Reviewer's report

Title: Previous experiences and emotional baggage as influences on lifestyle change - a qualitative study of Norwegian Healthy Life Centre participants

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Reviewer: Erik Hemmingsson

Reviewer's report:

This is an important qualitative study about barriers to lifestyle change in Norwegian Healthy Life Centers, which gives us new insights into why traditional lifestyle change programs rarely have the desired effect. While the study appears well conducted, the manuscript is a little lacking in depth and explicit details. I have added some comments that may help to improve this.

Title: this study is largely about barriers to lifestyle change so I suggest this is added to the title.

Abstract

Last sentence of the Background, suggest you add: “...in relation to changes in lifestyle”, or something similar.

Methods: suggest you add more clarity (rationale) about why you used systematic text condensation.

Results: do you mean “previous negative experiences”, as opposed to just “previous experiences”?

Give an example of what you mean about emotional baggage.

Background

A very large part of the text was sent describing the centers, but this is where you present the rationale for the study, i.e. why we need this type of data, and the study aims. Much of the information on the centers should be in the methods section.

Methods

Did you do any member checking? If not I suggest you clarify this.

Results

Figure 1 really is very sparse, to the point of not actually adding much information. Given the amount of valuable data that you have, you can add so much more to this figure and even include a second figure if there is such a need. Also give us more information in the caption since they need to be stand alone.
Did you explore the theme of feeling like a victim? I can guess that a victim mentality was present, but perhaps this should be more clearly stated. Another theme that I did not see much relates to shame and guilt, but perhaps I missed it or it was not mentioned much.

I would call the participants “woman” as opposed to “female” and “man” as opposed to “male”.

Discussion
First sentence: when you state that they are stuck in old habits, you have to be much more specific, or you really lose a lot of depth. Give examples. The same goes for emotional baggage.

You could place greater emphasis on the clear need to address these common psychological and emotional barriers to lifestyle change if we are to improve outcomes from lifestyle change programs, and perhaps how we have neglected these issues in the past.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests