Best Practices Guide

Guide for empowering European youths and youth workers to integrate physical activity within youths' daily lives.





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Best Practices Guide

Be Active – Be Well

The 'Be Active – Be Well' project is an Erasmus+ project co-funded by the European Union. The main goal is to create a dynamic digital platform to inspire and motivate young people towards healthier, more active lifestyles. This project is also aimed at empowering youth workers, equipping them to promote physical activity and integrating physical activity within their work with youths, using digital resources. All in order to prevent a further increase of disease burden and disability in European countries.

Mental health problems, especially depression and anxiety, are expected to be the main cause of disease burden and disability in developed countries by 2030. Before 2017, there was an alarming prevalence of depression and anxiety in youth already. This amount increased rapidly during the COVDI-19 pandemic. It's estimated that more than 10-20% of children and adolescents suffer from mental health problems worldwide. This is not only a youth problem. This has also severe implications for people during their adulthood because research has shown that most adulthood psychiatric disorders begin in childhood and/or adolescence. Therefore, prevention of mental health problems in youths is crucial and the EU Framework for Action and H2020 consider the promotion of young people's mental health and well-being a key priority.

One way of improving mental health is by being regularly physically active. Unfortunately, many youths are insufficiently physically active in order to maintain good (mental) health. More than 80% of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently physically active. Together with the already detrimental effects of mental disorders on healthcare costs, it's important to prevent a further decrease of physical activity and to prevent a further increase of the development of mental problems now and in the future. Boosting the capacities of youth workers and youths to integrate regular physical activity into youths' daily lives could be the solution to both societal problems. It could solve two problems at once.

Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure. It includes exercise and sports which are planned, structured and repetitive physical activity aimed at maintaining or improving health-related or skill-related components of physical fitness. The objectives of this guide are providing insight into:

- The effectiveness of physical activity against mood disorders, such as depression, and anxiety disorders within youths (aged 15-30 years).
- Underlying psychological mechanisms that determine whether youths are regularly physically active.
- What design choices need to be made to make sure the platform is usable for youth workers and youths.
- Collecting and selecting the most important themes, topics and functions that need to be addressed in the platform, user guide and training-event.

This guide is created by thorough desk research and additional field research with all target groups. The field research was done by having interviews and discussions with youths, youth workers and experts on the topic of physical activity within youths' daily lives. All in order to create a strong theoretical and practical foundation for the development of the platform.

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What does the literature say?

Be active, be well

There is ample evidence for the effects of exercise and physical activity on someone's emotional wellbeing, especially with youths. The strongest effects are found for having fun, less anxieties, more self-confidence and feeling of worth. In addition, physical activity is proven to have a positive effect on emotional and mood disorders. Physical activity can have the same effects as antidepressants and it ensures that your body is more efficient in dealing with anxieties and stress. It could even prevent the emergence of anxiety and stress.

Don't get moody

Your mood improves by being physically active. People who are regularly physically active have a lower chance of developing mood disorders. This could be because of the production and release of serotonin in the body, which is responsible for a good mood.

For example, research findings indicate that physical exercise could decrease depressive symptoms. One possible explanation is that physical activity causes distractions. As a consequence you don't have time to think. In addition, physical activity could provide a positive spiral, because it helps you to become fitter, gain self-confidence, get structure in your daily life and it ensures social contacts. However, depression could also be an obstacle for being physically active. Therefore should the personal wishes and needs for an activity be taken into account.

The effect on physical activity on mood and the antidepressant effects are mainly found with moderate to intensive activities. For example, yoga, pilates, strength training or aerobic activities. The effects are mainly found in young people and young adults (up to 26 years).

Deal with anxiety

Besides the antidepressant effects, physical activity is also an effective anti-anxiety medicine. Because it ensures that your body is more capable of dealing efficiently with stress and anxiety. Probably due to the improved functioning of the hippocampus because of being physically active. The hippocampus is a brain area responsible for issuing anxiety signals.

The effects on anxiety are mainly found with activities like yoga, pilates, strength training, HITT training or aerobic activities. And mainly found in youths and adults.

