

Incorporating regular physical activity in a busy medic's schedule

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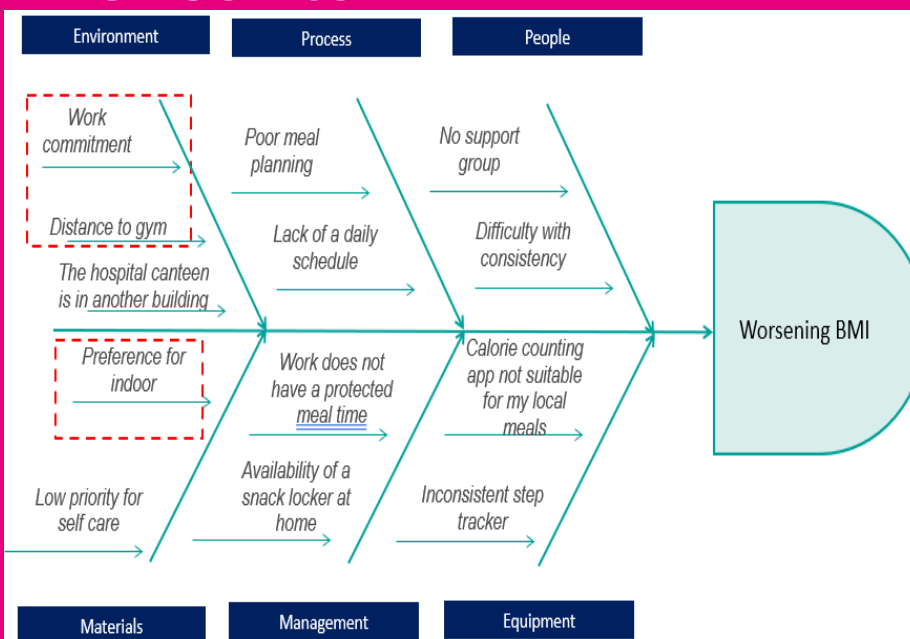


PROBLEM
Busy job + little exercise = Sedentary lifestyle = High BMI.
High BMI + black woman = High risk for cardiovascular disease.
IT IS TIME TO ACT

BACKGROUND

My sedentary lifestyle and a stressful job can lead to high BMI and increased risk for cardiovascular disease. I worry about the danger a high BMI poses to my future health.

DIAGNOSTICS



Bar chart: Met steps on 7 out of 14 days

AIM

Improve my heart health by increasing exercise from every other day to daily by the end of August 2025.



MEASUREMENT

Number of Steps taken during physical activity each day.

CHANGE IDEAS

System based

Require more effort More effective

Person based

WEAK ACTIONS
Reminders
Warnings/labels
Rules/protocols/policies
Education/(Re)-training

Your ideas (weak actions)
Plan meal the previous day
Set exercise reminders on phone
Alarms for break time

MODERATELY STRONG ACTIONS
Automation/computerisations
Simplification & Standardisation
e.g. Pre-printed forms
Checklists
Cognitive aids
Double checks

Your ideas (moderately strong actions)
Join an online exercise support group
Take a hot meal to work
Sleep in exercise wear
Incorporate outdoor activity into the weekly family fun events

STRONG ACTIONS
Culture change
Forcing functions/constraints
Equipment/environment (re)-design
Automation/computerisation

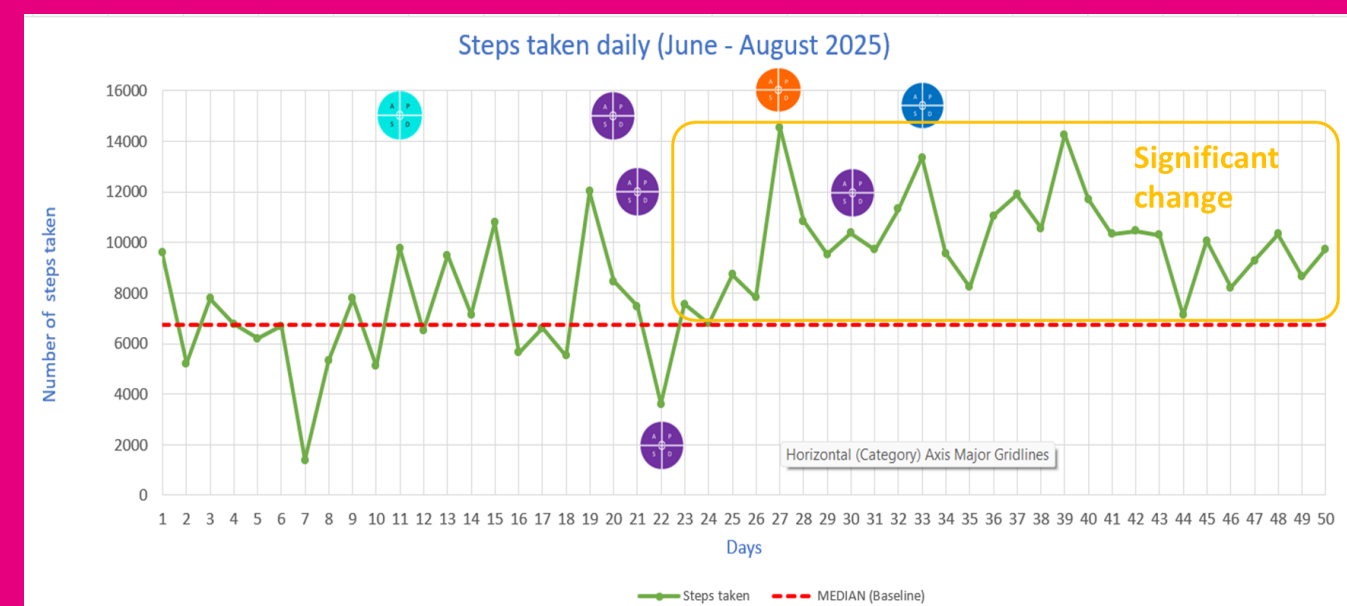
Your ideas (strong actions)
Walk to work
Start an indoor fitness program
Do the couch to 5k run

