

# Leader TOOLS

Keeping participants focused  
on positive lifestyle choices

APRIL 2017

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN APRIL?

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services,  
Tommy G. Thompson, declared the first

**NATIONAL WALK TO WORK DAY** as  
April 2, 2004, and it is now recognized

on the first Friday of April each year.

With the growing rate of obesity and  
sedentary lifestyles, this day was  
initiated to draw attention to the need to  
move more, and make exercise part of a

healthy lifestyle ([www.holidayinsights.com](http://www.holidayinsights.com)). Can't walk  
to work? Take a walk during the day with a goal of 30  
minutes...and make this the start of a daily routine!

Get more  
details  
here!

**WORLD HEALTH DAY** is celebrated on April 7th  
every year to mark the anniversary of the founding  
of the World Health Organization. World Health  
Day provides a unique opportunity to initiate action  
around a specific health topic. The theme for 2017  
is depression, something that "affects people of all  
ages, from all walks of life, in all countries." The goal  
is to better understand depression, and how it can be  
prevented and treated, to help reduce the associated  
stigma, and encourage more people to seek help.

Since 1992, April has been recognized  
as **STRESS AWARENESS MONTH**.

Sponsored by the Health Resource  
Network, this is a cooperative effort  
to inform people about the "dangers  
of stress, successful coping strategies,  
and harmful misconceptions about  
stress..." According to the Holiday  
Insights website, April 16 (the day  
after taxes are due) is National Stress  
Awareness Day.



Resource provided by the  
Aquatic Exercise Association

[www.aeawave.com](http://www.aeawave.com)

941.486.8600

# MORE THAN EXERCISE

AEA recently had the opportunity to share more about the AFAP/AFEP at a fitness convention in The Netherlands. Lectures were geared to both facility managers and to fitness professionals, and addressed the importance of offering these programs. We highlighted that the purpose of the programs is to help each participant enjoy a more active lifestyle while improving health. Instead of thinking of the programs as “simply another exercise class”, AEA wants to reiterate that the purpose is to offer life-enhancing tools for people living with chronic pain.

As Program Leaders, you probably remember from the manual that, “The programs are designed to encourage participants to enjoy an active lifestyle and improve health in a welcoming, supportive, fun environment, as well as to begin new activities while making friends.” With this in mind, we can work together on a global scale to open doors, creating a win-win situation for all involved. This is also a concept that will never “go out of style”, so the program is something that will always be needed and appreciated by those living with arthritis.

Let’s review some components that set these programs apart from others.

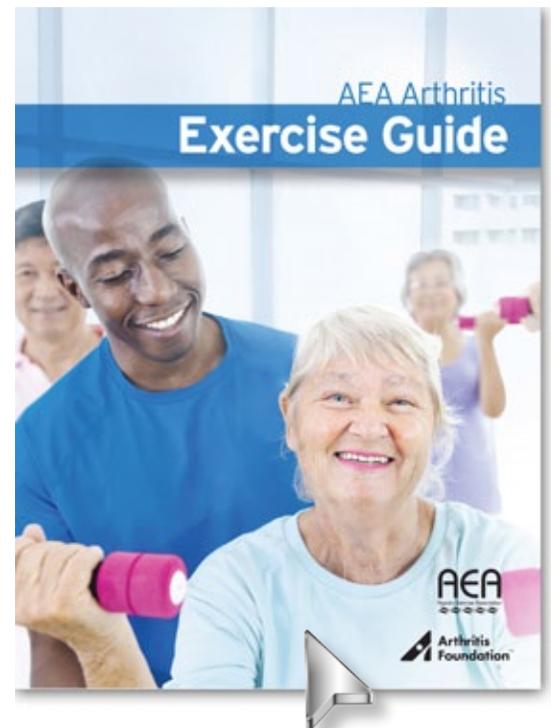
Classes should include key instructional elements to provide education, awareness and application of knowledge.

- Health Education
- Posture & Body Mechanics
- Body Awareness
- Breath Awareness

Including these elements ensure that participants with arthritis and related conditions are provided safe exercise options and are also empowered to take control of their personal health and wellness.

Optional activities may be included if time allows, or when appropriate for class participants. These include weight-bearing activities, as well as socialization, games, and neurobics that have physical, intellectual, emotional and

social benefits. These activities may provide distraction from pain or stress; improve balance, coordination, and memory; add an element of fun; and encourage interaction fostering support among participants.



To encourage participants to exercise daily (not just during scheduled classes), AEA has developed the 16-page Exercise Guide with precautions, tips and sample routines. Each participant can obtain a free copy, by simply filling out a simple online survey at the AEA website. The information gathered is utilized by various agencies to determine research needs and funding. Additionally, Program Leaders can purchase these guides at an affordable price from AEA and distribute to participants or use for class promotion.

# ENGAGING YOUR PARTICIPANTS

*Submitted by Jakki Staat McDonald, Eugene, Oregon*

Engaging my students in getting-to-know-you activities has created a closeness within classes that helps new participants feel especially welcomed. It is also important to remember that everyone is unique, so I strive to recognize each participant's level, and then encourage them to progress slightly out of their comfort zone, when appropriate. I can only know what this is by engaging in conversation. I have found that purposefully engaging participants into conversation that focuses on their needs, helps them to gain confidence and make progress.

