

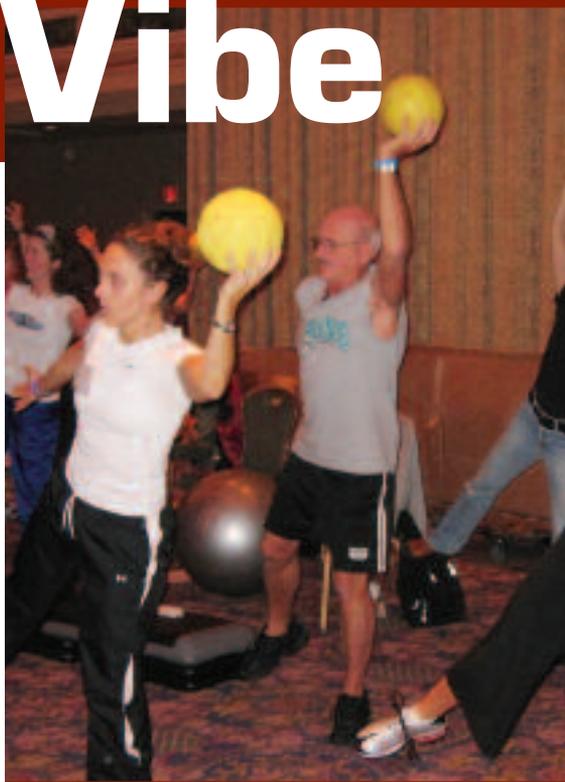
Catching & Spreading a Serious Vibe

2005 IDEA Personal Trainer®—NYC

By Sandy Todd Webster

The vibe of the Big Apple is organic. The sidewalks hum with the whoosh of the subway underfoot; the air is a noisy conversation of rumbles, horns and sirens; and the streets are a feast of lights and odd sights for the eyes to consume, one blink at a time. The vibe hits you in the gut and radiates outward, an aura of energy leaving traces of vitality everywhere—a force that can't be denied.

It's appropriate, then, that the education at the 2005 IDEA Personal Trainer—NYC event (October 6–9) in Manhattan seemed to have a similar, contagious effect on an estimated 900 personal fitness trainers (PFTs), assistants, and others interested in this ever-growing and evolving field. More than 75 classes with as many as 15.5 hours of CECs available presented PFTs with the winning equation of amassing information on exercise research and combining it with practical, immediately ready ideas from some of the industry's sharpest thinkers. The vibe of knowledge-sharing at this event was earnest, eager and serious. It hit attendees square and true, and by now has dispersed to every city and country of the attendees who absorbed it.



What's the Buzz?

Trainers these days seem to be zoned in on beefing up their knowledge in a handful of core areas that reflect the unfolding story of today's walking-wounded society. Namely, PFTs are hungry for information about obesity, assessment, function, biomechanics, coaching and working with special populations, such as older adults. Not surprisingly, these topics interweave regularly in a trainer's day-to-day experiences. As a result, a PFT can't just be proficient in one area and let the others slide. To wit: If a trainer can't conduct a thorough, intelligent assessment, where does that leave his unmotivated, 60-year-old overweight client with back pain? Probably right where she started, or, worse yet, badly injured after a few sessions and permanently turned off to personal training.

Things have gotten complicated, indeed. But how can you learn all you need and truly apply it well? Adding incrementally to your knowledge and skills seems to be the key. One message at this event was unmistakable: There's no shame in a back-to-basics approach. Ask questions, watch, learn and study!

What, specifically, are trainers concerned about?

From her vantage as a veteran fitness professional, Los Angeles-based IDEA member and presenter Kathy Stevens, MA, said she thought the buzz is "still around movement screening and recognizing and dealing with muscular imbalances." She also pointed out that the first wave of Baby Boomers is upon us. "As [clients] hit midlife and senior status, trainers will be (and are) dealing with clients who have one or more physical limitations. Trainers need to be proficient at helping this growing group to stay active and able."

