

## **The New You: Promoting Health with the Nutrition and Exercise for Wellness and Recovery (NEW-R) Program**

**Recorded by Catana Brown, Ph.D.**

### **Slide 1**

Hello. Welcome to our training on promoting health by using the Nutrition and Exercise for Wellness and Recovery program, known as NEW-R. My name is Catana Brown, and I'm a professor of Occupational Therapy at Midwestern University. I'm also one of the creators of NEW-R, and have taught it many times to a variety of audiences. Today's training is offered by the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy, as part of the Illinois supported employment web portal. The web portal is a one-stop source of information for helping people with mental health conditions find and keep satisfying jobs. It contains a wealth of information about promoting employment, including ways to enhance physical health for work.

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Here is our agenda for today's training. First I'll review the health risks associated with being overweight or obese. I'll talk about the impact of being overweight on issues related to recovery, quality of life and employment. I'll review the purpose, principals, and format of NEW-R. I'll share the qualifications needed by instructors, as well as what training and preparation are required. I'll also describe marketing strategies for encouraging people to sign up for NEW-R. Then, I will review the content of each NEW-R session, along with tips for personalizing the information and activities to each participant's needs and strengths. I'll end by discussing how the environments in which participants live and receive services can help or hinder successful use of NEW-R.

### **Slide 4**

Obesity is considered a global health crisis. Nearly one-third of the world's population is overweight or obese. More and more people are dealing with weight issues, and this is particularly true in the industrialized nations of the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Many of us are struggling with maintaining a fit and healthy lifestyle. Excess weight is also considered a public health crisis because it is a significant risk factor for many serious medical conditions.

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A large number of medical conditions are associated with obesity. These include heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, sleep apnea, osteoarthritis, gallbladder disease, joint problems, stroke and some cancers. So it's not just obesity itself that is problematic for many overweight individuals. The good news is that a reduction in weight can also lead to improvements in these other health concerns.

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As I'm sure you all know, adults in mental health recovery are significantly more likely to be overweight than those not coping with mental health challenges. In a recent review of the scientific literature, Bradshaw and Mairs determined that 46 to 79% of people with mental illnesses were found to be overweight in a series of studies. And this research also shows that they were significantly more likely to be overweight than those in the general population. In short, the obesity epidemic is hitting people in recovery harder than it is other people.

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People in recovery are at greater risk for obesity for several complex reasons. First, they're more likely to have a sedentary lifestyle, especially when they're unemployed or not engaged in some other productive activity. Because many of them live on fixed incomes, they're also more likely to eat packaged foods that are higher in fat and calories, and lower in fiber. Another reason is that many medications that people take, both for psychiatric and medical reasons, lead to weight gain. Many people also lack access to health care, especially the kind of preventative health care that could help them better manage their weight. Finally, we know that people in recovery are more likely to avoid or drop out of commercial weight loss programs, such as Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig.

There is hope, however. Even a small amount of weight loss can help improve people's health and longevity. We know from research that, with support, people in recovery can and do lose weight.

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Obesity plays a role in a vicious cycle of challenging life situations. It's not clear where the cycle begins or the order of impact, but individuals who are overweight tend to have more physical and behavioral health concerns. These concerns can reduce people's participation in fulfilling daily activities. For example, their physical challenges may make it more difficult to engage in self-care and home maintenance. Lower self-esteem may make it less appealing to get involved in social activities. As a result, life in general can be much more demanding for people who are overweight.

## **Slide 9**

Employment is an important aspect of daily life for most adults. Unfortunately, many overweight people face discrimination in the workplace. It is well-documented that people who carry excess weight are seen as less competent, despite their actual skills and abilities. This bias means that overweight individuals are less likely to be hired, and when they are employed, they are less likely to receive promotions and tend to have lower earnings. It's important for people who either deliver or receive supported employment services to be aware of these work-related biases faced by people with co-occurring mental illness and obesity.

## **Slide 10**

In addition to the double discrimination that overweight people in recovery may face in the workplace, there are other reasons why losing weight may be beneficial for workers. Losing weight can make it easier to perform job duties, particularly when the work is physical in nature. Additionally, after losing weight, sick days may be reduced and a general increase in energy can be expected.

## **Slide 11**

What prevents people in recovery from successful use of commercial weight loss programs? For one thing, these programs charge fees or require the purchase of prepared foods that many people in recovery can't afford. Additionally, finding transportation to the weight loss groups, or arranging for childcare in order to attend, is difficult for many people. Importantly, commercial programs are not set up to accommodate unique learning and cognitive needs that some people with mental health challenges have. The leaders of these weight loss programs are skilled instructors, but they often aren't aware of effective instructional methods, such as those used in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation, as I'll describe later. Finally, many people feel isolated or unwelcome in commercial weight loss programs, because they face discrimination and rejection due to their mental health problems. These barriers inspired us to develop our own weight management program. We wanted to provide a safe way for people in recovery to effectively work on developing a healthier lifestyle.

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NEW-R is an 8-week weight loss program I developed with the assistance of my colleagues Jeannine Goetz and Cherie Bledsoe. We combined our expertise to develop a healthy lifestyle program that addresses the specific needs of individuals in recovery. It's based on a successful and intensive 12-month weight loss program we developed earlier to meet the special needs of people in recovery. NEW-R helps people learn about healthy eating and safe physical activity. They also learn new skills to apply this health information in their daily lives, based on their personal strengths, needs, likes, and dislikes. The concept of intentionality is promoted throughout the NEW-R curriculum. Intentionality means making a commitment to take action. It comes from realizing that life is made up of choices. We can choose to drift through life, or we can choose to take actions each day that will make us feel better. Intentionality involves stepping back to assess how your personality and environment interact to affect your choices. Then, you make concrete plans and set goals to achieve what you want within the context of your life.

