

# When teaching the adult learner, create a welcoming, motivating and trusting space.

Most people have been lucky enough to have teachers who left a lasting impression on their lives. Think about one of *your* favorite mentors or instructors. What made him or her so special? And what can you do to create the same experience in your own classes? You may presume that you are a great instructor, but do your participants see you as such? Will you be remembered as an outstanding teacher? Carl Rogers, a psychologist and education researcher, said, "All human beings have a natural propensity to learn; the role of the teacher is to facilitate such learning." Teaching adults is a complex task, and when you add the particulars of the health and fitness industry, with its multitude of activities and professional responsibilities, the task becomes even more complex.

Many fitness instructors become professionals without ever studying how to *teach*. They come from various disciplines, such as sports or dance, and often learn to teach from being thrown into the situation, through trial and error, or simply by being passionate about what they do. Overall we are doing a good job as teachers, and as the profession continues to evolve we see more and more education-specific training. However, maybe it's time to take it up a notch.

Although we can't be everything to everyone or please all of the people all of the time, we do need to understand how our students (and potential students) learn best. Many education experts suggest that for the learning process to be successful, you must create an environment that is welcoming, motivating and trusting. When I look at what factors have contributed to my own success as an educator, I recognize certain key elements that allow me to be effective and successful when instructing the adult learner. I learned many teaching skills through continuing education, but most of the lessons were acquired over time, as life experience. Know Your Target Audience

The more you know about your students, the more effective you can be as an instructor. I learned this early in my career when I announced to a class that I would be taking a 6-month leave of absence. From the look of disappointment and uncertainty on many people's faces, I realized that I had been providing something through my actions, behaviors and words without really knowing what that something was. I was making an impact in their lives! That was the first day I saw my students as *individuals*, and not just a sea of faces.

When you walk into the group fitness studio, you may make the assumption that the participants have come to class just to get in shape, lose weight and get stronger. But you should be asking yourself some simple questions: Who are these people who come to my classes, and why are they here? What do these people do for a living? What are their lives like outside of my class? What are their underlying reasons for attending week after week? It's not always an easy task to really get to know your audience, but a simple "Hello, what's your name?" can open up a dialogue that may disclose just enough information to make a difference.

Leigh Crews, group fitness director at the Rome Athletic Club in Rome, Georgia, believes that adults "don't want to be anonymous" and that you should get to know a little bit about each participant. She goes on to say that by acknowledging individuals in a class, you can "help members develop respect for each other and at the same time foster a sense of belonging. The class becomes a collaborative effort, and everyone has a sense of 'We are in this together.'"

It is essential always to keep in mind that each one of your students has a full life outside of the classroom or gym. They are mothers and fathers, lawyers, secretaries, journalists, actors, construction workers, athletes, accountants, singers—the list goes on and on. These people come to your class with life experiences and previous knowledge in many different areas, including physical activity. This knowledge may be basic, and it may even be misunderstood, but it is *your* job to build on it and use it to your advantage to create a positive learning experience.

Create a Welcoming Environment

When people feel safe and welcome in a learning environment, they are not only willing but ready and eager to learn. Adults need to feel they can perform their activities in a nonjudgmental setting and that they can have a dialogue with the

instructor. Threat of any kind may lead to failure. A relationship that establishes trust is vital and must be built from the beginning.

Be respectful of your students and acknowledge the wealth of experience they bring. Alexandra Williams, MA, a staff instructor for the exercise and sport studies and recreation department at the University of California, Santa Barbara, stresses that as an instructor you need to "teach and speak to students as you would like to be taught and spoken to. Speak to adults as adults who want to learn; not as children in adult bodies."

Adults have a need to be self-directed, so you must allow for choice whenever possible. Plan learning activities and programs to meet personal objectives—this is essential for success. In movement-based group exercise classes, for example, Williams tells her students, "As long as you're not running into your neighbor, you are free to do the workout that works best for you." As a result, she has had several students comment that they specifically come to her class because they know they can pace themselves without feeling different or disruptive. "If I'm doing a mambo and a student is walking in place, who really cares?" Williams says. "At least they're moving."

Most people welcome praise. It is both encouraging and reassuring and allows students to become more confident. Praise can come in many different forms. It may be a direct comment, a smile, a thumbs-up gesture, the wink of an eye or a more general "good job today" type of comment. It doesn't take much, and it can make a significant impact on someone's behavior. Positive reinforcement helps you ensure correct or appropriate behavior and should be used often when students are learning a new skill. It can also help students retain what they've learned. Sincerity is key; learners want praise, but they want it to be genuine and natural. Motivate!

