



MedFit

CLASSROOM

Arthritis Fitness Specialist Course
Module 10:
Exercise Progression in the Treatment of Arthritis

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Assessing the Client



When doctors examine, assess and diagnose patients who they think may have arthritis, they follow an evaluation process that includes various steps. For example, symptoms may be apparent through a physical examination, but X-rays are often used to show the extent of any damage to the joint. Blood tests and other laboratory tests are also extremely useful tools when determining the type of arthritis that is present.

As a fitness professional, it is important to not only be educated about the various types and symptoms of arthritis, but also how to properly assess clients by taking into account their physical or emotional limitations. .

In addition to making sure arthritic clients are cleared by their doctor to exercise, a thorough client intake form should be filled out and discussed before beginning a baseline training. At this time, current or past injuries, medications, and concerns must be fully addressed. This is the time to lay the groundwork for a successful client-trainer relationship that breeds positivity, encouragement and dedication. This important dialogue is often referred to as “peeling back the onion” and is when you will ask your client to identify their “why.”

Assessing the Client



Trainer: "What is one goal you wish to achieve by working with a trainer?"

Client: "I want to be less stiff."

Trainer: "Why do you want to be less stiff? How does this affect your life?"

Client: "When I am stiff I can't move that well and it is sometimes painful."

Trainer: "What specific things can't you do when you are stiff and what is painful?"

Client: "I have trouble getting in and out of my car and I have a really hard time trying to play with my grandkids."

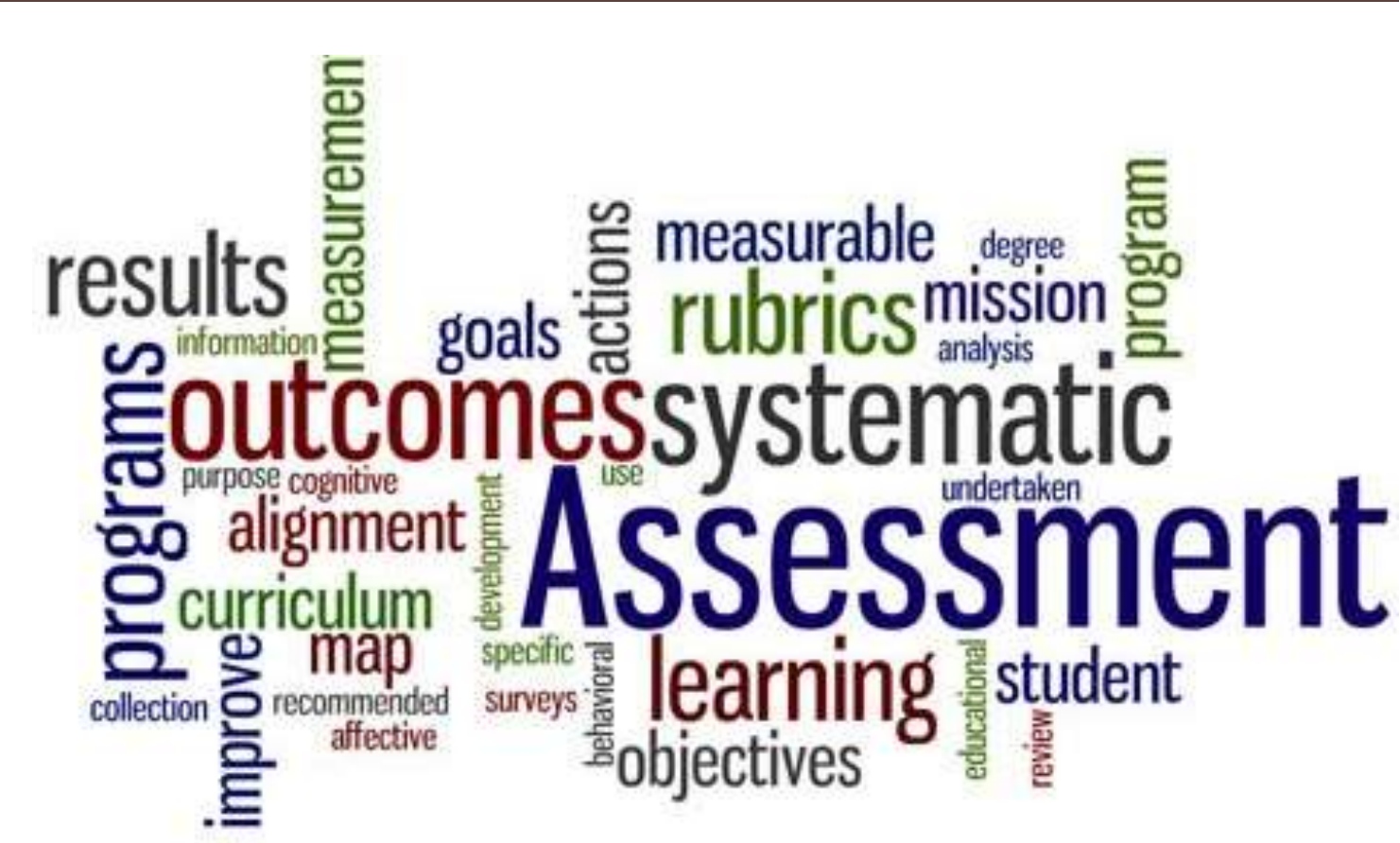
Trainer: "Is this painful for you?"

