

Instructor Training Key To BodyTech's Leadership

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BodyTech is renowned for producing good instructors because they are key to a successful strength or fitness training programme. So then, what makes a good instructor?

Research has found the three most important characteristics that an instructor should have are knowledge, teaching skills and lots of enthusiasm. People want instructors who have a good working knowledge in the area of physical fitness and exercise science. They desire the instructors to disseminate their knowledge clearly, concisely and correctly. Most importantly, members want trainers who enjoy their work, encourage them and show genuine excitement in their instructing.

Obviously, hiring instructors who know how to use the equipment is not enough. They should be genuinely committed to proper instruction and to all member needs. They need to be able to deliver a program that incorporates quality teaching procedures with individual attention.

BodyTech strongly feels that the key to a successful strength training programme is instructors who care.

BodyTech have always schooled their instructors to care about members' fitness as if it were their own; instructors who interact personally as well as professionally and who share pleasantries as well as training tips.

Personalised Fitness Training

When a prospective member expresses interest in our strength training programme we give them a packet of information explaining the benefits of sensible strength training, the procedures for beginning the programme and

guidelines for using the facility. We also require them to complete a pre-exercise questionnaire and if appropriate a fitness evaluation to better inform the instructors for a more accurate programme. If they have no medical contraindications, we take them for a first workout, which involves 30 to 40 minutes of instruction with several staff members.

During the introductory session, the instructor explains the basic principles of strength training: recovery time, near maximum resistance and the importance of muscle balance. This initial session should be used as an opportunity for an overall evaluation of a members' general ability to perform new exercises which include strength, co-ordination, likes and dislikes.

The second session deals with specific strength training guidelines. The instructor explains in detail, information on exercise selection, speed, range, progression and continuity. The member performs at least seven or eight exercises so that by the end of this session they will have trained each major muscle group.

The third session addresses proper form and breathing, as the members go through exercises again. By this time they should be less intimidated by the equipment and exercises, and better able to concentrate on technique. The instructor now takes the opportunity to explain the finer points about the exercises and training equipment. This is also a good time to clarify any areas of confusion and to emphasise the importance of workout regularity.

Progress and Problems

Both research and experience have shown, older people and women do not increase their weight loads as often as they should, resulting in slower progress. Conversely, young people and men tend to increase their weights too frequently, resulting in poor form and chronic injuries. Athletes and overweight individuals also have a habit of doing too much too soon in an attempt to force faster progress. In general, men tend to overtrain in an attempt to develop larger muscles, while women tend to undertrain for the fear of developing them. Both strategies are unnecessary and unproductive, because muscle size is limited by genetic factors.

"The problem where most gyms fall down is beyond the head trainer ... there are very few well-trained instructors to work with members, encourage them and note their progress. The best way to serve clients is to provide the best trained instructional staff."

It is important to deal sensibly with each type of person. Some must be encouraged to train a little harder, while others must be convinced to train a little easier. Committed instructors are absolutely essential for accomplishing this. And the key to maintaining member participation is first-class instruction from trainers who care.