

Take-charge Training:
Exercise and Nutrition for Individuals
with Mental Illness
with Jenia Kincade

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Summary

Individuals with mental illness die an average of 25 years younger than the general population. Often these early deaths are attributable to medical factors such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. These other medical factors can be prevented and/or managed with the implementation of good nutritional habits and proper exercise.

In this training, Ms. Kincade takes us through the experiences of the Independence Center in St. Louis which set up a Wellness Program for its members. She discusses the challenges faced in various settings--the mental health center, the home and the community--while trying to help people develop good habits, and several practical tips and solutions.

Presenter

Jenia Kincade is a Wellness Specialist at the Independence Center in St. Louis, Missouri. She has a strong academic background in health promotion combined with over 5 years work experience in different health related fields. She currently provides customized fitness programs to members of the Independence Center that include education and guidance on proper nutrition, cardiovascular exercise, stress reduction and resistance training. Her focus right now is not only collecting data to assess the needs and interests of these members but more importantly working with other staff to help ensure a supportive environment within the clubhouse that makes it easier for members to make healthy lifestyle choices at home and in their community

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References

www.MyPyramid.gov

www.independencecenter.org

www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines

www.solutionsforwellness.info

www.mffh.org

www.ofsearch.org

Transcript

Thom Pancella: Hello and welcome to this MIMHtraining.com presentation called “Take Charge Training: Exercise and Nutrition for Individuals with Mental Illness.” I’m Thom Pancella with the Missouri Institute of Mental Health, thank you for joining us today. With me is Jenia Kincade and she is a Wellness Specialist at the Independence Center here in St. Louis. She has a strong academic background in health promotion combined with over 5 years work experience in different health related fields. She currently provides customized fitness programs to members of the Independence Center that include education and guidance on proper nutrition, cardiovascular exercise, stress reduction and resistance training. Her focus right now is not only collecting data to assess the needs and interests of these members but more importantly working with other staff to help ensure a supportive environment within the clubhouse that makes it easier for members to make healthy lifestyle choices at home and in their community and Jenia thanks for joining us today.

Jenia Kincade: It’s good to be here.

TP: Let’s start by putting things in a little bit of a context--could you describe the Independence Center to us?

JK: The Independence Center has been around since 1981; it’s a psychiatric rehabilitation program that serves adults with serious and persistent mental illness. At the clubhouse we are committed to helping our participants or what we call “members” live and work in the community independently and with dignity. The Center uses the “clubhouse model” of psychiatric rehabilitation where participants, like I said, called “members” help us run the program. They do a lot of all kinds of different tasks. They help us run meetings, they help us with meal planning, they help serve lunch, they help us present on topics like this and they also help us to run the Wellness Center. The philosophy of the clubhouse really emphasizes how members are needed, wanted and expected.

TP: So why did the Independence Center begin a Wellness Program? Give us a little bit of background...what it is, how it

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got started.

JK: Well simply stated, we realized that our members were gaining weight. We found that 90% of our population fell in the overweight range. Along with that higher rate of obesity a lot of our members were at an increased risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, they had poor dietary habits, lack of physical activity, and sadly they have a decreased life expectancy. This particular population is dying 25 years earlier than the general population. So, given that information, we needed to realize that overall fitness, wellness, healthy living skills were just as important as their mental health, especially if we're going to emphasis employment as goal for our members on any given day. So, given this information, we realized that we really had to do something. So, lucky for us, we were able to get funded by a grant through the Missouri Foundation for Health. The first grant really focused on screening and education for these individuals that were either diagnosed or considered high risk for cardiovascular disease or diabetes. But, throughout that grant, we kind of learned from our mistakes. We realized that we needed to capture a larger audience so again, fortunately for us, we were able to get funded through a second grant also by the Missouri Foundation for Health. With this grant we were able to focus on obesity prevention. So, with this grant we were really able to better integrate services into our members' lives and really stress the importance of a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and education.

TP: So I guess alongside that there is motivation; and so, there is a lot of different ways to motivate people. How do you do it? What are your techniques that you are using?

