

Arthritis Foundation® Leader Links

First Class Tips for Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program Instructors



You've been trained and generated interest in your class. Now it's time for that first class. You learned a great deal in your training and it may seem overwhelming. Fear not, following is a checklist of things to remember:

First and foremost, don't be afraid! Greet your participants as they enter the room. Ask them what type of arthritis they have, if they have any replacements, etc. Make them feel welcome!

Spend some time at the beginning of the first class talking about what the participants can expect in your

program. Hand out some general information and brochures from the Arthritis Foundation. Make sure you have some brochures on specific forms of arthritis – OA, RA, bursitis, etc.

Tell them a little about yourself. If you have arthritis, let your class know about this – it's a great way for them to identify with you. Remind them to take it easy and not to force the exercises. This is NOT a "no pain, no gain" program.

You DO NOT need to do all of the exercises you learned in one class. Copy the exercises you want to use and reference them during class if you need to. Work all the joints through their range-of-motion. Do not overwork joints by doing too many reps.

If participants are afraid to exercise, remind them that everyone has different abilities and if they can't do an exercise perfectly, that it is OK (keep them feeling good about themselves). Keep this first class simple and doable for all levels. Save the toys such as weights, balls and bands for a later time.

At the end of class, use calming and peaceful music. Teach them deep breathing (an excellent natural pain reliever) and possibly visualization or another relaxation technique from your manual. End class with the hug exercise.

Systems Partner Grant a Great Success!

When Benchmark Assisted Living agreed to become a systems partner with the Northern and Southern New England Chapter on one of their REACH grants, no one anticipated what a great success story this was to become. Benchmark is the largest provider of senior living services in the Northeast, with over 40 communities located throughout Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

The original goal of the grant was to recruit two-thirds of the Benchmark facilities to train instructors to offer the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program to their residents and members of the local communities. However, the Benchmark corporate office had loftier goals. They wholeheartedly embraced this project and committed to 100% participation by all of their facilities! To date, approximately 100 instructors have been trained across New England. Plans are now underway to elevate several Benchmark instructors to trainer status. This will allow the organization to train new staff and to replace staff lost through attrition, making the program sustainable. A win-win all around!

Research Update: Osteoarthritis

The release of a new study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, which calls into question the necessity of arthroscopic knee surgery for arthritis patients, has led to a surge in media attention for the Arthritis Foundation. The study suggests physical therapy and medication may be just as effective as arthroscopic knee surgery in treating osteoarthritis.

Along with a television segment on CNN American Morning, in which Dr. Sanjay Gupta discussed the study and directed viewers to arthritis.org, the Arthritis Foundation was also mentioned in articles in the Associated Press and The Wall Street Journal.

Feel free to mention this article in your classes when discussing arthritis research. For that study and other related OA research, please contact Jeannine Galloway, jgalloway@arthritis.org.

ANSWERLinks

Q What if one of my participants brings in an Arthritis Today article full of exercises. Are these exercises safe to use in our Arthritis Foundation classes?

A Although exercises from Arthritis Today are useful, they are not intended to use in the AF programs. Our Life Improvement Series (LIS) has been thoroughly researched to ensure evidence-based results. In order to maintain the evidence – stick to the book!

Remember, AT is a great resource and you should share the articles with your class. Another idea, encourage students to bring in articles from arthritis.org or the National Institutes of Health website.

Making Your Class Exciting—Your “Recipe” For Success



Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center, in Salida, CO

No matter what you teach, every instructor has a common goal -- motivating their students while keeping class exciting! So rather than provide an overwhelming list of ideas we are going to list a complete “recipe” in each issue: providing ideas and tools that could be helpful for your class.

IDEA: “Laughter is Medicine”

TOOLS: A joke or riddle.

Consider wearing a clown nose, large funny glasses and/or a clown hat when telling the joke.

HOW TO: Put on your funny costume and begin your class with a joke or riddle – this is a great ice breaker, because it affords an opportunity for everyone to participate through their laughter!

RESOURCES: Corny Humor, published by the National Federation of the Blind is a great source for appropriate jokes and riddles. Another excellent source for humor is the Reader’s Digest. If you have access to a computer, you can “Google” jokes – just make sure to read them BEFORE class to make sure they are appropriate for your participants. My favorite source of all – consider asking your participants to bring in a joke...talk about a wonderful opportunity to give them a “voice” and connect with their classmates, as well as offering them a feeling of ownership in the program.

Check your Instructor’s Manual for other ways to make your classes exciting!

Back to Basics—Using Your Instructor Manual

Whether you are a new instructor, or a veteran of many years, the instructor manual is an incredible resource to keep your class exciting. Here are some things to review in your Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program Manual. Many of these same topics can be found in the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Manual too.

Program Overview – provides a history, program goals, requirements and basic guidelines

Medical Aspects – discusses arthritis and joint anatomy, including information on some of the more common forms of arthritis; may even include some information relative to the psychosocial aspects of the disease

Health/Participant Education – includes information on exercise principles, body awareness, joint protection, energy conservation

Effective Instruction – information on program planning, effectiveness, adherence and growth; including issues related to special sensitivities, theme/introductory/ closing activities

Warm-up and Cool-down – defines terminology, provides guidelines, explains components, including sample programs

Exercise Guide – provides guidelines and exercise descriptions; endurance activities, including sample lesson plans

Appendices – program materials list, Letter of Agreement, class participant reporting form, program questionnaire, and other related materials

Save the Date! Regional TTT in Meriden, Connecticut!



Arthritis Foundation
Exercise Program™



Arthritis Foundation
Aquatic Program™



Arthritis Foundation
Self-Help Program™

Fall is the perfect time of year to visit New England, when the air is crisp and the foliage is gorgeous. What a great opportunity to combine business with pleasure by participating in a regional Train the Trainer Program! This one will be held on

November 8 & 9 at the Four Points by Sheridan in Meriden, Connecticut. Register early and plan a little extra time to explore beautiful New England! Next TTT- April 2009.

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