

Coaching “Magic” — Helping Postpartum Clients Overcome Barriers to Fitness

Postpartum rehab is incredibly important, not only to support the healing process but for the overall health of the new mother.

Research has shown that although most women understand that regular exercise is beneficial in the postpartum period, there are multiple reasons why so many women struggle to achieve the recommended exercise guidelines, including:

- Lack of a support network
- Difficulty adjusting to life as a new mother
- Social isolation
- Mental health struggle
- Prioritizing baby's needs
- Exhaustion
- Work constraints
- Lacking motivation or desire to exercise
- No access to appropriate and affordable exercise options
- Lack of childcare options
- Wanting someone to exercise with
- Income
- Number of children in her care

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Here are some ways you can support postnatal clients during their postpartum rehab and retraining and beyond, to help them overcome some of these barriers:

- Allow clients to bring their babies to the exercise session. Depending on where you live and the environment in which you work, research what type of insurance is required, particularly if your gym does not provide childcare already. If you work at a gym that provides childcare, it is likely that the facility or business has the appropriate insurance and trained employees that can provide child care.
- Consider running a group class. A group atmosphere can be very appealing for some women as they provide opportunities for social interaction, allow them to compare notes with other mothers on the challenges of motherhood, and create some accountability.
- Work with your client to set goals that align with her values and desires. If you want to help motivate her to keep exercising consistently, make sure that the program you design is aligned with her goals.
- Offer appropriate times for classes and training session. You might find that sessions are more easily attended at certain times of the day. For instance, we find that many mothers like to exercise in the morning before getting their baby home for a nap at lunch time. Others prefer to exercise without their baby in the evening, when they and/or their partner are done working, if they have a partner.
- Encourage mothers to fit short bouts of exercise into her day. This may mean getting off the bus a few stops earlier or parking the car a little farther from the office, so that she can walk a little bit more. Her employer might have an on-site fitness center that she can access during lunch time.