Advice for SAIL Instructors

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Chapter 7A
“For the nations seniors, poor health should **not** be a foregone consequence of aging. Improvements in diet and physical activity can greatly improve the quality of life at any age”

Healthier US : The Presidents’ Health and Fitness Initiative, 1996
No particular certification is a predictor of effectiveness.

A combination of preparation, experience, and attitude are the best indicators of an effective instructor.

Think of your favorite teacher....what made him/her so good?
The “3 C’s” of effective instruction and leadership:

- Competence
- Communication
- Caring
Competence

- Strong understanding of aging process
- Understand benefits of an active lifestyle
  - physical
  - psychological
  - spiritual
  - social
- Bottom line: *Do Your Homework!*
In addition...

- Knowledge of common medical conditions in older adults (see next slide for examples)
- Signs and symptoms of those conditions
- Psychological issues
  - social isolation
  - depression
  - low self-efficacy
Possible conditions/illnesses

- Heart conditions (hypertension, vascular disease, congestive heart failure, high blood pressure and coronary artery disease)
- Dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease
- Depression
- Incontinence (urine and stool)
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- Diabetes
- Breathing problems
- Frequent falls, which can lead to fractures
- Parkinson’s disease
- Cancer
- Eye problems (cataracts, glaucoma, Macular Degeneration)
Additional ways to show competence....

- Provide a structurally, safe and comfortable environment
- Don’t neglect the pre-exercise screening and assessment measures
- Be prepared to adapt exercises for individual participants
Adjust exercise variables for individuals:

1) frequency (maybe participant should only come 1x/wk)
2) intensity (use no wt for two weeks and then add)
3) duration (time) (Do ¼ of class and build up)
4) type of exercise (modify as necessary)

*This will help to lower your drop-out rate.*
Come prepared to class!

1) Plan a logical progression of exercises.
   - ↑ confidence when teaching
   - Seamless transition
   - Allows constructive feedback to participants

2) “Many expert instructors believe that effective communication is the single most important determinant of a physical activity instructor’s success in working with older adults.”

3) Display genuine passion for the well-being of class participants

4) Seek to inspire participants

5) Be positive in your actions and words

6) Create a comfortable, non-threatening environment in the class

7) Arrive on time

8) Wear appropriate shoes and clothing for exercise.
Also...

1) Refer to participants by name
2) Provide feedback: meaningful, constructive and genuine
3) Take time to listen
4) Don’t pass judgment
5) Promote social interaction in the class
6) Ability to communicate with different personalities, cultures and ethnicities
Caring

Understand the worries of many older adults:

- Have not tried regular exercise before
- Do not consider themselves coordinated
- Might not be capable of exercising
- Lack confidence in abilities
- Feel their progress is too slow
- Solutions: find different ways to compliment participants, show them a warm smile, or give them a pat on the back.
Managing Class Exercises

- Keep classes structured: use SAIL checklist
- Demonstrate and explain all exercises
- Teach technique and posture in clear, simple lay language. Show how not to do some exercises
- New exercises: research how they should be done safely with older adults before use in class
- Be consistent with number of reps on each side
- Always remind class: “pain means stop”
SAIL Class Components

- Warm up
- Aerobics
- Balance exercises
- Strength exercises
- Stretching and Education

WABSS
Managing Class Pace

- Keep pace moderate
- Plan a logical progression of exercise
- Practice timing yourself with a clock
- Demonstrate slower pace for new participants or those returning after illness/injury
- Check with your class – ask the participants if they are comfortable with the speed and intensity of your class
Managing Class Time and Schedule

- Work with facility staff to minimize overlap with other classes on offer
- If another class immediately follows yours, arrange a waiting area that does not disrupt your class
- Start on time and don’t finish early – older adults know when they are being “short-changed”!
- Forewarn participants of any changes for example: substitute instructor, room change
Managing Classes in Different Facilities

- Good signage on the location of class
- Make sure the classroom is safe: no furniture or clutter, large enough space, dry floors
- Adjustable room temperature
- Avoid changing class location
- Know the physical address of the facility in case you must call for emergency assistance (911)
- Know where emergency equipment is kept (ie AED)
- Know facility policy on reporting incidents
Managing in-class Socialization

- Socialization aspect important for older adults
- Encourage them to bring spouses, friends, neighbors so they can exercise together. Have them invite their adult children to visit class
- Encourage “buddy system” within the class
- Do not discuss individuals health issues in class
- Offer information about other physical activities in the facility and the neighborhood – encourage participants to share information
Managing in-class Conversation

- Keep the tone of your class positive
- Keep your conversation professional – not too much information about your personal life
- Don’t let 1 or 2 participants’ conversation monopolize class time
- Count out loud and encourage participants to join in
- Encourage participants to bring in health info and fall prevention info to share with class
Managing Participation

- Remind participants that regular attendance will bring the most benefits
- Reaffirm message: strong, active, independent improved balance
- Understand that not everyone wants the same things from a class
- Build regular feedback sessions into your class: helps to understand how exercise affects participants.
- Provide a suggestion box for anonymous feedback
Managing Physical Limitations

- Remind class: no weights if experiencing pain
- Be aware that footwear and foot health may vary
- Remind participants to exercise at own pace
- Some exercises may cause pain after class
- Avoid “marching on toes” exercise – not safe for older adults (osteoporosis, foot + ankle problems)
- Avoid any type of “dancing” – led to the only falls during classes in the study
Other reminders:

- Remind participants to tell their health care providers that they are in this class
- Find ways to exercise outside of class
- Encourage them to bring water bottles with a secure lid or cap to class
- Emphasize the importance of and teach correct breathing techniques
- Use the SAIL Guide to explain normal aging
General

- Make it clear to class that you understand issues specific to older population
- Go back and review the SAIL instructor manual periodically to refresh yourself
- Ask them to tell you if they are finding the class difficult – or they may drop out of class
- Do not single out participants who are not keeping up – speak to them before or after class
- Look after yourself: keep your energy level consistent. Hydrate and eat properly if teaching many classes in a day
THANK YOU!