**Part I.** This semester, I would like to work on exercising consistently throughout all of life’s curveballs and craziness. I always feel better after I exercise, and I know that exercise is important for my overall health. When life gets crazy, and on the weeks where there simply aren’t enough hours in the day, my exercise routine is the first thing I sacrifice. Once my exercise routine gets shoved to the side, it is extremely difficult to get back into the habit of exercising after my weeks go back to being “normal.” On the days that I exercise, I eat healthily. I suppose the reason I eat healthily on the days I exercise is because I know how hard I have to work to burn off those calories, and I want to fill my body with the types of foods that will fill my body without actually undoing all my hard work from exercise. Last year I set a goal for myself to be able to run a 5K with my sister by the end of the year. I managed to run the 5K, but it was not an easy run because I had been inconsistent with my exercise routine the months leading up the race. Things got in the way, life got in the way, and I set a consistent exercise routine to the side for a few months. Once I started exercising consistently again a few months ago, I found that I almost had to start from the beginning in terms of running. It was frustrating to feel like all my hard work from the year before in training for the 5K had almost been undone, and I had to reteach my body how to run distances again. In December, I decided that the upcoming year I would train to run a 10K. My goal for this year, therefore, is to establish a consistent running routine that will prepare me to run a 10K. One step further, I would like to be in such good shape that I will be able to run the 10K without feeling like I’m going to die by the end of the race.

In terms of “this semester,” my measurable goal will be to run 3-4 times per week each week, and do strength training exercises twice a week, on the off-days of running. My enemy to accomplishing my goal is not lack of time, since that will always be a factor of life in general, but rather lack of motivation and laziness.

**Part II.**

1. Altered thought processes related to changing the way patient approaches exercise, as evidenced by choosing to view running as enjoyable rather than punishment.
   1. Rationale: Rather than viewing running as a chore/punishment/bad, choosing to consciously alter the thought-process related to exercise is proving much more difficult than I would have imagined. Taking negative thoughts and forcing them into positive thoughts is essential to change, and it is something I have to consciously do in order to change my thinking in terms of running.
2. Altered Health maintenance related to exercise, as evidenced by patient increasing exercise to 3-4 times per week.
   1. Rationale: It occurred to me not too long ago that I was self-defeating my own efforts of living a healthy lifestyle by exercising but then continuing to eat unhealthily and in larger quantities than I needed. I am now working on combining the efforts of exercise and eating healthy and smaller portions for better results.
3. Impaired Physical mobility related to the effects of increased exercise, as evidenced by patient experiencing stiffness in legs and back.
   1. Rationale: Some areas of my body are more sore than they have been in awhile, resulting in stiffness and limited mobility in the short run. In the long run, I will be stronger in those areas, but for now I am stiff.

**Part II continued.** For my behavioral change, I choose Rogers’ theory of Innovation-Decision Process. This theory is based on a 5-step plan for promoting change. The five stages are knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. The idea behind this theory is that the individual must pass through the five stages sequentially, but the decision to not accept the change can occur at any of the five stages. I choose this theory because it is useful for individual change. If I want to change my exercising patterns, and exercising routines, then the change needs to start from within. Rogers’ theory states that the first stage in the ability to make an individual change is knowledge. In order for a change to happen, an individual needs to know that the change will benefit her in some way, and that step requires the pursuit of knowledge about that change. My problem, as of now, is that my exercise routines suffer when life gets crazy and I seem to lose hours in my day to school, family, homework, etc. For instance, this week I only managed to squeeze in two days of exercise because school got in the way of my normal exercise routine. As a result of my exercise routine getting messed up, my eating habits plummeted and I ended up eating much more junk food than on a week where I am exercising consistently. The problem lies in the area of self-motivation to either get up early before class to exercise, or exercise first thing after school. My excuse for not waking up early before class, even though I set my alarm to wake up early, is that the sun isn’t fully out yet and it’s dangerous to run in the dark. My excuse for not exercising first thing after class, even though I try to talk myself into it as I’m driving home from class, is that I’m tired and I deserve to take a break after being in class all day. While my excuses are valid, the root of the issue is that I’m not self-motivated enough to ignore those excuses and get outside and run. I think, too, that part of the problem lies in thinking that running is punishment rather than fun. Maybe if I could get past those mental barriers, I would be able to motivate myself in the morning to run because it’s a fun way to start my day and in the evening because it’s a great way to run off some frustrations from the day.