JK: Well, you're right and during all of that that's probably the hardest thing especially when you hear people say that they are extremely tired and they are extremely hungry at night. So, we really base our Take Charge program on the Consumer's Coach Approach. What this is really based on the concept of empowerment. We see our members make choices about their

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health everyday. But, unfortunately staff can't always be there to help them make the best decisions. So, we really want to teach them to take that responsibility, accept the responsibility of their own health. They need to learn how to exercise; they need to learn how to make those healthy choices; they need to learn how to shop for better foods but it is really their decision to start to become more healthy and more active. So what we do is keep them informed. I think education is the best thing; once you put that education out there, get them informed, they are able to start understanding those basic health principles. Then, based off of that, what we do is kind of sit down with them and do a one- on-one consultation. We have them fill out a lifestyle profile, which is a form that we actually designed-- this gives us an opportunity to start discussing some health concerns and maybe some ideas for improvement. This also gives the member a chance to start understanding how to set goals for themselves. We're there to kind of lead them in a direction to help them set that realistic or attainable goal. If they're looking to start an exercise program we help them to get started with just a small goal. What we want to do, of course, is get them to meet that goal. Once they meet that goal they start to feel like their self confidence is rising, their self-esteem is going up, and again it's all about that concept of empowerment giving them that feeling of they have control over their lives and they can really start making decisions about their health on their own.

TP: Now is the Independence Center... is that more residential or is that more a "drop-in" type setting?

JK: I wouldn't call it either one. It's a clubhouse. It's hard to explain.....

TP: It's what percentage of time... How much time do people spend under supervision? You talk about staff not having time to supervise right or not have any resources like that.

JK: They are really not supervised at all. I mean, they ... If you walk into our clubhouse you'll really have a hard time differentiating

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between staff and members because we are all working together to just run the whole program.

TP: So then you touched on the Consumer as Coach approach. Can you give us a little more detail into that?

JK: Well, in talking about the Consumer as Coach; again, the whole idea is empowerment and sitting down and trying to figure out exactly what ...I mean putting the power in their hands. So, if somebody comes to me and they want to start an exercise program I'm not going to start shoving healthy eating down their throat. Again, its helping them decide what they want to do, set their goals and then provide the support and encouragement they need to get there. Now, at the Independence Center, what we do... Some specific things that we do to get people motivated... We've talked about education, we've developed these newsletters that talk about exercise, healthy eating, getting started or maybe reducing stress--we have that there. We also have a buddy or a mentor program; we will have other members kind of "hook up" with the new members and maybe teach them some stretching techniques or maybe something simple as how to get the treadmill started. We also, again, provide that constant encouragement and support, readiness quizzes, goal setting tools, that has to do with our lifestyle profile. I think the most important thing that we do over there is we try to create these enjoyable activities. Like we will do things like the "Biggest Loser" we'll put together kind of fun little program to get people excited to be a part of a team. We will do a 10,000 steps program--that we pass out pedometers and actually we are getting ready to start that next week. Anything to get people involved get them down to the Wellness Center let them be a part of a team and then of course awards, recognition, celebrations those always work too. So we'll have little ditty bags, giveaways, gift cards and different things to get people excited about losing weight or maybe just drinking more water throughout the day. It just depends on what their goal is.

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- TP:** You talk about Consumer as Coach, it's kind of a self coaching thing but you also talked about the buddy system, the mentor system. How much peer-to-peer interplay is there in that aspect?
- JK:** At the Independence Center there is a lot. We also encourage staff to get involved, too; because when the members see staff are involved they are also more motivated to get involved in the activities. There is quite a bit peer-to-peer--I would say a lot of our wellness program is based off of that. Just seeing other members reach their goals and we'll have like weight loss support meetings that are led by members. So that other members can come in and learn from them and we also have a "Staying Motivated Meeting" where members get together and talk about their goals may be they can kind of help each other. Something as simple as how to stop drinking diet soda--maybe another member has tried something that works so they can offer that advice to somebody else.
- TP:** So you talked about presenting nutritional information to people and that comes in a lot of different forms. What have you found that works?
- JK:** We use ... There are 3 references that we really like to use [Ely Lily's Solutions for Wellness](#), we also use [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) but I think the one that we utilize the most is [MyPyramid.gov](#) that is based on the Department of Agriculture's food pyramid. I like that website because it covers a lot of different things--it covers the food groups, sweets, sugars, fats, oils, physical activity, caloric intake, food safety, salt. It has a lot of good information on their website but I also like it because it promotes the importance of eating a balanced meal which I think is extremely important whether you just want to maintain your health, lose weight or whatever your goal is.
- TP:** Let's get even more specific then, what would be some good nutrition ideas in a Mental Health Center.
- JK:** In the Mental Health Center what we like to do over there is ...I talked about designing a weight loss support meetings. We have