Client: "My joints are painful when they are so stiff, but I feel sad and depressed when my arthritis affects my daily activities."

The arthritis fitness specialist will ask clients to perform various multiplanar exercises to look for:

- Weakness (atrophy) in the muscles
- Tenderness to touch
- Limited ability to move the joint passively (with assistance) and actively (without assistance).
- Signs that multiple joints are painful or swollen (an indication of rheumatoid arthritis)
- Grating feeling or sound (crepitus) with movement
- Pain when pressure is placed on the joint or the joint is moved

Baseline Assessment



THE BASELINE:

As the arthritic client carefully completes a baseline assessment, the fitness professional will take careful notes and ask for constant feedback throughout this process. Noting the range of motion or various joints, swelling, stiffness, atrophy and pain levels are key in designing exercise programs that will keep flare ups at bay.

Plan a daily review with your client about the effectiveness of the program, and more importantly, create a channel of feedback regarding the intensity and tolerance of each exercise.

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Goal Setting

Before beginning any exercise program, sitting down to speak with your client as they answer detailed questions on a “Client Intake Form” is the first step to the goal setting process. For the arthritic client, establishing realistic goals are extremely important to ensure the success and longevity of any program. This is the time to discuss the “why” behind beginning an exercise program or trusting you to help them regain strength, balance, flexibility, and more. To set realistic goals first involves a process that I like to refer to as “peeling the onion.”

First, ask your clients what they wish to achieve and even offer them the “SMART” acronym to begin developing their goals. This stands for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound. Then, discuss with your client why they are motivated to achieve this goal and have them write it down to make it tangible. Then, discuss the plan of small steps that must occur to reach this goal. As each smaller step, or goal, is reached, your client will enjoy feeling a sense of accomplishment with each milestone.



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Be honest about your usefulness and your limitations and be open to finding out everything you can in order to best help them achieve their goals. Find out more about their injuries, conditions, etc...

Taking this arthritis specialist course is a great way to qualify yourself when explaining the “WHY” and the exercise science that is involved behind each exercise. In other words, be prepared to do whatever it takes to create and maintain your relationship with your client... a strong relationship means that there is constant and open communication.

Be able to effectively communicate ideas to others, actively listen in conversations, appropriately providing and receiving critical feedback and public speaking.

Some examples: communicating ideas, feelings or what's happening around you. Communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathizing.

It is also helpful to understand the differences in how to communicate through face-to-face interactions, phone conversations and digital communications, like email and social media.



Types of Communication

Below are some effective ways to improve communication between yourself and your arthritic client.