Even though I only ran twice this week rather than 3-4 times like I was aiming toward, I did manage to wake up early to run before class one day. It was the first time I had run in the morning before I’d had my coffee and it was extremely hard to run due to that simple factor. I did, however, feel great the rest of the day since I had gotten my run in early, and managed to eat really healthy all day too, despite going out to eat later that evening.

One of the articles I read entitled, “Intensity, Intervals, and a new you,” speaks to the advantage of using High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) in combination with Low Intensity Training (LIT) as a way to maximize the amount of fat burned during exercise. HIIT involves high intensity workouts like sprinting, which causes the body to spend the rest of the day after workouts restoring its’ supply of oxygen. This essentially burns more calories post-workout than any other LIT workout, such as jogging/running/walking. The article warns the beginning HIIT trainer, however, to properly stretch before the workout, and to begin with a 1:2 work to recovery ratio in order to prevent injuries. The second article I found spoke more toward the advantages of running in increasing the span of an individual’s life. The article, entitled “Clinical digest. Regular joggers do live longer -- as long as runners stick to a moderate pace” seems to be more of the avenue I’m trying to pursue in terms of why I want to exercise consistently. Even though the first article is really good, and has some really good points, high intensity interval training is geared toward people who are trying to burn a lot of fat and not so much toward people who are simply trying to establish a healthy pattern for living. When at first I read the first article, I was preparing to try HIIT training in order to try to burn more calories throughout the day, but after I read the second article I remembered that my goal was not to burn a lot of calories and lose a lot of weight this year but instead to establish a routine for exercise that promotes a healthy lifestyle that I can maintain throughout my life.

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**Part III.**

1. Altered thought processes related to changing the way patient approaches exercise, as evidenced by choosing to view running as enjoyable rather than punishment.
   1. By the end of this course, I will report running as an enjoyable de-stressor activity through positive self-talk, as a result of altering the way I think of running.
2. Altered Health maintenance related to exercise, as evidenced by patient increasing exercise to 3-4 times per week.
   1. Within 3 weeks, I will increase the number of times I exercise from 1-2 times per week to 3-4 times per week.
3. Impaired Physical mobility related to the effects of increased exercise, as evidenced by patient experiencing stiffness in legs and back.
   1. Within 2 weeks, I will progress from experiencing muscle stiffness and tenderness in legs and back, and will no longer report stiffness in those areas.

**Part IV. Outcome 1) By the end of this course, I will report running as an enjoyable de-stressor activity through positive self-talk, as a result of altering the way I think of running.**

Intervention 1) I will educate myself on some different techniques to use in relation to positive self-talk.

Intervention 2) I will educate myself on how to keep a log/journal of running and eating patterns so that I can chart my progress, and further view running as an activity that induces positive changes in the body.

Intervention 3) I will pinpoint an underlying reason why I may feel like running was punishment in the past, so that I can learn to identify negative self-talk patterns as it comes and focus on turning them into positive fuel for change.

**Outcome 2) Within 3 weeks, I will increase the number of times I exercise from 1-2 times per week to 3-4 times per week.**

Intervention 1) I will educate myself on the importance of sufficient caloric intake, especially on the days I exercise, in order to promote healthy habits that can be maintained, and so that I do not lose too much weight too fast as I increase my weekly activity level.

