

Increasing Physical Activity – Alwyn and Stephan’s Story

Theme: physical activity, older people

Defining the Issue

According to the NHS (2018) many adults over the age of 65 spend, on average, 10 hours or more each day sitting or lying down, making them the most sedentary age group. Staying active in later life can lower the risk of developing various health conditions, reduce the risk of falls and improve cognitive function. Table tennis is a great low impact activity that can keep people active in later life, as shown by Alwyn and Stephan.

Background Information

Alwyn, aged 76, and Stephan, aged 72, are a retired couple who live in Hyde. Before retiring, Alwyn worked as a mental health nurse and Stephan worked with children. The couple met at a judo class at Stephan’s workplace in 1963 and they have now been married for 53 years. Stephan was diagnosed with dementia in early 2019.

In their younger years, the couple took part in various sporting activities, particularly judo. However, they stopped taking part in sport and physical activity in recent years because they didn’t see physical activity as a priority and everyday life got in the way. Alwyn is part of several other groups, including a knitting group, but both Alwyn and Stephan were classed as physically inactive.

In May 2019, the couple were walking through Arcades shopping centre in Ashton-under-Lyne and came across the Ping Pong Parlour. Alwyn and Stephan now visit the Parlour 6 days a week, for at least an hour each time.

As the Parlour is close to Alwyn and Stephan’s home and on the local bus route, they find it easy to access the opportunity to play in Ashton-under-Lyne;

“It’s free for us to get here because we use our bus passes and it’s free to play. We like playing the game! I had a go with Steph on our first visit and we got going and enjoyed it”

The Parlour has helped Alwyn and Stephan to change their behaviour and play table tennis together on a regular basis.



The Impact

Alwyn and Stephan are now classed as active, by completing at least 6 hours of physical activity each week – all through playing table tennis!

“It gets us out and it’s something we can do together; we enjoy it very much. You don’t realise you’re being active when you’re playing, so it’s a really good fit for us” -Alwyn

“The main thing is that I enjoy it. I played when I was at work and it’s lovely to be able to play again” -Stephan

“Your mobility and reflexes aren’t as good as you get older, so table tennis has helped keep me fit as I’ve got older” -Stephan

Alwyn lost 3 stone a couple of years ago, after having a BMI of 36, so being active through table tennis has helped her to keep the weight off.

After Stephan was diagnosed with dementia in early 2019, Alwyn believes that playing table tennis is helping keep his mind active and she loves seeing a smile on her husbands face.

The couple also enjoy the social aspect of the game and meeting new people who also use the Parlour;

“It’s the social aspect as well, we don’t know everyone who comes in, but there’s two lads who we see often – one is from Montenegro and one is from China – we’ve got to know them and play with them regularly” -Alwyn

Alwyn and Stephan will continue to visit the Ping Pong Parlour on a regular basis and carry on trying to improve their game;

“I hadn’t played table tennis before so I’ve improved, but the trouble is Steph has too! I think I’ve won about 11 games out of hundreds but I’ve told Steph that he must not give me any points, so that when I do win point I know I’ve earned it – I’m very competitive!” -Alwyn



Top Likes

1. It’s a completely free activity for us to do
2. We enjoy the social aspect and meeting new people
3. It’s good exercise for us

Further Information

Find your nearest Ping Pong Parlour at www.pingpongparlour.net



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