding them of the benefits of exercise in regards to health or their particular goals, and keep refreshing them with new goals and new ideas.

**James Wilson**

The first thing you're going to do is you're going to move your leg out to the side, without this knee wobbling.

**Sher**

Yeah, okay.

**James Wilson**

Yeah? Let's go.

**Sher**

Yeah, alright.

**James Wilson**

Hold it. Use your abdominals.

**Sher**

Yeah.

**James Wilson**

Feel the glute of this leg working.

Through variation, motivation, adapting my personality to their needs, I think that's a massive thing with personal training. You have to build up a rapport. If you can do that, then you're halfway there.

Okay, that's pretty good. Give you an eight out of ten.

**Sher**

Ten out of ten?

**James Wilson**

Nah, seven out of ten. Okay, now let's bring it round.

**Narrator**

Sher was a professional model and break dancer who'd been extremely fit and active until he broke his neck in an accident.

**Sher**

Being put into the situation whereby you've injured yourself so badly, one thing you don't want to do is move backwards.

When I was injured, I'd pretty much come to a stage whereby I needed to, obviously, rehab myself so that I was able to carry on my work.

**James Wilson**

That's good. Nine, excellent. Concentrate.

**Sher**

My personal trainer kind of gives you that motivation and, obviously, he's done an excellent job in that. And that's why I'm constantly going for it, and I train with him sort of five days a week, so I make sure I dedicate time to do it.

**James Wilson**

A nice little rotation now. Get the glute fine, abdominals drawn in. Hold, relax. Very good. Excellent. Whereabouts on the glute?

**Sher**

Piriformis.

**James Wilson**

Piriformis?

**Narrator**

Not everybody has as much motivation for exercise as Sher. So, what do trainers do when they notice that their clients appear to be losing interest?

**Anoushka Mistry**

Give them a call, try and find out what their barriers are or why they're not coming in, and try and coach them and motivate them around that.

When we start about talking about setting you some new goals, I just want you to remind me or think back to the journey that you've come on through your training. Can you remember back then what kind of goals you were working towards?

**Nila**

Oh, I mean, if I walked on the treadmill for one minute, at a slightly high speed, I think I was out of breath.

**Anoushka Mistry**

Usually, you know, if you get them setting some kind of goal or getting a real clear picture of what they want to achieve, or you take them back to where they were when they were in a really good place, it usually brings them back.

It's not like that any more, is it?

**Nila**

Not any more, and I've come a long way since then, in my balancing, my general fitness. I feel much more healthier and fitter than I used to be.

**James Wilson**

I'll try my best to meet them one-on-one. I don't really want to just speak to them over the phone or by text. I try and get them in the gym and just try and look at their whole lifestyle and find out the core reasons why they're not coming to the gym and set some goals. But, yeah, it's kind of like – it could be anything, it might not just be the gym. But, if it is the gym then, obviously, I'll totally change my approach as a trainer to the exercise we're doing, and I'll try and find out what they are and aren't enjoying.

**Narrator**

But gyms and health clubs aren't for everybody.

**Professor Adrian Taylor**

The incentive from the market is that people should join gyms, and that should be their focus of where they do their exercise. From a public health perspective, it's very much more about replacing sedentary behaviour with attainable physical activity.

So, if we think about the sort of barriers that people put up for reasons why they're not physically active, if they associate physical activity with solely going to a gym and doing structured exercise, then those barriers might increase. It takes time, it takes money, it takes expertise, of somebody else, to support them. If those barriers disappear, then the excuses and the challenges that people face become less.

**Dr Gaynor Parfitt**

One of the biggest challenges we have is to actually look at ways in which we can help people to understand that exercise could be pleasurable, could be enjoyable. And therefore we may have to move away from exercise being this 'going to a gym' into exercises about spending time with your children, your family, your friends, being physically active. Going for a walk in the park, taking the dogs for a walk, playing with the children.

From a public health perspective, we talk much more about the accumulation of physical activity during the day, during the week. Rather than this, I have to go and spend 30 minutes doing a certain amount of activity that's going to make me breathless and potentially might hurt, might make me feel embarrassed. For some individuals, those are just barriers and challenges that they don't want to have to think about starting to overcome. We shouldn't be worrying about maybe people doing a fixed amount of activity in one block, but that we can accumulate that.

**Anoushka Mistry**

There's always time for exercise, whether it's in your daily lifestyle, making that more active. If you really want to do something, you'll make time for it.