Adults need to be motivated to learn but must be interested in learning *before* they will be motivated. In the fitness scenario, we are quite lucky because most of our participants choose to come to our class or workshop. Our challenge is to keep them interested and motivated enough to come back! So how do we do it? Hold their attention with humor, active participation and storytelling (but not too much). Build interest with variety by mixing it up and inserting the unexpected. Students want to see that you are interested as well—not only in the subject matter, but in them. It's usually obvious when an instructor is bored, distracted or just going through the motions. Keep in mind that each person will be motivated differently, as everyone has unique qualities, interests, experiences and needs. Help students motivate themselves by showing that your class is valuable and useful. But don't forget that what is valuable or useful for one person may not be for another. This is yet another reason you should get to know your students.

Adult learners also need a *reason* for learning something. They want an explanation behind a procedure, method or principle and want to see the logic of the material presented. Lacking this, they will quickly question or reject what you're teaching. But

more important, they want to know that the subject matter or class will help them, and that it is relevant to their life and needs. It is important to distinguish between "nice to know" and "need to know." For example, it is "nice to know" how many calories you can potentially burn during a movement class. However, what participants "need to know" is how to maintain or increase the intensity to maximize energy expenditure.

When students see that your class is rich and rewarding, and that there is a useful application for what they have just learned, they will be motivated to continue. For example, it is easy to make the connection between the core exercises you just taught and how improved core strength can help students in their activities of daily living. This application is enhanced when participants use the information immediately in a new situation or setting.

**Develop Trust in the Process** 

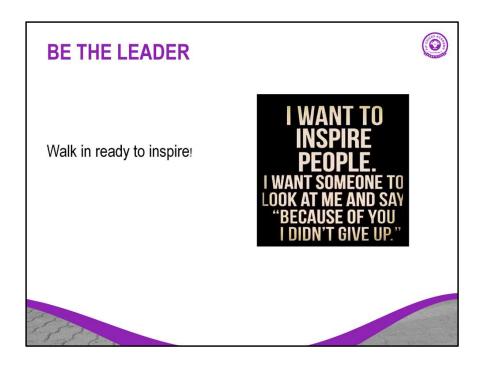
A particularity of the fitness industry is that we teach movement, and we teach it in all different forms and shapes. Regardless of format—dance, yoga, strength training or cycling—the common denominator is that we perform. The *theory* behind movement is important, but to truly understand it, people need to *feel* what it is like to actually perform a movement or exercise pattern. If you have already established rapport and motivated students, they will be in a better position to relax and trust in the process. Although understanding might require a lot of practice, repetition reinforces the learning process and allows the learner to improve and succeed at the task at hand. A quotation from Confucius (handed to me on a piece of paper after a presentation) sums it up: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

Just as the participants bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the classroom, so do you! Remember that your students keep coming back to learn from *you*, so share all that you've learned and acquired over the years with them, and use it to create the best learning environment possible!

SIDEBAR: Be Prepared and Organized

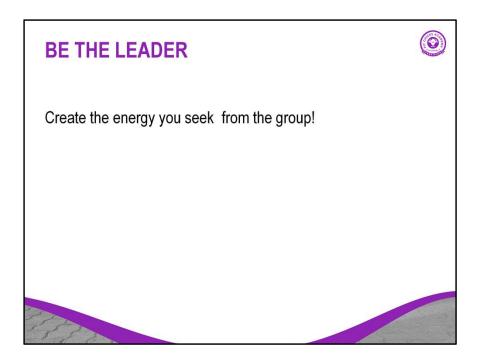
Adults learn methodically. They expect the instructor to be prepared for class and present material in an organized fashion that follows a logical sequence. This means giving the big picture first, followed by more specific parts; showing what is most important, and then least important; and moving from easier to more difficult. When teaching an exercise pattern, for example, present it in the order that it is actually performed. To teach a traditional push-up, demonstrate how it ideally should be executed. Follow this by demonstrating the first variation, then the second and so on. Then show modifications and emphasize the importance of elements such as alignment. When you present the material in a way that allows people to come to the right conclusion by themselves, they not only learn better but are more likely to retain what they have learned.

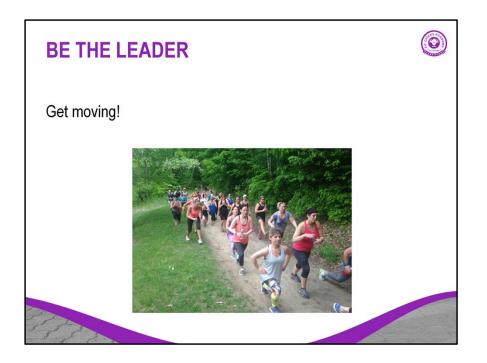
By Fred Hoffman for IDEA Health and Fitness Association











# **BE THE LEADER**

# Be prepared for your environment

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# Indoor

- Pros:
- Plan in advance • •
- No weather surprises
- Space used effectively
- Safe and comfortable environment

