



Code of Ethics, Professional Responsibilities of a fitness trainer towards clients

INTRODUCTION

A code of ethics is a guide of principles designed to help professionals conduct business honestly and with integrity. A code of ethics document may outline the mission and values of the business or organization, how professionals are supposed to approach problems, the ethical principles based on the organization's core values and the standards to which the professional is held. A personal trainer or fitness instructor is placed in a position of trust by the nature of their work. Honest, open, transparent and integrity driven dealings with all clients should be a starting point – and ultimately these make good business sense.

REPS AND ITS CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) is an independent public register that recognizes the qualifications and expertise of fitness instructors in the UK and provides a system of regulation to ensure they meet national industry standards.

As such, it places great store by its Code of Ethical Conduct and expects registered professionals to adhere to its principles.

REPs see the role of an exercise professional as to:

1. Identify and meet the needs of individuals
2. Improve performance or fitness through programmes of safe, effective and enjoyable exercise
3. Create an environment in which individuals are motivated to maintain participation and improve performance or fitness
4. Conform to a Code of Ethical Conduct in a number of areas – rights, relationships, personal responsibilities, professional standards, safe working practice

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF REPs

There are five principles to the REPs Code of Ethical Conduct.

Principle-1: Rights

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to maintain a standard of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with all client groups and to responsibly demonstrate:

1. Respect for individual difference and diversity.
2. Good practice in challenging discrimination and unfairness.
3. Discretion in dealing with confidential client disclosure.

As part of these principles members registered with REPs should seek to ensure that the contractual arrangements they have with their client are clear, transparent and unambiguous. Although REPs cannot and will not seek to adjudicate or deal with private contractual disputes (which should be dealt with by members and their clients) REPs will nevertheless seek to ensure that Exercise Professionals do maintain a proper regard to dealing with and addressing concerns raised by their clients.

Principle- 2: Relationships

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to develop and maintain a relationship with customers based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect and to responsibly demonstrate:

1. Awareness of the requirement to place the customer's needs as a priority and promote their welfare and best interests first when planning an appropriate training programme.
2. Clarity in all forms of communication with customers, professional colleagues and medical practitioners, ensuring honesty, accuracy and cooperation when seeking agreements and avoiding misrepresentation or any conflict of interest arising between customers' and own professional obligations.
3. Integrity as an exercise professional and recognition of the position of trust dictated by that role, ensuring avoidance of inappropriate behaviour in customer relationships. Any consensual relationship between persons of full age would not, however, be considered inappropriate.

Principle-3: Personal responsibilities

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to conduct proper personal behaviour at all times and to responsibly demonstrate:

1. The high standards of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with all their client groups and which reflect the particular image and expectations relevant to the role of the exercise professional working in the fitness industry.
2. An understanding of their legal responsibilities and accountability when dealing with the public and awareness of the need for honesty and accuracy in substantiating their claims of authenticity when promoting their services in the public domain.
3. An absolute duty of care to be aware of their working environment and to be able to deal with all reasonably foreseeable accidents and emergencies – and to protect themselves, their colleagues and clients.

Principle-4: Professional standards

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to commit to the attainment of appropriate qualifications and ongoing training to responsibly demonstrate:

Engagement in actively seeking to update knowledge and improve their professional skills in order to maintain a quality standard of service, reflecting on their own practice, identifying development needs and undertaking relevant development activities.

Willingness to accept responsibility and be accountable for professional decisions or actions, welcome evaluation of their work and recognise the need when appropriate to refer to another professional specialist.

A personal responsibility to maintain their own effectiveness and confine themselves to practice those activities for which their training and competence is recognised by the Register.

Principle-5: Safe working practice

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to maintain a safe exercise environment for all clients and at all times and to responsibly demonstrate:

1. A responsible attitude to the care and safety of client participants within the training environment and in planned activities ensuring that both are appropriate to the needs of the clients.
2. An appropriate ratio of instructors to clients within any group sessions to ensure that at all time the safety of all clients is paramount.
3. All clients have been systematically prepared for the activity in terms of safety including the safe use of equipment.

DUTIES OF A FITNESS TRAINER

A fitness trainer, or personal trainer, works with clients to educate and motivate them towards achieving a healthy body and lifestyle. The role of fitness trainers may vary depending on their level of education and the needs of the client. Their status as either an independent contractor or full-time employee may also influence their duties. A trainer may have a degree or certification in a fitness field or have a background that suits the profession, such as professional athlete or dancer. Understanding the basic duties of a fitness trainer will help you make the best choices to achieve your goals.

