

Younger Trainer, Older Clients: My Approach to Success

Give extra thought and care when training older clients with health issues

BY LAUREN WALKER

It takes a special sensitivity to work with older individuals who are dealing with chronic health conditions. Over time, I have developed an approach that this group seems to appreciate and that also bridges an age gap that for me is frequently more than 35 years. Here are some of the ways that I create long standing, productive and meaningful relationships with this client demographic.

1 Pack Extra Patience

Some of my clients rely on a walker or cane, or they arrive for their workouts with an oxygen tank. Others may be recovering from hip or knee surgery. I take extra care to encourage them to work at a speed that is comfortable for them.

For example I might say, "Take a moment and let me know when you're ready to continue." This reinforces the idea that they should work at their pace and feel comfortable doing so. However, while you want to be considerate of their needs, avoid babying them.

2 Customize Your Customer Service

Help these clients feel comfortable in what may be an intimidating



environment for them. Ask for feedback so you can better serve them. Some of the questions I ask are,

- "How are you feeling today?"
- "Do you find it cold in here today?"
- "Do you find the radio is too loud?"
- "Would you like a drink of water?"
- "Do you need a tissue?"
- "What questions do you have for me today?"

Because some of my clients have poor grip strength, I may also offer to open their water bottles. I think this shows that I'm thinking ahead, am willing to help and am observant of their needs.

3 Have a Sense of Humour and Be Encouraging

Part of making people feel comfortable in a new environment is making them laugh. So I treat these clients the same way I would a healthy 25-year-old client by making the occasional joke and by cheering them on. Providing laughter and encouragement is a universal way to lift people's spirits and to help them feel they belong. FBC

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