

Leader TOOLS

Keeping participants focused
on positive lifestyle choices

2nd Quarter
APRIL - MAY - JUNE

APRIL STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

According to the website, www.NationalDayCalendar.com, April is designated to recognize stress and to find a healthy balance for living happy, productive lives. We will never eliminate stress, nor would we want to, because a certain level of stress keeps us focused, engaged in important life activities, and achieving goals. The problem comes from having too many negative stressors and not knowing how to handle these factors. Prolonged stress can contribute to physical outcomes such as IBS, ulcers, diabetes, chronic pain, and cardiovascular disease.

According to Stress and Health: Psychological, Behavioral, and Biological Determinants (Schneiderman, N., Ironson, G., and Siegal, S. 2008), *“Stressors have a major influence upon mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and health. Acute stress responses in young, healthy individuals may be adaptive and typically do not impose a health burden. However, if the threat is unremitting, particularly in older or unhealthy individuals, the long-term effects of stressors can damage health.”*

There are various articles at the Arthritis Foundation website that connects stress and arthritis. Based on the article, Stress and Worry Affect RA, found at the Arthritis Foundation website www.arthritis.org, research suggests that trauma or stress may trigger the development of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and/or make the disease worse.

Here are some suggestions for observing National Stress Month

- Keep moving. Exercise releases endorphins, or the “feel good” hormones in the body. Exercise also lowers the level of cortisol, the body’s main stress hormone that is involved in regulating metabolism and immune response.
- Laugh. In class, incorporate laughter to lower levels of stress hormones, reduce inflammation in the arteries, and increase “good” HDL cholesterol.
- Be tech-free. Challenge your class participants to “unplug” from the external stresses that our fast-paced, technology-based lives highlight. Devote 10-15 minutes each day away from the cell phone, tablet, computer, tv and even your smart watch – maybe use this time to be outdoors.



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MAY

A BUSY MONTH

CHECK OUT THREE EXCELLENT
OPTIONS TO FOCUS ON

National Arthritis Awareness Month

Established by presidential proclamation in 1972, the goal of this national observance is to increase awareness for the prevention and control of arthritis. In the US, nearly 53 million adults have doctor-diagnosed arthritis; that number is expected to grow to 67 million by 2030. Additionally, almost 300,000 babies, kids and teens have arthritis or a rheumatic condition. The Arthritis Foundation (www.arthritis.org) is leading the way to conquer arthritis and its effects through advocacy efforts, scientific research, and tools and resources.

National Stroke Awareness Month

Stroke is a leading cause of death and can happen to anyone. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), Million Hearts, American Academy of Neurology (AAN), and the American Stroke Association are co-hosting a Twitter chat to discuss stroke risk factors, the importance of keeping your brain healthy, and the latest stroke research. Find out more at the NINDS website, www.ninds.nih.gov.

National Osteoporosis Month

The National Osteoporosis Foundation, www.nof.org, encourages you to celebrate bone health during the month of May. Consider the Jumping Jack Challenge for those who are able – remember, the pool makes jumping jacks achievable for many more people! Do 10 jumping jacks in less than 10 seconds (find out more at their website). Also, find tools and resources to help build strong bones and prevent or manage osteoporosis. The Safe Movement Brochure contains helpful information on preventing fragility fractures, safe movement, and fall prevention.

JUNE

SCLERODERMA AWARENESS MONTH

Scleroderma is an autoimmune disease also known as systemic sclerosis. “Sclero” means “hard” and “derma” means “skin”. But hardening skin is just one of the many symptoms individuals with scleroderma experience. Stiff joints, digestive issues, lung scarring, and kidney failure can result; this condition can be fatal. The disease varies from individual to individual and affects thousands of people, but there are billions who know nothing about it.

It’s estimated that about 300,000 Americans have scleroderma. Scleroderma can develop in every age group, but onset is most frequent between the ages of 25 to 55, and females outnumber males about 4-to-1. Other factors, such as race and ethnic background, may influence one’s risk, the age of onset, and the pattern or severity. Some scientists feel there is a slight predisposition to scleroderma in families with a history of rheumatic diseases. There may be many misdiagnosed or undiagnosed cases because scleroderma has symptoms similar to other autoimmune diseases.

The Scleroderma Foundation (www.scleroderma.org) encourages you to take the pledge to tell one person about this autoimmune disease that has no known cause or cure... your classes provide you the opportunity to tell many people and they can in turn tell others. Visit www.hardword.org to take the pledge!



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INTERNATIONAL AQUATIC FITNESS CONFERENCE (IAFC)

AEA's International Aquatic Fitness Conference is being held in Daytona Beach, Florida May 7-11, 2019.

