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*“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.”
Roman 12:12.*

Keeping the Spirit Alive: Maintaining your Physical -e-Fit Program



PHYSICAL-E-FIT

*Take action and take care of your temple!
Get 30+ minutes of physical activity a day.
Eat 5+ fruits and vegetables a day.*

www.health-e-ame.com

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Taking the next step: Maintaining your program over time

Congratulations on successfully starting your program! Taking the first steps and implementing your program are often some of the greatest hurdles that you will face. Once you have established your program, it can sometimes be difficult to maintain the interest and excitement that you may have received from your congregation when you first started.

We understand that it can be difficult to keep up with a program, and want you to know that we're available to help you. Also, be sure to stay aware of ongoing Physical-e-Fit events through the Health-e-AME website (www.health-e-ame.com, scroll down to the physical activity program link, and chose programs and events). Feel free to contact program staff (page 7). These events offer you opportunities to work with other trained Health Directors or Physical Activity Coordinators and find out their successes and struggles.

In this booklet we have offered some ideas on how to "keep the spirit alive" and keep your Physical-e-Fit program fresh and exciting over time. We have included some ideas about: forming partnerships with other churches, keeping your Physical-e-Fit team excited, trying new strategies, contests and competition and we also provide information about where to go for help.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalms 46:1.

Technical Assistance & Support

We're here to help! Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions, comments or suggestions you have about the program. There are lots of ways to reach us:

This information was removed since the program has ended.

You can also find lots of program resources, check on upcoming events, see a list of trained churches in your area, submit comments, suggestions or questions, or links to other online resources at www.health-e-ame.com, scroll down and click on the Physical Activity Program button.

Contests and Competitions

A little friendly competition can get people interested and excited about the program and there are lots of ways to get people more active with contests in the Physical-e-Fit program.

Walking programs: try holding a contest between groups in your church for the most steps or miles walked. Post the winner on your bulletin board or in the Sunday bulletin. Consider challenging nearby churches who are participating in the program to a step contest (you can find a list of trained churches on the Health-e-AME website or by contacting the program staff).

Bulletin boards: Post program details and physical activity information. This would also be a good place to hold an attendance competition. Track participant's attendance on the board for a month, and reward the person who has attended the most events. Prizes can be as simple as featuring their picture on the board, with a description of their accomplishments.

Involve youth: Have a competition for the best artwork depicting physical activity. It makes for great decorations!

Include activity at all events: (picnics, health fairs, recitals, etc.) include some form of physical activity. Have a basketball tournament, a softball game, Frisbee tossing contest or some other competition that gets your congregation moving.

Fundraisers: You may also want to consider including physical activity as a part of your fundraisers. Try a walk-a-thon or a dance marathon to raise money for your church or other charitable cause.



The ties that bind: Developing partnerships with other churches

Keeping up your Physical-e-Fit program may be the biggest challenge you face when trying to improve the health of your fellow AME members. Often times some of your best resources may be right down the road or a few blocks away. Partnering with other churches to offer your programs can help you to keep up the momentum of your program, create greater interest and prevent overload for the Physical-e-Fit program director. Here are some steps you can follow:

1. Find nearby churches who would be interested in joining you. You can find a list of trained churches on the Health-e-AME website, or contact the Health-e-AME program staff.
2. Have a meeting to brainstorm how you can work together. Discuss whether it would be beneficial to hold different programs at different churches (i.e. Praise aerobics at one church and 8 Steps to Fitness at another), or to hold all of the programs in one church, and to share the program directing duties, or some other arrangement that works for you.
3. Set up a regular schedule of planning meetings.
4. Get the contact information of all of your potential partners and designate someone to do reminder calls for meetings and activities.



Partnerships also offer a convenient opponent in a friendly competition. Try holding a contest for greatest distance walked by the congregation, most people participating in your programs, best attendance, or some other exciting idea. Try contacting local business owners to donate small prizes.

We encourage you to explore your options and form lasting partnerships that can benefit all churches involved and the surrounding community.

Rallying Your Troops: Maintaining Your Physical-e-Fit Team

One of the most common barriers to a successful program is a **lack of time** for the Health Director or Physical Activity Coordinator. The best way to overcome this is to develop a team of individuals from your church that are enthusiastic and excited about the program, easing the burden on one person, and dividing the tasks between several people.

Try to find people who are passionate about health. Contact the program staff (page 7) or log onto the Health-e-AME website (www.health-e-ame.com) to learn about upcoming training events.

Be sure to include church leaders on your Physical-e-Fit team. Other faith-based health programs have found that the support of the Pastor, the Pastor's spouse, and other key leaders within the church is a good predictor of the success of the program. Show your team the Physical-e-Fit video, encourage them to visit www.health-e-ame.com, and invite them to attend a training (contact the program staff for training events).

Encourage your Pastor to visit the Pastor's corner on the Health-e-AME website and look at the resources that were designed specifically for Pastors. Be sure to present your Pastor and their spouse with a pedometer. Consider creating some excitement about the Physical-e-Fit program by presenting it to your pastor during Sunday service, board meeting, bible study, or another event, and have them report their weekly steps during Sunday service!



New and Exciting Ideas

Overtime, programs can lose momentum. Be sure to continue with your educational activities- this will spread the word and reach those people who still aren't completely sure which type of physical activity is for them. Try adding a program that you have not offered before, as you may reach some new people.



Walking programs offer many opportunities. Use your "Walk a Mile in Your Own Shoes" handout, post a map of the country in a highly visible spot, have your members report the number of steps or miles they have walked, and chart their progress across the country.

Don't forget that you can offer 8 Steps to Fitness more than once! Try starting it up again in the fall, once the kids are back in school, or in January when everyone is trying to make their New Year resolutions.

If your praise or chair exercise groups are getting bored, try using some new music, or attempt some new moves (contact Debbie Bryant or Thaje Anderson for new ideas). You could also try using some videos; a list is available on the Health-e-AME website, under the resources link, or contact the program staff.

Enthusiasm is contagious, so recruit people from your congregation who are excited about physical activity!