For Leslie Sandoz Healy, owner and president of Fitness Firm Inc., in Kensington, Maryland, information such as that presented in Len Kravitz's "Physiology of Obesity" lecture was pure gold for her knowledge bank. His presentation of the most up-to-date research regarding fat and its key role in the immune system, heart disease, diabetes and obesity will help arm her to better deal with the challenges she and other trainers face with this epidemic, she said. "This research allows the trainer a more qualified perspective on a disturbingly growing trend. I am very concerned and feel a true responsibility to aid in the solution as a fitness professional. The reality is that we adults, parents and children must understand the ramifications of overeating and inactivity before we tackle the problem. That feels like my true job at this point in my career." Sandoz Healy also appreciated the sessions presented on functional training, adding, "We all need to grasp the importance of fitness integrated with real life."

C. Noelle Brownson, a personal trainer and the owner of Fitness Station in Denver, couldn't agree more about functional training, saying that trainers need to get out of the "machine rut." "I've been doing continuing education since getting my CSCS certification in 1991 and not in these many years have I ever heard a lecturer say 'put your client on this machine and push or pull this way.' And yet clubs and studios are opening every week that are lined with machines," she observed. "Trainers can have a tremendous impact on the public by teaching people how to move their bodies effectively. Open and support functional training facilities."

Jonathan Ross, owner of Aion Fitness in Bowie, Maryland, sees a positive and interesting trend of fusing aesthetics with function. "It's kind of like giving people what they want with

Keeping up with the rapid pace of the industry takes dedication to continuing education. Whether it was product knowledge, strategies for running a business more profitably or indepth knowledge about special populations, attendees at the 2005 IDEA Personal Trainer@—NYC conference were able to get it all under one roof.





IDEA Health & Fitness Expo

If attendees didn't absorb in sessions that knowledge blended with intelligent use of fitness products and services can make a crucial difference in giving their clients an edge, the displays in the convention hall helped codify that message. More than 40 exhibitors brought their wares and spent time explaining and demonstrating what these machines, gadgets, programs and services could do to enhance client goals. The expo provided a comfortable networking area for attendees, and an open time slot on the education slate gave them conveniently unopposed hours in the hall to explore, mingle and shop.

A special thanks to IDEA's senior partners STOTT™ PILATES and Nautilus® Health & Fitness Group™ for their support in putting on this event.

what you know they need thrown in as well," he said. He also provided a thoughtful insight about uniting the industry on concepts of teaching movement. "There is an emerging need for the industry to focus on what unites us instead of on what divides us," he said, "meaning, there has been too much focus on the 'right' way to exercise. It doesn't help when you have some people marketing their method as 'intelligent exercise,' thereby rendering other forms of exercising 'unintelligent.' Movement is the medium for better living. Fitness is about living and moving better. It's having enough strength, balance, flexibility, endurance, agility and coordination to live your life without having to worry about your body. If those components of fitness can be successfully trained, it matters little exactly how they got trained."

Programming Highlights

Education that infused attendees with new ideas included an array of pre- and postconference offerings, lecture/demonstrations and practical workshops. The following categories were popular and engendered lively participation and ongoing discussion among attendees. However, this is just a small sampling of the rich, stimulating education that was offered.

InTensives. This new breed of session was formatted to help personal trainers link research with bleeding-edge practical know-how in a 4-hour learning period that was half lecture, half practicum. Limited to a small number of participants to enhance

hands-on attention, the InTensives were each taught by a leader in the field and provided attendees with a certificate of completion.

Topics included balance training for older clients; special considerations for clients with special needs (effects of fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue and autoimmune disorders on the muscular system); tri-plane movement patterns of the abdominals and core; program design for clients with osteoporosis; seven steps to creating a professional in-home training business; and a live case study that took attendees step by step through a client's assessment and program design process.