While NEW-R is designed to promote weight loss, we do recognize that not everyone is ready to commit to losing weight. But even for those who are on the fence about it, by learning about healthy eating and exercise, they are building a foundation and learning the tools they'll need when they're ready to begin losing weight. In fact, I've had this experience on several occasions when offering NEW-R. In some cases, people who finished the program came to me weeks or months later and shared stories of being ready to lose weight and using the information and skills they learned in NEW-R to be successful. Others attended a second or third offering of NEW-R and found themselves ready to make changes.

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Why is NEW-R so popular? For one thing, it's relatively brief and easy to offer in different kinds of settings, such as outpatient mental health clinics, psychiatric rehabilitation programs, peer-run centers, or supported employment programs. Also, the content and approaches NEW-R uses come from national wellness experts on recovery, including peers in the field of health education. NEW-R is also informed by research, and our research suggests that it works. Our pilot study of NEW-R found that people lost up to 10 pounds after participating in 8-weeks of NEW-R sessions.

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NEW-R is based on principles of psychiatric rehabilitation. Psychiatric rehabilitation is a therapeutic approach that focuses on restoring community functioning and well-being of people diagnosed with a mental or emotional condition. NEW-R incorporates five psychiatric rehabilitation strategies. First, it offers both instrumental and social support to participants. Instrumental supports helps people apply the new knowledge they get from NEW-R. Applying this knowledge involves using tangible resources, such as recipes, food portion guides, pedometers, and exercise videos. Social support is provided through the group format, as people work together to overcome the challenges they face in building a healthier lifestyle.

A second psychiatric rehabilitation strategy is goal-setting, which allows participants to decide how to fit what they're learning into their own lives and situations. Importantly, goal-setting is also a core component of many weight loss programs. Research shows that goal-setting is important in making lifestyle changes, and NEW-R works towards goal-setting that is relevant and realistic for each individual.

A third strategy is skills training. NEW-R instruction simplifies the skills that need to be mastered. It does this by providing role models for healthy living, and allowing for practice at each session and in-between sessions. Each session of NEW-R is filled with active learning exercises. Participants have the opportunity to apply the content in class and again in their own lives. It also reinforces success, while providing support when people encounter setbacks. Using these strategies helps participants become confident that they can make changes, and increases their motivation to continue with NEW-R.

A fourth psychiatric rehabilitation strategy is transfer training, which helps participants move what they are learning from the classroom to their lives. NEW-R helps people apply what they learn by providing participants with meal planners, charts to record healthy choices, and homework in which they work on weekly goals.

Finally, NEW-R uses cognitive compensation, to help learners with special needs master each session's content. This is done by focusing on only a few learning goals each week, and repeating certain lessons every week. Repetition includes weekly commitment to intentionality, testimonials, and monitoring of goals. NEW-R also uses different instructional methods, including lectures, active learning, and peer mentoring.

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As you consider whether to offer NEW-R, you may be wondering if it's suitable for the people you work with, that is, your clients, patients, or peers. You should know that NEW-R is designed to be safe for most people, with a few notes of caution. First, as people sample new foods and plan new meals, be sure to remind them to avoid foods that they shouldn't eat because of their medications or medical conditions. For example, people who take certain medications to lower cholesterol need to avoid eating grapefruit. Also, we strongly recommend that some people get their doctor's approval before participating in NEW-R. This includes people with heart conditions, those who've experienced eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia, and pregnant women. Many people in recovery have physical ailments, such as problems with their backs or knees, but they still can participate in NEW-R's weekly exercise component by staying seated.

## **Slide 16**

It's helpful for instructors to be aware of NEW-R's foundational principles. Understanding these principles leads to more effective teaching. As I discussed earlier, NEW-R is based on being intentional. This is done by helping participants make daily plans for healthy eating and exercise. Additionally, part of intentionality is striving to engage in meaningful or purposeful activities each day. Later, I'll review exactly how this is done but, for now, remember that the more purpose we have in life, the more likely we are to be motivated to change or improve our health habits.

## **Slide 17**

While we don't want to over-emphasize weight loss to NEW-R participants, the fact is that changing how much one eats has the biggest impact on weight management. Safely restricting calories is necessary for people to lose excess weight. In NEW-R, we believe that intentionally being aware of what we're eating is a great way to change our food intake, both in terms of eating less and choosing healthier options. In our experience, often times participants are surprised to learn that the foods they eat on a regular basis are very high in calories or are lacking in nutrients. By making some small changes, these individuals can find more nutritious or lower calorie foods that they like just as much. NEW-R asks participants to commit to exercising because it has many health benefits. Since we recognize that boredom and being too sedentary can lead to overeating, we stress the importance of exercising and also having meaningful activities. Physical activity is key to a healthy lifestyle, and it helps people keep off the weight they've lost.

