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Flexing Your Creativity Muscles

The success of any class depends on the ability of the instructor to meet the specific needs of the group. Many times this means being able to teach in ways that are unique and creative.

The ultimate benefit of being creative is having clients continue to exercise and come back to your classes. Another benefit of using creativity in exercise classes is keeping you, the instructor, from burning out. It's easy to get tired of doing the same things over and over again.

So get out of your rut and learn how to boost your creativity using these tips:

1. Brainstorm for creative ideas, weigh the pros and cons and then find the best solutions. Some ideas may not be practical, but they might seed other creative thoughts.
2. Keep reading magazines, books, and articles that pertain to exercise and childbearing issues. Talk

to creative people. Attend educational and motivational conferences. Many times we get our best ideas from other people.

3. Try to do things differently. Listen to music you don't normally listen to, watch a movie that would not ordinarily appeal to you, take a different route home and notice the different scenery. By trying new things, you are expanding your horizons and sparking creativity.
4. Get over your fear of trying new things. Use the one-minute decision maker: Ask yourself, "What is the best outcome?" and then ask yourself, "What is the worst outcome?" If you can live with the worst outcome, then just do it!
5. Play and have fun. When you are trying new things

and having fun, your class participants will have fun as well.

Resources

Michalko, M. 2001. *Cracking Creativity: The Secrets of Creative Genius*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Von Oech, R. 1998. *A Whack on the Side of the Head: How You Can Be More Creative*. New York: Warner Business Books.

Website:
www.brainstorming.co.uk/contents.html. Explains brainstorming and other creative techniques.

Harnessing the Power of your Mind

The mind is powerful and can either act as a tool to solve everyday problems or be the source of many of our problems. Untrained, the mind is a jumble of thoughts and feelings that can affect

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our perceptions and the way we live.

A trained mind, however, can be a valuable tool to help us think clearly, creatively solve many problems and help us to realize our desires and dreams.

The human mind has two major divisions. The “lower mind” is connected to the senses and allows us to function in the world. This is the thinking mind and has three components: a rational thinking mind, a memory bank and an ego or sense of self-identity.

The second division is called the “higher mind,” and is connected to higher consciousness. It has the characteristics of intelligence, intuition, knowledge, faith, generosity, compassion and wisdom.

It is very easy for the lower mind to take control if we do not exercise our higher mind through self-discipline. Meditation helps to activate the higher mind and tame the lower mind.

One of the best ways to tame the lower mind is through “Third Eye” Meditations. When you focus your attention to the space between your eyebrows, you are stimulating both levels of the mind, creating a sense of calm and stimulating deep intuition.

“When the mind is silent and peaceful, it becomes very powerful.”

---- Swami Satyananda

Saraswati

Here are two simple exercises to help you get started. Please feel free to share these techniques with women in your classes:

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position and focus on the third eye center between your eyebrows. Breathe slowly and deeply. Imagine breathing into this center and the color indigo (denim blue) becoming brighter with each breath.
2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position and focus on your breath. Direct your attention to the third eye center and imagine a light or candle flame. Chant the word: *OM* for as long as your breath will allow three times, and then sit in silence for as long as it feels appropriate.

By practicing these techniques on a daily basis, you and your students will gradually learn how to calm the mind, relax and sleep more deeply as well as experience less wear and tear as a result of an untrained mind.

Mind-Body Benefits for Women during the Childbearing Years

Looking for more reasons to include Mind-Body techniques in your classes? Check this out:

Research suggests that mind-body programs such as yoga and meditation can increase fertility. In 2000, a

Harvard University study reported that 55% of women who completed a mind-body program became pregnant within a year, compared to only 20% in the control group.

And in addition to helping women conceive, Mind-body techniques may help to reduce the incidence of miscarriage. German researchers found that progesterone levels drop in response to stress, suggesting that stress may be a possible cause of miscarriage. According to Researcher Petra Arck, “We can clearly say stress has a major impact on pregnancy.”

For postpartum moms, a study published in the *International Journal of Nursing Practice* reported that postpartum women who participated in a stroller walking program not only improved their fitness levels, they were less depressed than women in a non-exercising support group. (See Instructor Update for full research reports.)

Motherwell is the leader in offering Mind-Body fitness classes for pregnant women and new mothers.