

Coaching lower-activated patients: Physical activity

Phreesia



Use this guide to coach lower-activated patients (PAM Levels 1 and 2) on the health benefits of physical activity. If they're not getting enough exercise, incentivize them to increase their daily activity by focusing on the correlation between movement and their mental, physical and emotional health.

Build knowledge:

Educate the patient on the health benefits of physical activity.

- **Talk about the physical, mental and emotional benefits of being active**, such as increased energy, improved mood, lower risk of cardiovascular disease and stronger bones and muscles. Discuss whether they have health conditions or symptoms that may be improved by physical activity.
- **Identify the activity recommendations** that the patient's care team may have made (e.g., continuous physical activity for 30 minutes or longer at least five days a week). Explain that if the recommended type or amount of daily activity seems overwhelming, it's OK to start small and work up to the recommended levels over time.
- Work with the patient to **address any underlying fears, misconceptions or barriers** that might be keeping them from being physically active, such as lack of time, fear of injury, worry about worsening a health problem, sensitivity about their weight or appearance, etc.
 - For example, a patient may believe that “getting physical activity” means “running a mile every day” and might feel defeated before they even start. **Break down physical activity into small, achievable steps.**

Build skills:

Help the patient make connections between physical activity and their health.

- Encourage the patient to start **paying attention to how much physical activity they partake in** during a typical daily routine. Reinforce the idea that housework, yardwork, running errands and playing with children or pets all “count” as physical activity. If appropriate, recommend downloading a fitness-tracking app.
- Ask the patient to **observe how they feel** before, during and after physical activity. Do they notice a difference in their mood, symptoms or behavior toward others? How does it feel to have an active day compared to a less active day?

Build confidence:

Encourage the patient to find small, attainable ways to increase their physical activity.

- Explain that **physical activity doesn't have to be difficult** or unpleasant. Ask the patient to write down activities they enjoy or want to try, such as gardening, riding a stationary bike while watching TV or going bowling with friends. How would it feel to try a new activity from the list each week?
- Ask the patient to **estimate the amount of time they are continuously active most days**. Brainstorm ways to increase the amount of time they are continuously active. You might suggest that they walk their dog an extra block or dance to five songs in a row, for instance.
- **Talk about ways to increase physical activity** during the week and over the weekends. Examples may include going for a walk on their lunch break, signing up for an exercise class after work, biking to the coffee shop on Saturday or going to the park with their family on Sunday.