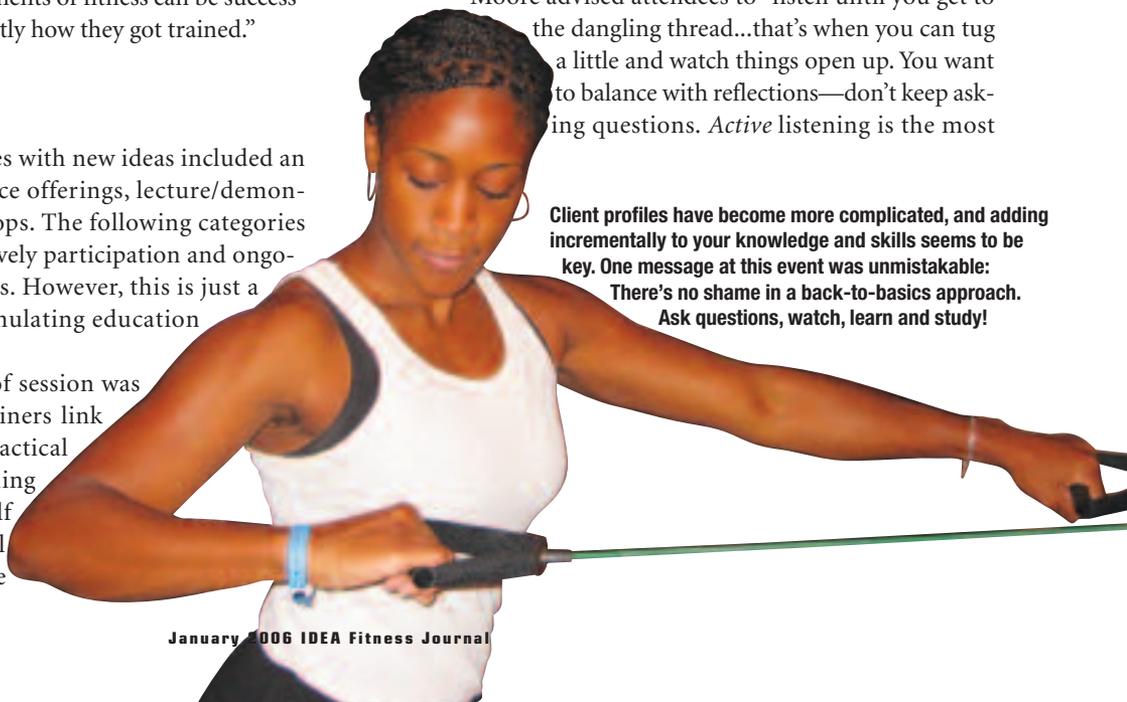
Mind-Body Training. Pilates, yoga and fusion concepts continue to gain footing with PFTs. A well-rounded menu of yoga and Pilates programming, including in-depth pre-conference offerings by STOTT PILATES™ covering mat work and foam rollers, gave attendees a good dose of the possibilities. Trainers are finding that the versatility of mind-body exercise—applicable for core work, balance, flexibility, stress reduction, postrehab, injury prevention and strength building—can be analogous to having a well-appointed wardrobe: There is something in the closet for practically every occasion and if it doesn't feel particularly comfortable at

the moment, there's always another option to "try on" for that day. From elite athletes to older adults—with the right amount of education, there can be a proper fit for almost every client on your roster.

Lifestyle Coaching. Sessions in this track addressed the psychology of client behavior change; discussed methods for leveraging your business by introducing coaching services; and provided a two-part interactive series that introduced coaching and used role playing to underscore powerful questioning and active listening skills. In "Introduction to Coaching: Coaching the Mindset to Initiate and Sustain Change," instructor Margaret

Moore advised attendees to "listen until you get to the dangling thread...that's when you can tug a little and watch things open up. You want to balance with reflections—don't keep asking questions. *Active* listening is the most

Client profiles have become more complicated, and adding incrementally to your knowledge and skills seems to be key. One message at this event was unmistakable: There's no shame in a back-to-basics approach. Ask questions, watch, learn and study!



important coaching skill. You need to be totally focused. Have nothing in your head while the client is talking. If you [are distracted], you will miss the dangling thread at the end. When you're listening, your intuition bubbles up."

