

Exercise Classes



RUN WITH IT

Exercise Classes

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Overview

An exercise class or a 'get fit' session could include an organised, profiled class such as circuits, aerobics, zumba, pilates, boot camp etc or it could be less structured/more informal such as a running club etc.



Goal

There are largely two different objectives to running exercise classes:

i) Demonstrate and communicate to believers and non-believers that keeping healthy and fit is a means of honouring God.

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:8

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; since you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

ii) Outreach and evangelistic purposes – largely through relationship building.

Imagine...

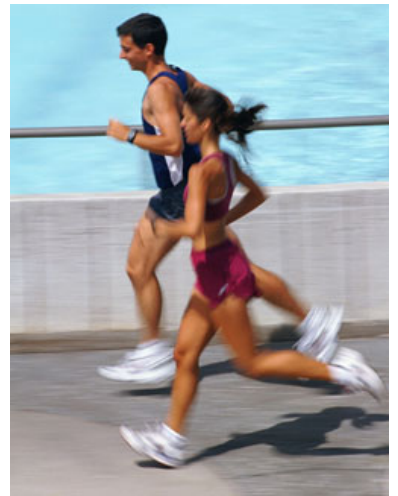
The vision is that through the exercise class/club relationships would be built with non-Christians who are either invited along by a friend or simply hear about it and attend. Your focus should be outreach minded and making the most of every opportunity to share the Gospel.

Target audience

The audience will depend on the type of event you run, but to keep it outreach focused there must always be a balance of non-Christians, as you do not want it to turn into a Christian huddle.

What can it achieve?

Running an exercise class can bridge a gap for people from a hobby/interest i.e. keeping fit to coming to know Christ. The class can also enable you to build a network of non-Christians to develop relationships and to reach out to share the Gospel with them. Inevitably the class broadens your spectrum of people and friends, which you can disciple towards knowing Jesus.



Key principles

1. Get to know your target audience
2. Engage in conversations before and after the class to build relationships
3. Continue to strengthen relationships this could be in the form of coffee/drink afterwards or at another time etc
4. Be demonstrating Christ's love and grace through your actions (witnessing through the way you live)
5. Make the most of any opportunity to speak about your faith and share the Gospel

Ideal number

Depending on the type of class and venue will dictate your ideal number e.g. a Pilates class may have 10-15 people whereas a running club may not have a limit etc. Your budget/outgoings for a venue or instructor will also have an impact.

Venue

Exercise classes typically take place in an indoor space and the type of class will dictate the type of facility required e.g. a dance studio may be best for a Pilates class whereas a sports hall is better for a circuits session etc. Often many classes will be done in more public areas which are more accessible such as village halls, schools, community centres or church halls as leisure centres/gyms are more restricting and may only allow members etc. However the venue is an important factor to give the exercise class a 'professional feel', therefore it should be carefully researched into. The venue and facilities are less important for a boot camp or running club, which are usually done outside and usually require no equipment.

Stories

Out of one Community Sport Team an individual started a regular Pilates class in a village hall close to a few local private schools to reach out to the mums after school drop off. The classes have drawn many local mums and have enabled relationships to be made with them. The individual was intentional about starting the classes with a clear vision of sharing the Gospel through



building relationships and through conversations. This began to happen after a few weeks and 'social' times for coffee increased in regularity enabling further conversations. The individuals kept coming regularly and began bringing friends increasing the network of non-Christian mums to Pilates. There was a good balance of Christians and non-Christians with a few of the Christian mum's already attending a women's bible study in which the vision is to disciple the other mums who attend and to eventually bridge them to the bible study group.

Supporting resources

Workers required: Qualified instructor is required for most exercise classes, however this is not necessary for a running club or boot camp.

Equipment: The equipment will vary for each type of class. For Zumba, and boot camps the only equipment you may need is a sound system or speakers for music. A running club does not necessarily require any equipment however you could provide water or if it takes place in an evening and it is dark luminous vests maybe necessary. For classes such as Pilates, circuits or aerobics more equipment maybe needed. If classes are run in a school or leisure centre equipment is often available. Otherwise equipment will need to be provided by the instructor or people asked to bring their own (e.g. mats for Pilates etc).

Ministry resources: Sports ministry tracts, Gospel booklets, can be given out or left on a table display etc.

Proclamation

When sharing the Gospel, the bible is quite clear that we should do it in the most relevant and appropriate way to the target audience. Additionally the type of exercise class may also have an influence. However since exercise classes or a running club do not usually have a 'natural' break or appropriate times to share the gospel, often the best form of proclamation is

'relational mingling' (contact us for more information.) Proclaiming the gospel in this method is much like that Paul says in Colossians 4:2-6

" Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned





with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

This passage indicates we are to pray for opportunities to share the Gospel with individuals who come to your class, to be living in a way that honours God and reflects his love and grace and to make the most of any opportunities that arise in conversations to share the Gospel.

In 1 Peter 3:15 it says you should:

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”


An accompaniment to this type of ministry is that you should also be able to eventually invite individuals to outreach events that they can come and hear more of the Gospel proclaimed whether another sports ministry event or event at church.

Discipleship

All sports ministry should have a discipleship focus. Since a disciple is a learner of Jesus so any un-believers can also be a disciple. Running exercise classes can be a form of discipleship as it allows your to walk with individuals, witnessing to them through the way you live your life allowing them to learn more about Christ and when opportunities come to talk about your faith to ‘disciple’ them more towards knowing Christ to salvation.

In addition your intention should be to build a relationship deep enough to be able to invite them to other events and to discipleship courses such as Alpha and Christianity Explored to learn more about the Gospel and to bridge them to a local church.

Next steps

1. Pray for vision and wisdom
 2. Establish a prayer team to intercede for the exercise classes
 3. Cast vision to other churches to develop a project team and plan follow-through steps
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4. Build a volunteer team to plan and implement the event (WSM specialises in helping form and equip sports ministry teams to stage events such as this one), visit our community sports team page:

www.worldsportministries.com/helping-you/

5. Decide on type of class and target audience and whether it will be a one off class or regular class.

6. Research venue according to type of class eg if boot camp – need permission from council to use open parks, if running club need to decide on an area with a good route for running or that could be varied to suit different needs. If Pilates, Zumba, aerobics or circuits preferably a dance studio/gym but also a community centre/village hall can work, if circuits then a sports hall is appropriate.



7. Decide on appropriate time depending on target audience – e.g. if mums perhaps an after school-drop off session e.g. 9/10 or an evening class or Saturday morning.

8. Set date/book venue and decide on admission fee (if applicable).

9. Begin appropriate marketing strategies e.g. facebook, flyers, posters, notices in church bulletins or local shops etc. Often the best form of marketing is through word of mouth.

10. Ensure the class is covered by insurance – usually through the instructor.

11. Check required equipment.

12. Pray over the session (get your church and friends to pray).

13. Run first session and build relationships.

14. Evaluate the session and continue to pray and plan for the next session.

15. Continue to develop deeper relationships, growing friendships.

16. Once the class is up and running regularly consider running a 'social' even as simple as coffee or pub afterwards.

Start a Community Sports Team

Beginning a Community Sports Team in your area and receiving training will help support you as you run exercise classes in the community to reach people and share the gospel. Starting a CST will enable you to effectively continue to run exercise/fitness sessions, providing you with support, prayer and broadening your network for people to reach out to.

For more information on establishing a Community Sports Team visit:

www.worldsportministries.com/helping-you/join-or-start-a-cst-2/



www.worldsportministries.com