Modified from Institute of Safe Medication Practice, Canada, 1999 and BMJ Editorial, P Trbovich, K G Shojania, 2017

PDSA cycles

PDSA Test #	PLAN	Do	STUDY	ACT
1.	Sleep in exercise clothes	What did I observe – I was not very consistent. This worked on my off days and when I had an early night. How did others react? They were not convinced this was sustainable.	My initial enthusiasm wore off after a few days. It didn't address my preference for indoor activities, or the issues related to my work schedule.	Abandon
2.1	Walk to work	I walked to work on a standard day shift. What did I observe - I was late because I underestimated how long the walk would take. How did others react? They didn't understand why I was in a hurry to leave at an earlier time	Did it but I have to mentally change my 'out of the door time' and physically change alarms.	Adapt
2.2	Walk to work	I set my alarm to wake earlier, changed the 'Mum needs to leave now' alarm in the kid's room and reminded everyone I was walking to work. What did I observe - I got in to work early enough to cool off and be ready in time for handover. I felt pumped and ready to go after the walk. How did others react: Still some questions about 'Mum are you really walking to work?'	I made it out of the house in time. This went as planned, and there is more acceptance of this change. If I give this time, it will work but it is person based in the hierarchy of effectiveness and needs some modification.	Adapt
2.3	Walk to work	I planned to walk to work on my off day. What did I observe: I put off taking the work to and back my workplace as I didn't want to be seen around the hospital on my off day. How did others react: They were not exactly sure why this was an issue for me but accepted my decision	When I am off work, I will still have the issue of my preference for indoors to deal with. I need motivation to exercise on days I am off work (Peer support group_	Adapt
2.4	Walk to work	I walked to work on a long day shift. What did I observe: Walking back at the end of a long day shift is a task. I was worried about walking home alone that late. How did others react: My spouse walked to the hospital and we both walked back home	In the winter months, walking home in the dark is not something I look forward to. This won't work on days I work in a different hospital	Adapt
3	Join an online peer support group	What did I observe – It provided motivation on days I struggled with walking to work. How did others react – Not observed. I already belong to some interest groups on social media so this was not a big change in my life.	This provided motivation and would likely result in long-term changes. My change was likely to become a behaviour if I paired this with an activity I enjoyed in an environment that suited my lifestyle (indoors)	Adapt
4	Start couch to 5 k	What did I observe – I could do this indoors. Joining an online exercise peer group helped on days I was tired. How did others react – Kids joined on some occasions. My commitment to healthy lifestyle if rubbing off on others.	Maintained consistency even on my off days. It is likely to work even when I change work location. This test achieved my expected outcome	Adopt

RUN CHART



CONCLUSIONS

I achieved regular daily exercise by making one change at a time while still at the same job (The PDSA points are marked on the chart). The steps were significantly higher than the baseline value, and there were at least six consecutive points above the baseline (marked as a significant change on the chart), which shows that a desired outcome has been achieved.

Joining an online group and customising my exercise routine to fit my preference (indoor) were the key steps for the improvement. While alarms may seem insignificant, I now consider them moderately strong actions as they are easy to use and effective. My next step would be to continue these small changes and track my weight loss over the next 12 weeks.

REFLECTIONS & LEARNING

I previously overlooked the power of observation when doing a project, which meant that I started projects and quickly got overwhelmed. Taking the time to do all the initial observations and breaking down the problem as recommended by this model gave me clarity and helped me identify key points to target.

For a change to be effective, I must consider the team's specific needs and capabilities, particularly their ability to continue the project. I included an exercise program that can be completed indoors to help maintain consistency on my off days and when I change my work location.

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