- Active Listening
- Friendliness
- Confidence
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Volume and Clarity
- Empathy
- Respect



Non-Verbal Cues & Responsiveness

Understand Non-Verbal Cues

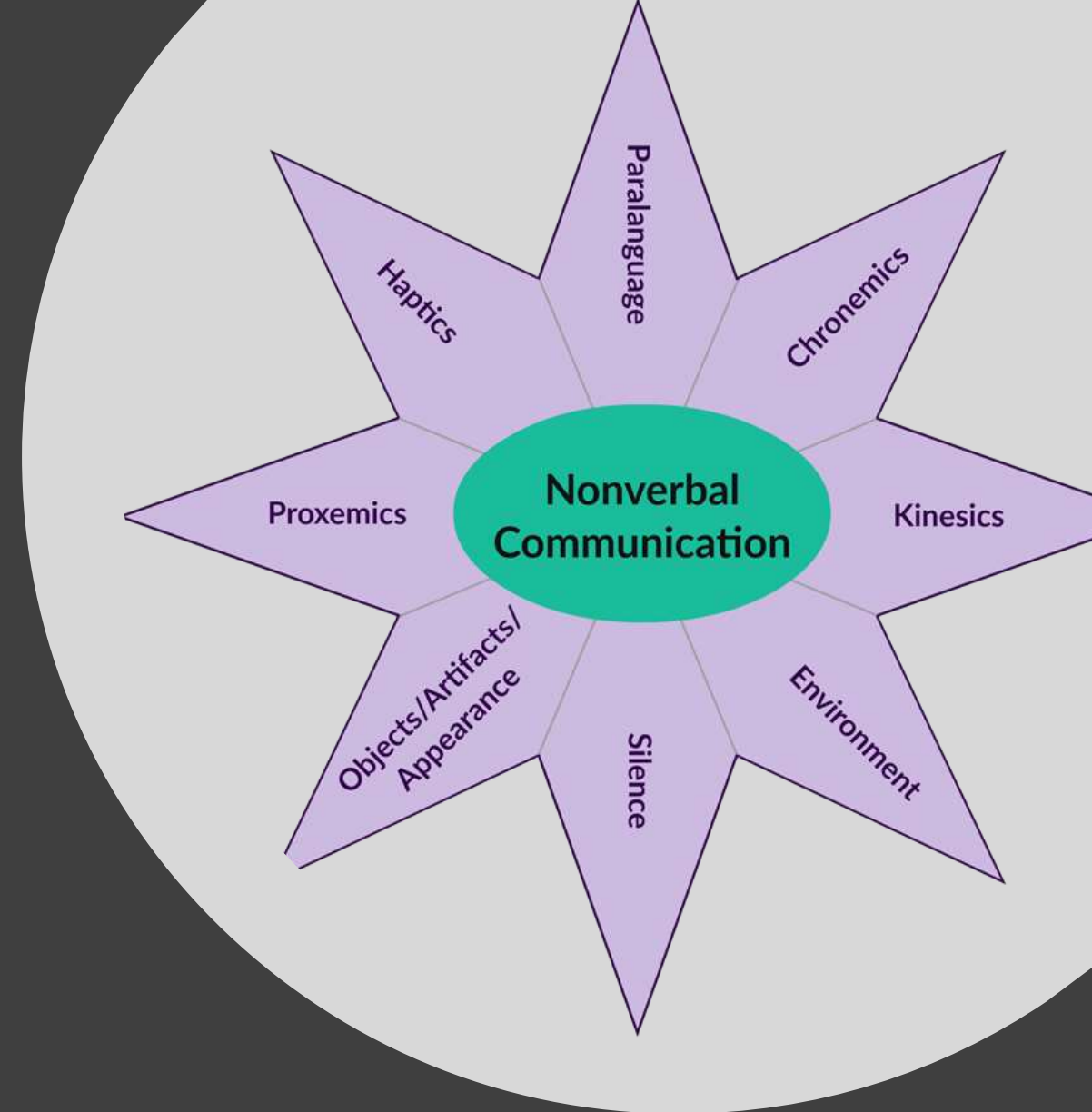
- Hands on hips: I do not agree or I will not budge.
- Arms crossed over chest: I do not agree or I am unwilling.
- Shoulders rounded: I am feeling depressed, sad or defeated.
- Smiling: I am happy to see you, open to communicating/ listening