## **Slide 18**

The more we believe in ourselves, the more likely we are to achieve our goals. For this reason, NEW-R instructors work to create a hopeful atmosphere in group sessions, so people can begin to believe in their ability to lead a healthier lifestyle. This hopefulness is based on knowing that even a small amount of weight loss can have a big impact on health and well-being. NEW-R instructors also work to dispel the many myths and misconceptions that people have about dieting. Often, people say that they can't afford to eat healthy, they can't find time to exercise, that vegetables and fruit just don't taste good, and that they don't want to give up their comfort foods because their lives are stressful and difficult. Throughout the curriculum, NEW-R helps both instructors and participants overcome and move beyond these ways of thinking.

## **Slide 19**

NEW-R instructors are encouraged to understand that food has meaning in people's lives beyond sustenance. In all societies, food plays an important role in conveying cultural or religious beliefs, creating a sense of community, and supporting people when in need. Therefore, it's important for both instructors and participants to think about the cultural role of food as they seek to change their health habits. This means considering one's own community, and the role of food in its celebrations, holidays, worship, and hard times. It's also critical to be aware of personal experience and the generational impact of restricted access to food. For example, African Americans, Native Americans, and other diverse groups in the U.S. have not always had control over where or how they could shop or have a meal. Through the applied learning emphasized in NEW-R, participants have the opportunity to talk about issues related to culture and food, and get support for choosing healthy options while still honoring their traditions and beliefs.

## **Slide 20**

NEW-R classes meet for 90 minutes each week over two months. We believe that the group format is very important for the social and peer support it provides. We encourage participants to use the group members as supports outside of the NEW-R sessions. For example, participants will often pair up as exercise buddies or will eat together at the peer program to help one another make healthy choices. The group format also offers motivation that comes from being accountable to supportive others about our eating and exercise choices. However, NEW-R has been offered in 1-on-1 sessions, which might work best in some settings, due to service billing requirements or other logistical demands. However, we feel that some of the critical ingredients of NEW-R are lost when it is delivered as an individual service. We also recommend that NEW-R be offered only once a week. This allows enough time for participants to work on their goals and alter their habits in between sessions.

## **Slide 21**

NEW-R sessions also are best taught in community settings where participants have control over their meal planning, can exercise regularly, and be physically active. We've designed NEW-R to be used by people at lower reading levels, and for people who don't know much about nutrition and physical activity.

## **Slide 22**

In order to guide the physical activity component of NEW-R sessions, I worked with occupational therapy students and people in recovery to develop 8 exercise videos for use in the classes. Each video is 20 to 25 minutes in length, and can be used during class as well as in-between sessions. The videos are offered in order, with exercises progressing from least to most strenuous, including stretching, yoga, dancing, kick boxing, and a core workout. The exercises are demonstrated by people who stand and others who sit, to encourage people at varying levels of physical fitness to participate safely. The videos stream from the Center's web site. But if you prefer, you can also contact the Center to request DVDs to play from a laptop. We made sure that NEW-R also provides many suggestions for other forms of exercise, if showing the videos isn't feasible. Remember, while exercising and physical activity are very important for participants' health, nobody should be pushed beyond what is safe or comfortable for them.

The NEW-R class format also reflects the growing evidence for the role of feedback as a motivator for creating new habits. One feedback mechanism that is especially effective is private weigh-ins at the beginning of each session. Participants should be told before joining NEW-R that there will be weekly weigh-ins to help them become more self-aware, remain motivated, and monitor progress. It's common for someone who is overweight to be surprised by how much he or she weighs. This awareness can then have a powerful impact on the desire to lose weight. At the same time, it's important that weigh-ins be handled sensitively, with support for whatever the scale reveals. Instructors must ensure that nobody feels judged or shamed by how much they weigh, so that the feedback will stimulate positive action rather than shame or hopelessness. Other types of effective feedback include recording one's calories each day, and using a device for reminders of when it's time to exercise like a Fitbit or iPhone app.

## **Slide 23**

Let's look now at how the foundational principles of NEW-R make up its framework for success, with five key commitments.

## **Slide 24**

The first commitment is being intentional. To translate this principle into action, NEW-R participants are helped to plan what they will do each day, especially regarding meals, snacks, and exercise. We don't expect participants to make a lot of changes all at once. However we ask participants to think about ways to be intentional. For example, a participant may be attending a party in the upcoming week and a plan could be put in place for how to eat reasonably at the party. The intentionality plan is discussed and adjusted at every session. Putting intentionality into practice also means that participants both give and receive peer support to create a mindset for health and lifestyle changes. Finally, participants are told that being intentional involves committing to attend every class for the entire two months. Showing up is half the battle and, even if people don't lose weight in the first two months, there's a good chance they will eventually lose weight if they commit to learning how to change their lifestyle.

## **Slide 25**

The second commitment is to setting goals for improved eating and exercise. NEW-R works partly because people are taught to set goals they can actually reach. Knowing you have a goal you can reach, given both your strengths and your limitations, is one of the most powerful ingredients of successful weight management. By proclaiming a goal, people aren't leaving their good intentions to chance. For some participants, one combined weekly goal for healthier eating and exercise will work. Others will find it better to set one reachable goal for eating and a separate reachable goal for exercising. Every week, participants discuss how they fared in reaching their goals, and set new goals or tweak existing ones. We encourage participants to write their goals on a card that can be placed somewhere they'll see it every day. If it seems helpful and they have the time, instructors can meet with participants between classes, to review and revise goals, and provide personalized support for goal attainment. Magic will start to happen as people reach their smaller goals, their confidence grows, and they begin to believe that they really can eat healthier and be more physically active.