Special Populations. Training has grown so specialized that almost everyone who taps you for services these days could be considered a special population. Two of the InTensive track classes—"Special Consideration for Clients With Special Needs" and "Program Design for Osteoporosis"—underscored the need for extra training when working with a niche clientele. Other classes covered strength training for older adults, working with diabetic clients, strength training for children and youth, exercise and menopause, and the biomechanics of motherhood.

Business & Career. In past years, it seemed that attendees opted for classes that appealed to their love of physiology and movement over business courses. Not so this year. Phil Kaplan drew a standing-room-only audience to his "9 Keys to Turning Any Personal Training Business Into a Profit Machine . . . Ethically!" He offered trainer entrepreneurs, program directors and facility managers perspectives on how to launch PFT businesses on a continuum of consistent growth. Bob Esquerre, MA, focused on emotional intelligence, self-awareness and relationship management as keys to selling in "Solutions and Relationships: How to Sell Without Selling." Kay Cross, MEd, delivered a very practical InTensive session on "7 Steps to Developing an In-Home Training Business." Known for her sharp planning and organizational skills, Cross elaborated on much of the information she has covered in her *IDEA Trainer Success* column over the past year.

Melissa Miller, a trainer from the Boar's Head Sports Club in Charlottesville, Virginia, believes ongoing business training is paramount to trainer success and points to customer service as a crucial area of focus. She has a very high level of expectation for the level of customer service her trainers deliver. "I think a big reason clients leave trainers or fall out is because there is little to no customer service. This means treating your client with respect and staying professional during sessions, returning phone calls on time, being on time, smiling, body language, etc."

Training Techniques, Function and Product Knowledge. Trainers can be dazzled by new "toys" that hit the market. Some dive right into trying them on clients without making educated decisions as to why the product might help generate effective results. Several instructors emphasized the importance of understanding function and biomechanics as precursors to loading up on lots of fancy equipment or even simple gadgets.

Another approach is to experiment with programming and equipment on yourself before subjecting a client to it. As instructor Dan McDonough told trainers in his "Get It From the Ground!" plyometrics class, "Learn to teach before you teach. You need to know exactly how this feels before you ask a client to do it. Don't sit on the sidelines; get up there and feel it."

On the Horizon

Sandoz Healy didn't mince words on what she thinks should come next, expressing with passion and optimism that trainers are integral to society's healthy future. "Okay, well, I am a broken record on this one," she began. "Qualified trainers have a profound responsibility to address the disturbing spread of overweight and obesity. With the ever-emerging virtues of exercising

mind as well as body in fitness, leaders of the industry must prevail in efforts to fight this physiological-technological-sociological war against young bodies and minds, making us all so fat. The good news is that the industry is engaged in joining the fight on all of these levels. We are the solution."

Sandy Todd Webster is the editor in chief of IDEA's publications.

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Attitude in Action

In addition to the vibe of New York City and the 2005 IDEA Personal Trainer®—NYC event, there was the whole discussion of "vibration" and attitude that motivational speaker John Alston offered attendees in his keynote remarks. "We all vibrate every day," he told the ballroom full of trainers. "What is vibration but energy? You can send out positive or negative vibrations. It's always your choice."

Among many nuggets of wisdom that drew laughs, amens and applause from the audience, Alston offered these observations about life that can easily be applied to a trainer's typical day.

- "Energy runs the world. What's even more amazing is what happens when you focus your energy. When you focus it, energy can change things. The universe opens up for whatever you declare."
- "Telling people is not the same as teaching. Just because you tell them, it doesn't mean you've taught them. You are a catalyst for learning."
- "Just because you know better doesn't mean you do better. You have to know yourself; you have to catch yourself. Not feeling like doing the right thing is never an excuse for not doing the right thing. Being professional and doing the right thing is a sign of maturity."
- "Some get it; some don't; some will; some won't: Knowledge is the recipe that transforms lives."
- "Get the facts. They don't change anything, they illuminate the situation. Keep your finger on the pulse. Know what is going on. The world is changing."
- "Practice your skills and techniques."
- "Think. Learning is the engine for change. Thinking is the fuel."
- "You are not put here to fail. Every day you have time, resource and opportunity. Be responsible for living your life."