#### Cons:

- Limited space for movement Stale environment •
- •
- Permit issues

## Outdoor

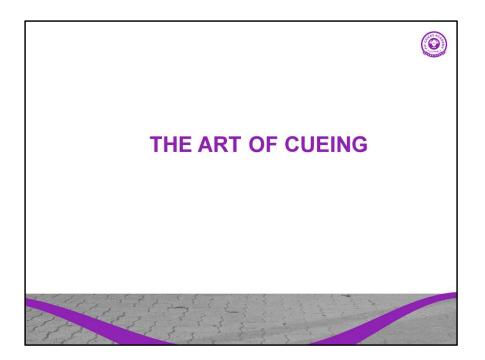
#### Pros:

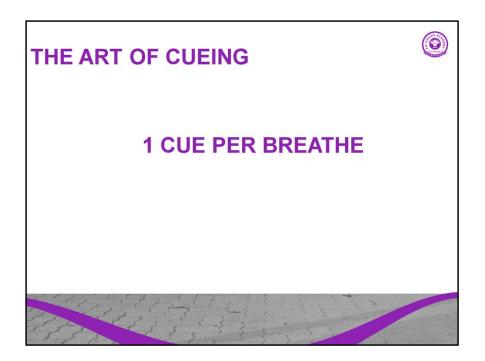
- More space for movement
- Vitamin D
- Creative concepts
- Use environment
- Environmental challenges •

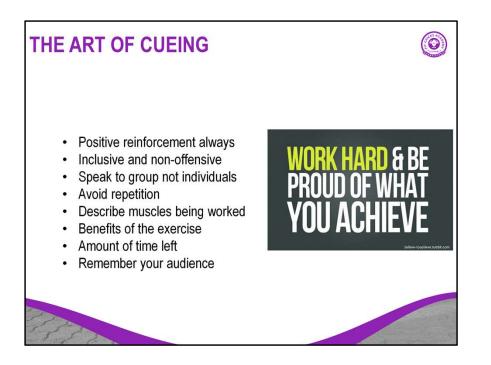
### Cons:

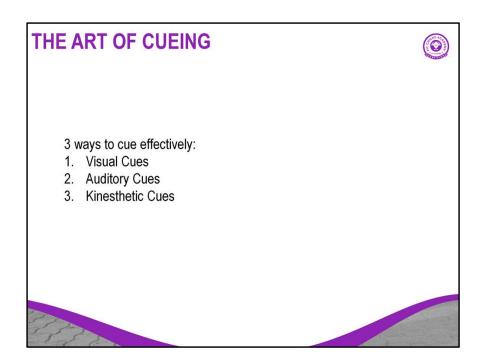
- Weather!
- Intimidation
- Space issues / safety concern •
- Bugs and more











Improve your communication by paying attention to learning styles and principles.

Elite trainers have in-depth knowledge and skill in their area of expertise and know how to communicate information effectively to their clientele. While some trainers may seem blessed with an ability to communicate well, most of us need to work hard at it. One critical communication skill that takes practice and that most elite trainers need at some point in their careers is cuing.

All group exercise instructors worth their salt understand the importance of cuing while leading a class. I discovered this firsthand as a graduate student when I agreed to teach an undergraduate activity course on aerobic fitness that had to include a variety of group exercise methods, such as low-impact aerobics and step. Although I had taken a course in group exercise instruction and had choreographed the entire session, I was not prepared for how difficult the cuing would be. Having to communicate to participants not only what we were doing at any given moment but also what we were about to do was difficult. In fact, I have to admit that those first few classes were pretty bad. However, with time, repetition and a lot of effort I did improve.

Although cuing in a one-on-one training session is different than it is in the group environment, I highly recommend that personal trainers get some experience in group exercise leadership, as it is extremely valuable. In addition, my industry experience has led me to believe that trainers with a group leadership background are better at cuing overall.

Effective cuing can be elusive, especially when a trainer has a particular teaching style and the client has a different learning style. A trainer who is unable to adapt his teaching style to a client's learning style will be ineffective (with that particular client), and the client will become increasingly frustrated. Is one style of instruction better than another, or is one wrong while another is right? I believe that almost any trainer can be effective with a client (assuming that the trainer has the proper educational background, skill and ethical conduct). The most effective way is to have a good match of teaching and learning styles. But I also believe that the best trainers are those who have a firm grasp of effective cuing techniques and can adapt their styles to meet clients' individual needs.

Learning Styles

Let's take a look at learning preferences, since this is an important aspect of becoming an effective teacher and communicator. According to Rose and Nicholl (1997) there are three basic learning preferences: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. **Visual: Learning Through Seeing.** Visual learners learn best through seeing the information being taught. Seeing would include activities such as reading text and looking at pictures, flow charts or diagrams. Visual learners also process information while observing demonstrations; for example, when watching a trainer perform a movement several times.

**Auditory: Learning Through Hearing.** Auditory learners prefer to learn by hearing instructions, listening to lectures and taking notes.

**Kinesthetic: Learning Through Doing.** Kinesthetic learners prefer movement and hands-on activities. They like to use the senses of touch, smell and taste in the learning experience.

