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**Radio786: WoW! MY Wellness**

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**Topic:** Physical Wellness for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)

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Interview Questions

1. **What is physical wellness all about? Specifically for PLWHA?**

* Physical wellness means different things to different people, but essentially it refers to the **proper functioning** of the body in order to cope with the **physical** **activities of daily living (ADLs)**, inclusive of **domestic** and **work-related or occupational activities**, as well as having the **extra** **energy and capacity** to pursue **recreational and leisure activities**, such as hiking, swimming, playing sport, etc. without undue fatigue.
* Specifically for **PLWHA**, where the immune system is weakened or compromised due to infection by HIV, having **optimal physical wellness** is particularly important in order to strengthen the body’s **defense (immune) mechanisms** against the virus, as well as allow the individual to pursue their normal **activities of daily living** (ADLs) and maintain an **independent lifestyle** (free from illness and dependency on others: family, friends, relatives, work colleagues, etc.)

1. **Why should I adopt a physically active lifestyle? Specifically for PLWHA?**

* A physically active lifestyle means participating in **regular physical activity** when at **home** or at **work** or during your **leisure time**. The **range of physical activities** can vary from light domestic chores, such as making your bed, and sweeping your room or the yard, to more competitive sport activities, such as playing netball, basketball, or going to the gym. The physical activity you engage in needs to fit into your **fitness levels** and **current lifestyle**.
* A **physically active lifestyle** is important because it **improves** the **overall functioning** of the body, i.e., the muscles, bones, joints, and organs, like the heart and lungs. If your body is functioning properly, this impacts directly on your **quality of life** and your ability to **do things for yourself**, your family, and for others in the community or at work.
* Once again, specifically for **PLWHA**, the condition is a **tissue-wasting disorder** that results in the loss of muscle tissue, muscle strength, body weight and energy stores causing **chronic fatigue, lethargy and overall body weakness**. These ailments have a direct impact on your quality of life, and affect not only your physical and mental health, but also the people around you as well. So, for PLWHA, adopting and/or maintaining a **physically active lifestyle** is of critical importance to having a **good quality of life** and being **functionally independent**.

1. **Why have I failed so many times in the past, when I have tried to adopt an active lifestyle?**

* There are **many reasons** why people fail to stick to their **resolutions**, more especially with regard to being more physically active. Some of the more common reasons that people give are a **lack of time**, and lack of **energy**, being faced with other more pressing **family responsibilities** and chores, and all of these are equally important and valid. So, just as there are a range of reasons why people are not successful in being physically active in the long-term, so too are there many reasons why **many people become and remain physically active** for many years. There are some very good **role models** in every community, in every neighbourhood and on every street who get the **balance right** between being productive in their family and work lives, and being physically active and healthy in their personal lives. This does not happen by accident, but develops over time with years and years of practice and self-discipline. So, we need to **become role models for ourselves**, and be an example for ourselves of the better person I want to become.

1. **What are some of the tips that can be shared to help me adopt and maintain an active lifestyle?**

* We are **creatures of habit**. If you reflect back over the last 10 years of your life to check the times that you were physically active, this can be an important **predictor** of what you can expect in your daily behaviour over the next 10 years. So, how can you go about changing your past to prepare yourself better for your future?
* Start small, start with **baby-steps**. Identify the physical activities that you really enjoy: is it gardening, is it playing with the kids, is it playing with your friends? You should never underestimate the **social impact** of physically activity, because we are basically social beings, and we experience joy when we are around others who share similar interests and hobbies as ourselves. Next, identify regular times and days in the week, when you can perform the activity(ies), especially with others. Most times, it’s the social element that keeps us going when the activity becomes taxing and monotonous. The WHO guidelines on physical activity that benefits your health follows the **FITT principle**:
* **Frequency (how often)**: the activity should be performed for 3 or more days of the week that totals 150 minutes per week or an energy expenditure of 1500 kcal per week.
* **Intensity (how hard)**: the activity should be performed at a moderate-to-vigorous intensity making it difficult for you to hold a conversation with someone else, because it causes you to breathe faster (slight breathlessness) and sweat steadily.
* **Time (how long)**: the activity should be performed continuously for 10 – 30 minutes or more that causes your heart rate and breathing rate to increase steadily, and to remain elevated for this period of time.
* **Type**: the activity should involve mostly full body movement or aerobic activities, such as gardening, walking (especially up stairs), dancing, hiking, etc. Most people find it difficult to follow a fixed time for doing these activities. So, an alternative, is to accumulate small bouts of activity (2-3 minutes) during the course of the day, starting with domestic activities from the time you wake, such as making your bed, tidying and sweeping you room, doing the same around the house, maybe over the weekend, when you have more time, etc. The **idea** is to adopt a **healthy** **mindset** that enables you to seek out **opportunities** in your activities of daily living that allow you to be **more physically active** during your normal day, such as walking that flight of stairs that you keep avoiding every day. Sadly, there will come a time, when you body will be so weakened by being chronically inactive, that you won’t be able to climb that flight of stairs. The ADLs are going to be different for each person, but the end result is the same, i.e., you being more physically active, if you are not currently active. The healthy mindset is that physical activity should be seen as fun and time for you to feel good about yourself, rather than as a chore that must be done grudgingly. This latter mindset will never last!

1. **Where can one go for help and more information about being physically active?**

* One of the health initiatives in the Western Cape is the **Western Cape on Wellness (WoW) project**.

There website is: [www.westerncape.gov.za/wow](http://www.westerncape.gov.za/wow)

Email: [WoW@Westerncape.gov.za](mailto:WoW@Westerncape.gov.za)

* There are many **schools** in the community, and some tertiary **institutions** that have good facilities and equipment, as well as offer various **physical activity programmes**, such as “walk for life” and “run for life”.
* I’m at the University of the Western Cape and enjoy using the squash courts, but most importantly because of the social element. We have modified the game at UWC from having only 2 players per court to having 5-6 players and we rotate among ourselves. Being older players, this gives us a chance to recover between points, but still gives us an excellent workout in the end. So, this is an example of how we have modified the game to cater for our needs and advancing age. And the same can be done for other sports or activities as well in order to make them more attractive and inclusive for the older generation and people with special needs, and, thereby, keep us physically active throughout our lifespan.

Thank you.