

Identifying Elements to Promote Self-efficacy and Retention in a Group Fitness Class  
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**Background:** For females especially, retention in- and levels of physical activity increase when performed with other individuals. With physical inactivity increasing in adolescents and young adults in particular, group fitness classes may provide an ideal setting to engage these individuals in a more physically active lifestyle. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore potential variables, exercise self-efficacy, fitness instructor efficacy and fitness class attendance, which may contribute to- or improve retention in group fitness classes.

**Methods:** Surveys designed to assess exercise self-efficacy, fitness instructor efficacy by proxy and fitness class attendance were administered to undergraduate group fitness participants from the University of Vermont (UVM). A total of 100 participants (96 females, 4 males) completed a survey administered during the first three weeks (pre) and 34 (33 females, 1 male) during the last three weeks (post) of the fall semester in 2012. Data was analyzed with Pearson Chi Square tests, frequency tests, cross tabulations and the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

**Results:** In regards to exercise self-efficacy, no significance was observed, however, 74% of participants stated that they felt more fit at the end of the semester and 88% indicated improved self-esteem, mental clarity and stress relief as benefits of group fitness. Regarding fitness instructor efficacy, 71% of students believed the instructor promoted socialization in classes which has been associated with increased retention. Despite group fitness retention increasing steadily over the past 5 years at UVM, a significant number of students overestimated their planned attendance for the semester ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusions:** While a majority of group fitness participants improved self-esteem, the relationship between instructors and participant retention needs further exploration. These results, however, may be used to improve group fitness retention in the student population as well as improve exercise self-efficacy at this critical stage and create life-long fitness habits.