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Exercise to Reconnect! Integrating CBT for exercise and psychosis, community resources and peer advocacy to promote exercise and human reconnection.

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Learning Goal:

1) Understand how exercise can benefit persons with psychotic-spectrum disorders (PSD); 2) Integrate CBT for exercise with CBT for psychosis, including third-wave approaches; 3) Learn how persons with lived experience, the mental health system and community resources can cooperate to promote and maintain exercise and foster reconnection and de-stigmatization.

Abstract Text:

Exercise is increasingly shown to improve mental health and general well-being. Recently, some of these benefits are being studied in patients with psychotic-spectrum disorders (PSD). Exercise can be a powerful force for fostering human reconnection between alienated groups, such as persons with lived experience of psychosis, their families, their communities and the mental health system. Doing exercise can be challenging for someone with PSD. In this highly case-based workshop we will describe how positive, negative and cognitive symptoms, medical and psychiatric comorbidities, as well as social adversity, such as poverty and lack of transportation, present obstacles to those suffering with severe PSD. We will present several cases, where CBT for psychosis, medical management, hospital and community resources, as well as support and advocacy of other persons with lived experience were employed to encourage and maintain exercise. We will describe in detail how CBTp can be directly incorporated into exercise itself by the therapist. We will focus in particular on the power of behavioural activation; cognitive restructuring of self-defeating, permissive and psychotic thoughts; acceptance and commitment therapy to formulate valued goals; compassion approaches; in vivo graded exposure and behavioural experiments; role playing, modelling, practice and overlearning; reinforcement strategies; and work with paranoid thoughts and voices as they arise on the spot during exercise. Finally, we will show how family, mental health workers, and peers can be engaged in improving the success of these strategies. One of us (Peggy Hickman) will show a brief documentary, "A Mental Marathon," describing her journey. She will share how running became a passion that allowed her to deal with voices and distressing thoughts. This became a catalyst for her peer-led running group and her advocacy work to decrease stigma and bridge the gap between those with lived experience, the mental health system and community in general.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**