

LECTURE 3

Forming Good Working Relationships

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Motivation

LECTURE **3**

Forming Good Working Relationships

It is safe to say that the better your relationships are with clients, the more successful they are likely to be. If you can enjoy a relationship built on trust and respect, then each party will feel able to be honest about the training process etc. There will be situations when you need to correct technique, or the client feels that an exercise doesn't work for them. If you are not confident in the relationship you have built it will be hard to discuss these things.

Being able to build motivation through the relationship you have built with your client will lead to exercise adherence and is a major part of your role as a fitness professional.

Effective relationships and sound communication are important for establishing professionalism in your role. This is important in helping generate happy customers and repeat business.

Relationships will be enhanced if you keep the following points at the forefront of your mind:

- Build your relationships based on openness, respect and honesty.
- Trust, safety and security are all vital if a relationship is to succeed.
- Good communication is the only way to really make a relationship thrive.
- Mutual appreciation between you and your client is important.
- Confidentiality is of paramount importance to ensure trust.

How To Form Effective Relationships

There are a number of key factors that go into forming an excellent working relationship. We alluded to them above. Let's explore them more below...

Communication

Communication is an important aspect of any relationship, and this stands true for the fitness professional in order that they can relate to all of their clients. You will communicate face-to-face, as well as digitally with your clients. You should consider what kind of impression you want to put across, what language you want to use and how formal you want to be. Professionalism is important, and so is building a kinship that inspires openness.

If you can make people feel at ease and build a safe space for them to train with you, then your career will flourish.

Personal Conduct

Good personal conduct as a fitness professional covers several key areas. You need to consider your behaviour with clients and ensure that you don't act in a way that negatively affects your reputation or that of the health club. Professional behaviour needs to be observed in terms of how you deal with a client face-to-face, as well as when they are not there. They should be respected fully, and their needs catered to positively.

Your personal conduct also extends to how you wear your uniform, and the pride you take in all your tasks, even the ones you might not want to do.

Personal Boundaries & Trust

Boundaries as a fitness instructor are so important. You are in a position of power when it comes to your relationship with your clients, and you need to respect this. Being clear about how and when you might need to touch a client is one example. You should always ask and ensure they are comfortable ahead of time. In addition to this you should be aware of discussions relating to things outside of your role as a fitness professional such as your partner's personal life.

When it comes to trust, there are few things more important than being entrusted with someone's health. It is important you keep the client at the centre of your focus and offer the best advice you can.

Let's take a look at each category in a bit more detail...

Communication



Listening - you must be able to listen to your client effectively. Your initial consultation is a prime example of when your relationship will start. It is vital to ask a question and really listen to the answer. It is too easy to quickly move past important topics or interrupt clients mid flow.

Support – support can come in many forms. It can be as a sounding board for a frustrated client who needs to discuss something, it could be in celebration for a client achieving something or it could be empathising with their situation. However, you are providing support and you should always act with your client's best interests at heart.

Body language – your body language shows your client that you are fully engaged. It is very obvious if someone is not engaged in what is happening and this could result in the loss of a client.

Simple acts such as nodding, or eye contact can confirm that you have heard or are listening to what the client is saying.

Questions – asking questions of your client is really important in empowering them to take ownership for what they are doing, as well as in clarifying that you fully understand them.

For example, if a client is performing a bicep curl, asking them 'do you feel that in your bicep' or 'where do you feel this the most' will open dialogue. Notice the first question is a simple 'yes or no' answer whereas the second is an open-ended question, inviting more input from the client.

Explain – you will of course be required to explain things to your client. At times you will need to ask personal questions to fully understand your client's situation and being able to articulate yourself and explain why you are asking, will help you gain honest answers and put your client at ease.

Clarifying & reflecting – clarification is making sure that you have properly understood what your client has said, whereas reflecting on a conversation and reiterating it to your client will help them to feel confident that you have understood them.

Positivity – it's important that you remain positive for your client, even if they may be losing motivation or haven't yet reached their goal.

If you can help them to see the positive when they are struggling to do so, you can help increase their motivation and likelihood of success.

Empathy – seeing things from your client's perspective whilst difficult, is extremely important. Take for example the intimidation that a client might be feeling on their first visit to the gym. Being able to empathise will help your client feel at ease.

Personal Conduct

Presentation

Your image and appearance will portray your professionalism and that of the organisation. Wearing the correct, clean uniform is an easy way to ensure you are portraying a professional image of yourself and the health club.

Timekeeping

Punctuality is a very important aspect of your work as a fitness professional. On a basic level you may have hourly appointments so if one session starts late and runs late it will affect the next one. In addition, being on time for your client shows that you take their time seriously and respect the appointment. This is a very good way to start your relationship and create mutual respect.

Reliability & Integrity

Reliability, honesty, respect and having strong morals are some of the pillars of integrity. To be seen as a good fitness professional and to do very well in the fitness industry you need to have integrity and be reliable.

Role Model

A fitness professional doesn't have to have a certain bodyfat percentage, or be a competitive athlete to be able to do their job well. However, living a life that features exercise, recovery and healthy nutrition will secure your place as a role model to your clients.

Environment For Success

You should always be working to offer the best chance of success to your clients and their fitness goals. If you can create an environment that supports their progression in exercise, then you are doing a great job as a fitness professional.

The relationships you build, the communication skills you hold and the reliability and professionalism you demonstrate are the things that are going to make you a success in the fitness industry...