Although most individuals are going to have a dominant learning preference, it will not be exclusive. That is, we use all of these learning styles to a certain degree. My wife, for example, has a learning preference that is highly visual, moderately kinesthetic and to a small degree auditory. It is difficult for her to paint a picture in her mind based on auditory descriptions. She needs to see it in order to "get" it. Many of our conversations end with her saying, "Just show it to me." It also helps for her to try it out herself and learn experientially.

I have experienced similar situations when training clients. One client of mine was highly kinesthetic and explanations only confused her—so much so that I stopped even trying to explain movements to her and realized it was better to demonstrate an exercise once or twice and then have her do it while I provided manual and verbal feedback.

**Effective Cuing Principles** 

# **Visual Cuing**

In order for visual cuing to be effective, the trainer's physical movements must be

efficient and precise so the client can see how to perform the movement correctly. If you are giving visual cues, avoid unnecessary gestures and movements that will get in the way. When possible, break down the exercise into parts that can be sequenced together.

Even seemingly simple movements, such as a biceps curl, should be cued visually to enhance performance. When a client watches you perform the movement first, she has a good reference point for correct mechanics; this can be enhanced if the client can view herself performing the movement in a mirror.

It is also extremely helpful to demonstrate common technique errors while you explain how to avoid them. For example, a common error in performing the biceps curl is anterior movement of the elbow. By seeing how this error looks, the client will be more attuned to self-correction.

# **Verbal Cuing**

This is the bread and butter of good coaching. Experienced trainers have developed specific verbal cues to use with clients when teaching certain movements. These cues have been practiced and refined during thousands of training sessions.

Verbal cuing is one of the most difficult aspects of teaching for novice trainers. They may know how to perform a movement correctly and even how to demonstrate it perfectly, but often they stumble over their words when trying to correct a client verbally. If you're a novice trainer, endeavor to provide specific feedback in language that reinforces correct movement patterns: "Your knees stayed in proper alignment with your ankles that time" or "Keep your elbow closer to your side." Phrases like "Good job" and "Well done" don't provide feedback that is specific enough to reinforce correct movement patterns.

Verbal cues can be transitional, goal-oriented, process-oriented or mindful (Jones & Rose 2005).

Transitional cues guide clients from one exercise movement to another (e.g., "one, two, three, begin").

Goal-oriented cues help motivate individuals to complete a task and can be timed (e.g., number of seconds to sustain a movement) or numerical (e.g., number of repetitions to complete).

Process-oriented cues focus on the quality of the movement and how the body feels during the exercise.

Mindful cues use stimuli such as events, visualization or imagery to help the client complete the movement. Instructors of mind-body disciplines, like yoga and Pilates, rely heavily on mindful cuing.

Each kind of verbal cue is effective when used appropriately.

### **Kinesthetic Cuing**

Also called tactile or physical cuing, this can be a very effective technique for teaching proper movement patterns, especially with novice clients, as it trains their kinesthetic awareness. In this technique the trainer physically guides the client's body through the desired movement pattern or into the proper position. When the muscle group

being challenged is touched, the client receives more somatosensory feedback, which can help develop a stronger mind-body connection.

For example, in a standing transverse twist with a cable machine, the goal is to "separate" the movement of the upper torso from the hips. Kinesthetic cues will help accomplish this: Instruct the client to pull the cable across his body by turning the shoulders and keeping his hips stationary. Most individuals really struggle with this at first. Assist your client by firmly holding onto his hip bones to keep him stationary, which will help him gain a better understanding of how to stabilize the hips while his upper body is twisting.

Once he understands this, place your fingertips lightly on the hip bones so the client must stabilize on his own. He will feel his hips move away from your fingers if the movement is performed incorrectly.

Any kind of physical touch between trainer and client must be appropriate. Before you begin, state that you will be using touch and explain why. Pay attention to nonverbal cues and discontinue touch if you feel the client is uncomfortable. Putting It All Together

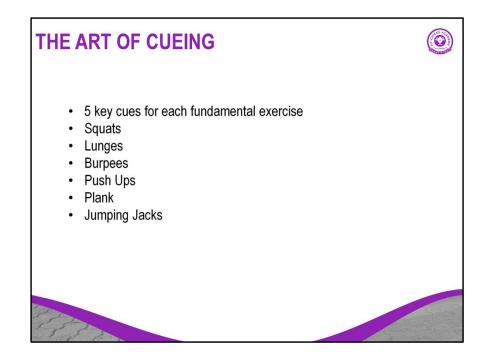
Although it is helpful to practice each of these cuing styles independently, the truth is that we typically use all three simultaneously or sequentially when teaching a new movement. For example, a common technique I use when teaching a rowing movement is to perform the movement myself first (visual cue) while explaining the proper form and naming the muscle groups that are being used (verbal cues). Simultaneously, I have the client place a hand between my shoulder blades as I am doing the movement (kinesthetic cue). I first perform the row with little to no scapular retraction and ask the client to note the low level of muscular activity. Then I perform the movement as in the latter demonstration. We then switch spots, and I place my hand between the client's shoulder blades, explaining that I want to feel the same magnitude of scapular retraction. This technique, while simple, is extremely effective for clients of all abilities and capitalizes on all three cuing types.

