

'Directed thinking' increases time spent exercising

"Directed Thinking" involves asking people to think about information related to a topic that they already know which directs them to action. A study in the Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research shows how "directed thinking" led to an increase in exercise performance and fitness in sedentary college students.

Laura L. Ten Eyck, PhD, Dana P. Gresky, PhD, and Charles G. Lord, PhD, studied 61 college students who did not exercise on a regular basis or exercised inconsistently. Researchers asked students to think about ideas that fell into either the "reasons" category or the "actions" category. For example, some participants were asked to list the reasons why they should increase the performance of a target cardiovascular exercise they had previously selected, such as to be healthier or lose weight. Other participants were asked to list actions they could take to increase exercise performance, such as joining a gym or working out with a friend.

Having the students for eight weeks bring to mind and list actions they could take to increase exercise performance led to an increase in exercise and improved cardiovascular fitness. However, having students repeatedly bring to mind the reasons why they should do the target exercise did not increase time spent exercising.

"Our results suggest that people who are out of shape and at risk for serious health problems may be able to think their own way out of their unhealthy lifestyle and onto the path towards better physical fitness," the authors conclude. "It could change the way that people think about motivating themselves and others."

Source: Wiley-Blackwell

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