Intervention 2) I will learn how to keep a daily food and exercise journal so that I can chart my progress and know how much net energy I am losing/gaining throughout the week. This should hopefully prompt healthy habits that can be maintained throughout my life.

Intervention 3) I will educate myself on the importance of staggering my running days throughout the week so that I do not run more than two days a week in a row. This staggering technique helps to reduce the amount of running-related injuries that could develop.

**Outcome 3) Within 2 weeks, I will progress from experiencing muscle stiffness and tenderness in legs and back, and will no longer report stiffness in those areas.**

Intervention 1) I will educate myself on techniques to reduce muscle stiffness and tenderness after exercising.

Intervention 2) I will educate myself on techniques to use before and during exercising in order to prevent unnecessary muscle stiffness and tenderness.

Intervention 3) I will educate myself on the importance of staying adequately hydrated, especially after exercising, in order to prevent muscle cramping and tension.

I have chosen Rogers’ theory of Innovation-Decision Process which is broken down into 5 stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. I believe myself to currently be in the implementation of change stage, as I have passed through the accumulation of knowledge about a change stage, the persuading myself to implement such a change through the knowledge I have found stage, and the decision to put that change to action stage. In the implementation of my change agent, I have found several interesting articles to support the nursing interventions I have chosen.

The first article I found is called “A Step Ahead: Running Injuries and Illness.” This article outlines several common injuries—patellofemoral pain syndrome, patellar tendinopathy, iliotibial band friction syndrome, shin pain, and plantar fasciitis— that runners are prone to develop. In addition, and most interestingly to me, was the portion of the article that explained common problems that women runners develop from over-exercise. The problem is identified as “Female Athlete Triad,” and it is developed as a result of a reduced caloric intake and/or excessive running to the point of malnourishment. Some symptoms of “Female Athlete Triad” include “disordered eating, low bone mineral density and amenorrhoea or menstrual dysfunction.” (p. 10) These symptoms basically occur from the body going into starvation mode through insufficient caloric intake coupled with exercise. One way to prevent the Female Athlete Triad from developing is to keep track of the amount of calories eaten and the amount of calories burned through a journal such as the one on [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com/).

Another article I read, “The Effect of a Change in Body Weight on Running and Responding Reinforced by the Opportunity to Run,” talked about the effect of weight loss on running. In this article, a study was performed on lab rats, and the result of the study showed that as the rats’ body weight decreased through food deprivation, the amount of time they spent running increased. The opposite was also true: as the rats’ body weight increased through excess food intake, the amount of time they spent running decreased. Even though this was a study on rats and not humans, the principle applies. I have noticed that as I see results on the scale in terms of my weight decreasing, I feel more energetic throughout the day and have more of a drive to continue running. In the past, when I have seen an increase in body weight on the scale, I have been discouraged to continue to do any exercise at all due to a “what’s the point, I’m just going to gain weight anyway” attitude.

My final supportive article, “Clinical digest. Regular joggers do live longer -- as long as runners stick to a moderate pace,” relates to the positive health impact running makes on the body. This article reinforces the concept of running as beneficial to living a longer life as evidenced by the study revealing men and women living several years longer as long as they stick to a moderate jogging lifestyle of 2-3 times a week for an hour to 2 ½ hours a week. Knowing you are being good to your body by running is sure to produce some positive mental changes as a result.