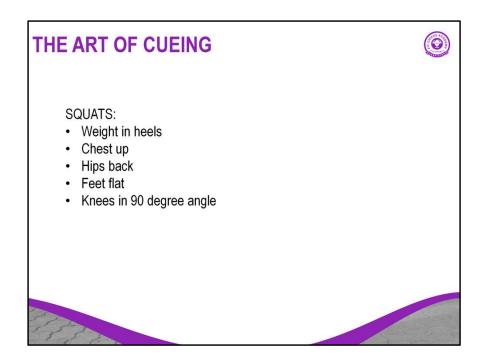
high-quality trainer, effective cuing can turn a good trainer into an exceptional one. Sidebar: Cuing for Different Learning Styles

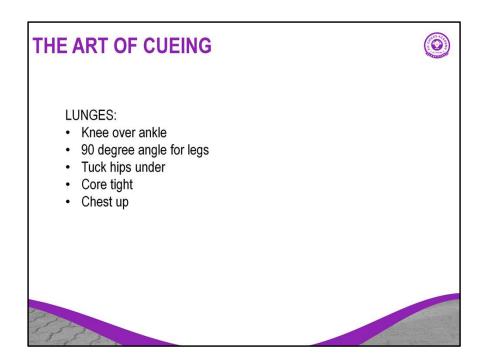
**Visual.** Most of your clients will fall into this category. Visual learners absorb information best by seeing. You can provide articles, flash cards, drawings, charts and written progress notes to these clients, but make sure the information presented is tidy and visually appealing. These learners are also more prone to read e-mails and text messages from you. When teaching new concepts, encourage visual learners to take notes, watch your demonstrations, or walk around the workout area and use their observational skills. Make sure you provide a clear line of sight so they can mentally "photograph" whatever is being taught. Keep background noise to a minimum.

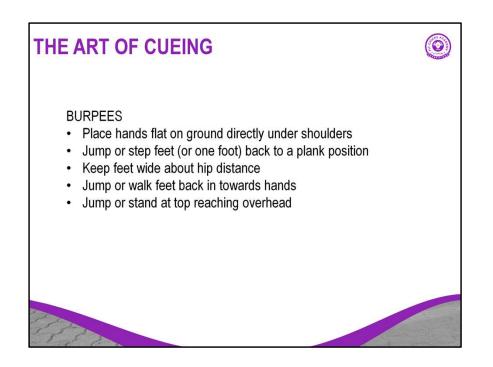
Auditory. Auditory learners absorb information best through the sense of hearing.

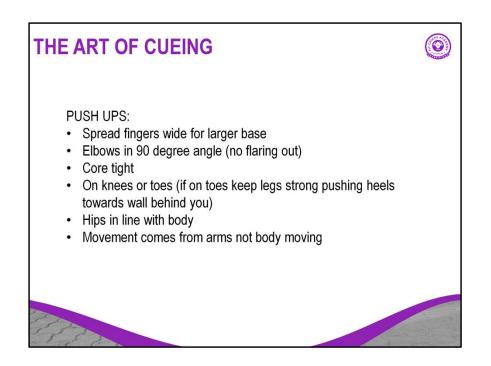
Use a lot of verbal instructions, be descriptive and encourage these clients to repeat information back to you or out loud to themselves. Use mnemonic, alliterative and rhyming devices when available, call clients by their names and employ stories to make a point. Verbal learners are also good at associating music with movement. **Kinesthetic.** Tactile, kinesthetic learners absorb information best by doing, experiencing, touching, moving or being active in some way. Cue these people by having them imitate and practice skills, use large motor muscles or walk about while learning. Employ hands-on cuing and demonstrations, and let the clients move about frequently so they can touch and experience equipment, for both use and location. By Cody Sipe for IDEA Health and Fitness Association