Beware of the environment

Unfortunately, the positive effects of physical activity and exercise won't automatically arise. The results depend on a lot of different factors in which the social environment (teachers, trainers and adults) plays an important role. Good guidance is needed, as well as a good physical and social environment that stimulates physical activity and the exercises being offered should be tailored to the specific needs of the target group.

So a safe and facilitating environment is needed to increase the chance that the positive effects of physical activity are actually achieved. Five pillars can contribute to this (Willemsen, 2020):

- 1. **Guidance.** The supervisors (trainers, coaches, psychologists) of a physical activity have the right knowledge and skills to positively stimulate their target group. The supervisors are knowledgeable and they have a good relationship with the participants.
- 2. **Empowerment**. Ensure that the target group is encouraged to be self-reliant. For example, give the participants the choice of what they want to do. In this way, participants are (intrinsically) motivated and experience independence.
- 3. **Physical environment.** An accessible and safe physical environment encourages the target group to become physically active. An exercise-friendly environment is a living environment that facilitates, stimulates and challenges people to play and be physically active.
- 4. **Social environment**. A safe social environment encourages the target group to be (more) physically active. For young people, it's important to involve parents. In addition, it helps if the environment of the activity is open, safe, inclusive and hospitable.
- 5. **Customization**. The offering of the physical activities should be tailored to the needs of the target group, a specific neighbourhood or the goals you want to achieve. Take the wishes and needs of the target group into account.

By taking these five pillars into account, the effects of physical activity are optimally utilised.

Get people moving

To get youths more physically active, a behavioural change is needed. There are several important behavioural determinants. Three important determinants are habits, the social environment and resistance. To decrease possible resistance against physical activity, it's important to not oblige youths to be physically active and to not oblige them to do a specific activity. Have a personal conversation with the youth. Find out why the youth wants to be physically active. What are the personal motives? By having this conversation, you could create concrete options or tools to help youths change their behaviour. By offering options tailored to the needs of the youths and by taking the wishes and needs into account, you decrease the chance of resistance.

The social environment is difficult to change with an online platform. However, if the platform facilitates youth workers in gaining knowledge and skills about integrating physical activity in the daily lives of youths and if you create a social environment for the users which is safe, you could create an environment that effectively motivates youths to be more physically active.

One of the most important and possibly difficult determinants however are habits.

Habit formation

Regular physical activity asks a lot of youths for a new habit formation. Habits are automatic behaviours triggered by our environment. Habits are formed by repeating a specific behaviour often enough to create a link between a trigger and a behavioural response in our memory.

Youths are insufficiently physically active, possibly because they haven't formed the habit (yet). Therefore it's important to add elements into the platform that will promote habit formation. Once habits are formed, people no longer have to rely on their 'good intentions' to change behaviour. The habitual responses to specific triggers will help them to do it automatically.

There are three important components to facilitate habit formation.

- 1. **Repetition**. Frequent and consistent actions form habits. By regular repetition, these actions become habitual. It's usually more successful to use longer periods of time with more repetitions than shorter periods with fewer repetitions.
- 2. **Use of contextual cues or triggers.** Contextual cues could be powerful triggers when repeating behaviours over and over again happens in the same, stable context. Possible strong reminders for the desired behaviour could be

things like specific times of day, certain places, or the presence of specific objects or people around us.

- Forming implementation intentions have positive effects on goal attainment. Implementation intentions are if-then plans. They spell out when, where and how you're going to perform a specific behaviour to reach your personal goal.
- 3. **Rewards**. Rewards reinforce habits. They make us feel good and act as a positive payoff. Rewards reinforce habits because they give us a reason to keep going. However, rewards only work when they make people want to repeat the behaviour. The reward should be worth the effort.

When designing a new platform, it's about making it possible for the youths to perform repeated actions in a consistent environment. It's important to not only encourage regular repetition of the desired behaviour. It should also make it easy and rewarding. Especially early on in the habit formation. Meaningful rewards can motivate people to do things they might otherwise avoid. By integrating these three components, you can help youths in making the desired habitual behaviour part of their daily life routines.