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those that get staff and members involved again, education the newsletters that we put out each month, cooking demos or taste tests. Every Tuesday night we have a staff member that gets members involved; they go upstairs they cook dinner together so everybody sees how it's prepared. Then they eat and then they watch a movie together. So, again it is all about making it more of a fun social interactive environment. Health fair displays-- we've done the display where you may set down a can of soup and then next to it put whatever so many grams of salt that is in the can of soup put it next to the soup. So people get that visual of actually how much salt they are taking in versus like the can of soda and then how much sugar is in it. Again, those visuals help to get people to start thinking about what they are putting in their body. I think one of the best things that we do at the Independence Center is that we coordinate with the kitchen; they provide healthier choices so instead of having cakes and brownies for dessert we offer a fruit option. We also have a snack bar that has healthy choices like yogurt and oatmeal and not your typical... not just candy bars and chips. So we have like baked chips. So again, it is putting that information out there giving the members the choice to decide what they want. Let's see, what else do we do? Making changes in food preparation, I think the kitchen does a great job on baking things, broiling things, rather than having all of those fried over-processed foods. What also most people don't realize what's out there in their community. You can network with community resources. We had a company come in, Operation Food Search, they came in and taught our members how to cook low fat recipes and by the end of the class they were actually able to take home a bag full of groceries and so they could go home and cook it for themselves. There's a lot of different things that you can do within your agency to help.

TP: Make that transition with us then from the setting that you are in to the home and the community.

JK: In the home we encourage our members to maybe expand their

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inventory of cooking supplies like having pots and pans and steamers. Making an inviting space to eat; I always tell people I don't encourage them to eat in front of the TV. I call that mindless eating so if you are sitting there and you have your bag of chips, what is going to happen is, you're going to end up sitting there and eating the whole bag. Growing a garden, learning how to modify recipes using low fat substitutes; learning the plate format method of meal planning--it's very easy to follow. You look at your plate and half of your plate should be veggies ¼ of your plate should be a lean meat and the other ¼ should be complex carbohydrate. We teach our members to compare food labels--know how to read it and know what you're taking in. Plan for snack attacks by having healthy snacks on hand rather than making that trip to the gas station; keeping a food journal and packing your own lunch. There's a lot of different things that they can do to slowly start changing their dietary habits.

TP: What are some of the challenges along the way then?

JK: Challenges? We hear "healthy foods cost too much!" I encourage members to do cost comparisons--know which fruits and veggies are in season because they are cheaper, go to a farmers market, I also hear members--they don't know how to cook, or don't know what to cook--again holding those fun interactive social evenings where teaching people how to cook can really help. Unfortunately I hear a lot of members say that they have to eat what their boarding home gives them and some places are good, some are not. That's more of a one-on-one conversation. Some people, I tell them to really just focus on maybe portion control or modifying their plate a little bit to match that plate format method of meal planning. Some people have a hard time cooking for one, for themselves. Maybe if they have a friend they can do meal sharing; they can cook that night and then share it with their friend, and the friend can cook the next night; or I may discuss to that member, freezing options. If you have a little bit too much, maybe take the leftovers for lunch

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the next day or freeze it and save it for dinner later on during the week. But I think one of the biggest ones that we hear is their medicine makes them hungry. Again that's just discussing talking about lower calorie options or different snacks that they can eat, rather than again, the chips and the cookies and such.

TP: You talked about people being limited to eating what the boarding home serves. Have you worked with the boarding homes to talk about meal planning within their setting?

