

LECTURE 2

Session Delivery

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- **Preparation**
- **The Makeup of a Session**
- **Movement Patterns**
- **Activation Exercises**
- **Delivery**
- **Meaning Intensity**
- **Heart Rate Training Zones**
- **Making Changes and Amendments**
- **Feedback**
- **Progression & Regression**
- **Self Evaluation**

As a personal trainer you will spend a lot of time planning and delivering sessions to your clients. How successful the client will be in achieving their goals and their enjoyment of the process, are related to the planning stage and the subsequent session delivery. We are going to look further into these areas in this lecture.

Q. What goes into this process to make it go as well as possible?

A. Preparation, Delivery and Review.

Let's begin with Preparation.

Preparation

Session Preparation

Following completion of a consultation, the PT will have a clear understanding of the client's goals. From this point they should write programmes to support the client reaching these goals. It is important that you consider the client's current health, fitness and lifestyle in order to be sure that the programme suits them. Generally, fitness instructors will also write programmes for the client, but they will be more generic in detail and they will be delivered in order that the client is able to train by themselves for an extended period of time. The PT will be planning progressions from session to session for the client and be with them throughout the workout. It is a much more comprehensive approach. This speaks to the added value of a PT - and the additional cost. It is also important that you have the session prepared in terms of equipment and space. If you have the time to arrange the session around the equipment you need, you will be able to eliminate the chances of anything not being available to you. This isn't always possible of course as you might need lots of different equipment, but it is good to try and arrange this as best you can.

Client Preparation

You will need to offer the client some insight into the session ahead of time. Consider the following...

- What do they need? The client should be told what they will need to bring with them, for example a towel, a water bottle, and a completed PAR-Q etc.
- Session content. You should offer the client a basic understanding of the session design in order that they can prepare themselves for it. If there are any fitness testing procedures, they should know the pre-test protocol you want them to adhere to. If they need to be well-rested, then you should let them know to have an easier training day (or a rest day) the day before.
- Where to go. If this is the client's first session with you they will likely need to know where to meet you. Will you meet them in the gym? Or in the reception area?

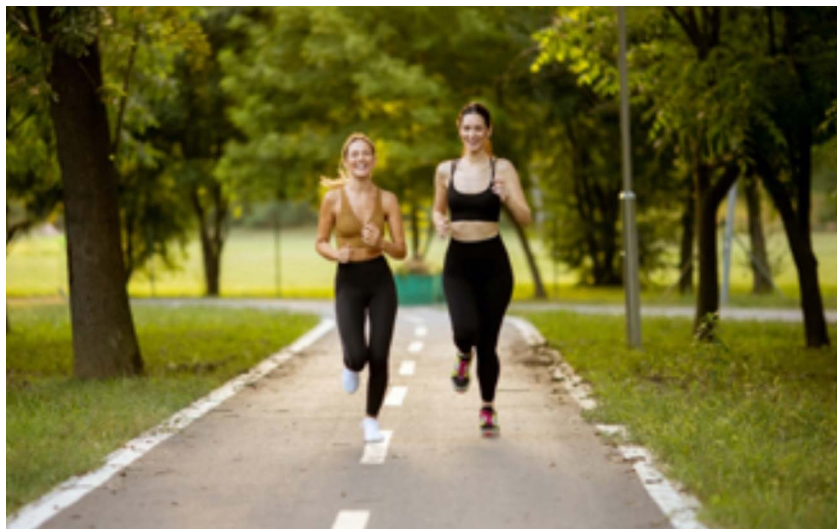
The Makeup of a Session

Warmup



You may want to include a pulse-raising exercise, as well as foam rolling. Activation exercises for the primary muscles you are going to use in the session should be considered alongside the dynamic stretch.

Cardiovascular



How is the main CV section going to be structured? Are you choosing to do Interval training? What intensity will you use? What does the client need from you in terms of motivation? Are you aware of how to monitor their intensity?

Resistance



The delivery of the main resistance session will likely include some of the advanced training systems. Have you made sure that the systems planned, match the client's goals? Are they ready for this level of intensity?

Cooldown



What type of cooldown are you likely to use? Will you utilise any hands-on stretching techniques or foam rolling? Is there any mobility and flexibility 'homework' the client will need to do between sessions.

Movement Patterns

'Functional exercise' is a term used to describe exercises that closely mirror the demands the client will experience in day-to-day life. If we can utilise exercises in our client's programmes that make their daily tasks a little easier, then we are doing them an excellent service. For a healthy body we should ensure it can move in several different ways. Let's have a look below...