The AEA Arthritis: Program Leader Development course is being offered on Monday, May 6th and provides 7 continuing education credits toward renewing your AFAP/AFEP training! If you have already completed this course, there are numerous other specialty programs being offered, all of which provide approved continuing education. The remainder of the conference offers aquatic and land-based workshops and master classes, lectures, labs and land-to-water sessions on a range of topics sure to meet your needs. A few examples include ChairFit: Arthritis Exercise that Challenge (Mark Grevelding), Ai Chi Progression for Hips & Backs (Ruth Sova, MS), Exercise: The Ultimate Brain Booster & Stress Reducer (Len Kravitz, PhD), and Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks (Kimberly Huff, MS). Click the IAFC logo on the right to learn more and register for the conference!



IAFC2019

Rejuvenate & Educate

Daytona Beach, Florida | May 7-10

MAY
A BUSY MONTH



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INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

Mary-Lee Costello, AFEP Program Leader

As an AFAP/AFEP Program Leader, you know that the program goal is to encourage participants to enjoy an active lifestyle and improve health in a welcoming, supporting, fun environment, as well as to begin new activities while making friends (AEA AF Manual). And while it is important to feel welcomed and included within the class setting, it is also important to maintain a connection within one's community.

I am always looking for fun activities for my arthritis classes. So, when the local Girl Scout troop asked if they could come and bring cookies and milk, I decided to plan something special that all generations would enjoy. We paired a senior class participant with a scout and let the games begin. During the ostrich egg relay race, the young and not so young partnered up to test their skills in transporting the egg safely across the room and back. Next, with linked arms, they took turns tapping a balloon in the air with a goal to keep it aloft for as long as possible. The coordination and camaraderie were very impressive! Both these games could be fun in the pool as well.



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THE BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER AND SINGING

By Bonnie Koenigsknecht, AFAP/AFEP Program Leader

An earlier article gave suggestions for bringing laughter and all its benefits into our classes. Singing can be even more effective. Here are a few suggestions to encourage laughter and singing to provide physical effects, such as better oxygen intake, muscle stimulation, and the release of endorphins.

To bring laughter and exercise facial muscles, during warm-up, Kathy (one of the leaders here at our YMCA) tells participants, “Make a funny face only a mother could love.” Experienced parents enjoy the variety and creativity of expressions – after all, many have seen that kind of face before. As a change of pace in the cardio sections, she has the people “cheerlead.” They get in a circle or a set of straight lines and she calls in quick succession, “Turn left, turn right, get up on your toes, back on your heels, sit in a pretend chair, stand up, hey _____ (fill in an appropriate team), fight, fight, fight.” Use other cues as you wish, including a slight bounce at each change. If you are in deep water, cue the turns with jacks or other common exercises; include a tuck at each change.

Now, convincing people to sing can be a bit tricky. Too many of us have been told, “You have many talents, but singing is not one of them” or other foolishness. Does anyone else remember Hootenannies? No one cared if they could sing or not at Hootenanny. Why not bring back “Puff, the Magic Dragon” or “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore”? If you have a younger crowd, a particular religious, ethnic, or social group, or fans of the local teams, make other appropriate choices.

Another common song is “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” A month or so ago, one of my participants suggested we write a parody using football. People shared ideas and we put together “Take Me Out to the Gridiron.” Hockey soon followed. Feel free to try in your class – maybe print out the new words in big letters on paper or cardboard so people can follow. Have your class write their version about another sport (maybe golf or bowling or ??) and let us know what you come up with. ➡



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Football

Take me out to the gridiron.
We'll tailgate with hot dogs and beer!
Cheer on the quarterback calling the plays.
Then refs will find out just where the ball lays!
For it's root, root, root for the home team,
If they don't win it's a shame.
Just move the ball through the other team's goal
At the football game.

Hockey

Take me out to watch hockey,
Wow! Does that puck zip around!
Players are decked out like armored knights.
Safety first! 'Cause they could get in fights.
For it's root, root, root for the home team,
If they don't win it's a shame.
Just stay on your feet and always play fair
At the hockey game.

THE BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER AND SINGING

Singing can also help to keep the proper tempo for exercise. According to Maria Sykorova Pritz (Using Water to Assist, Support, and Resist. Akwa 31(3): 29. October/November 2017), adjusting the pace of an exercise can change its purpose. Let's look at an example. Leg circles performed to a slow-paced song such as "Rainbow Connection" is relaxing; the same exercise to "I'm a Believer" helps with balance; and "Can't Touch This" challenges coordinated movements against the increased resistance. Plus, who could resist singing along with Kermit, Shrek or MC Hammer?



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DEVELOPING YOUR PRESENTATION SKILLS

By Carol Carson, AFAP/AFEP Program Leader

You've choreographed all the exercises. You can count down from eight. And you have a great playlist of songs that make you want to move. Unfortunately, your class fell flat. What happened? Here are suggestions for delivering effective instruction that will direct and motivate your participants to make the most of each class.

