



Compliance Programming

Deliver solid results based on sound, verifiable research

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As you know, personal training clients are becoming more savvy — having greater expectations and wanting more results for much less money. With the uncertain economy and the market for clients getting more competitive, only those trainers who can economically deliver solid results based on sound, verifiable research will thrive and prosper.

Compliance Is and Always Has Been The Issue

Most of our clients are looking to achieve major body transformation, especially weight/fat loss. Research shows this means expending approximately 2800 kcal per week in physical activity (Klem, et al., 1997) which translates to 400 calories a day. And, these recommendations do not necessarily include the time required for strength and core training programs. If our clients are going to achieve significant body changes, let alone the minimum levels of activity required to increase health status, we need to provide them with tested and proven tools that keep them motivated consistently to increase their activity every day of the week and make permanent lifestyle changes.

A survey among personal fitness professionals reveals a mere 10-25% of clients exercise consistently on a daily basis over a 24-week period (The Association of Fitness by Phone Coaches, 2001). According to a survey by IDEA on personal trainers' job satisfaction, one of the most common complaints is "clients' lack of responsibility for training and their low levels of commitment, especially when clients still expect results," (Gavin, 1998). While it is clear that most fitness professionals have the knowledge to create effective exercise programs, most trainers significantly lack the information and skills to get clients to comply with those programs on a daily basis. Given this lack of compliance, we as fitness professionals clearly have our work cut out for us.

Why are personal training clients experiencing such dismal compliance? The crux of the problem comes down to the clients' dependence on their trainers' presence for motivation. Most clients become so dependent on the trainer's physical presence for feelings of competence and self-efficacy, they eventually do not exercise at all or frequently enough on the 4-5 non-trainer days each week to achieve even the

minimum health requirements. Therefore, most clients remain in a low level maintenance mode, rarely achieving the long term results they came to us for in the first place: clients increasingly lose commitment because of lack of results; cancellations due to clients' erratic schedules, illnesses and personal crises mysteriously become increasingly familiar; trainers get frustrated, bored and burned out. Bottom line, without daily compliance, we all know our clients' progress as well as our professional futures are severely limited.

The Research and its Application to Personal Training

By using what we call "compliance programming", a combination of techniques that are now backed by university research, our own international fitness organization, The Association of Fitness by Phone Coaches, has documented an increase in compliance from 10-25% with traditional personal training to 75-90% compliance (a 300% to 900% increase) over the last eight years with thousands of clients in over 40 states and Canada. You, too, can use the research on compliance and motivation as well as the practical application right away to make a world of difference in your clients' results as well as in increasing your revenue while you work less.

First, in order to ensure the appropriate techniques are being applied at the appropriate times, it is critical to identify the client's readiness to change and level of self-efficacy. Two important concepts you may already be familiar with are the Transtheoretical Model and Self-Efficacy Theory. The Transtheoretical Model was originally developed for helping smokers quit and has been found applicable to exercise adherence (Prochaska and Marcus, 1994). This model classifies people into six different stages of change, or readiness, to participate in exercise. The progressive stages are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and termination (see sidebar). People can move through these stages in a linear fashion, and they can also move back and forth. It is easier to move from contemplation to preparation than from preparation to action (Cardinal, 1997). In addition, the action stage has the highest risk of relapse to a previous stage (Prochaska and Marcus, 1994).

Self-Efficacy Theory is related to the Transtheoretical Model in that it increases as one moves through the different stages of change from precontemplation through termination (Prochaska and Marcus, 1994). According to James Annesi (1996), self-efficacy is "a person's judgment of his/her ability to devise and execute strategies of action required to attain designated types of performance." Based on this concept, exercise adherence increases when an individual has a belief in the benefits of exercise and a belief in her ability to exercise consistently to obtain those benefits. Many studies show that perceived self-efficacy is the best determinant of one's adherence to exercise. An individual's perceived self-efficacy can influence whether an exercise program will be attempted, the ability to persevere when dealing with obstacles, and the level of success (Godin, 1994).