Push



Primarily involves the chest, shoulders and triceps...

Examples include:

- Shoulder press.
- Bench press.
- Tricep dips.
- Push-ups.

Pull



Mainly utilises the back and bicep muscles...

Examples include:

- Bent over row.
- Single arm row.
- Cable row.
- Lat pulldown.
- Bicep curls.

Squat



Lower body movement using both the hips and the knees mainly...

Examples include:

- Front squat.
- Back squat.
- Split squat.
- Goblet squat.

Hinge



Lower body exercises that target predominantly the muscles of the hips...

Examples include:

- Deadlifts.
- Stiff-leg deadlifts.
- Single-leg deadlifts.
- Kettlebell swings.

Lunge



Lower body movements that use the hips and the knees to produce a range of different single-leg movements...

Examples include:

- Forward lunge.
- Backwards lunge.
- Step-ups.
- Lateral lunge.

Rotate



Torso movements that involve twisting...

Examples include:

- Russian twist.
- Cable woodchop.
- Standing band twists.

Activation Exercises

Some clients will have muscular imbalances and compensations, or postural issues. You may need to spend more time during your session (particularly in the warmup) activating muscles, ensuring that new postural habits are learned, and issuing more corrective exercises in addition to your regular programme. This all feeds into the extra care and attention a PT provides to the client and is another reason the client can feel secure in the fact that you are working for their improvement. A client with an understanding of why these aspects are beneficial to them is more likely to buy-in to this process and be more diligent in it.

So - having looked largely at the session components, exercise selection, and warm-up, let's look deeper into a personal trainer's responsibilities during a session. There are a number of things to consider as your primary responsibilities to a client within a session.

Let's look into these now...

- Educate.
- Spotting.
- Stretching techniques.
- Training systems for example drop sets.
- Progression.
- Motivation.
- Attention.
- Alternatives.

Fatigue, sweating and delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) are sometimes by-products of training sessions, but they are not the aim. There is a distinct difference to be aware of here. Many things will make you sweaty and tired, yet this isn't an indication that they are productive in improving your health, wellness and performance. There is a time to work with intensity of course, but it should be well planned. Some of the most productive sessions are those teach clients to improve technique, rather than push their limits. A skilful PT will know when to apply different training styles.

Delivery

You should consider guidance, education, demonstration, motivation, and celebration when thinking about your approach with clients. You should offer...

- guidance to the client through comprehensive demonstrations of what you want them to do.
- The education of why this is beneficial is important for their 'buy-in'.
- You should offer motivation, particularly when the session gets tougher.
- Finally, celebrate the success the client enjoys.

We want our clients to build a fantastic relationship with exercise. By empowering them in their sessions they will be more likely to take ownership of the process.

In relation to the above point, you should keep a focus on what you are trying to achieve with your client. Let's take a client who is doing squats. One progression we could make over time is to add more weight to their squat. But we need to do this only if it is beneficial. If it compromises the depth of their squat, is it worth doing?

There is a place for shorter range of motion (ROM) and higher weight. Equally there is a place for fuller ROM and lower weight. The job of the PT is to keep in mind the technique that is going to benefit the individual client the most. This also feeds back into education. We can often adopt a simplistic view that 'more is better', yet our job is to guide the client as to the benefits of their sessions, and keep their progress in our minds.

Measuring Intensity

Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

The original RPE scale was known as the 'Borg scale' and that was from 6-20. This has since been largely replaced by the far simpler scale of 1-10. The scale is easy to use, familiar, and easy to administer.

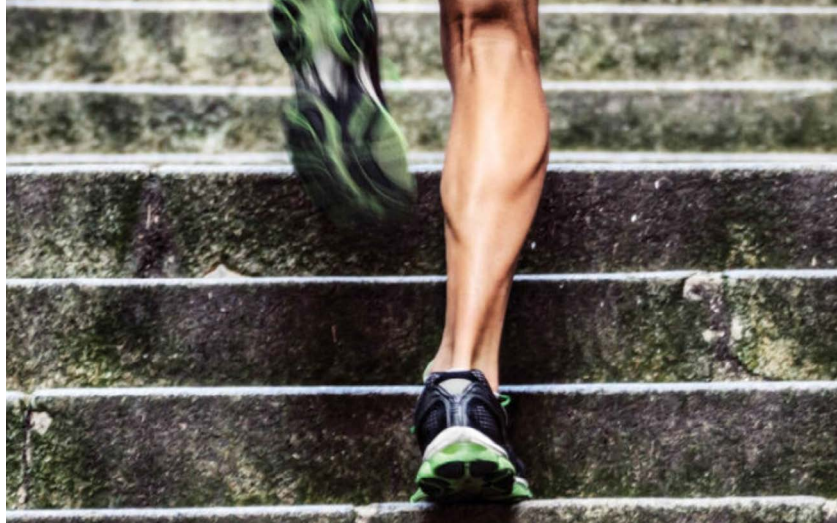
The easiest way to consider the scale is that 1 is completely relaxed and 10 is as hard as you could possibly work. Most people can easily relate to this scale and it can show progression over time, as well as giving insight into a client's level of fatigue if they find an exercise harder than they ordinarily would have.

