



Lawrence's TOP 10 FITNESS Questions

Practical Responses for Fitness Pros

BY LAWRENCE BISCONTINI, MA

This article explores answers to common questions fitness trainers and instructors receive on a daily basis.

1 “How can I become a presenter like you?”

As I mentor future presenters, the most important task is to be certain that instructors and personal trainers understand the realistic nature of the fitness presenting business. Therefore, I help ensure that future presenters:

- attend major fitness events such as MANIA® Fitness Conventions to understand the expectation level of delegates.
- are currently certified by AFAA and others because this is necessary to become a continuing education provider, and a presenter is both marketable and professional when he or she can offer continuing education credits.
- work closely with a mentor who represents a positive role model in the industry.

2 “I don’t have enough personal training clients... What do you suggest I do to acquire more?”

Here are my top three suggestions for personal trainers wishing to boost clientele:

- Offer 30-minute sessions in addition to 55-minute sessions. Since the No. 1 excuse potential clients most often use for not booking a personal trainer is a lack of time, providing shorter, more concentrated sessions

generally can be a great workaround compromise for trainers to acquire new clients.

- Gain exposure to possible clients by offering your spotting services to popular group exercise strength and boot camp classes: walk around to assist people with their form in a nonthreatening way. What group exercise instructor with a full class would not be grateful for this free assistance? Simultaneously, group exercise junkies will see how friendly and nonintimidating you are and will be more likely to engage your services.
- During the times when you're not booked or doing the previous suggestion, walk around the gym floor and offer tips for exercisers to get more benefits in less time. Avoid saying, "May I make a suggestion?" and use instead reassuring words such as, "I love this machine/exercise/movement, too, and I learned a way to make it even better when I _____. May I show you?" This accomplishes the double tasks of, first, exposing your services to those who otherwise may not know how good you are, and, second, making you look busy to other observing members. Public perception oftentimes decides that, as with all businesses, "consistently busy businesses are the better businesses" (Biscontini, AFAA).

"I teach pre-choreographed group ex and the freestyle instructors always say negative things about my work. What can I do?" Conversely, "I am responsible for my own choreography in class and the instructors of the packed and popular pre-choreographed programs make a schism between them and us. What can I do?"

Given the vast options of group fitness classes available, professionalism among colleagues proves key. The benefits of certain fitness performance programs attract many, and the advantages of instructor-driven programs also carry strengths. Instead of advocating a choice, this author believes that the most rounded of instructors understands the methodology behind both fitness camps and therewith makes educated career decisions.

Maureen Hagan of GoodLife Fitness clubs in Canada suggests teaching a bit of both. "I teach Les Mills because it provides me with a world-class, pre-choreographed program that I, or any GoodLife instructor, can teach and it makes all of us feel part of a worldwide team. On the flip side, I teach my freestyle classes because it gives me the opportunity to be creative as it challenges me to develop new exercises and teaching techniques. Only in knowing both approaches can I be as successful as I am."

"I want to teach yoga in my gym but the management told me that I cannot because yoga is a cult religion. What can I do?"

Education is key. The word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj," which means "to join together, to mix."

Calling yoga a religion would be as erroneous as calling the noun "combination" a religion. Yoga has no deity, worship services, rituals, sacred icons, formal statements of religious beliefs, requirements of practice, profession of faith, ordained ministry, membership, temples or churches. Furthermore, since yoga signifies a combination of brain, body and breath, anyone alive is already engaged in yoga because of celebrating the combination of a living, breathing, thinking and moving body.

Yoga classes appear across the globe at such varied places from yoga centers to public parks, to church basements and Jewish community centers. Instructors wishing to import yoga to a facility may wish to print out a list of all of the types of facilities that currently offer yoga classes and provide this to club management.

"I'm thinking of expanding the options of what I teach in group fitness. If I want to start to teach different types of classes to find more work, what would you suggest?"