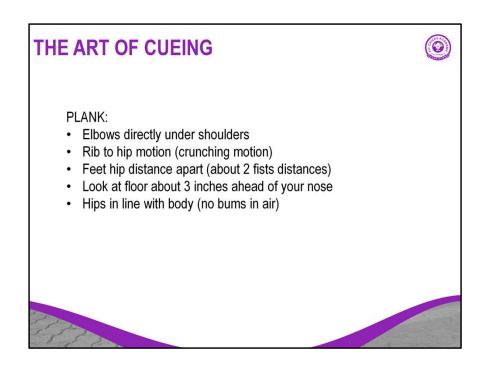


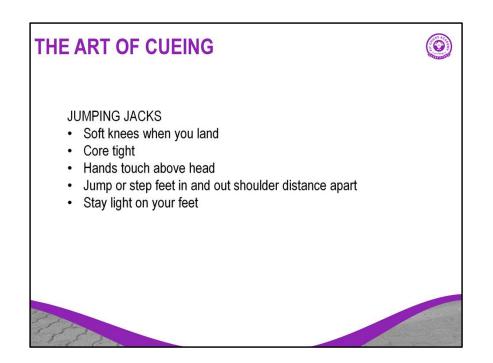


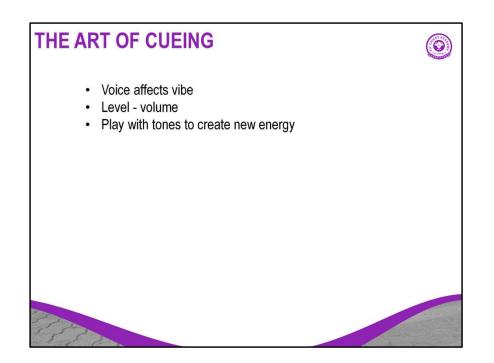


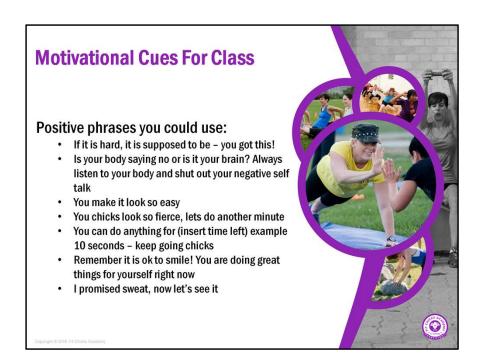




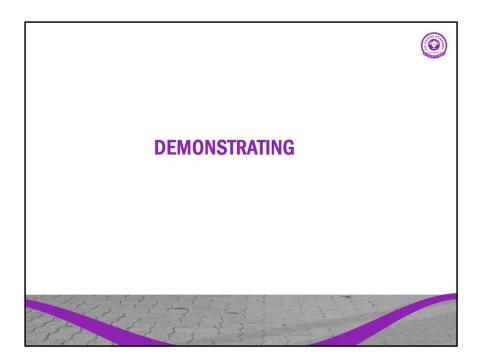


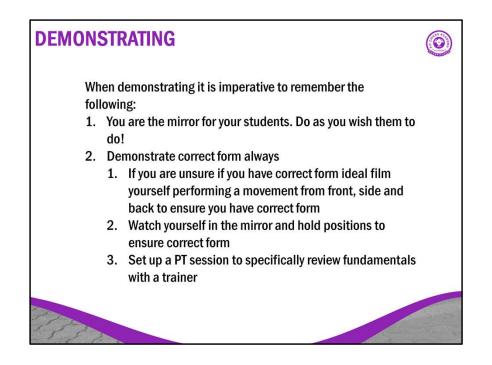


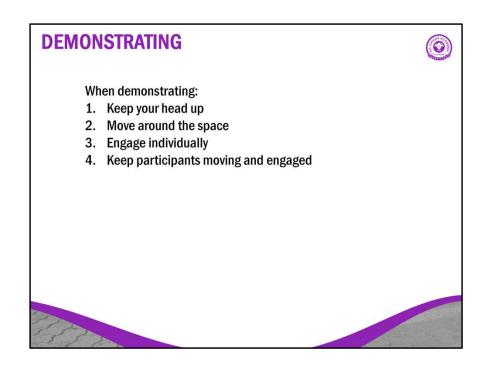




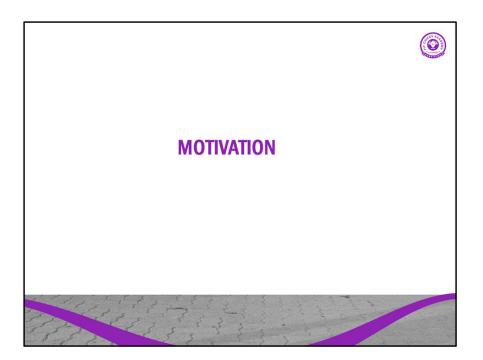
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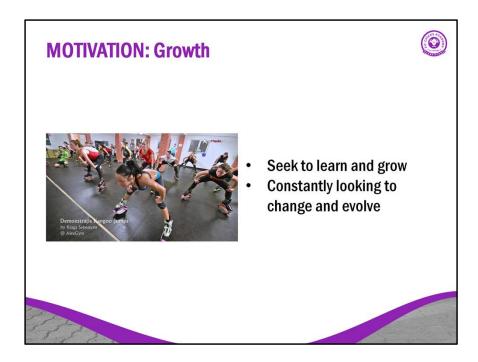




#### ACHIEVEMENT

ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION IS ALSO COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE DRIVE FOR COMPETENCY. WE ARE DRIVEN TO <u>ACHIEVE GOALS</u> AND TACKLE NEW CHALLENGES. WE DESIRE TO IMPROVE SKILLS AND PROVE OUR COMPETENCY BOTH TO OTHERS AND TO OURSELVES. GENERALLY, THIS FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IS INTRINSIC IN NATURE.