Conversational



The talk test is a non-scientific method of monitoring intensity that takes into account how hard your client is working based on how easily they can hold a conversation. You can ask questions to your client as you increase intensity throughout an exercise session and assess how they are responding. When they get to a point where they are working really hard, they will not be able to hold a conversation.

Metabolic Equivalents (METs)



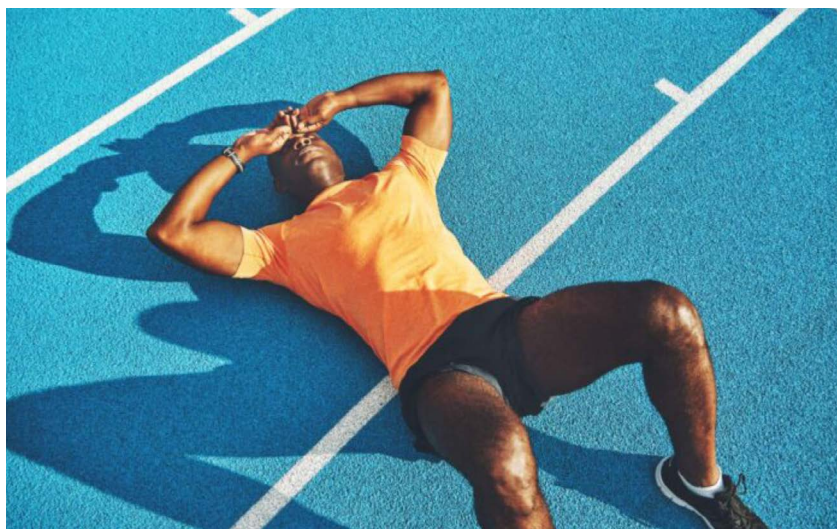
We can link the exercise intensity to the amount of energy expended in performance. METs (Metabolic Equivalents) estimates the energy expenditure of a task relative to body mass.

When you exercise, you expend energy, and it can be measured either in **calories** or **VO2**.

VO2 is an index of the body's efficiency at producing work. It is expressed in how many millilitres of oxygen can be consumed in a minute

The energy we use increases through activity. So, for example, an exercise that uses three times our resting energy is said to use 3METs.

Physical Signs



To assess a client's effort and intensity we can observe the signs of physical exertion they are displaying. This isn't very scientific but can offer some insight. Consider the following: – technique diminishing – redness and sweating – breathlessness – facial expressions showing difficulty.

Heart Rate Training Zones

Heart rate percentage (HR%) and the training zones can be used to assess intensity. Initially it is important to understand how to calculate the theoretical maximum heart rate (HR).

To achieve this, you can use the following equation... 220 minus age

For example, if you are 30 years old, your theoretical maximum HR is 190 beats per minute (bpm) (220 minus 30). Exercise intensity can be assigned based on the percentage of 190bpm that you want to work – this is generally between 60-90% based on client fitness and goals.

Remember that this is only theoretical and that the actual number may be higher or lower by around 11-12 bpm.