Get them motivated

To persevere or sustain new behaviour (e.g. habits), good intention and motivation are needed as well. According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) from Deci and Ryan (2000, 2015) there are several kinds of motivation. The experience of these types of motivation depend on the satisfaction of three important psychological basic needs. Namely:

- **Feeling of autonomy**. People want to feel like they have the freedom to choose their own behaviour and have influence over what they do. No feeling of autonomy will result in resistance.
 - o <u>Application</u>: offer choices to the youths. They will choose what they want to try.
- Feeling of competence. People's own confidence that they are able to perform a certain behaviour.
 - <u>Application</u>: make sure the experienced threshold to participate in activities is as low as possible. Don't make the offered activities too difficult. Adjust the offers to the current level of expertise and skills in order to increase the chance of successful execution. And make sure to reward the youths immediately after performing the desired

behaviour in order to increase their feeling of confidence. This could be done by gamified elements in the platform or by giving them positive feedback by their youth worker.

- **Feeling of connectedness**. People want to feel connected with their (social) environment, or experience trust from their environment.
 - <u>Application:</u> make sure youth workers can personally support the youths and can offer them positive feedback. In addition, add a social component to the platform that brings youths together. When youths experience some success for themselves and see success within others, this will lead to more trust in each other and themselves. They could lift each other up.

The degree of satisfaction of these basic needs determines what type of motivation someone experiences for a specific behaviour. The more people feel like their basic needs are being satisfied, the more they are motivated to perform a certain behaviour.

According to the SDT, there are six types of motivation. It's important to consider that we are rarely driven by only one type of motivation. As a consequence, it's useful to think of motivation on a continuum, ranging from 'non-self-determined to self-determined'. The definition of the motivations are described below. It's important to create a platform that responds to all these types of motivation so you could motivate as many youths as possible. Therefore, some concrete (possible) applications for the platform are described as well.

Identified and integrated motivation are the most promising to change behaviour sustainably. Extrinsic motivation is a great first push for change. In the long term, however, more autonomous motivation (identified, integrated and intrinsic motivation) is needed. To make sure that behaviour remains changed in the long-term and to make sure that behaviour is no longer dependent on external stimuli.

Motivation	Definition	Application in platform
Unmotivated	The intention to perform a certain activity is hardly present. It's when people don't value a certain behaviour or when they feel incompetent and/or lack of control.	Give people the feeling that they are capable of performing other behaviour and increase the chance that they find the results of the new behaviour more important. This could and should be done by a person that is important to the youth or who is deemed as a professional on this matter (and thereby reliable).
External regulated motivation	Avoiding punishment or seeking rewards.	Emphasise the advantages and rewards of being regularly physically active. For example, less financial cost due to health issues, having more energy and focus, better well-being. But also make sure the users are being rewarded immediately after performing the desired behaviour.
Introjected motivation	Driven by partially internalised activities like shame avoidance, seeking approval and protecting the ego. Willing to change behaviour, but not yet doing so based on one's own will or internal motivations.	Social component is important in this matter. This motivation could be triggered by emphasising and facilitating a social component. When youths are being active with someone else, they feel guilty when they don't adhere to the appointment. This will motivate them to show up and be physically active.
Identified motivation	Motivation based on conscious values and things that are personally important. The person realises that the new behaviour produces something or brings something good. The person assigns personal values to the activity. As a consequence, the person is able to encourage himself to change his behaviour to achieve a desired goal.	Important to facilitate youths in finding a physical activity of which the youths know it will have positive effects on themselves. When the youth knows and feels that physical activity brings something good. The youth is able to set specific goals for the new behaviour. Make sure youths set their own goals on the platform. When goals are personal and

		expressed externally, they are more likely to follow these goals.
Integrated motivation	Person is motivated to change behaviour because the desired behaviour is seen as part of one's identity. And the behaviour connects seamlessly to the person's own values.	Give youths the possibility to write down their own values. When these are in line with being regularly physically active, they are more likely to be extra motivated by these expressed values. People tend to stand up for their own values, especially when they are expressed in public (in this case in their profile on the platform and/or in the vicinity of the youth worker).
Intrinsic motivation	Performing behaviour because it's fun, satisfactory and/or interesting. Especially the feeling of satisfaction makes people want to continue practising the activity.	Guide youths towards physical activities they really like and find interesting and satisfactory.