Assessing the Client

A fitness trainer should spend time with you and assess your needs and current fitness level. Some trainers will record your weight, height and body mass index, or how much fat you have, at the beginning of training. Things to discuss with your trainer include goals, exercise schedule, diet basics and the best cardiovascular and strength routines for you. Once the assessment is complete, the trainer will guide you to change habits that work against fitness, such as eating fast food, and will help you develop habits to improve your health. Unless your fitness trainer is a certified nutrition or dietitian, those with a controlled diet or illness should discuss food choices with a medical professional.

Training the Client

It is the job of a fitness trainer to develop exercises that work towards improving your body tone and overall health. The trainer has the knowledge to provide you with workout routines that are both safe and effective. All exercises should be demonstrated to the client so they are both effective and accomplished without injury. Strength training may include the use of equipment, such as weight or resistance machines. The fitness trainer will teach you how to use the equipment and will stay with you until you become confident with the tool. A trainer will teach you proper ways to burn calories during cardiovascular exercising. For example, if you and your trainer decide walking is the best exercise for you, the trainer should explain proper strides and interval speeds to get an effective workout.

Motivating the Client

Many people can develop their own exercise routines and work towards goal without a trainer. Becoming fit is a not an easy task and can be hard to maintain. A fitness trainer will help keep you motivated with encouragement and remind you about your goals and the benefits of exercise. A trainer should monitor your progress and make adjustments along the way to improve routines. For example, a trainer will work with you and tell you when to increase weight loads and add additional repetitions when strength training. He might suggest walking faster or increasing your distance to advance cardiovascular training. Working without a trainer means when you get discouraged, you might quit. A fitness trainer's job is to encourage you to continue and keep you on a path to achieve your goals.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FITNESS TRAINER

According to the National Federation of Personal Trainers, personal trainers apply fundamental exercise science principles to design fitness programs that help meet health and fitness goals in public and private settings. These trainers teach you how to reach your individual fitness goals and they are responsible for using and promoting safe exercise prescriptions. Personal trainers keep up to date with current industry standards and practices by completing periodic continuing education requirements.

Screening

Personal fitness trainers must screen a potential client to determine if he can be physically trained. Trainers must identify health risk factors such as diabetes or obesity. Trainers collect information about a potential client's personal medical history, chronic illnesses, biomechanical problems and current medications. Trainers must obtain clearance from a client's physician if the client is on blood pressure, cardiac or blood glucose medications.

General Information

Trainers must collect general client information, which includes the client's age, gender, height and weight. Information about a client's occupation can help the trainer determine her daily activity level. Trainers should inquire about a client's sleeping and dietary habits, water intake and the most recent exercise program she practiced.

Fitness Assessment

Personal trainers are responsible for performing a fitness assessment of a client to structure his training regimen. Trainers administer a body composition test to determine a client's percentage of body fat. Muscular strength and muscular endurance tests help determine the intensity of the client's exercise regimen. A "step-test" helps a trainer evaluate a client's cardiorespiratory ability. A "sit-and-reach" test assesses a client's flexibility with minimal equipment.

Dietary Recommendation

Personal trainers are responsible for providing the client with general dietary advice. Trainers may provide a client with literature or recommend foods that provide nutrients that help the body recover from exercise or meet the client's fitness goals. Trainers should explain how a client's daily activity determines her dietary caloric requirements and provide charts and tables to help a client make informed meal and meal timing decisions. Trainers may recommend dietary supplements that can help a client meet her specific fitness goals such as protein shakes for lean muscle gain or vitamins for exercise recovery.

Training

Trainers should structure an exercise regimen according to a client's fitness level and specific goals such as weight loss, lean muscle gain, endurance or muscular strength. Fitness trainers provide instructions about specific resistance movements and the number of sets and repetitions a client should perform during an exercise session. Personal trainers demonstrate the appropriate technique for completing exercise movements and evaluate progress. Trainers must ensure that a client has enough recovery time between workouts. Recovery time depends on the intensity of an individual workout session.

CONCLUSION

The first version of the code was developed by a working group brought together by the Institute of Personal Trainers. The group worked very closely with similar groups in other sectors of the health care sector to make sure that the statements in the code are the right ones. The Code applies to both employed and self-employed professionals but where professionals are employed the Register accepts that employed exercise professionals will be subject to the codes of practice and employment rules of their employers and will, in determining compliance with this Code of Ethical Conduct, have careful regard to any such employment rules and in particular whether or not, in the case of any complaint being made the professional concerned has or will be subject to any internal investigation by his or her employers.