

## **PART ONE:**

### **Attempting 'change' and embedding wellbeing for University colleagues participating with the GCC: Part 1 - Starting to make a change**

*By Geoff Middleton,*

*Senior Lecturer: Health Promotion & Exercise Science*

*School of Sport and Exercise Science*

During the GCC, a series of short informal articles by Geoff will discuss the link between physical activity promotion and health, and the potential for behaviour change among staff during the challenge. In this first extract, the underlining theories which drive the GCC are explained in line with concept of creating change to a physically 'inactive' workplace.

A plethora of scientific articles suggest that engaging in regular physical activity has benefits to the holistic components of health (physical, emotional, social, environmental, mental and spiritual). Given the UK's current predicament with the rise in the population prevalence of sedentary lifestyle orientated diseases (Diabetes, Obesity, Hypertension etc.), governmental Public Health efforts have centred on encouraging and developing a more 'active nation' (with the Olympic legacy still resounding). The University workplace is a setting where we spend much of the day; 6-8 hours per day (although I suspect many academics would equate more hours on a regular basis!). In today's world, it is likely that this time is predominately spent physically 'inactive' with little exercise or body movements other than finger work involving in typing and possibly fidgeting! In many ways the 'work culture' we acclimatise to on acceptance of our role here promotes physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour (estates, security and manual handling roles of course may suggest otherwise!). Two key questions arise for a health promoter discussing the importance of encouraging physical activity in the workplace:

- *How can we transform an inactive 'work culture'?*
- *How can we optimise our physical activity levels (and therefore health) during our time at work?*

#### **The 'theories' of the GCC?**

**(i.e. How the GCC provides opportunity to achieve the above?)**

##### *1. Choosing a sustainable and resourceful physical activity: Walking*

Importantly, walking requires little skill (once mastered!) and usually people have confidence in their ability to perform this task with little cause for worry regarding any potential harm or injury. This simple activity is also generally accessible to the majority of the population. For these reasons, walking's simplicity and convenience is its power. The barriers for participation in individual pursuits (which are also likely to take place outside of work time) such as sport, gym membership and related physical challenges are removed for many. Plenty research studies have been conducted and attribute this form of exercise to a 'raft' of holistic health benefits, particularly with sedentary people.

## *2. By tracking and targeting personal 'activity' levels: the Pedometer*

The pedometer is common component of large staff wellness programmes in the UK, USA and other westernised countries. Indeed, research in the area of pedometer use as a motivation tool for increasing physical activity is generally positive. In the majority of cases, the most successful programmes are those which combine pedometer use with mental 'challenges' or behavioural components. Therefore participants who keep records of activity (steps attained) and use realistic goal setting for gradual increases in step count per day are thought to be ideally placed to benefit from using this equipment.

## *3. Creating an engaging social environment: Interaction and inspiration*

Cleverly the GLOBAL CORPORATE CHALLENGE® (GCC) takes things a step further, going beyond just the use of the pedometer and goal setting. The programme encourages team membership and a peer-challenge between colleagues, a classic push on the idea of *social facilitation*; a tendency for people to perform better in the presence of other people. In this case, the mere presence of colleagues in a teamwork type task will create a chance for healthy competition and the possibility of generating higher step count attainment for a cohesive group of colleagues. Secondly, the GCC uses technology (using smartphone applications and a 3D accelerometer) for reporting activity and an interactive website. By providing supportive materials for motivating participants during the challenge ('a virtual journey around the world' and international case study accounts of progress) this can be an engaging and inspiring influence. With this in mind, the GCC gives every possible chance of creating a facilitative environment which *empowers* individuals to take up and sustain walking (at least for the time length of the challenge).

### **Creating an 'active' workplace: Changing culture – the beginning**

Organisational culture is difficult to change, it takes mass collective efforts to promote, sustain and firmly establish changes which affect hundreds of employees. Essentially, change starts with the individual and proliferates among others, particularly among those who want to change habits and actions. The GCC is the start of the process; to embed an organisational change to our University, creating a more physically active work culture (and a healthier workforce!). For colleagues reaching and passing week two of the challenge, your preparation and commitment at this stage are commendable; passing the stages of 'contemplating' the idea of increasing your physical activity levels, and hopefully you are actively engaged in the process. It is the next few weeks of 'action' which will determine the successful initiation of this challenge – keep going and counting those steps!