Responsiveness

To be an effective arthritis exercise specialist:

- Be Clear and Concise
- Practice Empathy
- Be Confident/Assertive
- Remain Calm and Consistent
- Display Appropriate Body Language
- Educate Yourself About Your Client (Arthritis)

Type/Symptoms/Limitations



Finding “WHY”

Finding Their WHY:

Before we can program for our clients and explain to them why they are doing each exercise, we must understand why they are coming to us in the first place. The process of dissecting a client’s goals can range from simple to challenging

Specific: How much weight do they want to lose? What action do they wish to perform? Do they wish to be less stiff in the morning? Do they wish to sit and stand unassisted?

- **Measurable:**
- **Achievable:**
- **Realistic:**
- **Time Bound:**



Program Effectiveness

How do you know if your program is effective?

It is time to reassess the process.

Revisit the “SMART” acronym that you used to develop their goals. What specific goals did you identify as specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. After each session, there should be an open discussion between the client and trainer to revisit both the daily goals and focus of the session with an emphasis on how this is moving them towards their bigger goals.

Use Benchmarks. In addition to analyzing hard data about the client’s physical fitness and pain levels, program effectiveness should also be measured by the mental state of the client. An effective program produces a positive mentality; the client should feel accomplished, empowered, and successful after each session. Just as you may set physical benchmarks, mental or emotional benchmarks also need to be addressed.



Program Design Guidelines



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As recommended by the Aerobic Fitness & Athletic Association, AFAA, careful consideration must be placed upon various exercises and modalities for the arthritic client. For example, cycling, low-impact or step aerobics should be completed no more than 3-5 days per week and the intensity should remain at about 60-80% of the max heart rate.

Special considerations: avoid heavy lifting and high repetitions. Always stay in pain-free ROM.

Progress is based on the severity of their condition.