## **Slide 26**

The third commitment is to both giving and receiving support. First of all, the group involves meeting with people who also want to learn about healthier choices, which is a form of social support in and of itself. Instructors can promote even more social support by helping participants form a friendship with someone in the class who has similar viewpoints or goals. Instructors and participants can offer one another support between classes as well, through regular emails, text messages, phone calls, or meetings. If the program can arrange for it, instructors can make use of peer coaches inside and outside of class to help people master new content and skills.

## **Slide 27**

We recommend that control of class discussions be transferred from instructors to participants over time. The more ownership people assume for their own weight management process, and the more confidence they build, the more likely they are to continue applying their new knowledge and skills. Maintaining regular exercise can be very challenging for participants. We've found that arranging for peer coaches, students, or volunteers to facilitate exercise sessions between NEW-R classes helps keep people on-track with their exercise goals. A walking group is an easy way to keep people moving during the week.

## Slide 28

The fourth commitment is to developing a structured daily life. It's one thing to say that we'll find purposeful things to do each day, and another thing to actually get out and do them. This is why we strongly recommend that participants create a *written* plan for their day, as a way to add positive structure. It can be awkward to do this at first, but over time, people begin to see the value of having reasons to get out of bed and work on their well-being. Having a written plan for one's day is a clear way to put intentionality into practice. One is not just committing to being more intentional, but also specifying exactly *how* and *when*. Also, knowing when to stop and eat a healthy meal or take a long walk builds healthier habits right into one's daily routine.

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Here are some sample statements for a daily plan. An Intentionality Plan often includes what time to wake up, which meaningful activities to do, how to spend time moving one's body, which healthy foods to eat, how and when to offer support to others, and where and when to seek support. An important part of intentionality is self-forgiveness when goals aren't met or unhealthy habits are resumed, as they often will be.

## Slide 30

The final commitment people are asked to make is to maintain progress after the class ends. This starts with a celebration ceremony at the final session. The ceremony is a time to emphasize that this is not the end, but the beginning of healthier habits and choices. During the final session, participants are also encouraged to create a maintenance plan, similar to their intentionality plan. This maintenance plan includes ongoing goal-setting for healthier eating and exercise. It's also helpful to talk with participants about how they might stay in touch with each other to continue receiving support. Some settings have offered NEW-R on a regular basis throughout the year, and have allowed NEW-R graduates to enroll again if they want the extra support and practice. On several occasions, NEW-R graduates have served as guest speakers in new groups, sharing their challenges and ultimate successes with the program. Graduates of NEW-R may also make good candidates for co-leaders of subsequent group offerings.

## Slide 31

Given the importance of weight loss for people in recovery, we designed NEW-R to be taught by instructors without intensive training or certification. However, we do have a number of recommendations for people who are preparing to offer the intervention. First, people who wish to be instructors need to receive NEW-R training, which includes watching this webinar. Second, they should read and become very familiar with the leader and participant manuals. We recommend that classes be co-taught by two instructors, with a third for back-up, in case one of the primary teachers is unavailable. Holding practice sessions with each other and involving other co-workers or peers as an audience is also strongly suggested. Instructors should visit the government web site called ChooseMyPlate to learn more about nutrition, healthy eating, and goal-setting. This web site is also a useful resource when participants have nutrition questions that instructors can't answer. It's always okay for instructors to say they don't know the answer to a participant's question, and that they'll try to find out using reliable sources such as ChooseMyPlate to share at the next session. It's a good idea for one or both instructors to have experience running health education groups. Finally, we strongly suggest that at least one of the two instructors be a person in mental health recovery. It's not necessary for instructors to be of normal weight or very physically fit to lead NEW-R. We believe that a good role model is someone who is actively engaged in learning to eat healthier and to exercise, just like the group members.



### **Slide 32**

Once aware of the principles, content, and flow of NEW-R, instructors should be ready to get started. Preparation starts each week by re-reading the session notes 2 to 3 days before class, no matter how many times you've taught it. This is also the time to decide which instructor will cover which points of the curriculum. Instructors should gather the needed supplies, including different fruits and vegetables for participants to sample. When doing this, they should keep in mind that texture is a primary reason that people reject new foods. Instructors can poll the group for preferred textures, such as crunchy or chewy, and try to supply foods with these textures. Additionally, it's well-known that many people who receive public mental health services have poor dental health, so they may find eating hard fruits and vegetables to be painful. Sampling softer choices is often better for those who cannot manage harder whole foods.

### **Slide 33**

When it comes to the exercise segment of each class, instructors should be prepared for participants' reluctance. Many people won't have exercised in a long time. Others will think they have to be fit or have attractive workout clothes in order to participate. Some may resist exercising in front of other people. These are all legitimate concerns. We've found that it's essential to plan ways of exercising that are fun, in addition to using the videos. For example, during the first session, instructors can poll the group for their favorite dance songs. These can then be downloaded and played during the next class to get people moving. Also, we've found that even people who refuse all forms of exercise are willing to throw a ball or a Frisbee, which helps them loosen up and remember that exercising can be enjoyable. Another simple way to get people moving is to have the group form a circle. It's okay if some people need to stay seated. While playing dance music in the background, ask each person around the circle to share an exercise for everyone to perform. The leaders can help modify the exercise for those who remain seated. We've found that this activity often leads to lots of laughing, and participants end up moving more vigorously and for longer periods of time than would have been expected.