Leverage Clients' Results and Your Revenue by Identifying Their Stages of Change

How can these concepts leverage your clients' compliance and results as well as your income and your time? First of all, most traditional interventions fitness professionals use are action-stage oriented which leave out a significant amount of the sedentary population who may be in the contemplation or preparation stages. We are primarily helping the fit become fitter instead of reaching those

who need our help the most. To reach those now alienated by the action-stage personal training experience we must match our approach to the client's current stage of change. With an appropriate marketing plan and training program for each stage of change, in particular, the contemplation, preparation and action stages, and supporting those clients in moving through those stages, fitness professionals can greatly increase the number of clients who ultimately engage in personal training and who are successful in complying with a program that will get results.

The market of individuals in the contemplation and preparation stages is huge and untapped. Fitness professionals who target their marketing to individuals in these stages before others become savvy about the benefits of working with this market will reap tremendous profits. The training tools available to support these clients are not only more economical than traditional personal training, but trainers can reach many more people and earn more money while working less. Some examples include weekly or monthly (e-) newsletters, tapes or CDs, videos, books, support groups, and teleclasses that focus on the information this market needs to move forward through the stages of change. Discussions on the benefits of exercise, how to overcome obstacles to exercise, and how to incorporate lifestyle activity into a busy schedule are ideal for contemplation and preparation stage clients. The marketing to this population must be frequent and consistent. This type of "hovering" is important because you never know when someone will be ready to move from contemplation to preparation to action. If you effectively use your marketing and stage-related programming to build a relationship with this market you will be the person they think of when they are ready to move forward.

As noted earlier, the action stage has the highest risk of relapse to a prior stage, so programs must be designed to prevent relapse. While most personal trainers work with action-stage clients, many fail to focus on incorporating relapse-prevention strategies into their action-stage training programs. Our organization has used the following research to provide simple, cost effective techniques that significantly increase compliance and prevent relapse in action-stage clients while providing fitness professionals the opportunity to earn more while working less. We encourage fitness professionals to read the individual research articles listed at the end of this article for further understanding and application.

Now that you have a background in how to move clients from contemplation to preparation to action, let's discuss how to get clients to comply over the long term, moving clients from action to maintenance to termination. As fitness professionals, we are already skilled in how to manipulate training variables (frequency, duration, mode and intensity) to affect specific physiological changes. We apply the concept of client-centered goal setting, using challenging, yet attainable goals (Annesi, 1994; King 2000) based on clients' fitness levels and personal choices. We know that goals such as weight loss need to be broken down into more objective, measurable goals like duration, distance or calories burned. We know that clients need to be held accountable by someone, preferably their personal trainers. And, we know clients should not be compared to norms or standards, but goals should be based on self-improvement and the clients' efforts. Clients should be encouraged to compete with themselves, not others with different fitness levels, genetics or abilities (Boyd, Weinmann and Yin, 2002). What you may not know is that your constant physical presence is having a negative effect on your clients' abilities to comply with their exercise programs. Your constant

supervision is actually preventing your clients from being successful. Your clients have learned trainer-efficacy, not self-efficacy.

Shifting from Trainer-efficacy to Self-efficacy

The key to shifting from trainer-efficacy to self-efficacy, and ultimately greater compliance, lies in applying “compliance programming” which involves combining the following research-based concepts into a systematized training program : 1) independent, objective feedback monitoring and self-documentation systems; 2) home-based exercise programming and lifestyle activity; and 3) phone coaching with time sensitive accountability systems. By using these applications based on solid university research, you will find they work synergistically to get your clients automatically exercising on their own and getting better results for less money while you make more and work less.

1. Self-Monitoring and Self-Documentation

The use of self-monitoring and self-documenting has been shown to increase exercise adherence in many studies (Annessi, 1994; Schlenk, et al., 2000), and they have been used as part of the protocol in many exercise adherence studies (Castro & King, 2002; Castro & King, 2001; King, et al, 1998; King, et al., 1991; Morey, et al., 2003). Independent monitoring systems such as heart rate monitors, accelerometers (calorie trackers), pedometers, step counters and displays on cardiovascular equipment that show strides per minute allow clients to get immediate, objective feedback during exercise without the presence of a personal trainer.