The Arthritic Population

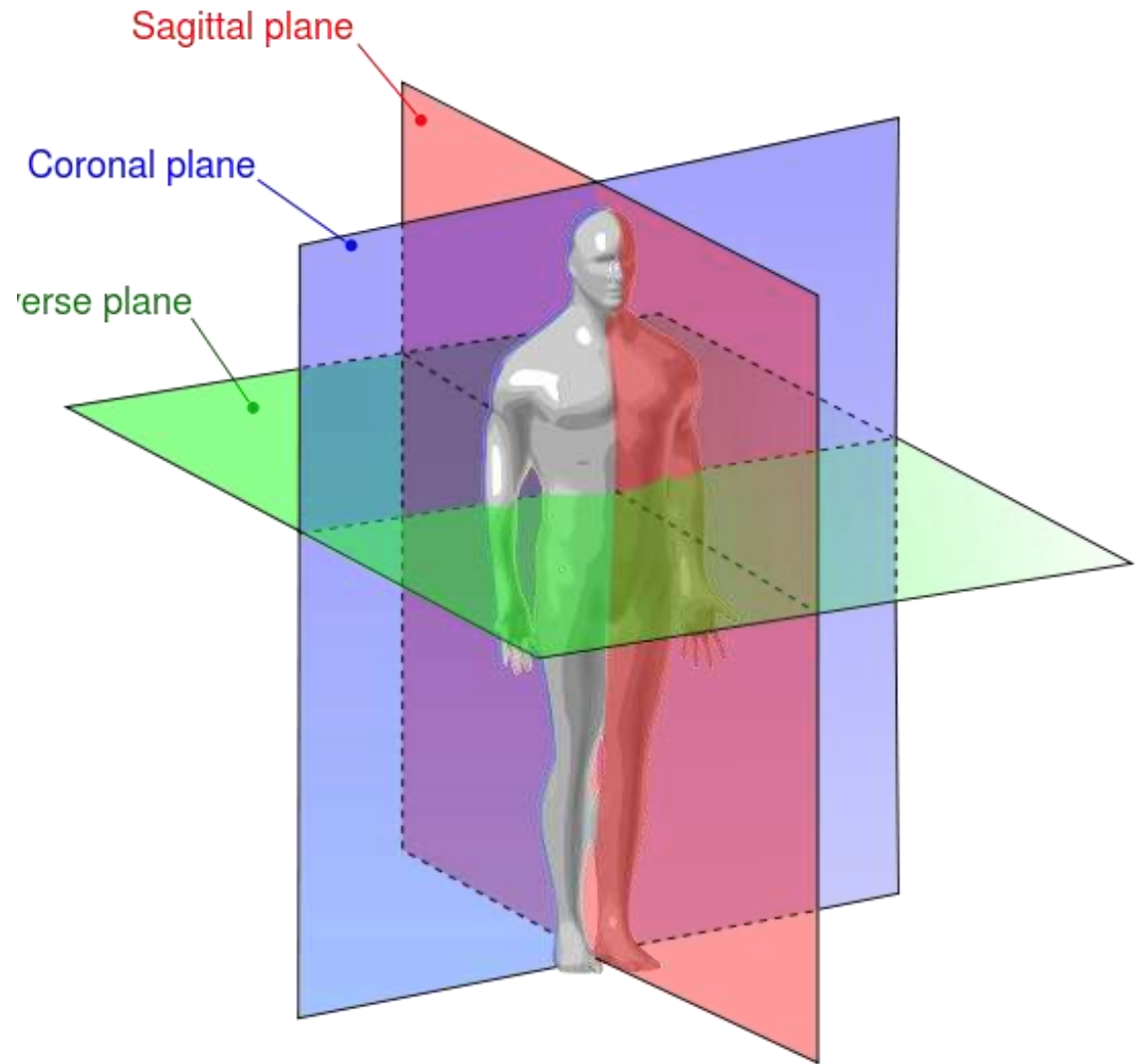
Note that when working with arthritic populations, designing exercise programs that work all planes of the body is paramount. However, it is important to remember when integrating multiplanar exercises into your client's workout that it must:

Focus on exercises involving the major joints of the body (hip, knee, shoulder, elbow, etc.).

Emphasize movements that include multiple joints, and check for kinetic chain alignment.

Start small and you build strength and confidence; multi-joint movements tend to be a bit more complex.

Mix it up. Include new movements and new equipment/modalities in each workout.



Protecting The Joints

Keep the impact low. Low impact exercises like stationary or recumbent bicycles, elliptical trainers, or exercise in the water help keep joint stress low while you move.

Apply heat. Heat can relax your joints and muscles and relieve any pain you have before you begin. Heat treatments — warm towels, hot packs or a shower — should be warm, not painfully hot, and should be applied for about 20 minutes.

Move gently. Move your joints gently at first to warm up. You might begin with range-of-motion exercises for five to 10 minutes before you move on to strengthening or aerobic exercises.

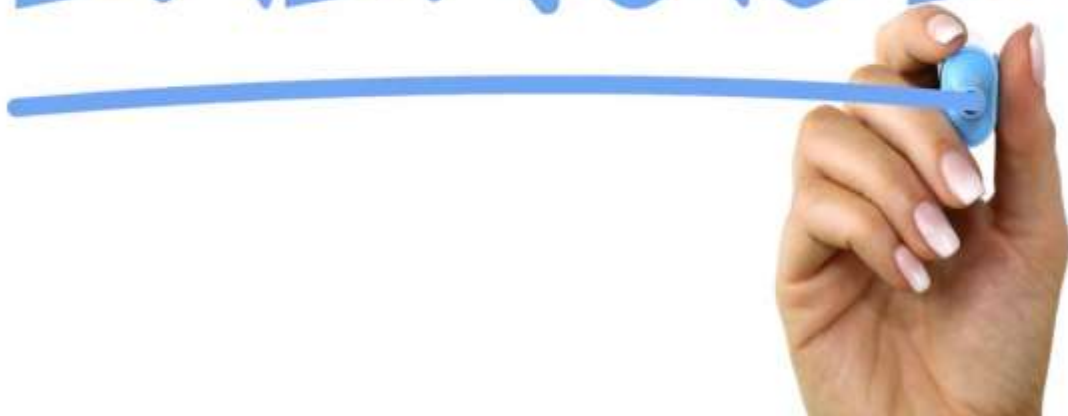
Go slowly. Exercise with slow and easy movements. If you feel pain, take a break. Sharp pain and pain that is stronger than your usual joint pain might indicate something is wrong. Slow down if you notice swelling or redness in your joints.

