IDEA’S CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS, PERSONAL TRAINERS, OWNERS AND MANAGERS HAS WITHSTOOD THE TEST OF TIME.

Every industry needs boundaries and standards for interacting with its employees and customers. At IDEA, we believe that a formal, well-communicated code of ethics can help to protect the reputation of the industry in general and the stature of the dedicated professionals who are the engines of change and inspiration for so many people.

We developed these standards with the intention that they steer the industry as both an internal guideline and an external statement of values and commitment to fairness, decency and excellence. We hope our codes for the three main segments of fitness industry professionals will help to support your day-to-day decision making, encourage ethical practice, enhance compliance and empower all of our valued members to handle the dilemmas that are bound to arise in day-to-day interface with customers, co-workers and employees.

IDEA CODE OF ETHICS FOR GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS
As a member of IDEA Health & Fitness Association, I will be guided by the best interests of the client and will practice within the scope of my education and knowledge. I will maintain the education and experience necessary to appropriately teach classes; will behave in a positive and constructive manner; and will use truth, fairness and integrity to guide all my professional decisions and relationships.

ETHICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS
1. ALWAYS BE GUIDED BY THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE GROUP, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING INDIVIDUALS.
   - Remember that a group fitness instructor’s primary obligation is to the group as a whole, taking class level and class description into account.
   - Strive to provide options and realistic goals that take individual variations into account.
   - Offer modifications for all levels of fitness and experience (i.e., demonstrate easy and more challenging options).
   - Recommend products or services only if they will benefit a client’s health and well-being, not because they will benefit you or your employer financially or occupationally.
2. PROVIDE A SAFE EXERCISE ENVIRONMENT.
   • Prioritize all movement choices by (1) safety, (2) effectiveness and (3) creativity. Do not allow creativity to compromise safety.
   • Use good judgment in exercise selection. Assess all class moves according to risk versus reward, making sure rewards and benefits always outweigh risks.
   • Adhere to safe guidelines for music speed in all classes.
   • Follow guidelines for maximum music volume. IDEA recommends that “music intensity during group exercise classes should measure no more than 90 decibels (dB). Since the instructor’s voice needs to be about 10 dB louder than the music in order to be heard, the instructor’s voice should measure no more than 100 dB.”
   • Consider whether exercises that can be properly monitored in a one-to-one setting are appropriate in a group environment.

3. OBTAIN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING NECESSARY TO LEAD GROUP EXERCISE.
   • Continuously strive to keep abreast of the latest research and exercise techniques essential to providing effective and safe classes.
   • Maintain certifications and continuing education.
   • Obtain specific training for teaching specialty classes or instructing special populations. Teach a class such as kickboxing or yoga only after mastering the skill and understanding the important aspects of the class. Instruct a special population, like older adults or perinatal women, only after studying the specific needs of the group.
   • Work within the scope of your knowledge and skill. When necessary, refer participants to professionals with appropriate training and expertise beyond your realm of knowledge.

4. USE TRUTH, FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY TO GUIDE ALL PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS.
   • In all professional relationships, clearly demonstrate and support honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.
   • Speak in a positive manner about fellow instructors, other staff, participants and competitive facilities and organizations or say nothing at all.
   • When disagreements or conflicts occur, focus on behavior, factual evidence and nonderogatory forms of communication, not on judgmental statements, hearsay, the placing of blame or other destructive responses.
   • Accurately represent your certifications, training and education.
   • Do not discriminate based on race, creed, color, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical handicap or nationality.

5. MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES.
   • Never exploit—sexually, economically or otherwise—a professional relationship with a supervisor, an employee, a colleague or a client.
   • Use physical touching appropriately during classes, as a means of correcting alignment and/or focusing a client’s concentration on the targeted area. Immediately discontinue the use of touch at a client’s request or if the client displays signs of discomfort.
   • Avoid sexually oriented banter and inappropriate physical contact.