JK: Well, the Independence Center actually owns two residential care facilities and again, lucky for us we're on board with wellness so the staff that teach the meals at our RCFs already do that. They look at low fat substitutes they don't buy a lot of the processed foods. So they are already making that cultural change. You have to go slow because you will get people that will fight you to the end on it so it is just slowly making that modification. We haven't yet to venture out to the other boarding homes; maybe that is something that can eventually happen within the future, but we are getting people from--we do current trainings now where outside agencies come in and learn about our training so we are hoping eventually they'll start getting on board.

TP: Are there any other challenges that the agencies faced?

JK: Obviously training. It's very important for your staff, especially the ones that are making the meals, to know how to prepare a healthy meal. Cost --again we did some cost comparisons with different food distributors to find the best cost for the healthy foods. But we make a lot of homemade things--most people don't understand that a lot of the over processed box foods are expensive; so if you can buy bulk things and make homemade things that usually works out pretty well. Maintaining program attendance--we do have eat right classes, staying motivated classes, but we'll track the attendance--if we see attendance falling we'll do something different whether to rotate the class to a different day, different time. I think it's important to be creative and add new ideas and again you have to track what

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you're doing to make sure it's effective. Of course just keeping health an agency priority, I think the Independence Center has done a great job in doing that. We have dedicated space for our Wellness Center. There is trained staff there, there is a lot of staff on board with working out and knowing how to prepare those healthy meals.

TP: I think we have covered nutrition pretty well. Let's move into exercise a little bit. What are your principles and foundations when you're talking about your exercise program?

JK: When it comes to exercise the first thing that I tell people you gotta keep it simple. Some general guidelines we encourage our members to experiment a little bit. Try some different things, see what they like once they find something that they like that's the key you have to enjoy it because if you don't enjoy exercise you are not going to come back and do it. So once they find that thing that they like we encourage them to take it slow to do that particular activity 2 to 3 times a week and then of course make it social; again, it has to be fun. We then just set kind of some basic guidelines off of that; again, it just depends on what that person is looking to do and what they like. Some of them like to take some of the classes that we offer so we do; again, its all about just keeping a variety of things to do. But what we do stress is that every exercise program should contain 3 things. You've got your cardiovascular exercise, your strength training workout, and your stretching routine.

TP: How would you encourage exercise program in a mental health center?

JK: We like to post signs so if you are standing in front of the elevator you are going to see a sign that's going to post you to take the stairs. Or it's going to tell you how many calories that you can burn if you take the stairs versus if you are just standing on the elevator. Things like mapping out a walking route within the building; again that is also going to depend on the size of you facility. Involving staff--that's a big one if you get your

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staff on board then the members see that then that's a good way to increase motivation. So we do have extended hours at our Wellness Center so staff is able to use the gym once they're off of work. Initiating walk and talk meetings, we have community support workers so if they're going to talk about certain things maybe they can go for a walk in the neighborhood depending again if it is safe or what the weather is like, of course. Again just providing the education on basic principles of exercise; because, a lot of people don't exercise because they just don't know what to do, so that is a big one. Again sponsoring competitive events "Biggest Loser" "10,000 Steps" having that dedicated wellness space. We have a bike rack at our center so we also encourage some of our members to take a bike. We also coordinate with our evening, weekend, holiday program so what we do is we get together and plan activities that promote physical activity such as bike rides, bowling trips, over the summer we had a softball team. So there's a lot of different things that you can do.

TP: And just like with the nutrition make the transition with us from the Mental Health Center into the home and the community.

JK: What we usually encourage our members to do is either buy an exercise video or better yet you can go to the library and rent them for free. All of our classes at the Wellness Center are able to be replicated at home. So if we are doing a weight training class at the center you can go home and do it. All you need is a chair and you don't even need free weights you can use soup cans, you can use milk jugs filled with water, potato sacks whatever has got a little bit of weight to it, you can utilize that at home. If you can't map out the route in the building you can map out a walking route in your neighborhood. Find a buddy to work out with. I call that their "accountability partner" so if you have two people that are depending on each other it's more likely that it's gonna happen. Plan outings that promote physical activity walking, bike riding, bowling, ice skating--just discussing the benefits of being active, yes there are people that

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do not want to exercise they hate it and they won't do it; but if you just explain to them about maybe starting a garden, cleaning house, vacuuming; there is a lot of different things that you can do to just stay active. Adopting a dog and taking it to the park, again, we just kind of sit down and try to figure out what it is the member wants to work on and then go from there.