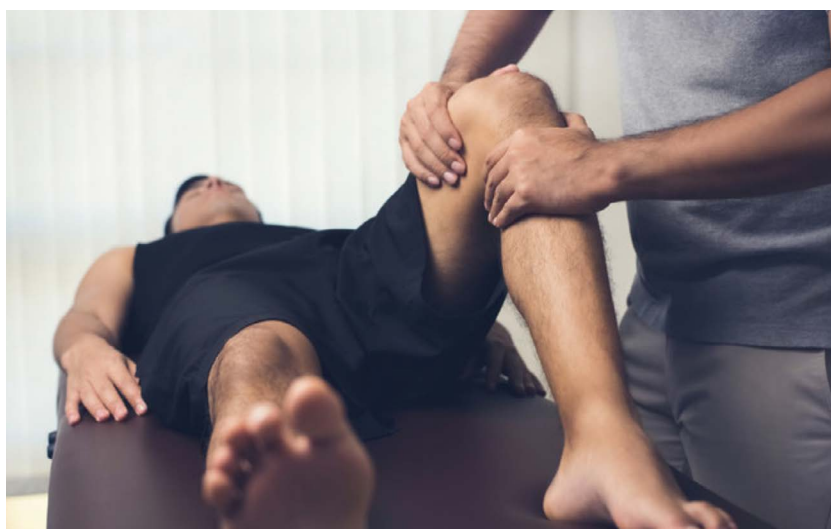
Individual Needs

No two people are exactly the same, and as such each of your clients will have different requirements when it comes to delivery of sessions. They will all have different movement issues that you need to be aware of, they will all need to be given teaching points in a slightly different way, their corrections will need to be administered in a way they can understand, and you will need to focus on the 'corrective' and 'preparatory' exercises that apply to each person individually.

Making Changes and Amendments to Client Programmes

Below we have some of the reasons to consider adaptations, alternatives and amendments to your plans.

Injury / Illness



A client who is ill, has been ill, or is coming back from an injury will require special attention from you. Now is the time to lower the intensity to ensure they are not exacerbating the issues. You also need to consider a potential strategy to return the client to full health in the event of an injury. This may require assistance from a sports therapist or physiotherapist.

Time Off



Time away from exercise can be a helpful and healthy thing, but an extended layoff might result in regression of fitness levels, movement capacity, and health markers. A client coming back to exercise may need to be given a programme with reduced intensity, complexity, and demand. They are unlikely to be able to do exactly what they could do before, right away.

Difficulty Level



A session can be difficult to complete on one day, and feel easy another day. People come to their sessions carrying different levels of fatigue, stress, and aches and pains, and your sessions should be adapted as needed. At times a session that used to feel difficult can begin to feel easy, and it is important that the client is offered the chance to progress.

Change In Goals



Clients who have been with you for a while are likely to evolve as they gain experience. Their goals and aspirations may change, they might decide to sign up for an event, or they may have a new aesthetic target they want to reach. Being adaptable as a PT is important in this instance as you should be able to alter the client's programmes to suit their changing goals.

Feedback

Receiving Feedback

Gaining feedback from the client is incredibly valuable in terms of your progression as a trainer. You should look to ask open questions to your client so that you are able to receive the most useful feedback possible. Simply asking, "Did you enjoy the session?" doesn't give much opportunity for the client to expand. Instead, ask questions like...

- What aspects of the session did you enjoy the most?
- Were there any aspects you didn't enjoy or would want changed next time?
- How did you feel about my delivery?
- What about the level of motivation?
- Was there anything they you understand?

All of these things will help you to ensure an ever-improving service.

Giving Feedback

Feedback should be positively delivered and should centre around the client's achievements, as well as addressing the things they may work on with you next time. It is important to consider where the improvement can come from so that you can work on these things in the next session. This practice will set you up to improve the value of your sessions together as you go forward. Leaving on some positive feedback always feels good and is a nice way to wrap up a training session.

Progression and Regression

Once the client has finished their session you may need to make adjustments to their programme for the next time you meet. You will need to take into account a number of things when looking at future planning, including...

- Did they find the session too easy or too hard?
- Did they complete all the exercises with good form?
- Did you have to increase/decrease reps for any of the exercises?
- Did you have to increase/decrease the planned weight for any of the exercises?
- Did they manage to complete the entire cardio-vascular (CV) section without undue fatigue?

These are just examples of some reasons you may want to progress or regress the programme for next time. Then you can set about making adaptations to future sessions...

So, what can you amend?