## PART TWO:

### A more active University of Lincoln workforce with the GCC: Part 2 – Creating and sustaining ‘change’

By Geoff Middleton,

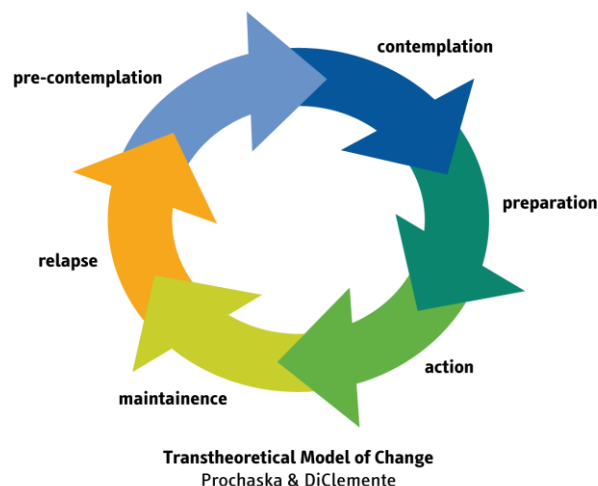
Senior Lecturer: Health Promotion & Exercise Science

School of Sport and Exercise Science

During the GCC, a series of short informal articles by Geoff will discuss the link between physical activity promotion and health, and the potential for behaviour change (i.e. walking more!) among University colleagues during the challenge.

Having had the use of a pedometer for **XXXX** weeks, I hope this extract finds teams accumulating more and more steps per day as the summer rolls on. Congratulations so far on your achievements; typically you are currently at what is recognised as the ‘action’ stage of being engaged in the programme. This extract will illustrate the theoretical underpinning of the GCC related to motivation and behaviour change whilst exploring participant’s reflections on the personal progress made.

Before the challenge, did you ever ‘pre-contemplate’ the idea of being more active?.....So have you recently considered that you would like to do more exercise?.....Or thought that may be that more activity would be ‘good’ for you? This is often how people start to be interested in the idea of being more physically active. By considering to sign-up for the GCC, this inevitability pushed participants a little further, by stimulating conversations between colleagues and may be on the receiving end of the odd pestering episode by our beloved HR lead Ian Hodson! - At this point, participants were ‘contemplating’ joining the scheme, and possibility weighing up the positives and negatives of the GCC explicitly for themselves. Shortly after agreeing to take part, it is likely that each one of you (or collectively) entered a ‘preparation’ stage: forming and formalising a team, looking at the day the scheme started; the requirements for participation; instructions for progress tracking, and; initially plotting the ways for gathering those early ‘steps’. The primary aim for the GCC (and also other pedometer schemes) is to initiate and engage people in physical activity, and theoretically move them toward and into the ‘action’ phase of what health promoters’ regard as the ‘behaviour change’ cycle (see below).



Whilst at this point, take a moment to realise the step count amounts that you have accrued since the start of the GCC:

- Where did you start?.....5,000steps per day; 6,000, may be 7,000.....
- Where are you now?.....8,000 steps per day; 9,000 may be 10,000.....?

Most Importantly from a health promoters' point of view, is a participant's personal reflection on 'how' they managed to get where you are.....so:

- What is it that has made you achieve? (What has driven you?)
- How did this happen?, and most interestingly;
- Would you have done this without the pedometer, the GCC challenge and may be your colleagues egging you on.....?

Answering these questions effectively digging for the factors which have positioned you in the 'action' phase - they provide a deeper meaning to 'why' you have achieved, 'what' you have achieved. These factors are likely to be very different individually between those participating. Indeed, in the broader context of those who actively research this area, the contemporary challenge is to try to get to grips with what exactly makes people take-up and, of course, *sustain* physical activity.