TP: Besides not wanting to what are some of the other challenges that the members are going to face?

JK: A lot of it is fear of injury, maybe they are just scared, maybe it's the first time they've ever set foot in a gym, so what we do is we really try to offer more guidance in the beginning. Someone who has maybe has a poor self image they need that constant encouragement, constant support. Some people really don't have the energy to exercise maybe their medication is making them tired, so what we will do is again try to really help them set that small goal that they can attain. Challenges, "the weather is too bad outside" again we'll encourage indoor activities. Some people don't like to sweat; well maybe they're just wearing the wrong clothing. So we will discuss--we'll talk about what proper attire they should be wearing. Maybe encourage them--don't exercise outside on hot days or something simple as, do you have access to a pool? Maybe you would do better swimming. We do have members that go to the local Y's and swim. What else do I hear? ... "I don't like exercise" if I hear that usually in my mind I see that they have really haven't found something that they like, so I will help them kind of experiment and find something that they enjoy. We have a variety of things at our center, we have dance classes, yoga, stretch, weight training, cardio, treadmills, bikes, so we're bound to find something that they like.

TP: What about challenges at the agency?

JK: It kind of goes along the same lines as the nutrition piece—there's always training can be a problem and if you don't have anybody that's--if a particular agency doesn't have anybody that's certified to teach a class that could be a problem. So

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again, it's just having the staff trained and able to either lead a class or just know some of the basic principles about exercise. Cost—again, but it's very important to identify your internal resources you may have a staff member there that already knows how to work out may be they can help get your Wellness Center started. Identify outside funding sources again, MFH-- Missouri Foundation for Health—they're the ones that helped us to get started with our Wellness Center. Of course, again, maintaining wellness program attendance--we just track our classes make sure we track our daily attendance; if it's falling we figure out a way to get it back up, whether its rotating classes around different days, different times and then just lastly the same thing—it's just keeping health an agency priority. We're there; we have our dedicated space; we have our trained staff; our Wellness Center is open its open all day from 8 to 5 and the staff is working out after 5 it stays open.

TP: Okay, you started off talking about the risks people face and that this population dies sooner and has all of these physical issues that they face and they also have a serious mental illness. Are you seeing an improvement?

JK: Yes we are! So we can definitely say that on any given day we have members that come down, and whether its something simple as they have lowered their blood sugar, they've lost a pant size--I can say we ran when we did our "Biggest Loser" competition a few months back the whole clubhouse got involved we had 3 different teams--I think the final numbers were the clubhouse was down like 172 pounds. So everybody gets involved ...

TP: So where are you going from here? Where does the Independence Center stand and what do you have looking forward here?

JK: Well, I think our second grant was so successful dealing with lifestyle change that we recently applied for a third grant and we got it so we are very excited about that it just started December 1st of '08. Our third grant is known as the "Model Practice

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Building Grant.” What we’re going to do is we’re taking it out of the Wellness Center. Yeah, we’re established we’re there, but now, what we are going to do is get our community support workers involved each member that enrolls into this particular grant they have the option of having a wellness coach so it could be a staff member at the Independence Center, it could be another member, or it could be their community support worker; and then we’re really start zeroing in on what our members are doing at home because its not just coming to the Wellness Center for an hour and then leaving; it’s about coming to the Wellness Center utilizing it; but then, going home and taking what you’ve learned and still being able to watch your diet, exercise at home if you can’t get to the Wellness Center. We’re hoping--I mean we’re just starting so this is a 3 year grant so we’re pretty excited about.

TP: Great, we will look forward to seeing the results from that. Thank you for your time today I appreciate it.

JK: Thank you.

TP: It’s been very informative. Thank you for your time we appreciate your time in joining us for this presentation by MIMHtraining.com .

Notes

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