Self-documentation systems such as exercise diaries help clients keep track of their daily goals, the readings from the monitors, and their personal achievements. By documenting their own goals and achievements clients are more personally invested in their own programs. Coaching clients how to use these monitoring and documenting systems when the trainer is not present and holding them

TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL

Stages of Change (Prochaska & Marcus, 1994)

1. *Precontemplation*: a person has no intention of changing his behavior (such as being sedentary) in the next six months. Sometimes this is because the person is unaware of the consequences of this behavior. Often, however, it is because the person has attempted and failed to change in the past and does not want to try again.
2. *Contemplation*: a person seriously wants to make a change in the next six months.
3. *Preparation*: a person decides to change the behavior and/or takes some steps to make the change.
4. *Action*: actual changes have been made in the last six months.
5. *Maintenance*: the behavior change has been maintained at least six months.
6. *Termination*: the behavior continues to be maintained and there is no temptation to relapse into the old behavior.

accountable by fax or email on a weekly basis empowers them to take more responsibility and gain personal control over the results of their efforts. Ultimately, this empowerment strengthens their sense of self-efficacy and motivates clients to exercise more frequently.

2. Home-based Exercise Programming and Lifestyle Activity

The next research-based concept to consider in getting clients to be more compliant involves home-based exercise programming and lifestyle activity. Home-based programming has been shown to be more effective than group exercise or facility-based programs for adherence (King, et al., 1991). Many studies have shown that lifestyle activity programs are more successful in increasing adherence in the sedentary, the older adult population, and those with known disease (Dunn, et al., 1999; Marcus, et al., 2000; King, et al., 1991; Morey, et al., 2003; Stewart, et al, 2001). Studies comparing structured to lifestyle programming have shown similar results in the short-term when comparing physiological improvements, but the lifestyle activity participants were able to adhere to their programs much longer and maintain those improvements (Dunn, et al., 1999).

When home-based programming and lifestyle activity programming are used together, many of the perceived barriers to exercise such as lack of time, fear or dislike of the health club, or feelings that exercise is too hard are removed which opens the door for the exercise habit. For those individuals in the action stage, a structured program with specific mode, intensity, duration and frequency may be desirable. For those in the contemplation or preparation stages, this may be perceived as too rigid or too difficult to incorporate into real life.

3. Phone Coaching with Time Sensitive Accountability Systems

Finally, phone coaching with time sensitive accountability systems is key to synergistically tying all the concepts together for optimal compliance. There have been at least thirteen studies that have shown the efficacy of phone-based exercise counseling for various types of exercise (cardiovascular, resistance training, flexibility, etc.) and various populations (King, 2000). Over the last 20 years, researchers at Stanford University have conducted numerous studies on phone-based exercise counseling and its effect on adherence (for full review article visit www.fitnessbyphone.com). They conclude: “Research on telephone-assisted counseling for physical activity has established a convincing body of evidence supporting its effectiveness in promoting long-term physical activity change in adult populations” (Castro & King, 2002).

A study done at The Center for Research in Health Behavior at Virginia Polytechnic and State University concludes that weekly phone counseling for a walking program resulted in a 63% adherence rate compared to 4% in the control group who received no follow up phone counseling after being given instructions for a walking program. Also, the study demonstrates a strong “maintenance effect”: “Evidently, the initial phone calls helped to make walking a habit. Then, (later), without phone calls, the participants continued to walk, thus showing maintenance of the behavior,” (Lombard, Lombard & Wynett, 1995). Many of these studies have combined the use of the telephone with the other strategies mentioned above (goal-setting, self-monitoring, home-based exercise and lifestyle exercise), i.e. compliance programming, which resulted in unusually high levels of compliance: 90% for men and 75% for women. (Castro & King, 2002).

Apparently, our Fitness by Phone program is the first and only of its kind to systematically apply the research on “compliance programming” and the synergistic effects of 1) independent, objective feedback monitoring and self-documentation systems; 2) home-based exercise programming and lifestyle activity; and, 3) phone coaching with time sensitive accountability systems to the commercial personal training industry. And, we consistently yield high levels of compliance, 75%-90%, comparable to that of the research studies just mentioned. These results are duplicated across hundreds of personal trainers and across thousands of clients with different fitness levels, goals and lifestyles. Ironically, many of these clients begin with home-based, lifestyle programs and quickly progress to adding structured, gym-based exercise programs. The result is a very balanced, flexible and versatile program that is easy to maintain long term.