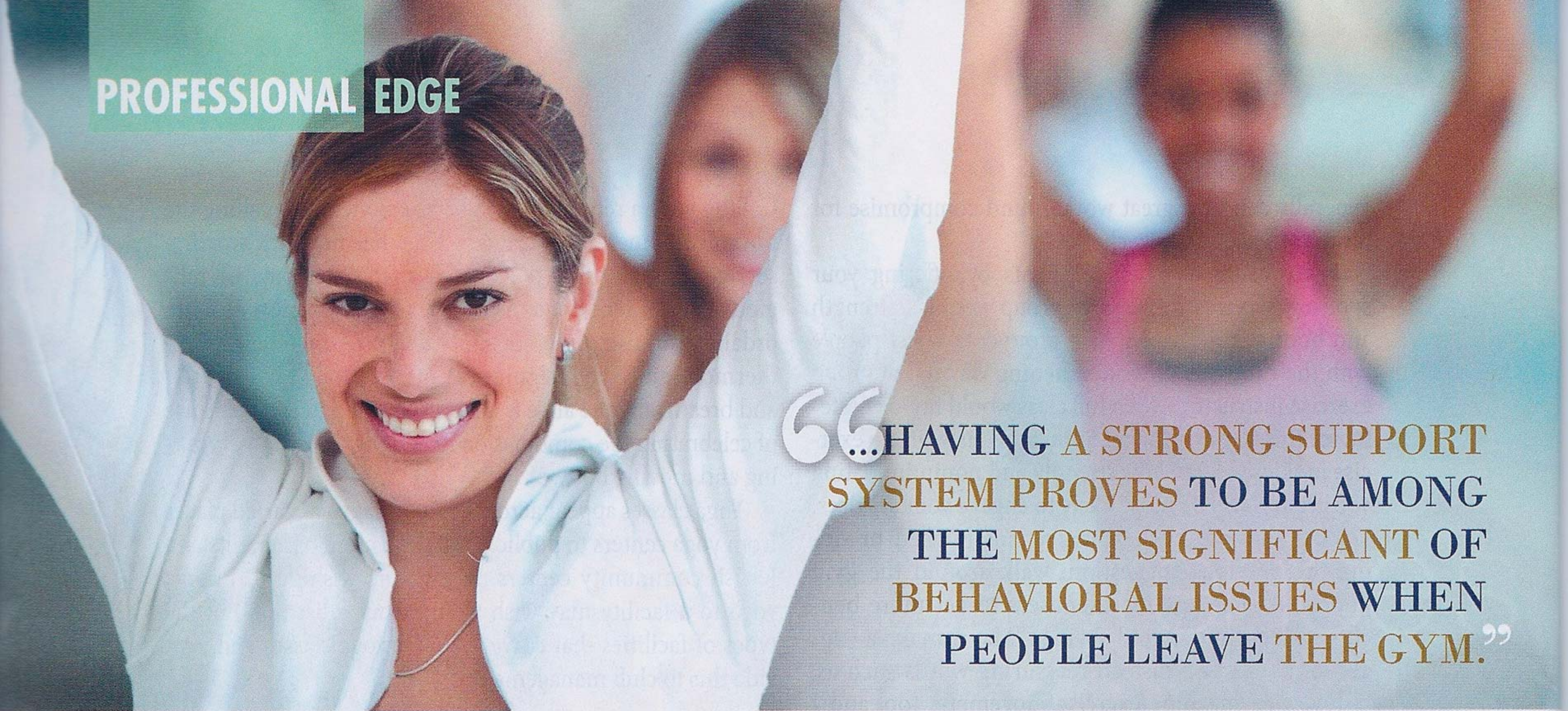
As of this printing, current trends in fitness include a steady market interest in pre-formatted and pre-choreographed programming such as R.I.P.P.E.D. and Zumba®. For individually choreographed classes, interest in specialty equipment like TRX® continues to grow where demographics and space will hold that market. 2014 up-trending group classes include the "Bs" of balance, barefoot, breathing, body weight, boot camp, brain-booster and barre (such as Bender Barre) classes.

"Is it healthier for me to eat before or after I work out?"

June Kahn and this author co-wrote the Human Kinetics book *Morning Cardio Workouts* in which we advocate a pre-workout state of being never full but never starving. "Nobody would expect to make demands of a wonderfully strong vehicle with an empty tank of gas," we say, so it's important to be sure not to work out when hypoglycemic (low blood sugar because the stomach is empty) or overfull (Biscontini and Kahn). Furthermore, the timing of meals proves just as important as the workouts. For most individuals, eating a small meal or snack 20 to 30 minutes before a class gives enough time to digest (Kravitz).

Clients often grab their midsection or sides and ask their trainers, "Can you just give me an exercise to get rid of this?"

While we can work the muscles in specific areas of the body, there is no way to burn fat in any one area. To burn fat in any area of the body, we have to engage in cardiovascular exercise, which means movement that makes the heart and lungs work hard for about 20 minutes minimum. These minutes do NOT need to be consecutive, and the activity can be in a steady state (including consistent walking, swimming or stepping) or intermittent format (such as



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interval or sprinting work). If we create a deficit of calories by using more calories to move than we consume, the body will burn the excess fat everywhere, including the sites where we want to lose it (Kravitz).

The simplified answer to the above is to tell clients to engage in both resistance training (for the muscles) and cardiovascular exercise (to burn the excess fat they want to lose), all while closely monitoring their caloric intake.

“Should I exercise in the morning or evening?”

Ultimately, the best time to work out is individual-dependent based on four factors: enjoyment, intensity, safety and duration. Whichever time of day allows you to achieve these four components the most, becomes the appropriate time of day for you. Many people cannot choose their preferred times to work out due to children, jobs and other responsibilities.

All things the same, some research from *Morning Cardio Workouts* shows that those who exercise in the morning receive five additional benefits to the caloric expenditure: a greater overall lifelong adherence rate, a higher number of endorphins produced, a more productive ensuing workday, better sleep patterns, and an overall boosted metabolism (Biscontini and Kahn; Børsheim).

“I take classes regularly but find that’s not enough. What’s the single most important aspect of wellness that I can follow when I’m not at the gym?”

Research says that having a strong support system proves to be among the most significant of behavioral issues when people leave the gym. Michael Mantell, Behavioral Psychology Coach and television personality based in San Diego, suggests “having an encouraging support system makes it easy to maintain an exercise and healthy nutrition routine and increases the chances that you will successfully stick with a wellness-focused program. Think of the five people you hang out with and their support, or lack of it, is most likely to determine your wellness-related behaviors. To achieve your goals, make sure those five closest to you aren’t just ‘talking the talk’ but ‘walking it’ with you.”

“How do I get a job as a guest instructor at a spa for a paid vacation?”

As a Spa Consultant, this author can tell you that the industry standard for approximately weeklong teaching gigs at spas worldwide requires guest instructors to pay for their own airfare to the closest airport and teach up to three classes daily in exchange for spa treatments, meals, accommodation, Internet, laundry services, but no additional honorarium. Usually a spa instructor can bring along a guest at no charge and that person’s meals, spa services and retail outlet purchases are available at 50% off of listed prices.

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LAWRENCE BISCONTINI, MA, has been answering such fitness questions for more than 30 years. As an AFAA Certification Specialist, author, lecturer and Spa Consultant, he continually strives to help both fitness leaders and consumers alike separate the myths from the reality in the industry. Find Lawrence at www.findLawrence.com or submit your questions to Lawrence via our AFAA Twitter page @yourfitplace.

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