

How do we build positive relationships with participants?



This question is important because...

Being person-centred is key to making your project a success. People's motivation for coming along may be more to do with getting out of the house, feeling welcome, making friends and having fun than with getting fitter or doing that particular activity.



The support offered and relationships created can be of great significance and can become the motivation for someone to stay involved.

Research

The University of Strathclyde's evidence suggests that people are as much motivated by fun and meeting other people as they are by becoming active.

Key messages

- ✓ Keep reminding yourself just how vulnerable your participants may be.
- ✓ Think about how you can build a community amongst your participants. Ask what would help them build positive relationships.
- ✓ Make initial sessions very relaxed and non-threatening - "just a cuppa and a blether".
- ✓ Focus on what is achievable rather than what is challenging.
- ✓ Consider having someone trusted go to the person's home and come along to the activity with them at first.
- ✓ Let the individual decide for themselves if/when they are ready to have a go.
- ✓ Remember that everyone is an individual. Spend time getting to know them and why they come along - this might change over time (after they've been involved for a while, part of their motivation to keep active may be to make their instructor proud, for example).



How do we build positive relationships with participants? (continued)



- ✓ Provide extra support during the first few sessions to help participants find their way around the new environment and to build trust.
- ✓ Phone people if they don't turn up for a session to check that they are OK.
- ✓ Always be non-judgemental and encouraging.
- ✓ Remain approachable and friendly at all times - before, during and after sessions.
- ✓ Include some social time in each session - having the opportunity for a chat and a cup of tea works well!
- ✓ Be ready to remind people about upcoming sessions - people with challenging life circumstances may find it difficult to plan ahead.