

## Everybody in the Pool!

By Connie Warasila

Fitness facilities competing in the business of health and recreation can set themselves apart from other facilities by creating inclusive and welcoming communities. Likewise, group fitness instructors who create a climate of warmth, sincerity and genuine caring for all participants will attract and keep clients of all backgrounds and abilities. WATERinMOTION strives to serve a diverse population with varied music choices, a blend of movements inspired by changing fitness trends and education aimed at developing the most effective water fitness instructors. Inclusive cueing techniques encourage all participants to strive for their own personal best while exercising in a welcoming environment.

Inclusive cueing is defined as instruction delivered during exercise that offers options for individuals with varying levels of ability, fitness, interests and lifestyles. Basically, inclusive cueing is a way of teaching that makes everyone present feel welcome, comfortable and empowered to accomplish the exercises.

### 10 Tips to create an inclusive exercise experience:

1. Make no assumptions about anyone or anything.
  - a. A visual assessment of a client is incomplete unless you talk with that client and find out about their expectations.
  - b. A person's physical attributes are not an indicator of their fitness level or skill.
  - c. Suspend judgement about a person's abilities and needs until you do your research.
2. Have noodles, music, chair, etc. accessible prior to the beginning of class.
  - a. Be prepared early.
  - b. Talk with your clients as they arrive.
  - c. Be accessible.
3. Welcome everyone equally as they arrive.
  - a. Avoid judgements.
  - b. Respect everyone as they are.
  - c. Initiate eye contact and introduce yourself.
  - d. Ask about each person's fitness goals for the day and future.
  - e. Introduce a new participant to a veteran for guidance and assistance.
4. Start class by expressing what to expect during the class.

- a. Include session duration, movement style, format, equipment needs, etc.
- b. Ask if anyone needs to tell you about anything that might affect your movement together, including if they need to leave early.
- c. End class with a Q&A and “Thank You.”
5. Offer variations of each exercise to meet a wide variety of needs.
  - a. Movement intensity needs to be appropriate for each individual.
  - b. Offer alternative ideas about movement even if students have not indicated that they need alternatives. They may not have told you.
6. Give permission to the class to use the class to meet their own specific needs.
  - a. Even though the class is designed to meet specific fitness goals, some people may participate for totally different reasons.
  - b. Educate and empower participants to own their workout.
7. Communicate using varying teaching styles:
  - a. Visual
  - b. Verbal
  - c. Kinesthetic
  - d. Rely on the 3M’s to remind clients of the purpose of the moves and the skills being practiced.
  - e. Cue early.
  - f. Preview complex moves.
8. Enthusiastically deliver cues that focus on:
  - a. body’s function
  - b. strength
  - c. flexibility
9. Emphasize the joy of movement.
  - a. Avoid focusing on weight loss.
  - b. Avoid focusing on appearance.
  - c. Focus on function and skill building.
10. Be flexible and smile.
  - a. Someone might need plan B.
  - b. Alternative movements may be more comfortable, on many levels.

These tips will help you create a welcoming fitness environment wherever you are teaching. Remember to focus on creating inclusiveness regardless of any one person’s individuality. Everybody can benefit from your class in some way if you are mindful of creating an open and

encouraging haven.

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