### **Slide 34**

Instructors will need to market NEW-R, in order to encourage people to sign up. Instructors, and the programs they work for, should be prepared to face some initial hesitation when they approach people about joining NEW-R. This comes in different forms. The first is lack of interest in joining another group where they discuss their mental health needs. To address this barrier, you should emphasize that this is not a mental health group. Instead, it's a weight management program, like any other they might join in the community. But unlike other programs, NEW-R isn't totally focused on weight loss. Instead, it's a fun and personalized way to learn about healthy eating and exercise. Finally, there are no judgments or body shaming in NEW-R.

### **Slide 35**

In your marketing efforts, it's also helpful to explain that NEW-R is designed especially for people in mental health recovery, and builds on their special strengths. Peer support, hope, and encouragement are offered in abundance. You'll want to clarify that people don't have to give up their comfort foods or favorite dishes. Instead, they'll learn how to eat the foods they love in moderation through measured portions.

### **Slide 36**

Earlier, I mentioned that people are asked to show their intentionality by committing to attend every class. That said, lack of reliable transportation will be a barrier for many people. It's helpful if your program or agency can assist with transportation. This can be done by offering the classes at a time when most people are able to catch a ride with family or friends, or by providing vans that take people to and from their homes, or stipends to help people pay for public transportation or a taxi. NEW-R works because it is highly individualized. We recognize that participants will differ in the types of changes they can and want to make, and in the weight management they can achieve. People are more likely to have positive outcomes if they're helped to make choices that best match their needs, preferences, and lifestyles. We've found that it's important to acknowledge people's changes, whatever they may be. Some people will lose significant weight and this should be celebrated, as should someone's first efforts to cut down on soda, skip a second helping, eat a smaller piece of cake, try a new vegetable, go for a walk, or even just start thinking about ways to be healthier.

### **Slide 37**

You may be aware of the Stages of Change model, which suggests that people move along a continuum as they prepare to change their behavior. This means that some NEW-R participants will be ready to take action right away, while others will only be ready to think about making changes but not yet ready to act. Everyone will benefit from hearing testimonials, seeing others enjoy new health habits, and learning about nutrition and exercise, even if they're not yet ready to make changes. No matter how ready a person may be, losing weight is challenging for most people. For this reason, we recommend focusing on what people can do, rather than on what they can't do or on areas where someone else thinks they need to improve.

### **Slide 38**

One of the best ways to engage people in NEW-R is to make it fun and interesting. Ask people questions about what they think or believe. Encourage group discussion and get people involved in the activities. Don't be afraid to laugh and enjoy the time spent together.

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If you can, giving people resources, such as pedometers, pocket-sized calorie counting books, or healthy snacks, can increase their enjoyment as well. Be sure to keep extra participant binders on-hand for when people lose theirs or forget to bring it to class.

### **Slide 40**

When teaching NEW-R, you'll notice that there are common elements in every session. Each week starts with an inspirational quote to create a positive mindset. Each class includes didactic instruction, followed by active learning, where people apply what they've heard to their own lives. Goals are discussed and set each week. Participants exercise together during every session, and each class ends with a success story. Whenever possible, we recommend that the people in the group work together to prepare and share a meal right after class. This is one of the best ways to provide different examples of delicious, healthy meals. Also, while eating that meal, participants enjoy brainstorming what meal they'll prepare after next week's session. This is a good time for them to consider other cuisines than the ones they're used to or grew up with.

## Slide 41

Next, let's take a tour of the content of each NEW-R class.

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Session 1 is called, "I Can Make a Change." The facilitators start by reviewing the format and components of NEW-R. We've found it's important for them to set the tone for the 2-month class by sharing their enthusiasm and belief that each person will have something positive to gain from NEW-R. Next, facilitators talk about the effects of over-eating and obesity on people's physical and mental health. They review many of the consequences of excess weight that I discussed earlier. Participants are asked to write down ways that their weight has affected their own health or lifestyles. This is done to help them create motivation for change, if they do want to lose some weight. To avoid overwhelming participants with facts about the health risks of obesity, facilitators share the encouraging news that even small amounts of weight loss can have a positive impact on people's overall health. In this session, facilitators also present the concept of intentionality, and how it relates to weight loss. As mentioned previously, by intentionality we mean the decision to engage in purposeful actions every day to feel well within the context of your own life. It's helpful to point out that the fact that participants have signed up for NEW-R indicates intentionality. It's important to remember that being intentional takes practice. Our daily life is made up of routines, and we may put little thought into what we eat each day or how much time we spend in sedentary activities. NEW-R provides strategies to help participants make plans and carry out more intentional healthy lifestyles. To help people understand what this means for them, facilitators share several simple ways to be intentional in NEW-R, such as by attending each class, or by finding one person to share and support a new exercise goal.

## Slide 43

One unique and important aspect of NEW-R is that it helps participants to apply what they're learning in their own lives, taking into consideration their personal needs, struggles, and strengths. So, to help participants apply what they've learned in Session 1, they're given a two-page list of possible eating and exercise goals that they could set. For this handout, we specifically chose goals that illustrate what it means to set a *reachable* goal. Participants are instructed to record the amount or frequency with which they plan to engage in their new goal, based on their unique situations. Some examples include, choosing to eat 2 servings of fruit each day, or eliminating the whipped cream from their coffee drink for 3 mornings, or replacing French fries with a salad for 1 dinner.