Ice afterward. Apply ice to your joints for up to 20 minutes as needed after activity, especially after activity that causes joint swelling.



Multi-Planar

EXERCISE



There are many joints and muscle groups that move in more than one direction and most of our daily movements require us to move in all the planes of motion. This is why multiplanar training is essential.

Foundational Movements

There are 6 foundational movement patterns that characterize how the human body moves.

- Squat
- Hinge
- Lunge
- Push
- Pull
- Carry

Range of Motion--Balance, Stability and Flexibility--Endurance, --Strength and Power, --Breath and Mindfulness

Foundational Movements

There are 6 foundational movement patterns that characterize how the human body moves. As a fitness professional, if you want to be a strong, athletic, healthy human, you train all of these foundational patterns.

- Squat
- Hinge
- Lunge
- Push
- Pull
- Carry

Program Design Focus:

- Range of Motion
- Balance, Stability and Flexibility
- Endurance, Strength and Power
- Breath and Mindfulness



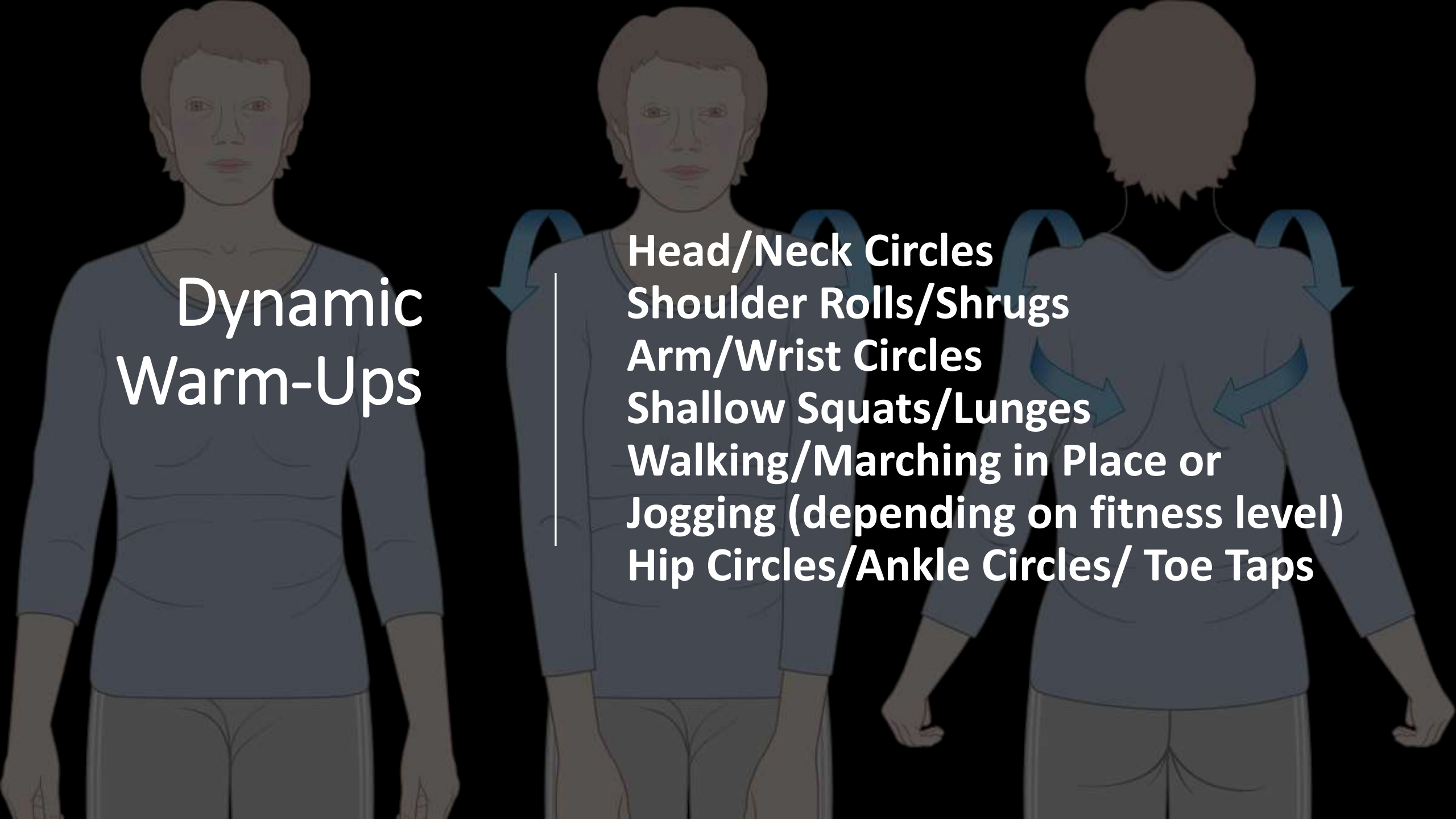


Dynamic Warm-Ups

A dynamic warm up is a series of movements performed with the purpose of restoring active flexibility and/or preparing the joints, connective tissues, and muscles for dynamic movement with the purpose to promote muscular force (via concentric, isometric, eccentric contractions).

This is the time to assess your client's range-of-motion, flexibility, level of pain (if any), and begin to bring blood flow to the muscles and increase circulation.

It is important to include both concentric and eccentric movements that will lengthen and contract the muscles in preparation for exercise. In addition, be advised that isometric stretching during the warm-up phase of any exercise program could be contraindicated. If muscles are not "warm," attempting to hold a stretch can result in various injuries such as muscle pulls, strains, or sprains.



