

# The NEAT Choice:

Daily Decisions for a Healthy,  
Active Lifestyle in Adults

# Project Description

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A majority of American adults are overweight and exercising insufficiently. Poor fitness habits are largely attributed to lifestyle barriers - the negative perception of exercise as too time consuming. This project aims to alter this perception through an educational YMCA campaign that features daily decisions (outside of typical fitness programs) promoting and supplementing an active lifestyle. The Clifton Melrose Branch is used as a case study.

As an avid and varied athlete, I grew up highly encouraged to embrace an active lifestyle by parents involved in the medical field (my father a pediatrician, my mother a nurse). As a result, I developed a consistently active lifestyle I greatly enjoy, and a positive perception of exercise.

However, I realize many Americans were not this fortunate. A majority of American adults are stuck in poor health/fitness habits. The American Journal of Preventive Medicine reports, "On any given day, most U.S. adults reported performing predominantly sedentary and light activities... only 5.07% report any vigorous-intensity activity." Although adults need 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise weekly, a 2009 US Bureau of Labor Statistics study reveals a weekly exercise average at slightly over half that amount (88.2 minutes). The leading reason for this lack of exercise was, "Not Enough Time in My Busy Schedule," (followed by "No Energy / Lack of Discipline," and "Discouraging / Not Enjoyable").

The American Heart Association recommends just 30 minutes of walking a day to reduce high blood pressure, cholesterol levels, the risk of cancer and Type-II diabetes, and help maintain weight. Simple, active lifestyle choices daily can help adults reach this aerobic goal. By understanding that physical fitness can be supplemented through small decisions outside a gym, adults can slowly add physical activity into their daily routine.

Digital media technology will be integrated into campaign methods currently used on-site at YMCA locations nationwide to create an engaging, impactful, and memorable solution in promoting an active lifestyle.

The desired result is to inspire healthy change by promoting an active lifestyle. Emphasizing that simple, active daily decisions are an easy way to release stress, jumpstart the heart, and increase energy levels can ultimately motivate individuals to pursue further active lifestyle choices and supplement any fitness program at the YMCA.

The goals of this project are to:

1. **Inspire** individuals to create a lasting, positive change in their health by making more active choices that fit into any busy schedule.
2. **Educate** in basic health fitness (what constitutes as exercise, benefits of active lifestyles) to sustain motivation.
3. **Motivate** to embrace an active lifestyle and improve time management for fitness habits.

The target audience is middle-class, working American adult men (28 - 45) who are overweight and/or exercising insufficiently due to a busy schedule - but as YMCA members, many have already made a decision to embrace healthy change. A secondary audience would be any YMCA adult member striving to better their lives by embracing a healthier, active lifestyle in their community.

This project addresses men based on the typical weekday schedule of the American working adult (morning commute, the work day, and the evening at home). The 28-45 age range was selected because they lack parental figures or social/academic institutions that might encourage an active lifestyle. Additionally, adults this age tend to lead busy lives and struggle to fit physical activity into daily life. Finally, this range is young enough to make a permanent change in their health, without complications that arise from old age.

Note: women were not selected as my audience simply due to time involved. Ideally in real-world application, this project would address both men and women via different episodes catered to gender specifics.

The center of this topic revolves around making a positive change in society. My goal is partnered with the long-standing history of YMCA establishments as centers for community and social responsibility - to appropriately engage my target audience, educate, and inspire personal improvement in health and fitness with a focus on creating a lasting, beneficial social impact.