Figure 1. Self-Determination Theory

The success of the Ommetje App

The Ommetje app is an app designed by the Dutch Brain Foundation in cooperation with Erik Scherder, a Dutch neuroscientist. It motivates people to integrate a daily walk of at least 20 minutes (called ommetje) in their daily life schedule. It uses different behaviour change techniques that are the foundation of the success. Therefore it's an inspiring example in terms of using an online application or platform with different kinds of techniques



to motivate people to become regularly physically active.

- 1. **Rewards**. Give continued rewards. In other words, rewarding desired behaviour every time it occurs. This stimulates our dopamine production. As a consequence this stimulates behaviour.
 - Works great in learning new behaviour.
 - A specific action is followed by a specific consequence (XP-points, medals, compliments from Erik himself).
- 2. Social proof. We do things because others do it too.
 - Works strongest when we observe people who are similar to us (e.g. friends, peers, colleagues).
- 3. **Don't want to lose your streak!** 3 extra points for an ommetje if you continue your daily streak.
 - People have a strong loss aversion. This technique responds to this loss aversion.
- 4. **Sharing is caring**. Users reach out to as many people as possible. As an autonomous individual, we do not allow anything to be dictated to us about this. Unless you show someone else that you care about them by pushing the share button with the big heart and earning 2 XP points each time.
- 5. **Respecting our sense of autonomy**. People decide for themselves what they will do and when. Ommetje encourages walking, but does not impose it on you. Because people choose whether and when they go for a walk (i.e. they choose the behaviour themselves), this leads to higher intrinsic motivation according to the self-determination theory.

- 6. **Not using punishment**. People don't have to worry about punishment. Only about losing their streak. Punishment doesn't work in the long-run. Rewarding positive behaviour is the only thing that works if you want to teach people something.
 - Especially the case for adolescents. Their brain hardly becomes active when they are being punished, but their brain does respond to rewards ('Nice that you took a walk!').
- 7. **Showing progress.** Showing people that they are having fun motivates them to continue. Progress bars are used to show how far you are from your goal. As a consequence, your brain is already preparing for the next reward. Used designs:
 - Circle that becomes more and more filled from 0 to 20 minutes of walking.
 - You can see how far you are from your next medal in six areas in which you can score points.
 - Use of different coloured medals.
 - Feedback on progress could be a way to increase perceived competence of the walker.
 - When people have an idea of sufficient progress towards their goal, they feel more capable of improving their skills and reaching their goal.
 - o Extra tip: use real-time feedback. Speak encouraging words during the activity.
- 8. **Power of repetition**. To internalise behaviour, we must repeat behaviour. The more we demonstrate behaviour over and over again, the more that behaviour becomes our second nature. Behaviour becomes internalised. However, many people don't like repetition because of their short attention span and little discipline.
 - Therefore it's important to make the desired behaviour a habit. So it no longer depends on our fleeting motivation or discipline. The behaviour becomes automatic.
 - o According to the *Transtheoretical model of behaviour change* it takes three to six months to learn new habits.
- 9. Use games. Most people like games and competition.
 - Added competition element: homepage with the leaderboard showing how well you are doing compared to others.
 - According to research, competition can increase motivation, allowing us to continue using the product or service longer. But this only works if we can compare ourselves with others who are important to us.

- Competition element probably works better in teams that are not too large. This way it remains possible to become first. When it feels impossible to become first, competition has the opposite, demotivating, effect.
- 10. **Wanting to be seen**. Make sure the desired behaviour is seen by important others. In this app, walking behaviour is visible to others by showing them your points. We can show and signal our identity through visible behaviour. It communicates our identity to others.
 - According to the *Identity consistency model* we want to exhibit behaviour that matches our identity.
 - App should enable people to make the performed desired behaviour, and thus the wanted identity, visible to important others to positively affect your reputation.
- 11. **Use of authority**. We are more likely to accept something when it comes from an authority.
 - In the Ommetje app, Erik Scherder (exercise professor) motivates you to exercise and shares brain facts about exercising and the brain.
 - Credible authority sharing credible information works best. It should obviously be no actor.
- 12. **Use feelings of sympathy**. According to the liking principle, people are more likely to agree with people they find sympathetic.
 - We are more likely to like people if they
 - a. Resemble us or if we share qualities with them;
 - b. Compliment us;
 - c. Work with us to achieve a common goal.

