

# Leader TOOLS

Keeping participants  
focused on positive  
lifestyle choices

FEBRUARY 2017

## HeartHealth

Friday, February 3, 2017 is National Wear Red Day®, a day devoted to focusing specifically on heart health for women. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), “Heart disease and stroke cause 1 in 3 deaths among women each year, killing approximately one woman every 80 seconds. Fortunately, we have the power to change that because 80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action.”

The Arthritis Foundation [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org) explains that that having arthritis, especially inflammatory conditions (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus and psoriatic arthritis), increases the risk of developing heart disease. This includes the risk for heart attack, stroke, atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeats), high blood pressure, heart failure and atherosclerosis (plaque in the arteries).

Why is this? According to the Arthritis Foundation article, Arthritis & Heart Disease, “Inflammation, regardless of where it comes from, is a risk factor for heart disease,” says rheumatologist Jon T. Giles, MD, assistant professor of medicine at Columbia University School of Medicine in New York City. “So it’s not surprising that people with inflammatory arthritis like RA, lupus and psoriatic arthritis have more cardiac events.”

However, according to a 2011 Arthritis & Rheumatism review, inflammation is not the only determining factor for individuals with arthritis developing heart disease. To reduce the

*February is known as Heart Month, not only for celebrating the sweetheart in your life on Valentine’s Day, but also for increasing awareness on heart health.*

cardiovascular risk, it is imperative to also control conventional factors. The AHA lists six heart disease risk factors that the individual can control or modify:

- 1 Smoking
- 2 High Cholesterol
- 3 High Blood Pressure
- 4 Inactivity
- 5 Obesity
- 6 Diabetes

One more area of consideration...some medications that help control arthritis may increase heart disease risk, while others may reduce the risk. For a listing of those medications that have been shown to harm the heart, read the full article at the Arthritis Foundation website.



February should not be the only time we show appreciation to our sweethearts, or consider our heart health, but it is the perfect month to go above & beyond!



# HEALTH EDUCATION

## NEUROBICS

By Laurie Denomme & Katrien Lemahieu

Ever feel like you are on autopilot, simply “going through the motions”? Routine actions like brushing your teeth or even leading an exercise class can become so natural they require less brain activity. The brain, like the rest of the body, needs to be worked.

Just like physical exercise is designed to strengthen the heart, muscles and lungs, mental activities stimulate brain cell growth and help maintain a fit mind.

AFAP and AFEP exercise guidelines recommend inclusion of “neurobics”. The term, coined by Katz and Rubin, describes using your physical and emotional senses in new and unexpected ways. According to their research, a neurobic activity should do one or more of the following:

**1 Involve** one or more of your senses in a new context.

**2 Engage** your full attention.

**3 Break your routine** in a significant way.

Neurobics doesn't have to be complicated. Following the guidelines above you can include neurobics at any point within an exercise class – as part of the warm-up, during the main segment, or within the cool-down. All you need to do is plan for what, when, and why before you start.

Try these 7 brain-boosting techniques to stimulate new thinking, problem solving and other cerebral functions.

**1 Mirroring:** Reflecting movement of another individual.

**2 Social interaction:** Activities that involve acting and reacting between two or more individuals.

**3 Repetition with variation:** Performance of a familiar exercise in a different order or combination.

**4 Problem solving:** Use of logic, interpretation and abstract thinking to come up with a solution.

**5 Multi-tasking:** Activities that entail handling of more than one task at the same time.

**6 Individualized training experiences:** Personalized exercises that meet individual needs.

**7 Fun:** Activities that provide enjoyment or playfulness.

Neurobics are also easy to do at home. Give participants these brain-training exercises to try outside of class:

- Brush your teeth with your non-dominant hand.
- Find a new route to work.
- Once a week, cook a vegetable you've never tried before.
- Go for a walk in a new place.
- Try putting together a puzzle upside down.

You can use all of your senses in many different ways to exercise your brain. Have fun and try different things.

# CONTINUING EDUCATION

## INTERNATIONAL AQUATIC FITNESS CONFERENCE

As you are probably aware, to maintain your training as an AEA Arthritis Program Leader, you must obtain a minimum of 15 hours of continuing education every two-year period after completing the Online Course & Examination. A great way to achieve this goal is to attend AEA's International Aquatic Fitness Conference (IAFC) held May 15-20 in Palm Harbor, Florida. Don't be deterred if you currently only teach AFEP classes, there are plenty of sessions applicable to your needs. The 7-hour Program Leader Development course is just one of many that will enhance your knowledge base and leadership skills for AFEP and AFAP classes. Find out more details on IAFC and how to register by clicking the logo below and look for more information in the March Leader Tools!

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# HOMEWORK CDC HEART DISEASE QUIZ

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tests your knowledge about heart disease with six quick questions. Provide the following link, [www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/quiz.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/quiz.htm), for your participants to take the quiz at home. Or, print off the questions and correct answers and make this a learning game during class.



Resource provided by the  
Aquatic Exercise Association

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

941.486.8600

# TEACHING TIP

## MOTIVATION & ADHERENCE

By Danita Watkins

### *Make a difference – motivate your class to succeed and adhere to a lifestyle that includes regular exercise.*

Motivation and adherence are two areas that go hand-in-hand when teaching any exercise program. There are many ways to motivate your class, but motivation can be more challenging when working with individuals who are experiencing pain, or who are skeptical of exercise because of how past movement has made them feel. One of the key factors in motivation is to take time to learn each participant's name and a little about his/her personal life, as this simple task helps to build a sense of belonging within the group. Your class could be the only positive event of the day, and possibly the only social interaction a person experiences.

When developing your AFEP and AFAP classes, it is important to use creativity within a safe environment. Continually review movements from the AEA AF Movement Library, to keep from always relying on the same exercises. Creativity can give your class the fun factor while achieving functional goals; a great motivating factor that leads to exercise adherence.

As an AEA Arthritis Program Leader, communication is imperative for the success of the class, and also

encourages adherence to a regular exercise program. Explain to participants that moving in the correct manner can make a difference in pain levels, while providing overall improvement to health and wellness. This falls under the key instructional element of Posture & Body Mechanics (read more on page 42 in your AEA Arthritis Foundation Program Leader manual.) Helping participants learn to move in a pain-free, efficient manner will create an enjoyable exercise experience, develop feelings of success, and improve exercise adherence.

