



USA Swimming and Total Aquatic Programming – LLC recommends all “new models” for aquatic facilities have at least 2 pools with one pool having water temperatures 80 to 84 degrees (cool water) and the other pool water temperatures 87 to 89 degrees (warm water). However, we are also very interested in improving the financial sustainability of existing single pool facilities. This article may help programming options in the cooler temperature pool.

“Cool Water Programming can make a difference in your bottom line”

Most deep water will be on the cooler side; 82 degrees and under. Deep-water exercise is perfect for nearly every population and provides variety, intensity, challenge, fun, and is impact free. Who can work in cooler water and possibly deep water?

Target Audiences for Deep-Water Exercise

- All able body and special populations (see below)
- MS could be vertical or horizontal
- Obese or overweight
- Prenatal
- High Performance (competitive swimmers and triathletes)
- Fitness Swimmers
- Master Swimmers

Recommended workout formats for deep-water exercise include:

- High Intensity (HIT) OR (HITT) High Intensity Interval Training
- Deep water running / cross training
- HI-YO Intervals
- Cross Country Ski Series
- Cycling / noodle / board / belt
- In Deep with Pilates – (must know what you are doing)
- Deep Water Therapy
- Deep Technique
- Water Polo Gym

To learn about different types of exercises it is recommended to attend workshops and conferences held by the Aquatic Exercise Association (AEA). To learn more about water exercise in shallow and deep water go to Aquatic Exercise Association. www.aeawave.com

What are the potential benefits of offering “small group training”?

This cost-effective way to offer personalized exercise to people in your community offers multiple benefits for your facility, staff and customers. Potential benefits include:

- Facility = Increase member retention, capture a new revenue stream, and use the pool during down times. All outcomes improve the facility’s bottom line.
- Personal trainer / Swim Coach = Job diversity, the ability to earn more per hour and the potential to serve more people.

- Customer = Personalized results with the support of a group at a lower cost than traditional one-on-one personal training/coaching.

For all of these reasons, the value of small group training is clear. So now the question is, how do you establish small group training programs? I believe the inclusion of programming that offers both fitness and health benefits may be the right solution.

Step 1: Understanding the Fitness & Health Connection

An exercise program that offers both fitness and health benefits can be the difference between a person making a behavioral life change or reverting to old habits.

There are components of fitness considered essential in improving physical health –

- Cardio-respiratory endurance
- Muscle strength and endurance
- Flexibility and body composition

Health benefits might be thought of as a combination of physical, mental and social wellbeing. These parameters are not easily evaluated in a traditional analysis process however they are the key to making exercise personal.

Certification for fitness trainers places a strong emphasis on anatomy, kinesiology, and exercise physiology. Having a solid understanding of these areas prepares the trainer from a scientific perspective to design sound exercise programs for fitness benefits. To develop and lead programming that has the potential to truly change how a person moves and feels requires consideration of the physical and biological and the behavioral sciences. Small group training that focuses on always including these 3 sciences offers the complete package. They make exercise personally relevant and rewarding.

Step 2: Hire Leaders with the Right Skill Set

To effectively lead, the coach must use a balanced approach between the science and art of movement. Here are some important skills and qualifications that make a good water exercise coach.

- Certified personal trainer
- Certified aquatic fitness professional
- Critical thinker
- Knowledge specific to intended target audience beyond basic certification
- Able to motivate group
- Capable of cueing to a group, observing results, and providing follow up cues
- Engaging
- Able to multi-task and think ahead
- Creating and implementing a season exercise plan

Step 3: Develop a Program that Delivers Results

It is important to educate the community on how your program is different and its benefits. Here are some ideas to help develop a program that differentiates and elevates you in your community.

1. **Offer small group training to a specific audience.** This has several benefits from bringing together people who share similar experiences/life challenges while allowing the coach to design a program that uses exercises and techniques specific to the group. This will also offer the opportunity for socialization and being able to “fit in” with others like themselves.

Target classes may include:

- Gentle Moves to Ease Arthritis Pain
- Exercise for Healthy Knees & Hips
- Intervals for Weight Loss

2. **Provide options for all fitness levels.** Small group training can be designed for all ages and fitness levels from low impact to high performance. Small group training fills the gap between therapy and fitness. Once you have selected your audience it is time to determine the training format and what depth of the pool would be best; shallow (3’6” to 4’6”) or deep (5’ and deeper). One of the most important programming considerations is water temperature. Specific formats like Yoga or Ai Chi for fall prevention, or goal-oriented formats such as circuit training for improved knee strength and balance are popular. Developing exercise programs for high performance and cross training would be for your clients who struggle with continuous training on land. They can train in the water a few times a week or more and still compete and do some properly designed training on land.

Knowing your clientele is critical to formulating a workout with responsible design. As a professional, due diligence is required which includes being familiar with current research, attending continuing education workshops and, if applicable, knowing the individual client precautions. For the particular group you are servicing, you need to know what muscles need to be strengthened or stretched, what skills need to be addressed, what time of day might be best for the audience to exercise, and what social and emotional needs are common. Environmental factors should also be considered, including pool entry/exit, getting to and from the changing facilities, and what client “fears” might be potential barriers.

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An article “Aquatic Options” was rewritten and adapted by Sue Nelson, Aquatic Program Specialist with the permission of Laurie Denomme, founder of WECOACH – www.waterexercisecoach.com