In the Ommetje app, Erik gives everyone compliments and helps them to achieve their daily goals.

- 13. **Loss aversion**. People hate losing. Preventing loss is up to five times more important to people than winning.
 - Danger lies within competition elements: where there are winners there are always (and usually more) losers. If a loss can no longer be made up for, this may result in dropping out.

Expert findings

Research results

Based on correspondence with a behaviour researcher from the Dutch Brain Foundation (Hersenstichting). They've done several studies on how to get people regularly physically active in the Netherlands, also by using apps and games.

Most important findings:

- Motivation to get moving and to keep moving isn't different for different age groups.
- Learning new habits doesn't differ with age.
- Thresholds are mostly time related. It's important to integrate physical activity into daily lives. Keep it regular and small. By doing this, it's easier to implement the activities compared to long-term sports (in a group context).
- The effects of competition and rewards don't differ in age groups. Competition won't work for everyone. This is especially the case for new users and movers.

Tips from experts

Based on correspondence with a behaviour researcher from the Dutch Brain Foundation (Hersenstichting) and the founder of Moving Intelligently (Intelligent Bewegen – Fabio D'Agata), an expert in using physical activity in counselling.

- Well-thought-out vision on youth combined with movement.
- Support system for the implementation of this vision is needed.
- Create a mix of pleasure in the activity, social support and connection, and personal development (physical, cognitive and emotional).
- Focus on all kinds of movement. Try to encourage youths to move in different ways. Not only sports in 'traditional' group contexts. Give them the experience of being active and let them try different things.
- Make the experienced threshold as low as possible.
 - Important with new users and 'movers':
 - Make the threshold as low as possible by making it easy and fun. Make rewards fast and engaging.
 - First no competition and/or comparison with others.
 - Start at their own pace.
 - Facilitate social support and peer groups.
- Be aware of experiences of moderate to severe (physical) limitations.
- Differentiate in the focus of effects:

- For younger age groups it's more effective to focus on short-term effects (relaxation, better functioning) than focussing on long-term effects (living healthier for longer).
- o Short-term effects are effective for all groups of age.
- Messenger is important. Should be trustworthy, relatable and likeable.
- Train trainers so they know what they can do and mean for youths when it comes to integrating regular physical activity in their daily lives.
- Minimise time on the platform and stimulate interpersonal connection. Give youths real people. Exercise does not involve screens. Let youths really connect with each other.

Interviews and discussions with youths

In total, 22 youths from Greece, Croatia, Germany and the Netherlands participated in the interviews or discussions. The objective of these interviews was to collect and select the most important themes, topics and functions that need to be addressed in an online platform, user guide for youths and youth workers and a training-event for youth workers. Discussions and interviews were used to gain insight into the motivators and bottlenecks of youths to be regularly physically active. The most important themes, topics and functions are summarised below.

What motivates youths and what are their bottlenecks?

Motivators/stimulators		Barriers
•Social aspect: feeling of togetherness.	•₩	Veather.
 Maintain good health: physically and mentally. 	•P to	lanning/time management: feeling of too little time.
•Feeling better after physical activity. •Wanting to reach certain goals and see	• V b a	Vork/school: a lot of sedentary ehaviour during the day and being tired fterwards.
•Enjoyment.	•La	ack of motivation/commtiment.
	•H •D a	laving to develop a new routine. Iistraction because of screens (television nd/or social media).

What are and what are not their reasons to be regularly physically

active?

Reasons to be regularly physcially active

- •Gives a nice feeling: pleasure, dopamine boost, feeling of confidence.
- Having a healthy physical and mental body:
- •Relaxation, peaceful head.
- Connect mind with your physical body. So you don't ignore your body's signals.
 Better self-image.
- ·Liking of the activity or sport.
- •Enrichment of life by meeting other people.

