

# Leading Physical Activity with Aging Adults

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## **Provide an environment of inclusivity.**

- Use principles of group dynamics to facilitate relationships
- Offer positive feedback
- Start with accessible movements and allow everyone to grow at their individual pace

## **There is a spectrum from frail to hearty in the population of aging adults.**

- Accept all movers in their current health and ability
- Start low, slow and small and move up in increments
- Allow everyone to find their appropriate level of challenge

## **Warm up joints and muscles.**

- Stay within range of motion. Remind participants that everyone's range of motion is individual.
- Cue movement with little to no weight on joints
- Wrists, elbows, shoulders, spine, hips, knees, and ankles all benefit from warm-ups. Warm-ups may include drills or getting blood pumping to a certain area

## **Always start low, slow, and small.**

- Begin with the most accessible movements, weights, and balance requirements
- Begin with decreased range of motion options and build

## **Provide frequent feedback**

- Watch for signs of challenge such as shaking, instability facial grimacing
- Cue the class to take a step back
- Use if-then statements to guide into appropriate challenge

## **Find range of motion.**

- Show actions most accessible to individuals
- Use muscles to find range of motion preventing use of momentum for movement
- Avoid facilitated stretching

## **Repeat movements.**

- Develop muscle memory - train the muscles
- Develop muscle and cognitive strength through repetition
- Simplify physical activity without complicated sequences

## **Cool down with slower movements and gentle stretches.**

- Offer stretches that match the activities completed
- Ease into and out of a workout

## **Respect potential sensory degradation.**

- Respect hearing limitations by offering visual demonstrations
- Respect sight limitations by offering encouragement and guidance verbally
- Only demonstrate and say what you want people to do. Offering an example like "what-not-to-do" may be misinterpreted

# Consider specific responsibilities when leading aging adults individually or within a group.

## Know your limitations.

- Do not diagnose participants or provide any medical advice
- Suggest consulting a medical provider if specific/individual health questions arise
- Become comfortable with saying, “I don’t know.”
- “If it hurts, don’t do it.” is a safe response for everyone

## Know your role.

- Guide movement with confidence
- Encourage without pressure
- Suggest alternatives provided by your training and programming
- Demonstrate range of motion appropriate for your group, not YOUR greatest range of motion

## It is a challenge to honor the individual while leading a group.

Using if - then statements can help. If - then statements establish safety and next steps for challenge.

**IF** states the safety and knowledge of what is needed to support the movement.

**THEN** states what the next step is in taking on a challenge.

This process keeps everyone moving from low, slow and small towards challenge.

“If this is easy, then get a heavier weight.”

“If your core is holding tight and you can still breath, then reach a little further”

“If you can balance with one finger on the chair, then try and slowly let go all together.”

“If your front foot is steady on the ground, then lift the back foot.”

## Safety suggestions specific to LIFT

Watch the floor for tripping hazards, including tied shoelaces and placement of water bottles/personal items.

Keep participants using their muscles, rather than momentum.

Allow an individual to choose their weights daily, recognizing ups and downs occur with health.

## Safety suggestions specific to LIFT OM

Follow the class plans start to finish.

Follow program plan from class to class.

Use English over Sanskrit when discussing yoga poses and philosophy.

Music is optional and discouraged if it challenges a participant’s ability to hear the instructor.

Demonstrate the “Do’s” showing participants only what to do.

## Resources

[Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion - Guidelines for Physical Activity: Chapter 5 Active Older Adults](#)

[National Institute of Aging - NIA - How to Stay Safe During Exercising and Physical Activity](#)

[CDC - Fact Sheet for Health Professionals on Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults](#)

[American College of Sports Medicine - Position Stand: Exercise and Physical Activity for Older Adults](#)

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