## Slide 44

Turning to Session 2, participants next learn the ABCs of healthier eating. New learning in this session begins with the definition of a calorie, which is basically a unit of energy used by the body to help it function. Facilitators also describe how calories affect weight. They also introduce an effective system for controlling calories, called ChooseMyPlate. ChooseMyPlate helps people see, in a very simple and concrete way, how to limit portion sizes and to fill their plates with more vegetables and fruit. Using ChooseMyPlate, participants see which foods to increase and which to decrease for better health. When talking about how to build a healthier plate, facilitators also emphasize the importance of eating a variety of foods. Next, facilitators review the 5 food groups represented in ChooseMyPlate, which are grains, fruit, vegetables, protein, and dairy. Discussion centers on how to choose wisely from each of these groups. One example is to choose fish over red meat in the protein group. Overall, the amount of information about each food group in this session can be overwhelming to participants. So, the take-home message should emphasize the importance of fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables tend to be the most lacking in the American diet. However, they're important because fruits and vegetables tend to be

much lower in calories and higher in fiber, vitamins, and essential nutrients. We have found that the discussion of “empty calories” has a big impact on people during Session 2. Empty calories are those that increase weight without also providing healthy energy or nutrients. The biggest sources of empty calories for most participants tend to be soda and packaged foods, such as chips or crackers. Participants learn that they can quickly shed weight simply by replacing their soda or pop with a healthier beverage, like water or unsweetened tea.

#### **Slide 45**

Because many people aren’t sure how to reduce their empty calories, Session 2 includes active learning to help them see how to replace processed foods with whole foods. The participant binder offers examples, such as eating an apple rather than either commercial applesauce or an apple-flavored toaster pastry. During this session, it’s important for facilitators to help participants identify 2 or 3 empty-calorie foods that are having a big impact on their daily caloric intake. In our experience, it can be enlightening for people to recognize the difference one change can make when somebody is drinking large amounts of sugary beverages, or regularly eating a full bag of chips or a big bowl of ice cream every night. If so, discuss a realistic goal that doesn’t involve eliminating that food right away. For example, a reasonable goal can be to reduce the amount of ice cream by 1 scoop at first, or divide the chips into 2 or 3 smaller bags to eat over several days. Based on their own likes and dislikes, participants record in their binders how they might add more vegetables, fruit, and healthy protein to their diets.

#### **Slide 46**

In the third week of class, participants are taught about “Reading Food Labels and Portion Control.” Many of us tend to buy packaged or canned foods – like bread, crackers, macaroni and cheese, or soup – without stopping to read the food labels first. So, NEW-R teaches participants how to analyze and understand a food label, especially the serving size. Discussion focuses on using food labels to reduce calories, by understanding how many serving sizes are in a package. Facilitators illustrate this concept with an activity where participants calculate the number of calories in 1 serving of boxed macaroni and cheese compared to 2 servings of it. Participants can see how they have to double everything on the food label when they eat 2 servings instead of 1. Facilitators also teach how to read a food label for how much fat and salt an item has, and how much of the daily value this represents. Participants learn that it’s best to avoid foods that have 20% or more of the daily value for sodium, sugar, and fat. Again using ChooseMyPlate, participants talk about how they can control their portions by filling half of their plates with fruits and vegetables for as many meals as possible. They’re given a list of tips in their binders for controlling food intake, such as having a glass of water about 10 minutes before a meal or eating a lightly dressed salad first.

#### **Slide 47**

Session 3 often makes an impression on people because they tend to eat a lot of packaged and convenience foods. We’ve found that the effect is even greater if participants are asked during Session 2 to bring labels from their favorite foods to class for Session 3. And, facilitators also are instructed to bring in food labels to round out this activity. Analyzing labels from foods that participants commonly eat can have a big impact on their understanding of where their calories are coming from. To further personalize the information, participants are given a handout in their binders that uses common objects to identify how much of something to eat. For example, a 3-ounce hamburger is about the size of a deck of playing cards. In this session, it’s important not to overemphasize cutting back on the amount of food people eat because people will start worrying about feeling hungry. By sharing information about lean meats, fruits, and particularly vegetables, participants can see how they can still eat a reasonable amount of food if they

make healthier choices. Finally, they also record 3 ways they will control their portions in the coming week.

#### **Slide 48**

Session 4 is called, “Let’s Get Moving!” Although everyone will be encouraged to exercise at every class, this is the session where participants learn about the benefits of physical activity. Their binders contain many suggestions for safe and simple ways to become more active. Facilitators help participants identify exercises that they would actually enjoy doing. They are reminded that the best exercise is the one that they like to do. Social support is particularly useful when trying to establish new habits around exercise. If participants live close together, you can encourage them to get together on their own to exercise. If they don’t live near classmates, participants can identify a family member or friend who might be willing to exercise with them. Also provide information about free or low-cost resources. Talk about other groups at your site that offer physical activity or provide information about mall-walking or outdoor trails people can use.

#### **Slide 49**

To further personalize this information, facilitators help the participants to review an Activity Pyramid, which shows exercises they can do every day, 2 or 3 times a week, and 3 to 5 times a week. A strong emphasis is placed on finding enjoyable exercises, and making a commitment to doing them in-between classes. To help them understand why this is important, active learning involves helping participants calculate how often they move during a typical day. Many people are surprised by how much time they spend sitting or lying down while awake. Many of us believe that we move around more than we actually do! Seeing just how much time they spend sitting or lying down can help participants motivate to set a new exercise goal.

