

TOP DECK, ON DECK TEACHING SKILLS

by Line Marr, CALA, Can Fit Pro & YMCA/YWCA Certified, CALA Trainer & Assessor

A workshop called 'Top Deck', offered at the CALA Conference 2001, turned out to be an amazing experience for everyone. After only a few minutes in the session it became apparent that people were in this workshop for different reasons including:

1. To help fine tune 'on deck' teaching skills and develop clear exercise execution
2. To prevent instructor injury by perfecting the style of movement thus promoting self care. (One of the participants, had fallen on deck while teaching several months ago. This fall resulted in a broken jaw. Purchasing an Aqua Mat is highly recommended to prevent slipping and falling. What other things could she do to protect herself while teaching on deck?)
3. To become reacquainted with the CALA Base moves and learn to demonstrate them with clarity and energy. (There were leaders who had totally forgotten some of the moves.)

Start to improve your on deck teaching skills by asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I remember all the CALA base moves?
- Am I using all the moves, over time, in my classes?
- Do I teach the moves properly?
- Am I in the habit of always using the same moves because I am just not sure about how to execute some of the other moves?

Some simple ideas to try:

- Mirror image is the key. Get in front of a full length mirror and scrutinize yourself as you try each CALA move to music. Pretend you are actually teaching your class and integrate visual cues after you show each move (to yourself). Remember that what you see in the mirror is what you will get from your participants. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Are my knees high enough?
 - Are my arms too high?
 - Is my back long and strong?
 - Are my abdominals activated?
 - Am I stable and well balanced as I demonstrate the move?
 - Is my chin retracted?
 - Are my shoulders relaxed?
 - Do I exude positive energy and vitality?
- Feedback is the key. Work with a partner, who can be just like a mirror, telling you how to improve your movement execution. In the Top Deck session we had the wonderful opportunity to review the moves, then demonstrate them to one another and then receive valuable feedback.

Creating a safe experience for your body:

- Use a chair to show certain moves such as hip flexor pacman, hip flexor chair, hip flexor swivel...
- Drink plenty of water throughout the class to stay hydrated and energized.
- Use the Aqua mat.

Line Marr, CALA presenter, 2001 - putting the delegates through "L.A.P.S." during the Aqua Motion session.