This is the next quest for those participating; how do you move from the 'action' to the 'maintenance' phase in the behaviour change cycle? What is going to keep you motivated?.....What might your step target be per day (12,000, 15,000)? Typically this movement between phases is the most challenging, given that your accomplishments need to be repeated, if not improved (for those who like the competitive side of things you will need to improve on the current levels of steps achieved). Best of luck and keep accumulating!

## PART THREE:

### A more active University of Lincoln workforce with the GCC: Part 3 – The final strides, but what next?

By Geoff Middleton,

Senior Lecturer: Health Promotion & Exercise Science

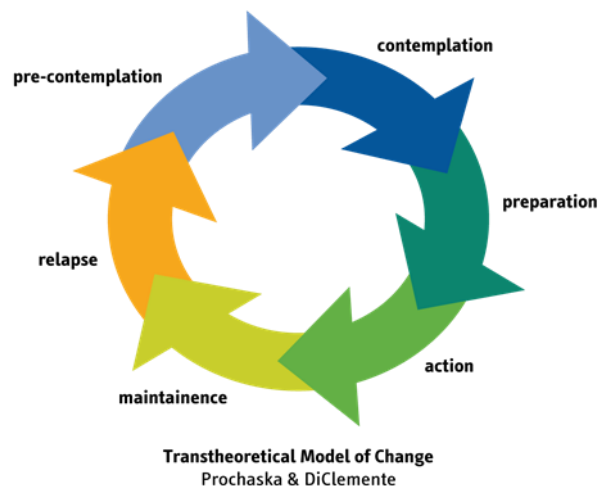
School of Sport and Exercise Science

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Last time I discussed a popular behaviour change model which provided an understanding to the thoughts and actions to those engaging in the GCC subsequently embarking on a new physical activity change. As you are coming to the end of the current challenge this next extract will focus on what happens next as the time has come to end the GCC and move on.....will you be dropping the pedometer? Will you reduce the number of steps your achieving daily? Or even stop walking altogether? May be that sounds negative, but this is now the reality striking and the start of the personal decision-making process which now exists:

- Would you consider being this active normally without the GCC?
- Are you able to maintain the level of activity you are achieving now in the next few months?

Going back to the behaviour change cycle (see below), experts often suggest that it takes 6 months to really move out of the 'action' phase into the 'maintenance' phase of physical activity.



Therefore the GCC is only a 'taster' for getting things started for those who are inactive. A health promotion programme tries to promote health by providing opportunity and support for the initial involvement in any health behaviour activity. Once a programme like the GCC ends the next steps of involved in continuing physical activity (through walking) is then entirely down to the individual, with their personal beliefs and capabilities. Often a key factor for moving to maintaining activity is

removal of barriers which 'get in the way' such as the changes in upcoming months in the weather which turns many to the comfort of car journey instead of walking to and from work. For academics, I know that that I will be citing 'time' or may be 'energy' when the marking load appears and for others may be it is a case of just not being motivated enough to continue. Another key factor is how the experience being more physically active during the GCC has been 'received' and then 'perceived': Do you to enjoy walking? Do you feel 'fitter' or may be more mobile? Are you more confident about being active? May be you have lost some weight? Or do you feel better about yourself? Does walking relax the mind?

Answers to these questions are searching for the positive outcomes of the GCC among staff members which a health promoter would be happy to hear (along with our HR department!). Short-term outcomes are possible from involvement in the GCC and many of you will feel or even see some health benefits from participating even if small. Unfortunately although short-term benefits are useful and encouraging, they are often not enough to really influence long-term health. Indeed to induce greater physical and psycho-social benefits, long-term adherence to physical activity is necessary. Achieving this will 'manage' weight rather than entering the cycle of yo-yoing up and down. Improvements in cardio-respiratory physiology will continue and will be maintained lowering the risk of developing sedentary lifestyle related medical conditions. Confidence grows along with the ability to take part in physical effort. You generally feel better and healthier. Several may find other social benefits and may be other challenges like a novel form of exercise by simply trying something new. Whatever this, I wish you well and to keep to the task of being more active.