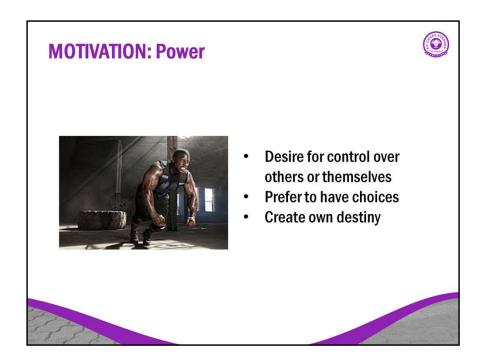
HOWEVER, IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES BE MOTIVATION FOR ACHIEVEMENT MAY INVOLVE EXTERNAL RECOGNITION. WE OFTEN HAVE A DESIRE OR NEED TO RECEIVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM BOTH OUR PEERS AND OUR SUPERIORS. THIS MAY INCLUDE ANYTHING FROM AN AWARD TO A SIMPLE PAT ON THE BACK FOR A JOB WELL DONE.



### GROWTH

THE NEED FOR <u>SELF-IMPROVEMENT</u> IS TRULY AN INTERNAL MOTIVATION. A BURNING DESIRE TO INCREASE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES AND OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD CAN BE A VERY STRONG FORM OF MOTIVATION. WE SEEK TO LEARN AND GROW AS INDIVIDUALS.

MOTIVATION FOR GROWTH CAN ALSO BE SEEN IN OUR YEARNING FOR CHANGE. MANY OF US ARE WIRED BY OUR PERSONALITY OR UPBRINGING TO CONSTANTLY SEEK A CHANGE IN EITHER OUR EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT OR KNOWLEDGE. WE VIEW STAGNATION TO BE BOTH NEGATIVE AND UNDESIRABLE.



#### POWER

THE MOTIVATION OF POWER CAN EITHER TAKE THE FORM OF A DESIRE FOR AUTONOMY OR OTHER DESIRE TO CONTROL OTHERS AROUND US. WE WANT TO HAVE CHOICES AND CONTROL OVER OUR OWN LIVES. WE STRIVE FOR THE ABILITY TO DIRECT THE MANNER IN WHICH WE LIVE NOW AND THE WAY OUR LIVES WILL UNFOLD IN THE FUTURE.

WE ALSO OFTEN ASPIRE TO CONTROL OTHERS AROUND US. THE DESIRE FOR CONTROL IS STRONGER IN SOME PEOPLE THAN OTHERS. IN SOME CASES, THE CRAVING FOR POWER INDUCES PEOPLE TO HARMFUL, IMMORAL, OR ILLEGAL BEHAVIOR. IN OTHER SITUATIONS, THE LONGING FOR POWER IS MERELY A DESIRE TO AFFECT THE BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS. WE SIMPLY WANT PEOPLE TO DO WHAT WE WANT, ACCORDING TO OUR TIMETABLE, AND THE WAY WE WANT IT DONE.



### SOCIAL

MANY PEOPLE ARE MOTIVATED BY SOCIAL FACTORS. THIS MAY BE A DESIRE TO BELONG AND TO BE ACCEPTED BY A SPECIFIC PEER GROUP OR A DESIRE TO RELATE TO THE PEOPLE IN OUR SPHERE OR IN THE LARGER WORLD. WE HAVE AN INNATE NEED TO FEEL A CONNECTION WITH OTHERS. WE ALSO HAVE THE NEED FOR ACCEPTANCE AND AFFILIATION.

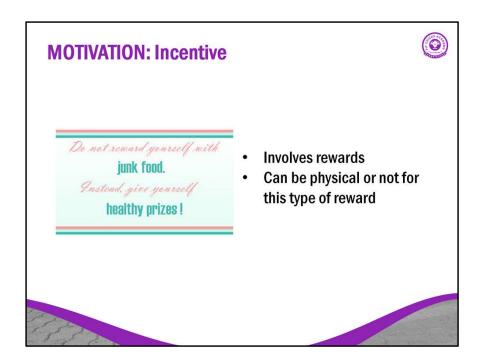
A GENUINE AND PASSIONATE DESIRE TO CONTRIBUTE AND TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS CAN BE ANOTHER FORM OF SOCIAL MOTIVATION. IF WE HAVE A LONGING TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD AROUND US, IT IS GENERALLY A SIGN THAT WE ARE MOTIVATED BY SOCIAL FACTORS. THE REAL IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MOTIVATION IS IN OUR ABILITY TO DETERMINE WHICH FORM OF MOTIVATION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR INSPIRING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR IN EITHER OTHERS OR OURSELVES. NONE OF THESE STYLES OF MOTIVATION IS INHERENTLY GOOD OR BAD, THE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE OUTCOME IS TRULY DETERMINED BY THE WAY THEY ARE USED.



