



Using the Stanford Health and Lifestyle Assessment (SHALA) at Your YMCA

Summer, 2008

Coinciding with America on the Move Week with the YMCA (Sept. 20 - 27), an advertorial will appear in *Newsweek* magazine on September 15 that will, among other things, encourage individuals in your community to take SHALA and bring their results to their local YMCA for review. SHALA has the potential to generate memberships at your YMCA. Because any number of different YMCA staff might be the first to encounter an individual with his or her SHALA results, we've provided a variety of suggestions for engaging these individuals, many of whom will be experiencing a YMCA for the first time.

About SHALA

SHALA is an online survey designed to assess individuals' current health and well-being. In addition, it assesses respondents' readiness for making a lifestyle change. Questions range from diet and exercise to support systems and obstacles to healthier habits. A number of YMCAs involved in Activate America have used SHALA with regularity in working with health seekers. All YMCAs can use SHALA in working with members and potential members.

After taking SHALA, respondents receive their results in a summarized output report. The results are designed to be educational on their own. That said, many respondents would benefit from meeting with a health and wellness professional for help in interpreting and responding to them and we've suggested they try their local YMCA.

SHALA: a "jumping – off" point

SHALA, or any health and wellness questionnaire, provides you with a starting point for talking with potential members about their habits, where they struggle, what their particular needs and strengths might be. If you've taken the Listen First trainings, engaging with people around SHALA is a perfect opportunity to use those skills to bring a holistic and encouraging approach to lifestyle change. Regardless of where your YMCA is in the Activate America pathway, using SHALA as a tool to begin building relationships, and demonstrating the care and support that are YMCA hallmarks, is a valuable opportunity.

Educating your staff about SHALA

We suggest you share this document with staff at your regular staff meeting and encourage your front desk and health and wellness team to take SHALA at <https://healthimprovement.stanford.edu/amway/default.asp> in order to familiarize themselves with the questions, the report and the many programs and services your YMCA offers, especially for health seekers. The advertorial runs in *Newsweek* on September 15, but people may come to your YMCA over the course of several weeks.

The SHALA experience at your YMCA

The desired outcome for the person coming to your YMCA with their SHALA results is that they experience a friendly, knowledgeable and supportive environment in which to start a conversation about their health and lifestyle habits. They've taken a big step by even coming to the YMCA and they have information to share with you. Ask them a little about the assessment. What surprised them, good or bad? What healthy behaviors can they build on? How can you help them get started in a small way?

Specifically, when individuals come to you with their SHALA results, there are three simple things to do:

Engage these prospective members with a welcome and supportive smile and let them know that you're happy they've come to the YMCA.

Refer them to one of your health and wellness staff members if available to review the SHALA results. If a non-health and wellness staff person is more readily available, have them discuss the results and places where the YMCA might be able to help.

Follow up. Finish your meeting by asking them if they'd like a follow-up call in a few days to see how they are doing as they think about new ideas and ways to improve their health. Ask if there is anything the YMCA can do to be supportive of these new ideas.

A portion of the SHALA summary report:

Adobe Acrobat Professional - [Sample SHALA report.pdf]

Target	Your Current Status
Moderate physical activity (30 minutes) at least 5 days per week	⚠️ 3 days a week
Vigorous physical activity (20 minutes, continuous) at least 3 days per week	⚠️ 2 days a week
Strength exercises at least 2 days per week	❗ Less than once a week
Stretching exercises (5 minutes) at least 5 days per week	❗ 1 day a week
Walk for transportation when feasible	✅ Often walk

Nutrition Targets

Target	Your Current Status
At least 2 servings of fruit daily	✅ Two servings a day
At least 3 servings of vegetables daily	❗ One serving a day
At least 1 serving of dark green leafy or yellow/orange vegetables daily	❗ Less than one serving a day
At least 3 servings of whole grain products daily	❗ One serving a day

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The SHALA summary report is broken down into three parts: **Biometrics** (weight, BMI, etc.) **Healthy Lifestyle Behavior Targets** (how current diet and exercise behavior compares with recommendations) and **Attitudes Toward Behavior Change** (motivation, confidence, support).

Any of these areas provide an opportunity to discuss habits, readiness for change and motivations. Ask open-ended questions to allow the person to more fully share their situation. Below are sample conversation to help you and your staff get comfortable with such an interaction.

Sample SHALA talking points and questions

- Hi, welcome to the YMCA. I see you brought your SHALA results with you. I'm so glad you had a chance to take it. Would you have a moment to sit with me to talk about what you discovered?
- What did you learn about yourself after you took this survey?
- What came as a particular surprise to you in the survey?
- What interests/concerns you most about your health?
- What habits are you looking to change? What help do you think you need in changing them?
- How can the YMCA help you get started?
- By coming here today you've taken a big step. That's great. Would you mind if I shared some things that have helped a few of our members as they've explored ways to get started improving their health?
- We have a variety of options to help you get started—classes, consultations, seminars ...
- How do some of these ideas fit with what you're thinking?
- Thank you for sharing your SHALA results and letting me share some of the things we do here at the YMCA to help people improve their health. If you're interested in joining, I can help get you set up today. If you'd like to take a little time to think about what we talked about today, may I give you a call in a week or so to see how you're doing?