#### **Slide 50**

The fifth week is devoted to learning about “Eating Out.” We’ve found that it’s important to acknowledge that dining out is fun, and it’s a valued social activity that participants don’t have to give up. At the same time, eating in restaurants does present challenges to maintaining a healthy diet. So, the focus in week 5 is helping participants learn to be intentional when at restaurants. This includes limiting portion sizes by eating less of what is usually served at most restaurants. One tip is to put half of a large meal right into a take-out container at the beginning of the meal. Participants also are encouraged to intentionally choose the healthiest options from the menu. They learn that it’s easier to do this by looking up the menu ahead of time, and planning what they’re going to eat. That way, once they’re at the restaurant, they can enjoy themselves without worrying about whether they’re choosing an unhealthy or high calorie option.

#### **Slide 51**

Techniques for eating out are further personalized when participants complete charts showing how they themselves will replace unhealthy foods with healthier ones when eating in restaurants. For example, they might decide to order marinara sauce rather than cream sauce on a pasta dish, or order their tacos without sour cream and cheese. They also learn how to use the popular Calorie King® book and online calculators to figure out the calorie content of their favorite restaurant foods, and how to reduce those calories by making different choices. This is another high-impact activity. Participants are often unaware of the calorie counts of the foods they eat when dining out. In our experience, participants often make choices they think are healthy – for example, choosing fish or salad – when in actuality they’re choosing fried fish or salad with high-calorie toppings, which can be some of the least healthy choices. Participants typically can find alternatives that they’ll also enjoy at the same restaurant. If possible, we’ve found it’s helpful for

the class to visit a local fast food restaurant together to practice ordering healthier options than they might normally get. Many fast food restaurants now post the calories of their items making it easier to choose healthier options. This can be practiced if you dine together as a part of the session. Then, everyone can sit down to eat and enjoy their time together, helping to show that eating out can still be fun, even when choosing healthier options.

### **Slide 52**

The next session is called, “Meal Planning and Thrifty Shopping.” Here, participants learn the value of meal planning because it helps people both to choose healthier options and to save money. Facilitators teach participants how to use a meal planner, which starts with checking for the foods they have on-hand before going to the store, and checking the newspaper or circulars for coupons. Meal planning also involves making a detailed grocery list. Having a list and coupons in-hand before arriving at the store are great ways to buy healthier options and save money. Facilitators also emphasize the importance of sticking to a food budget. One effective way to do this is to set aside grocery money in an envelope that is used only for that purpose each week or biweekly. Participants also discuss how to cut costs while buying healthy foods, such as by watching for weekly sales, buying frozen vegetables and fruits instead of fresh ones, and making one meal during the week for which the leftovers will be incorporated into a second meal.

### **Slide 53**

Many people believe that eating healthy foods is expensive, and it certainly can be. But it also can be cheaper than some other buying habits. To illustrate this fact, facilitators lead an activity showing that a bag of fresh oranges can cost the same per serving as a large bag of potato chips. They also discuss that the oranges will last longer and, of course, that they’re healthier. In this session, facilitators also review strategies for buying the healthiest foods for the least amount of money. Participants learn to avoid shopping when they’re hungry, to shop the perimeter of the store where the fresh foods are usually found, and to comparison shop to find the best deals.

### **Slide 54**

Facilitators further personalize this session by having participants practice filling in a meal planner with what they will eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks for an entire week. In this session, you can help facilitate this process by having participants share ideas for healthy foods they like to prepare. You might also consider bringing in cookbooks or handouts for recipes. If you have been sharing snacks or lunch as part of NEW-R make sure the participants have those recipes.

### **Slide 55**

In Session 7, participants learn the value of cooking at home and how to prepare healthy meals. They start by again reviewing food labels, and where to find information about the amount of fat that an item has. Facilitators also review the different types of fat an item might contain, like saturated fats, and how these impact health. Then, they ask participants to review their binders for multiple tips on how to prepare lower-fat and lower-calorie meals. Participants also analyze a meal they commonly prepare, and learn how to reduce its fat and sugar content. Facilitators guide a discussion on how, even though it can take more time, cooking at home can help people eat more nutritious meals and save money.

## **Slide 56**

To guide participants towards healthier choices, facilitators teach them how to use a stoplight analogy to categorize their foods. A green light means the food is healthy, a yellow light means it's acceptable, and a red light suggests that it's an unhealthy choice. Participants also receive a 2-page handout with tips to reduce their calories and fat when cooking, such as by replacing heavy cream with plain yogurt, or substituting olive oil for butter. Facilitators encourage the participants to create a written plan for how they'll use healthier ingredients at home, such as replacing salt with a non-sodium seasoning like lemon pepper.

## **Slide 57**

The final session is called, "Celebrating Accomplishments." During this class, participants are given the opportunity to identify and celebrate 3 changes they've made since joining NEW-R. As part of the celebration, they're reminded that change is a process that builds over time, and that if they stick with their new habits, they're more likely to lose weight. Participants end this class by receiving a certificate of completion.

## **Slide 58**

It's important that everyone have something to celebrate at Session 8. Some people will have lost weight, others will have made new friends in the class, and still others will have tried a new physical activity. Everyone will have learned about healthier eating and exercise. Each participant makes a final *Plan for Being Intentional*, to use after the class ends. This plan includes such things as getting up at a reasonable hour, connecting with others, and eating healthy foods. Facilitators also encourage participants to discuss whether they want to meet on their own for continued support, and to provide the gentle accountability that is so helpful in weight loss programs.

