

# 'No pain, no gain' fails to motivate exercisers

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Fitness instructors should abandon the 'no pain, no gain' mantra and embrace a more motivational style to keep participants coming to classes, research suggests.

A study of mostly Perth-based indoor cycling instructors found training instructors to use a 'motivationally adaptive communication style' led to a better psychological experience for participants and increased their

intention to keep attending fitness classes.

The instructors who underwent training in motivational techniques also reported greater job satisfaction themselves.

Language is a very powerful tool to support or undermine successful performance, according to Curtin University exercise and health psychologist and lead author Professor Nikos Ntoumanis.

He says fitness instructors wanting to motivate people should explain activities, and why they were being done or what muscle groups they targeted.

"That's because we know that giving someone a rationale for why they do certain things promotes engagement, as opposed to 'do this, do that' without explanation," Prof Ntoumanis says.

It is also important to create opportunities for exercisers to have input and make decisions about the workout, he says.

Instructors should take time to listen and be responsive to participants' needs, and acknowledge exercisers' feelings and respond appropriately.

"Obviously some of these classes may involve high levels of exertion, which could put off some individuals in terms of coming back," Prof Ntoumanis says.

"So it's important for the instructors to acknowledge these negative emotions and reassure the exercisers that it is ok to feel like that, but at the same time give them some rationale that there's going to be some positive adaptations in the body in terms of improved fitness and developing better muscle tone."

Prof Ntoumanis says instructors should avoid using guilt-inducing language, such as suggesting that missing classes or not giving 100 per cent will result in a person not be able to go to the beach in their bikini.

"We know from research that people could develop, in some extreme cases, eating disorders," he says. "The emphasis should be on the activity and the health [benefits] that people get."

Prof Ntoumanis says instructors should avoid appearing cold and indifferent, or fail to offer any specific feedback.

The training also challenged 'no pain, no gain' language, which was controversial among the instructors because it went against the culture of the fitness industry, Prof Ntoumanis says.

"This [language] works with only a few very select participants who are highly experienced," he says.

"For the vast majority of the population...this kind of language could be putting them off."

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