Reasons to NOT be regularly physically active

- Too little energy.
- Too little time.

•None.

Personal needs regarding being physically active

- **Social factors** are key to maintaining motivation and consistency.
 - o Going on a regular basis with someone else.
 - o Group settings.
 - o Support from peers or role models.
- Convenience and accessibility: low threshold to start by
 - o Accessible facilities.
 - o Acceptance and openness of the group.
 - o Finance/money.
- Find an activity you like and possibly with people you like. Thereby creating a situation in which you don't feel enforced to be physically active.
- Having all the options: know what is out there.
 - o In one place, easy to find, custom designed based on specific personal needs.
 - o Need for diversity of physical activities.



How to offer suitable physical activities

- Wide range of possible activities in one place. Preferably with online access.
- **Professional guidance**: in person or with key instructions to make the activities doable.
 - o Easy language and clear descriptions of what to do (visual, audio).
- **Community engagement**: possibility to create a community or group that is interested in the same activities. With the possibility to do it together.

Openness for using digital tools to stimulate regular physical activity

All youths are open to the use of digital tools. Preferences include platforms offering a spectrum of activities, user-friendly interfaces, and features for goal-setting, progress tracking, social connectedness and motivation.

Design of the platform

Do's

- User-friendly interfaces:
 - o Clear instructions, easy language.
 - o Use videos, audio and music.
 - o Clean and simple design, but at the same time cosy and inviting.

• Interactive elements:

- Mascot or person that gives a feeling of connection. Beware of the need for feeling of relatedness. It's important that the users feel related with the person or mascot.
- o Use positive push messages: offering motivating text messages adopted to the performed activities.
- o Use streaks/add gaming element(s).
- o Give the possibility and reminder to reflect: encourage users to think more in depth about what they've done that day/week. What could be improved for example?
- o Rating system showing experiences of others with specific activities.
- Give an overview of all available options in their environment.
 - o Focus on the broad definition of physical activity. Not just sports.
 - o Give concrete examples in daily life situations.
 - o Add a broad range of activities and exercises youths can do.
 - o Clear pricing information and statistics of the activities.
- Add **community features**: add a social component that gives users the possibility to meet each other and ask questions.
- Make sure the offers/proposals are **up to date**. Data must be correct.
 - o Clear pricing information.
 - o Accessibility across various demographics.
- Personalise the platform, make it customizable:
 - o Personal level and plan so that it's doable.
 - o Progress tracking functionalities.
- **Professional guidance**. Youth workers should know what to do and are able to properly guide youths.

Don'ts

- Say what people must do: emphasise the advantages without giving them the feeling they are being forced to be physically active.
- **Make it hard to use**: make it intuitive. Don't make them have to click too much before reaching their destination on the platform. Should be easy to navigate through the platform.

Interviews and discussions youth workers

In total, 17 youth workers from Greece, Croatia, Germany and the Netherlands participated in the interviews or discussions. Some were already experienced in integrating physical activity within their work with youths, others weren't. The objective of these interviews was to collect and select the most important themes, topics and functions that need to be addressed in an online platform, user guide for youths and youth workers and a training-event for youth workers.

Discussions and interviews were used to gain insight in:

- The motivators and bottlenecks of youths to be regularly physically active.
- The attitudes of youth workers toward inclusion of physical activity into youth work and possible ways of positive change.
- The motivators and bottlenecks of youth workers to include physical activity in their own work with youths.

All interviewees would like to integrate physical activity in their work and counselling. The most important themes, topics and functions are summarised below.

Reasons to (not) use physical activity in work

Reasons to NOT use PA in work

- Inability of the clients: professionals are afraid to exclude someone by making it too hard for clients because of a specific disability.
- Ease: lack of time and/or proper space.
- Doesn't come to mind first: more used to and trained in other working methods.
- It's still unusual for youths and in school contexts. May lead to resistance?