**James Wilson**

You just have to educate people on where they can fit it in. Get them into better routines in life, as well, where they're eating better and living better, so that they've got more energy, so

that when they've got down time, they don't just want to lie down and sleep, they actually want to do something.

**Anoushka Mistry**

And exercise comes into everything in terms of feeling good, looking good, health benefits. So, there's lots of ways you can get around it to motivate them.

**James Wilson**

Just taking the dog for a walk a little bit further than what you normally would, or walk to the shops instead of drive, little tips like that along with the gym, just make – it's the cumulative difference, not the – it makes a tiny difference but over a period of time it's a big change.

**Nila**

And I think it's just a question of being persistent.

**Narrator**

Within the gym environment, there are other techniques that trainers can use to keep people motivated, and adhering to exercise.

**Anoushka Mistry**

Anything else that you really want to work on. Have you got a vision of what you really want to do?

**Nila**

Not to work on, but I do want to do the half marathon, just for the sake of doing it, nothing else.

**Anoushka Mistry**

What do you mean?

**Nila**

Time is not a factor, I just want to get on that treadmill and make sure I do 21 kilometres. And that's it.

**Anoushka Mistry**

Okay, alright, so it's more of an endurance thing for you, not as a competitive thing –

Setting realistic goals which are smart. So, specific and time-framed and realistic for them, and making sure that you follow up with that process.

So, when would you like to achieve that by?

**Nila**

About three months, within three months.

**Anoushka Mistry**

Yeah, that's realistic. Okay, so three months' time. Now we need to decide how we're going to go about training for that.

But it's very important – well, I think it's very important - that they initially set the goals themselves. So, I can't just say, 'right, you're going to do this,' I need that to come from them, because that's when they stick to a goal, if they've made the decision themselves. So, you've got to put the ownership on them to do that.

And what I'll do, I'll create you a little chart so you can monitor where you are.

**Nila**

I was thinking of starting off in 5K, 10K, and then build up to 21, not in one whole –

**Anoushka Mistry**

Well, I wasn't going to – not going to be you doing 21K. Alright, so we'll gradually build.

**Dr Gaynor Parfitt**

To actually become a regular exerciser, to adhere to exercise, you have to really want to do it for yourself, and you have to be, or you ought to be, autonomously controlled in doing that activity. If you have a personal trainer, then you don't have that autonomy. And, really, a good personal trainer would be actually training you, or helping you to develop, the autonomy and the personal competence to be able to work independently and exercise independently.

**James Wilson**

Can you tell me your top three goals that you'd like to achieve?

**Sher**

My top three goals I'd like to achieve. Obviously, strength.

**James Wilson**

Is that number one?

**Sher**

No, I'd probably say my number one is obviously rehabilitation.

**James Wilson**

Rehab, yeah.

Well, I'm always aiming to get them to a point where they can look after themselves, and they've got everything they need nutritional-wise, exercise-wise, to manage their lifestyle, live a healthy life.

Okay, so what would your weight goal be? Because, size is –

**Sher**

About 80 kilos.

**James Wilson**

80 kilos, yeah. Okay, so what we're going to do is we're going to set you a nutritional target.

**Sher**

Okay.

**James Wilson**

And we're going to try and get in the right protein, the right amount of carbohydrate and fat into your diet, so that you steadily increase weight without increasing body fat. And we try and put as much lean tissue as we can on you. I need you to write a food diary for that, obviously, pretty much as you did before.

At the beginning, they might be training with me quite often, then we might go to, instead of two or three a week, it might be to one a week, then it might go down to one every couple of weeks. So, when they get closer to their long-term goals, you know, it might be a dress size, it might be a weight they want to lift, then we'll just slowly wean it off. And then we might just say, 'look, we've reached it, and have you got everything you need to go and do everything yourself?'

**Sher**

And yeah, that's it. I was proud that I've started achieving my goals as to where we set out for my training prior to that.

**James Wilson**

You have to put the client first. A lot of personal trainers might go in there for the reasons of it being a glamorous job. It's not. It's nothing about you, it's all about them. Fair enough, you

might have these qualifications, they don't really mean anything unless you get these clients results and you make them feel better.

**Anoushka Mistry**

Even those people that really seem like they don't want to talk to you, they're probably the people that need the most support, rather than the ones that are loud and outgoing, it's the ones that don't want to talk that you've got to get to, because if you don't get to them in time, they're the ones that are going to drop out. You know, it's always the quiet ones. You're the one that needs to go and speak to them, that's your job, to get them to stick to an exercise routine.