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**Part V.** In my first outcome goal, I stated that, “By the end of this course, I will report running as an enjoyable de-stressor activity through positive self-talk, as a result of altering the way I think of running.” Throughout this course, I have been working on positive self-talk, and trying to find ways to enjoy running rather than dread it. I have learned that I dread running in the morning because my favorite way to wake up is in a leisurely way, with enough time to drink my coffee and have a moment of peace before running out the door to class. With that concept in mind, I have stopped running in the mornings and have, instead, started running after class is over on days that I have class and in the early afternoons on days that I don’t have class. This small change has helped me tremendously in my approach to running and exercise, as I no longer dread running and instead view it as a de-stressor from a full day of classes or homework. In addition to changing the time of the day I run, I now also vary my running routines throughout the week. Instead of only running as exercise, I have joined the gym at OLOL hospital and now take advantage of the treadmill as well as some of the other machines available for cardiovascular exercise. I find that the change of routine has helped me to enjoy exercising more as a whole, and I am also working out and toning different muscles than when I was only running. Incidentally, the toning of those different muscles has also helped me to run faster and longer distances on the days that I run. It was amazing to me how quickly exercising became more of an enjoyable activity as soon as I began positive self-talking. The positive self-talk soon overcame the negative thoughts and behaviors, and I felt better about myself and more willing to make a change. I think that patients desiring a change of some sort, be it losing weight or changing exercise habits, can really benefit from this method of learning how to change negative thoughts and behaviors into positive self-talk.

In my second outcome goal, I stated that, “Within 3 weeks, I will increase the number of times I exercise from 1-2 times per week to 3-4 times per week.” Before Spring Break, I had finally increased the number of times I exercise to 3-4 times per week. The past few weeks, I have gotten into the habit of exercising at least 3 times per week, and most of the times I have exercised 4 days a week. The reason, I believe, that I was able to accomplish my outcome goal is because I joined a gym that has a lot of really great equipment available to use. The gym is usually quiet when I go, and I usually have free reign of whatever equipment I want to use while I’m there. The change of working out at a gym rather than outside has been good for me, because I can no longer use the weather as an excuse for not working out if I am feeling lazy that day. I also find that I work out more days a week now that I’m a member of a gym that is located on campus. When I’m finished with classes, I simply take my gym bag out of the trunk of my car and walk to the gym to work out. Another reason I find that I work out more days a week now is because there are so many different ways I can challenge myself in the gym. As soon as I start to get bored with a routine, I either switch to a different type of machine, or I increase the speed or intensity of the previous machine. As a result, I have found that I have definition in muscles now that I wouldn’t have had if I had stayed with running as my sole exercise preference.

In my third outcome goal, I stated that, “Within 2 weeks, I will progress from experiencing muscle stiffness and tenderness in legs and back, and will no longer report stiffness in those areas.” Throughout the semester, I have not managed to progress from experiencing muscle stiffness and tenderness in legs and back because I have increased the amount of times I exercise per week, and I have added variety of exercise routine by alternating running days with other forms of cardiovascular exercise. As a result, I often feel tenderness and stiffness in my muscles after a particularly grueling day of exercise, but I have come to expect this stiffness and have learned to push through it. In actuality, I do not think this third outcome goal was realistic or practical. Any athlete will tell you that experiencing stiffness and tenderness in muscles is good if you are working them out in the right way. The slight discomfort is sometimes an indicator that you’re doing something right in your exercise regimen. Therefore, I will continue to exercise as I am doing, and not be dismayed when I feel aches and pains in my muscles that do not quickly dissipate.

One of the interventions I stated more than once in phase IV of my change agent goal was the importance of learning how to keep a food journal. I have kept a food journal since the first day of this semester in order to chart my progress, and even though I have not gained any weight, I have also not lost any weight despite running 3-4 days a week and eating moderately. I have found that on some days that I run, I end up eating more food than I need because my metabolism has increased so much. Even though I eat more healthy foods now that I’m running more, I find that I compensate for the calories burned by eating more calories throughout the day. I am still trying to get a handle on food journaling, but I can see how useful it is to be able to look back on my eating habits and chart the reasons why I did not lose weight on certain weeks. I will continue to journal my food intake after this class is over, and hope that once I get a handle on my caloric intake through accurate food journaling, I will also begin to see results on the scale. If a patient can learn how to accurately chart their food intake and exercise output through food journaling, they can look back on an honest depiction of their daily habits, and learn how to change negative habits into positive ones.