I use lots of encouraging words with each student, whether long time participants or first timers. For example:

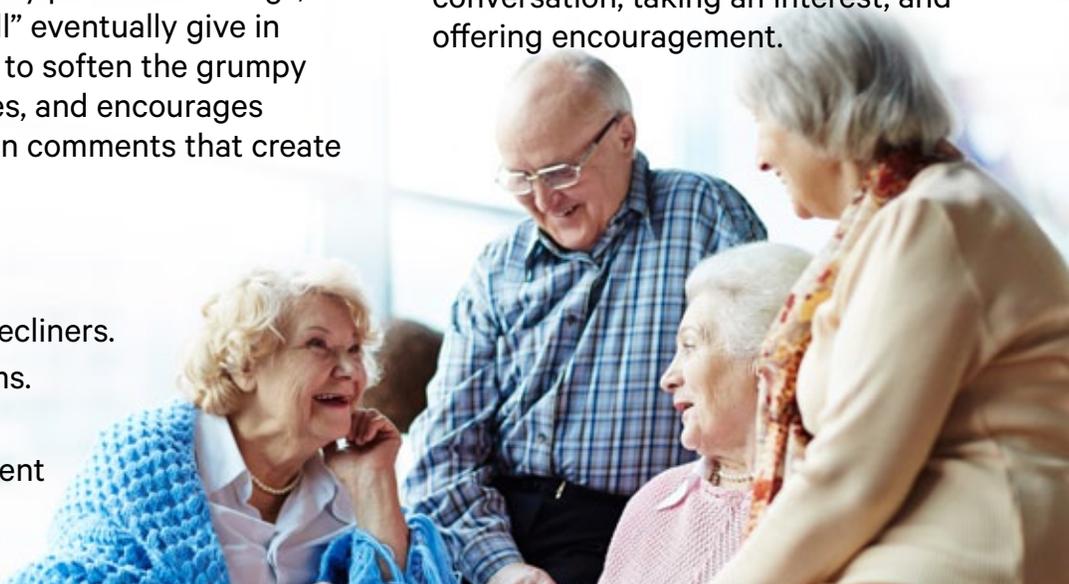
- Great body awareness.
- I like how you are concentrating on your posture today.
- Don't be afraid to push yourself just a little.
- If all you do is move, you are exercising!
- There's no competition here, so go at your own pace.
- If you need to leave early that's okay, just let me know.

I keep my classes lively by using singing and humor, creating a more relaxed atmosphere, which is especially helpful for those with limited exercise experience. Many of the moves we use are set to silly poems and songs; even those who give the "eye roll" eventually give in and join in the fun. Humor helps to soften the grumpy attitudes, brings out the shy ones, and encourages those who are less confident. Fun comments that create laughter and fun:

- Make some noise!
- Let me hear you grunt.
- No slackers – get out of your recliners.
- Our goal is to have Popeye arms.
- Pretend you are enjoying this.
- Use both sides for this movement or you'll go home lop sided.

Feeling clumsy with new activities can prevent someone from coming back to class. I encourage experienced students to share stories of what it was like during their first few classes, and I share my personal story as well. I emphasize it takes time for everyone to become proficient. For example, balance might be a concern. One way to help a newbie (as we refer to first time participants) is to explain that eventually he/she will be able to self-correct for balance; this is reassuring. Initially I focus on encouraging new participants "listen" and be aware of what their body "wants to do" (e.g. lean forward or lean back, use the arms out at the sides, etc.) Imparted with that knowledge, I can then begin to add more emphasis to posture, alignment, technique, etc.

Our class is more than just reaching exercise goals. I strive to meet students where they are, and then help them to progress at a comfortable pace. I can only know what this is by engaging in conversation, taking an interest, and offering encouragement.



# CONTINUING EDUCATION

## IAFC 2017

It is not too late to register for the International Aquatic Fitness Conference, May 15-20 in Palm Harbor, Florida. Both AFAP and AFEP Program Leaders can earn valuable education, and required continuing education credits, from many of the sessions being offered at this global event. In addition to the AEA Arthritis: Program Leader Development course on Monday, sessions offered through the conference will provide informative and innovative ideas to expand your knowledge base. For example, join Eduardo Netto, MS – all the way from Brazil – in his lecture, Create a Broad Experience for Special Populations, and learn how to create an inclusive environment that welcomes a diverse array of individuals into your class. Or, join Program Leader Trainers, Kimberly Huff, MS, and Lori Sherlock, MS, for their workshop, Do It Yourself: Senior Independence. Dr. Maria Sykorova Pritz will present a classroom lab that targets a unique approach to restoring optimal health and functional physical fitness – Aquatic Conditioning for Function/Rehab. These are just a few of the quality, hands-on education you will find at IAFC 2017.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE OR REGISTER?

AEA Aquatics | Revolutionizing Fitness



# HEALTH EDUCATION

## ARTHRITIS & DEPRESSION

Research has shown that pain and disability can be linked to depression with individuals who have rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Learn  
more  
here!

A new theory believes that inflammation may also play a role. As many as 40% of people with RA experience significant symptoms of depression. The Arthritis Foundation states, "Depression can lead to more physical function problems, higher disease activity, poorer health overall and an increased need for medical care."

The Arthritis Foundation website also explains that depression can worsen joint pain. We often think about chronic pain leading to depression, but research indicates that the opposite may also be true: depression can make pain worse! According to the article, "... a 2011 study published in The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery showed that for people with osteoarthritis (OA), depression can have just as strong an effect on knee pain as physical damage."

Read the  
full article  
here!



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