Reasons to use PA in work

- Positive effects on mental health: proven to be effective against a variety of disorders and health problems (depression, mental decline, improved cognitive functioning, preventing neurological diseases, opportunity for dealing with anxieties).
- Activates body and mind:
 - Changes energy: makes people more awake and engaged.
 - Makes people feel more motivated.
- Creates body awareness: feel their own body (signals).
- Alternative way of expressing themselves: way for youths to express themselves non-verbally.
- Having fun and do something not sedentary and with screens.
- Being physically active together makes people more connected.

Needs

- Knowledge/tools: know-how:
 - Concrete and broad range of options: what are all the options the youth worker and youth have? What is available?



- Keep them simple.
- Where to start?
- How to apply? How to combine mind and body?
- Tailored to the needs of different people.
- o Develop professional skills: training in how to use physical activity and get more familiar with such methods.
- Access to different practical things such as equipment, appropriate room or space outside.

Important and effective motivators for youths to become regularly

physically active

- Connectedness and social relationships.
- **Fun-factor**: doing an activity they like, preferably with people they like.
 - o Important to let them find pleasure in moving.
 - o Keep it diverse. Make it interesting and not too predictable.
- **Positive experiences** motivate youths to continue doing things in the future. Feeling of success is important.

Openness for using digital tools to stimulate physical activity within

youths

All youth workers are open to the use of digital tools. However, they see it especially as a thing that fosters, motivates or encourages youths to then leave the digital tool and go out and do their physical activity. It should be an asset but not a thing that is in the foreground.

Design of the platform.

Do's

- Find out what is important to the youths: what is fun, what do you enjoy and like? What activity makes you feel good or better? What activity suits your current mental and health needs? Thereby creating a desire or motivation within the youths. It has to come from within themselves.
- Keep it small: start with small steps and don't go hard on the youths.
 - o Emphasise to do their own best. It's definitely not about who is the best or has the best looks.
 - o Include mild forms of physical activity (games, yoga, walking etc.).
- **Give enough different options** for activities within youths' own environment. Keep it **diverse and inclusive** for all.
- Allow people to make decisions and choices for themselves.
- Inform:
 - Utility and profits of being regularly physically active. Emphasise it's a process and what the effects of specific activities are on their well-being.
 - o Give tips for activities coupled with certain topics and personal states and how to perform these activities.
 - o Add information and tips about diet and nutrition. Encompass the holistic view of health.

• Add interaction:

- o Reviews of users of activities.
- o Connect the advice of activities to their current state (mentally and physically). Make the advice personal.
- o Add cooperation tasks.
- o Networking possibilities with other youths.
- o Space for discussion and questions.

- **Continuous monitoring of progress**: include feedback so you can see you're progressing or what you did. Also make the results available for the youth worker.
 - o Make it personal.
 - o Use positive language.
 - o Track results and effects. And add an evaluation (at the beginning and later on) so that clients can do some self-assessment.
 - o Inform youths about the effects of their current activities on their mental and physical wellbeing.
 - o Report previous successes to them so they will remain motivated.
- Facilitate exchange of ideas between professionals. Create a possibility to create a network of professionals.

Don'ts

- Put too much information on one platform. Don't want to read too much.
- Make it **only a written platform**. Make sure it will facilitate the exchange of ideas between youths and youth workers.
- Too hard and big demands. Keep it simple and realistic.
- Force youths what to do.

Looks and specific characteristics

- Easy to navigate.
- Preferably available on the laptop. App and/or website would be convenient.
- Use the communication language of the youths.
 - o Use video and audio.
 - o Use lights, sounds, music and possibly memes. Make it more like a game style rather than something serious.
- Simple, straightforward and visual.
- User guides for all users.
- Create a feeling of relatedness with the examples or mascot.

Conclusions

All target groups are open to using an online platform to stimulate youths to become regularly physically active. This guide provides us with an elaborate overview of what to do and what definitely not to do concerning such a platform. It definitely doesn't help to oblige youths to become more physically active. We should reduce the over-demand of youths and break the trend of always having to perform to the max. It's all about the personal process. Creating an autonomic and preferably intrinsic motivation is key in creating sustainable behaviour change. Youths are in need of physical activities that make them enthusiastic, are accessible and helpful for them. It's important to give youths a voice in this process and a feeling of connectedness.

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