The first tip is about punctuation. Do your instructions end with question marks and periods? (Read: unsure and boring.) Much of your instruction should end with an exclamation point! The inflection used to deliver your message will guide how your participants respond. Try being a Drill Sergeant. Repeat this sentence out loud, with the correct inflection:

- Statement: Drop and give me 20.
- Question: Drop and give me 20?
- Exclamation: Drop and give me 20!

Can you feel the results each delivery will produce? The first version ends with a period and lacks enthusiasm. Your participants will probably move, but the intensity will be missing. The second ends with a question mark and sounds unsure. Do you really want them to do 20 pushups or are you just calling out exercises and hoping for results? The last version, with an exclamation point, is confident and means business. Your participants will take you seriously and follow your lead. Your vocal energy just went into their biceps and triceps!

However, not every direction ends in an exclamation point or should be long-winded. After a few classes, your brain will adapt and tune out all of that unnecessary perkiness. Sometimes, less is more. In an echo-filled aquatic facility, too many words get in the way of the important ones. Outside pools contend with the wind blowing your words away. Read these two directions:

- OK, now we are going to rock forward and back with the rocking horse.
- Rocking horse!

Both of these directions told you what to do, but the second one got right to the point and produced the same (or better) results

than the first, where your words were hard to hear, and they couldn't pick out what you wanted.

In addition to using concise directions with energy, the tone and pace of your voice can make a difference. Try to deepen and slow your voice, followed by a hand motion that moves down. You have conveyed depth and are encouraging participants to lower their body in the water to perform exercises without bouncing. How about a high pitched, "Up!" When used correctly, the higher tones can indicate small, fast movements or to elevate out of the water if you are in the pool. However, be careful not to sound like a scared little mouse; this is a sure way to let your class know that you are not confident and unprepared.

Most importantly, use command language. When teaching classes, there can only be one leader. Do not ask what they want to do; explain to them what you want them to do. "When I say 'go', Speed Skate. Ready? Go!" (Instead of: How about Speed Skate?) "Show me you are ready to move on by doing some easy Cross-Country Skis." (Instead of: Are you ready?) "If you can hear me, touch your nose." (Instead of: Can you hear me?) Last, but very effective, "Get ready... Grapevine!"

If all else fails, sing. When I sing, they sing. Singing makes people happy. Give, "Hey Baby" or "We are Family" a try. This is a great way to start or end a class to bring everyone "Happy Together."



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SUCCESS STORY

Featuring Christine (Chris) Togni

Chris' initial Arthritis Foundation program training was in 1995; next year will mark her 25th year of teaching. AEA asked her what program changes she has seen over the years. "Looking at the current program, I notice the endurance component now offers more exercise options. For example, in the pool, including the rocking horse, hat dance, etc. offers participants an 'extra' dose of endurance. I like this because it offers a way to progress the program for those who are able. My classes enjoy the flexibility that is offered to all levels of participants!"

Chris is very involved with the Arthritis Foundation. In December 2018, she was named the Adult Honoree of the annual Jingle Bell Run race held in downtown Columbus, Ohio; their team raised nearly \$2,000.00. She has spoken at various organizations, including the Rotary Club, Ohio State University, Women Legislators of Ohio, and many other venues. She often shares about her own struggle



with arthritis and fibromyalgia, explaining, "I do not take any pain medication, due to side effects, so, for me, teaching water classes is how I handle my pain."

She is also an Advocate for the Arthritis Foundation. "I attended the Advocacy Summit in DC in 2007 and 2008 and am very excited to return for this year's Summit. We will take our message to Capitol Hill on March 12, 2019. I also advocate on the state level and will attend Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse on April 4."

Teaching and helping others is Chris' passion in life. Although trained in both the AFAP and AFEP, currently she is only teaching AFAP classes. When asked to share some teaching tips, Chris explained that she always arrives about 30 minutes before classes begin. This allows her time to answer questions, interact with participants and to help get new participants prepared for their first class. She also pointed out, "I keep my classes FUN! If people are just going through the motions and not enjoying themselves, then I have failed. We smile, joke, sing, etc. Quite often, I share a corny joke: 'As a kid, I must have eaten too many bowls of Rice Krispies. That is why I snap, crackle, and pop!'"

A favorite phrase heard in Chris' class, "motion is lotion", reminds participants to keep moving every day. Final words from Chris, "I thank participants each day for attending class. I tell them they have done the most important thing they could do for themselves today - they exercised! I also explain that exercise is very important but so is rest; they go hand in hand"

Chris and her husband, Carl, celebrated their 50th anniversary on March 22, 2019. Carl shares a quote that reminds him of his wife's involvement with the Arthritis Foundation and her dedication to her students:

*To love what you do and feel that it matters,
how could anything be more fun?*

~ Katharine Graham



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