# FEAR

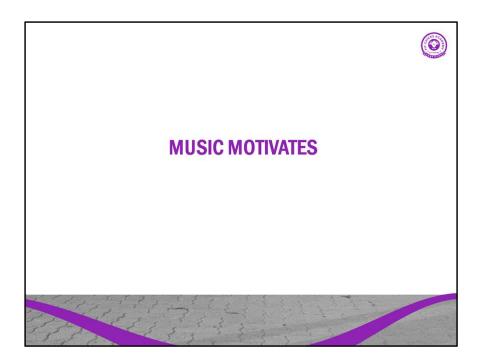
FEAR MOTIVATION INVOLVES CONSEQUENCES. THIS TYPE OF MOTIVATION IS OFTEN ONE THAT IS UTILIZED WHEN INCENTIVE MOTIVATION FAILS. IN A BUSINESS STYLE OF MOTIVATION OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE, "CARROT AND STICK," INCENTIVE IS THE CARROT AND FEAR IS THE STICK.

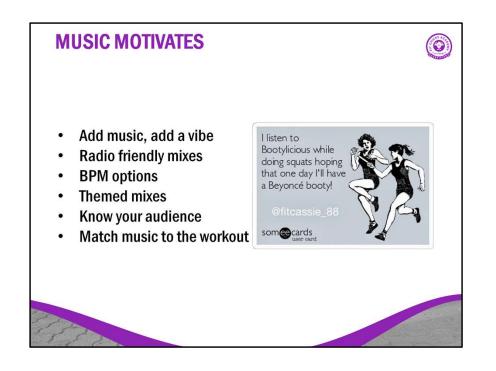
PUNISHMENT OR NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES ARE A FORM OF FEAR MOTIVATION. THIS TYPE OF MOTIVATION IS COMMONLY USED TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ALSO FREQUENTLY IN A PROFESSIONAL SETTING TO MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES. IF WE BREAK THE RULES OR FAIL TO ACHIEVE THE SET GOAL, WE ARE PENALIZED IN SOME WAY.

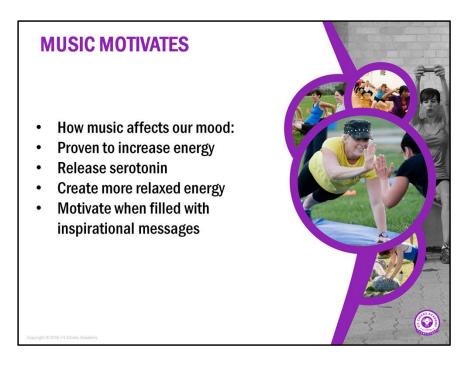


## INCENTIVE

A FORM OF MOTIVATION THAT INVOLVES REWARDS, BOTH MONETARY AND NONMONETARY IS OFTEN CALLED INCENTIVE MOTIVATION. MANY PEOPLE ARE DRIVEN BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WILL BE REWARDED IN SOME MANNER FOR ACHIEVING A CERTAIN TARGET OR GOAL. BONUSES AND PROMOTIONS ARE GOOD EXAMPLES OF THE TYPE OF INCENTIVES THAT ARE USED FOR MOTIVATION.





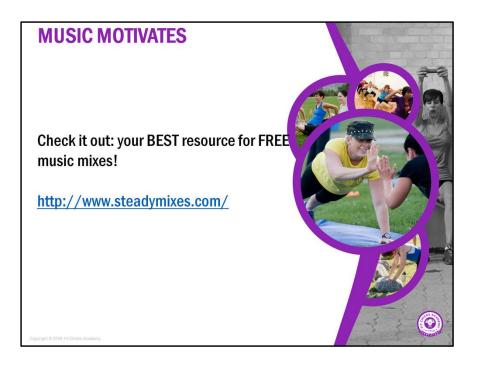


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MUSIC MOTIVATES			
	WorkoutMusic2 BPM (	CHART Pace	ВРМ
BPMs for best results!	Walking Stroll Walking Easy Fitness Walking Moderate Fitness Walking Fast Fitness Walking Power Walking	3.0 to 3.2 MPH 3.3 to 3.5 MPH 3.6 to 4.0 MPH 4.0 to 4.3 MPH 4.3 to 4.5 MPH	115 to 118 118 to 121 124 to 126 130 to 138 137 to 139
	Easy Jogging	5.2 to 6.0 MPH	147 to 150
	Running Cycling Moderate Cycling (upright, recumbent, outdoors)	6.0 to 8.0 MPH	147 to 160 139 to 145
	Fast Cycling (upright, recumbent, outdoors)	75 to 80 RPM	147 to 150
	Stairclimbers		124 to 128
	Elliptical / Dual Action Machi	nes	124 to 128
	Yoga / Pilates		85 to 95
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