Dynamic Warm-Ups

Head/Neck Circles
Shoulder Rolls/Shrugs
Arm/Wrist Circles
Shallow Squats/Lunges
Walking/Marching in Place or
Jogging (depending on fitness level)
Hip Circles/Ankle Circles/ Toe Taps



Working in the Work Out!

Exercise should be something that we “work in” to our lives to live longer, healthier, and pain-free lives. Be aware that many of your clients may be new to exercise and that it may be intimidating, scary, and uncomfortable. While you will be in constant communication with your client regarding the importance of each exercise in relation to how it will help to alleviate symptoms of arthritis through a combination of strength, flexibility, and balance, this is also the time to be empathetic and supportive.

This is the “focus of the day!” Utilize a combination of multiplanar exercises to meet the needs of each individual client. Remember that arthritis varies from person to person and what your client may be able to do one day, they may not be able to do the next.

Flare ups are very common among people who suffer from arthritis and exercise may occasionally bring on an increase in pain.



Working in the Work Out!

Squats w/ or w/out aid/chairs/rails

Walking up and down stairs

Lateral Steps w/ or w/out bands

Bicep/Tricep Curls

Multi-Directional Lunges

Knee Lifts/Toe Tap/Lat Step Overs

Bicycle Riding, Swimming, Aqua

Walk/Jog, Elliptical, Stair Climber

The Cool-Down, Stretch & Breath Work

The cool down phase, which consists of isometric stretching, breath awareness, and mindfulness practices is just as important as the dynamic warm-up and the exercise portion of the workout.

It is crucial for the arthritic client to spend even more time than the average person to complete a proper full-body and mind cool down.

The cool down may be the difference between your client experiencing slight muscle soreness and discomfort to experiencing a severe flare-up that may leave them unable to exercise for extended periods of time.