## **Slide 59**

A final aspect to consider when deciding to offer NEW-R is the role of the environment in weight management. The environment is a very important, and often overlooked, factor in successful weight loss. It's not too hard to imagine why. I'm guessing that many of us can probably think of times when we've had the best of intentions to lose weight, but found it hard to succeed when we didn't have enough support or we ran up against barriers in our environment. For this reason, we encourage facilitators, and the organizations offering NEW-R, to think carefully about how participants' home life, as well as the program setting, may support or undermine people's attempts at weight management.

## **Slide 60**

Many people believe that America is what we call "obesogenic," which means a culture that promotes weight gain and discourages weight loss. You may wonder how that can be. Well, it becomes clearer when we consider the large portion sizes served in many American restaurants, kids' menus that give children a taste for unhealthy foods from a young age, the widespread passion for high-calorie specialty coffees and other drinks, and the tendency we have to drive everywhere instead of walking or biking. These trends have led to a society that is promoting unhealthy lifestyles. But, there are ways to counter an obesogenic environment.

## **Slide 61**

Let's first consider the cultural environment, and how it might be altered to support healthier eating and exercise. By culture, we are referring to the attitudes, customs, and beliefs that characterize a group of people. Many of us live and work in more than one culture, each with its own unique impact on weight management. There are no hard and fast rules, but it is useful to consider participants' cultural environment at home, and how it may support or hinder their healthy behaviors. To do this, you'll want to think about whether NEW-R participants will find support at home to change their eating habits. You'll also want to consider whether family or friends will want to join in with exercise, or will resist it. By the same token, it's important to think about your organization or program setting. Give thought to whether you think it promotes a wellness culture, beyond offering NEW-R. For example, are other wellness classes or exercise groups being offered at your program? Are staff encouraged to think about their own wellness? If meals or snacks are available in your agency, are they healthy ones?

## **Slide 62**

Chances are, you'll find you have some work to do in promoting a wellness culture within your organization. This isn't unusual, and we've identified some weight-positive attitudes and beliefs that can help. First, it's important for everyone -- from leadership to direct service staff to clients or peers -- to believe that people can change their health habits. Both spoken and unspoken cues need to be given, showing that everyone is capable of having a healthy lifestyle. There are two key attitudes here that may be hard to convey, but can be modeled with some practice. First, is the message that healthy food tastes good. Second, is the notion that exercise feels good. Both of these things are true, but many people need support to embrace them. Your organization should offer ample evidence that healthier lifestyles are achievable.

## **Slide 63**

In supporting participants and staff to embrace weight-positive customs, we suggest that you start by helping them think about how to choose the healthiest options during family and community celebrations. It can help if everyone is encouraged to learn how to make a signature healthy dish to bring to parties. It also helps if your agency serves healthy options during work celebrations, and resists the temptation to serve unhealthy ones, even as a "treat." This means saying goodbye to donuts, muffins, cookies, or brownies served during meetings. This is a good way to role model making better choices. Your program can also help participants and staff identify the healthiest restaurants and grocery stores near to where they work and live, to help reduce the impact of our obesogenic environment. Also, adding multiple wellness activities to your service array will support people in their continued quest for a healthier lifestyle.

## **Slide 64**

It's also important to consider people's physical environment at home. Again, there are no easy answers, but it is important to understand how people's home life can affect their ability to lose weight. Here, we suggest that staff think about whether it's safe for the people they serve to take walks where they live. Do their clients or peers have space or equipment to exercise at home? Do they have cooking facilities, such as an oven and a refrigerator? All of these things can have a direct impact on the success of NEW-R as well.



## Slide 65

Some of these same questions apply to your program, as well as whether you have a vending machine stocked with healthy options, like nuts, dried fruits, or packs of humus with whole grain crackers. If the budget allows, we also suggest that programs consider providing everyone with a Fitbit or a pedometer, or offer prizes to people who start walking clubs and log a certain number of steps. As we've done in our own workplace, we also encourage agencies to see whether some meetings can be turned into regular walking meetings each week. We have found that incentivizing fitness, making it fun, and building it into the daily routine can encourage healthier lifestyles for everyone at your organization, from the leadership to staff to those served.

## Slide 66

Finally, it's important to consider people's time and schedules. Many of us believe we simply cannot find the time to exercise. It's true that modern life can be stressful and stretched thin. But, it's often the case that, once we examine how we're spending our time, we can squeeze in some exercise, even if only for 15 to 20 minutes. Remember, we all have the same number of hours in a day, we just have different priorities for how we use them. Once NEW-R participants and your staff become more physically active, they'll probably start to feel better, and may even want to free up more time for exercise.

## Slide 67

Here again, the concept of intentionality is important for everyone. If we eat mindfully during the day, we're more likely to eat less and enjoy it more. If we exercise mindfully, we're more likely to enjoy it and want to do more. Also, we've found that we can't emphasize enough to NEW-R participants the value of menu planning, shopping, and cooking at home. These are some of the best ways for people to control what and how much they eat, while also saving money.

## Slide 68

If you still have questions about NEW-R after this workshop, you can request free technical assistance from the UIC Center, which is available on a time-limited basis. Send an email to Jessica Jonikas at [jonikas@psych.uic.edu](mailto:jonikas@psych.uic.edu). You also may want to visit the Center's *Solutions Suite for Health & Recovery* to learn about other ways to promote health and wellness. The Solutions Suite contains free manuals and other tools that promote wellness, self-direction, and employment for people in recovery. You can learn more about the Suite by visiting the web site <http://www.center4healthandsdc.org>. Thank you very much for listening to our training today. I wish you the best of luck in your efforts to enhance the health and wellness of the people you serve.