6. UPHOLD A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE THROUGH CONDUCT AND APPEARANCE.
   • Model behavior that values physical ability, function and health over appearance.
   • Demonstrate healthy behaviors and attitudes about bodies (including your own). Avoid smoking, substance abuse and unhealthy exercise and eating habits.
   • Encourage healthful eating for yourself and others.
   • Dress in a manner that allows you to perform your job while increasing the comfort level of class participants. Be more conservative in dress, decorum and speech when the class standard is unclear.
   • Establish a mood in class that encourages and supports individual effort and all levels of expertise.
ETHICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES
FOR PERSONAL TRAINERS

1. ALWAYS BE GUIDED BY THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CLIENT.
   • Remember that a personal trainer’s primary responsibility is to the client’s safety, health and welfare; never compromise this responsibility for your own self-interest, personal advantage or monetary gain.
   • Recommend products or services only if they will benefit the client’s health and well-being, not because they will benefit you financially or occupationally.
   • If recommending products or services will result in financial gain for you or your employer, be aware that disclosure to the client may be appropriate.
   • Base the number of training sessions on the client’s needs, not your financial requirements.

2. MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES.
   • Never exploit—sexually, economically or otherwise—a professional relationship with a supervisor, an employee, a colleague or a client.
   • Respect the client’s right to privacy. A client’s conversations, behavior, results and—if appropriate—identity should be kept confidential.
   • Use physical touching appropriately during training sessions, as a means of correcting alignment and/or focusing a client’s concentration on the targeted area. Immediately discontinue the use of touch at a client’s request or if the client displays signs of discomfort.
   • Focus on the business relationship, not the client’s personal life, except as appropriate.
   • When you are unable to maintain appropriate professional boundaries or to work within the legitimate agenda of the training relationship, whether because of your own attitudes and behaviors or those of the client, either terminate the relationship or refer the client to an appropriate professional, such as another trainer, a medical doctor or a mental health specialist.
   • Avoid sexually oriented banter and inappropriate physical contact.

3. MAINTAIN THE EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE NECESSARY TO APPROPRIATELY TRAIN CLIENTS.
   • Continuously strive to keep abreast of the new developments, concepts and practices essential to providing the highest-quality services to clients.
   • Recognize your limitations in services and techniques, and engage only in activities that fall within the boundaries of your professional credentials and competencies. Refer clients to other professionals for issues that fall beyond the boundaries of a personal fitness trainer’s profession or your current competencies.
   • For health screening, fitness assessment, prudent progression and exercise technique, follow the standards outlined by professionals in the fields of medicine and health and fitness.

4. USE TRUTH, FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY TO GUIDE ALL PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS.
   • In all professional and business relationships, clearly demonstrate and support honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.
   • Accurately represent your qualifications.
   • In advertising materials, be truthful and fair. When describing personal training services, be guided by the primary obligation of helping the client develop informed judgments, opinions and choices. Avoid ambiguity, sensationalism, exaggeration and superficiality.
   • Make your contract language clear and understandable.
   • Administer consistent pricing and procedural policies.
   • Never solicit business from another trainer’s client. When interacting with clients of other trainers, be open and honest so those clients cannot interpret the interaction as solicitation of their business.
   • If you work for a business that finds clients and assigns them to you, recognize that the clients belong to that business.

5. SHOW RESPECT FOR CLIENTS AND FELLOW PROFESSIONALS.
   • Act with integrity in your relationships with colleagues, facility owners and other health professionals to help ensure that each client benefits optimally from all professionals.
   • Never discriminate based on race, creed, color, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical handicap or nationality.
   • When disagreements or conflicts occur, focus on behavior, factual evidence and nonderogatory forms of communication, not on judgmental statements, hearsay, the placing of blame or other destructive responses.
   • Present fitness information completely and accurately in order to help the client make informed decisions.

6. UPHOLD A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE THROUGH CONDUCT AND APPEARANCE.
   • Avoid smoking, substance abuse and unhealthy eating habits.
   • Speak and dress in a manner that increases the client’s comfort level.
IDEA CODE OF ETHICS FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS
As a member of IDEA Health & Fitness Association, I will be guided by the best interests of the client. I will provide facilities and staff for effective exercise and lifestyle programs; ensure that staff maintains the education and experience necessary to appropriately train clients; uphold fair business practices and safety guidelines; and use truth, fairness and integrity to guide all my professional decisions and relationships.

ETHICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS

1. ALWAYS BE GUIDED BY THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CLIENT.
   • Remember that the primary responsibility of a fitness business owner or manager is to the client’s safety, health and welfare; never compromise this responsibility.
   • Recruit, hire, train and offer continuing education opportunities for staff with the aim of providing programs and services of the highest quality.
   • Incorporate new research and trends into all programming. Offer health/wellness/exercise options for different fitness levels and special needs.
   • Recommend products and services only if they will benefit a client’s health and well-being, not solely because the sale of these products and services will benefit the business financially.
   • Be aware that if product or service recommendations will result in financial gain for the business, disclosure to the client may be appropriate.
   • For health screening, fitness assessment, prudent progression and exercise technique, follow the standards outlined by professionals in the fields of medicine and health and fitness.
   • Document and follow up on all customer complaints.

2. PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT.
   • Maintain a clean, well-lit and ventilated facility or workout area that meets all governmental regulations and insurance guidelines.
   • Provide an appropriate ratio of staff to clients.
   • Follow a regular equipment maintenance schedule according to manufacturer directions and immediately repair or replace faulty equipment.
   • Ensure that all staff members are knowledgeable in first-aid and emergency procedures. Establish emergency systems and train staff in the execution of such systems.
   • Follow guidelines for maximum music volume. IDEA recommends that “music intensity during group exercise classes should measure no more than 90 decibels (dB). Since the instructor’s voice needs to be about 10 dB louder than the music in order to be heard, the instructor’s voice should measure no more than 100 dB.”
   • Document and follow up on all incidents of illness or injury.

3. UPHOLD FAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES.
   • In advertising materials, be truthful and fair. Your primary obligation is to help the potential client develop informed judgments and choices. Avoid ambiguity, sensationalism, exaggeration and superficiality.
   • Explain and provide clear, written policies for pricing and collection of payments. If a client signs a contract, the contract language should be understandable.
   • Administer consistent pricing and procedural policies.
   • Abide by contracts with clients and other professionals.
   • Follow fair hiring practices and categorize staff according to applicable laws. Provide fair wages and compensation based on industry standards and geographic region.

4. ENSURE THAT ALL STAFF ARE QUALIFIED AND MEET INDUSTRY STANDARDS.
   • Provide opportunities for staff to acquire or maintain the education and experience necessary to appropriately train clients.
   • Encourage and reward staff members who continuously strive to keep abreast of the new developments, concepts and practices essential to providing the highest-quality services to clients.
   • Recognize limitations in services and techniques, and ensure that staff engage only in activities that fall within the boundaries of their professional credentials and competencies. Clients should be referred to other businesses or professionals for issues that fall beyond the boundaries of the staff’s current competencies.
   • Establish standards and an atmosphere that uphold technical, instructional and professional conduct according to industry guidelines.
   • Monitor the appropriateness of staff’s speech and attire in relation to the activity being taught and client comfort.

5. MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES.
   • Never exploit—sexually, economically or otherwise—a professional relationship with a peer, an employee, a colleague or a client.
   • Respect clients’ and staff members’ right to privacy. Conversations, behavior, results and—if appropriate—identity should be kept confidential.
   • Avoid sexually oriented banter and inappropriate physical contact.

6. USE TRUTH, FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY TO GUIDE ALL PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS.
   • Act with integrity in all relationships with colleagues and other health professionals.
   • Never discriminate based on race, creed, color, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical disability or nationality.
   • Focus on behavior, factual evidence and nonderogatory forms of communication—not on judgmental statements, hearsay, the placing of blame or other destructive responses—when disagreements or conflicts occur.
   • Never publicly discredit or lower the dignity of individuals, organizations or facilities through conduct or comment.
   • Present fitness information completely and accurately in order to help the client make informed decisions.
   • Provide reasonable work allocations and procedures for all staff.