

Characteristics of an Effective Exercise Instructor

Awareness, a positive **A**ttitude & the willingness to take appropriate **A**ction.

A professional (e.g. AD, RT, etc) implementing exercise classes (e.g. chair aerobics) needs to be aware of the **3 C's**; characteristics associated with an effective instructor:

- 1) **C**ompetence
- 2) **C**ommunication
- 3) **C**aring & Compassion

Seems pretty simple, right? Let's go on and examine the characteristics on an individual basis.

- **Competence** is critical. As a competent instructor, be **aware** of the aging process as well as the physical, psychological, spiritual and social benefits of leading an active lifestyle. Be knowledgeable of common medical conditions experienced by older adults, as well as signs-and-symptoms older adults may experience as the result of taking certain medications. In addition, be familiar with current basic contraindications (no-no's) specific to exercising with this population.
- **Communication** with is essential. Have open communication with your facility director, and during an exercise class remember to continually communicate with your participants. This communication can come in the form of verbal cuing or demonstration, and the latter is best for RPs with memory loss; *less is more...show me*. Show your participants you are passionate about their personal wellness and the idea of empowering them to improve their functional fitness. Some experts believe that communicating with a positive **attitude** may be the single most important determinant of an instructor's success in working with older adults.
- **Caring & Compassion** will also take you a long way! As you know, many of the RPs coming to you with a desire to become more physically active have been sedentary for quite some time or have not ever previously exercised. With this in mind, you know these individuals are likely to be lacking in confidence. You want to find ways to compliment your RPs for their efforts...verbally (e.g. "good job today") or non-verbally (e.g. a smile or a pat on the back). Be able to connect in a caring and compassionate way, recognizing and acknowledging even the smallest improvements in an effort to increase confidence, improve functional fitness and keep your RPs coming back time-and-time again.

The FitXpress **Steps to Better Balance & Fall Prevention** training module is a great way to get started, providing the brass tacks in terms of implementing a safe & effective

chair exercise program for the older adults you serve. For more information email me; nikki@fitxpress.com or call me at 1-800-481-7449 X802.

Until next month, *Be healthy...be happy!* ☺