Volume



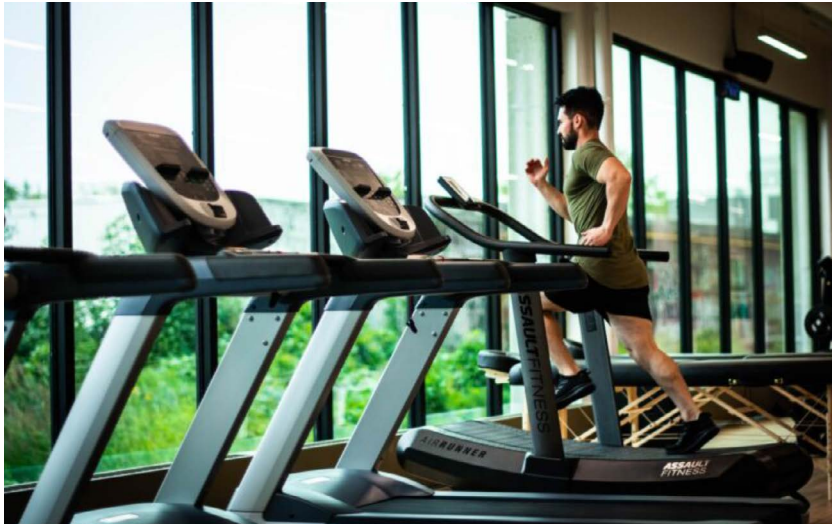
You could increase or decrease the volume of the training session by manipulating the sets, reps and rest periods. By simply taking away or adding a single set you will vary the exercise stress the client is under.

Exercise Selection



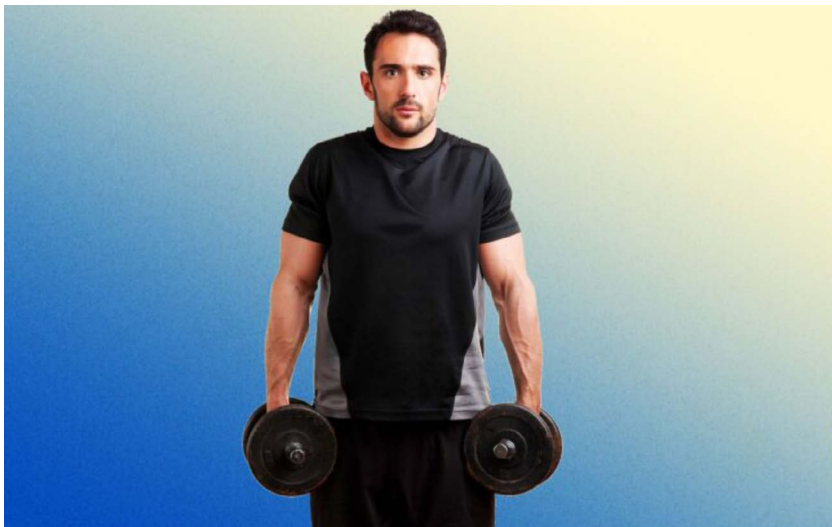
The exercise selection is another key element. You might begin to utilise more isolation exercises to supplement the compound ones, or more free weights in place of the machine-based exercises.

RPE (rate of perceived exertion)



If the client found the session too hard then simply asking them for a 6/10 rather than a 7/10 next time may be enough for them to feel like the session is more manageable. Equally if it felt manageable last time you could ask for an 8/10 next time. This is not particularly quantifiable but can offer the client more input into their sessions.

Training Systems



The addition of some advanced training systems could change the entire feel of the session, together with the demands.

For example, let's take a bicep curl and tricep dip. As you do the bicep curl, the biceps are the agonist muscles (because they are the ones that are contracting while the triceps are the antagonist because they are lengthening. The tricep dip does the opposite.

instead of completing 3 x 10 reps doing a bicep curl (with a rest in between each set), and then doing the same with a tricep dip, putting the two together in an agonistic superset will enhance the demands. In other words, you do 10x bicep curls followed immediately by 10x tricep dips. Then rest. And repeat that three times.

Review Goals

Working with clients over the long-term will include goal reviews to ensure what you are doing is still relevant and appropriate towards the client's aspirations. Their adherence and progress will vary over time, and you may need to make adaptations to plans throughout the process. Based on current performance and achievements, the timelines and programmes can be adapted to ensure the client is working towards results in the most efficient manner possible.

Self-Evaluation and Reflection

Following the conclusion of the session, and after having given feedback to your client, it is important that you take a little time to run an informal session-evaluation on yourself. This doesn't have to take long, and doesn't need to take place after every session, but if there are any parts of the session you feel didn't go as well as you would have liked you can think about how to change this in future. A few moments reflecting on your performance, identifying areas you are happy with, and those that could be improved, are valuable for your long-term progression. You should consider clients' feedback, and potentially any observations from yourself, your peers or management as a way to progress in your career. The ability to honestly reflect on the workouts you have delivered and how they might improve in future is a fantastic way to ensure you are always setting yourself up to be the best PT you can be.

Self-evaluation should include the areas of both strength and weakness that you have as a PT so that you may identify where you are doing well, and what you can work on, in addition to any continuing professional development (CPD) that may enhance your service.