

6 Tips to Keep Them Coming Back

By Connie Warasila

The fitness industry has progressed over the last decade into a professional, business-driven entity. Metrics are much more closely analyzed and tracked now than when the fitness industry began its journey. Group exercise classes contribute greatly to the success of many fitness facilities, so it is only logical that statistics about attendance in classes is tracked. As a group fitness instructor, you may be informed by your manager the number of attendees necessary for you to keep a class on the schedule. If numbers are not tracked by your supervisor or facility, consider implementing this practice for yourself to elevate your own level of professionalism. Here are 6 sure ways to build and keep great class numbers.

According to two separate studies, one at the University of Rochester and the other at the University of Southern Utah, there are two major factors that influence decisions about adhering to an exercise plan. The first is the enjoyment factor, and the second is the intensity factor. Clients who experience an enjoyable fitness experience look forward to repeating that experience. This is like enjoying music by a favorite artist or seeing a specific actor in a movie series. If you liked what you experienced, you will go back and buy their music or see their movies again. In addition to enjoyment, the appropriate intensity and challenge level of a class will determine a client's interest in continuing that type of exercise or class. If these two factors are balanced in a group exercise class, attendees will be more likely to attend again. It's SIMPLE.

- 1) Smile and Nod (Positive Body Language)
- 2) Intensity (challenging yet achievable)
- 3) Movement progressions/regressions
- 4) Purpose
- 5) Lyrics
- 6) Exhibit enjoyment

SMILE AND NOD

Practice, implement, and look for smiles and nods. This simple body language tool can have a powerful, positive impact on those with which you interact. A smile and nod sends a subliminal message that reinforces positive behavior, validates feelings, and signals a positive environment and experience. This simple tool let's your students know that everything in the present moment is occurring as planned. Your clients will feel confidence, satisfaction, relief, and contentment all of which are positive message that this activity is enjoyable. The more enjoyment an exerciser experiences, the better chance you'll have that they'll be open-minded to increased intensity.

INTENSITY

Delivering exercise movement that offers clients an appropriate challenge that is realistically achievable can be tricky. That is simply because every student and their exercise needs is unique. Intensity should be just high enough for clients to feel that the activity is eliciting an exercise response, but not so high that discomfort is overwhelming, physically or mentally. WATERinMOTION is such a wonderful training protocol because it is performed in the water, a dynamic environment that allows the student to control their intensity. The harder you push the water, the more resistance the water provides. The tools to manipulate intensity are used to create progressions and/or regressions.

MOVEMENT PROGRESSIONS/REGRESSIONS

Since each exerciser has varying intensity needs, instructors can provide individually specific guidance so that appropriate, personal intensity can be achieved. Offer clients options based on their level of fitness (including injuries), skill, and motivation. RAFT techniques help you to remember how to manipulate intensity by cuing clients to apply more or less:

- Range of Motion
- Accelerated rebound
- Force
- Travel

PURPOSE

In addition to intensity, movement that has purpose appeals to exercisers and draws them to attend sessions more regularly. People are interested in movement that allows them to exercise and expand skills. That means they need to know what the skill is and how it is improved with the movement that you are presenting. Cuing the 3Ms (move, muscle, motivation) gives clients that information. Beware of getting too technical or overwhelming clients with too much input at one time. Share just enough information to keep them interested in the moment and wanting more in the future.

LYRICS

One way to avoid getting too serious during class is to use the lyrics in the music to lighten the mood, encourage matching a move with a word, even encourage singing. According an article by Len Kravitz, PhD (The Effects of Music on Exercise?), "music may directly improve a person's enjoyment and fulfillment of the physical activity, leading to greater exercise compliance; a worthwhile objective for any fitness educator." The music designed for WATERinMOTION is carefully chosen and engineered to support the movement in the water and uplift the energy and mood of the class. When polled, my students always identify the music and its lyrics used in fitness classes as a primary motivating factor.

EXHIBIT ENJOYMENT

In addition to cuing moves, muscle use, and motivation, give attention to visually and verbally demonstrating enjoyment. Use your body language to show energetic and strong moves. Use your facial expressions to exhibit a range of emotions: happiness, surprise, concentration, praise, etc. Choose words that celebrate effort and accomplishments, big and small. Take care to praise genuinely and specifically. Avoid general praise statements. Instead, note specific actions that are desirable. For example, say, "Great upper body strength; I see the white water," instead of, "Good job." Positive feedback breeds positive behavior. At the end of class, remind the class how enjoyable the class was. Point out a special moment in class that everyone will identify as enjoyable. Review all accomplishments with joy, thank them for contributing to that enjoyment, and invite them to come and enjoy your next class. Leaving them with the message that what they just did was enjoyable.

SIMPLE

Use these techniques to infuse your classes with fun, and balance that fun with the appropriate intensity for each student. Striking that perfect balance will boost class attendance and exercise adherence. Becoming known as that fitness leader that offers this perfect balance will solidify your reputation as the instructor not to miss. SPLASH ON!

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