The Cool-Down, Stretch & Breath Work

Allows Heart Rate to Normalize, Slows Breathing, Improves Relaxation

Effective cooldown practices-(standing/seated/laying down)

- Savasana
- Guided Imagery
- Corpse Pose
- Cat/Cow Pose (variation of spinal flexion and extension)
- Overhead Reach
- Calf Stretches on a step/against a wall or modified Downward Dog
- Myofascial Release Foam Rolling



Exercise Program Design Post-Covid

The fitness professional needs to reimagine exercise.

- The “new” normal! ZOOM and Virtual Training Guidelines
- -Release Waivers
- -Fitness Liability Insurance
- -Client Intake Forms
- -Watch Form & Fall Risk Hazards

Outside & At-Home Workout Recommendations

Location Suggestions (parks, beaches, fields, parking lots, driveways, and decks have now replaced indoor fitness locations. Permits?

- Outdoor Equipment
- Body weight-only exercises
- Functional Exercises



Equipment Ideas

OUTSIDE & AT HOME EQUIPMENT & EXERCISE:

- 16 ounce Water Bottles Bicep Curls, Tricep Kickbacks
- Small Sticks/Branches Finger/Hand Grabs, Wrists-Light Drumming
- Towel Stretching/Yoga/Meditation
- Reclining Chair or Beach Chair Seated March, Supine Crunch
- Bungee Cords Lateral Band Steps, Wrists-Front Raises
- Backpack/Pocketbook High Rows, Deadlifts
- Paper Plates/Frisbee Lateral Single Leg Slides, Play Catch

GYM EQUIPMENT & EXERCISE:

- 1-5 LB Dumbbells Bicep Curls, Tricep Kickbacks
- Drumsticks/Pencils Finger/Hand Grabs, Wrists-Light Drumming
- Yoga Mat Stretching/Yoga/Meditation
- Exercise Ball Seated Bounce or March, Supine Crunch
- Round Bands Lateral Band Steps, Wrists-Front Raises
- Light KettleBell High Rows, Deadlifts
- Glider Lateral Single Leg Slides, Play Catch

Social Distance Guidelines

Masks

- Depending on the latest guidelines, restrictions, and policies, masks may be required for all in-person sessions.

Disinfecting

- Before, during, and after all sessions can make a huge difference in fighting the spread of disease. Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes and spray should be readily available throughout the session and each piece of equipment used should be immediately wiped clean once it is no longer in use.

Personal Touches

- High-fives, hugs, pats on the back, and hands on form correction should be carefully considered.

Signs of Sickness

- It is recommended that temperatures be taken upon entry and if there are any signs of sickness, training **SHOULD NOT** take place. Since COVID-19 is said to be an airborne disease, sneezing, coughing, eye-rubbing, or touching of the face is said to lead to the spread of infection.



Module 10:

Things to consider

As an arthritis fitness specialist, be prepared to answer these questions.

- 1. What does it mean to properly assess an arthritic client and what questions should you be asking?**
- 2. Why is it important to conduct a baseline and set realistic goals?**
- 3. Can you identify the various types of communication and how they directly impact the development of trust.**
- 4. How does identifying the client's "WHY" directly impact program design and effectiveness?**
- 5. How and why should program design be different for an arthritic client than that of the general population?**
- 6. Why is it important to include the foundational movements and multi-planar exercises into all exercise programs?**
- 7. What are the key characteristics and purpose of a dynamic warm-up, the main workout, and the cool-down sections of each session?**

Module 10: Things to consider

8. Why is it important to include the foundational movements and multi-planar exercises into all exercise programs?

9. What are the key characteristics and purpose of a dynamic warm-up, the main workout, and the cool-down sections of each session?

10. What are safe and effective Post-Covid exercise practices to implement when working with immuno-compromised clients?

11. How can you safely and effectively use modalities outside of the gym setting?

12. What are social distancing guidelines, how do I know if I should be training my arthritic clients in person, and what is their comfort level?

Please complete the Module #10 Quiz.