“Compliance Programming” Compels Clients to Take Full Responsibility and Leverages Fitness Professionals to Earn More Money While Working Less

Why are these techniques so effective in creating a win-win situation with client compliance and results as well as helping personal trainers make more money while working less? With traditional personal training, clients’ hectic and unpredictable schedules, travel, illnesses and stress are frequently the reasons for cancelled sessions and, ultimately, the reasons for relapse. Instead, with our research-based “compliance programming”, obstacles often associated with traditional personal training are overcome. This is because clients do not exercise during the phone sessions; the time sensitive accountability by phone and fax/ email is generally only 15-25 minutes; and the sessions can take place from anywhere in the world. The phone sessions are used for strategizing and setting appropriate goals for the clients’ lifestyles and weekly demands. Clients are compelled to take much more personal responsibility for the results of their efforts. This is because “compliance programming” immediately requires an active commitment from clients rather than a more passive one usually associated with traditional personal training. We have found that the more responsibility we put on the clients the stronger their personal investments become in reaching their goals.

For fitness professionals, “compliance programming” eliminates driving time, cancellations and restrictive schedules. In addition, it expands your market for clients because it costs clients less per week than traditional personal training, you are not limited by geography, and you are not limited by those few hours that people can actually exercise during the day. Even more impressive, by using “compliance programming” Fitness by Phone Coaches earn 2-6 times more per hour than traditional personal trainers and handle two to three times as many clients in less time. How? The research backs the results of what Fitness by Phone coaching can do for compliance (75%-90%) compared to the survey on compliance of traditional personal training (10-25%). The average personal training client would need at least three times more personal training sessions per week than they currently have in order to get the compliance that one Fitness by Phone session per week generates. It is clear that “compliance programming” has greater value regardless of the amount of time the personal trainer invests with the client. Now this is what we call leverage!

Are You Prepared for the Changes Happening in The Personal Training Industry?
Faith Popcorn, in her best seller, *The Popcorn Report* (1992),

successfully predicted that Americans’ changing values mean they are doing more nesting—staying home more and spending their dollars accordingly. Those fitness professionals who understand the direction of the dramatic change happening in the United States (and around the world) understand they have the ability to capitalize on a variety of creative resources, “compliance programming” being just one, to move people forward on the activity continuum that involve safe, effective and consistent behavior, helping hundreds, even thousands of people to become fitter, healthier and more energized about life.

The research on compliance bridges the huge gap our industry has been struggling with from the beginning in reaching the inactive as well as getting the active to stay active frequently and long enough to derive the benefits a fit and healthy lifestyle brings. If we are going to finally bridge that gap, we need to look at the research and think “out of the box” in terms of its application. It is time for fitness professionals to see their roles not only as being in the personal training business, but in the fitness motivation business. Do not think of yourself as just a personal trainer. Take notice of the sweeping change happening in our industry, in the United States and around the world. Take advantage of the revolutionary opportunities that are presenting themselves to you.

For a detailed special report on phone coaching and compliance programming call 888-714-4042. The Association of Fitness by Phone Coaches is offering a special invitation to Personal Fitness Professional readers to participate in an exclusive teleconference call on Monday, February 23rd, featuring Stanford University researcher Cynthia Castro, PhD on the research on phone coaching and compliance programming. Space is limited to the first 50 PFP subscribers who call for their reservation number, 800-350-9349.

STAGES OF CHANGE & APPLICABLE MARKETING & PROGRAMMING

1. *Precontemplation*: (e) newsletters
2. *Contemplation*: (e) newsletters, tapes, videos and CDs promoting the benefits of exercise, overcoming obstacles to exercise and how to fit exercise into a busy schedule;
3. *Preparation*: support groups, workshops and teleclasses promoting lifestyle activity;
4. *Action*: compliance programming that incorporates structured exercise along with lifestyle activity;
5. *Maintenance*: compliance programming to assist in relapse-prevention;
6. *Termination*: abbreviated compliance programming (sans phone coaching with time sensitive accountability).

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