



HIGH-IMPACT IDEAS FOR LOW-IMPACT TRAINING

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 **NIRSA** +  **IDEA WORLD**
Focus on What Matters: People, Play, Purpose



ABOUT

- **International Presenter and Leading Trailblazer in Fitness for Active Aging.**
- **Specializes in:**
 - Program Design & Implementation
 - Cognitive Brain Movement
 - Class Implementation for Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Clients
 - Low Impact Movement
 - Chronic Fitness Solutions
- Fitness Supervisor in Senior Living Homes
- CEO of FUNctionally EVOLVED

Award-Winning Fitness Professional:

- 2026 IDEA Instructor of The Year Nominee
 - 2025 Coach 360 Fitness Visionary Nominee
 - 2024 IDEA Emerging Trailblazer of the Year
 - 2024 Coach 360 Top 24 Coach of the Year
 - 2020 LA Fit Expo Wow The Crowd Winner
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LETS TALK ABOUT REALITY



Now here's the reality...

If our workouts don't improve THAT...
we are missing the mark.

**What's one movement your
clients struggle with the most in
real life?**

Getting off the floor

- Balance / walking
- Stairs
- Picking things up
- Reaching overhead

LETS TALK ABOUT REALITY



Why do most clients stop exercising?

- Pain
- Boredom
- Too hard
- Fear of injury
- Not seeing results
- Not enjoyable

Which is why low-impact training is powerful

PURPOSE

To help fitness professionals design:

- High-energy, low-impact workouts
- Functional, real-life movement training
- Inclusive programs for ALL populations
- Engaging, retention-driven experiences





WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

By the end, you will be able to:

1. Design low-impact workouts that still feel intense and effective
2. Use movement layering + rhythm to increase engagement
3. Apply dual-task training for brain + body benefits
4. Build workouts using functional movement patterns
5. Coach in a way that increases confidence and adherence



LETS TALK ABOUT REALITY



Raise your hand if you work with:

- **Older adults**
- **Clients with joint pain**
- **Beginners**
- **Post-rehab clients**
- **People intimidated by traditional workouts**



LETS TALK ABOUT REALITY



- Look around the room.
- That is the future of the fitness industry.
- Low-impact training is no longer a niche.
- It is now one of the fastest-growing demands in fitness.

The challenge for instructors is this:

How do we keep it exciting?

Because low-impact should never mean low energy.

WHY LOW IMPACT MATTERS (ALL DEMOGRAPHICS)

- Low Impact Is Not Just for Older Adults
- Low-impact training benefits:
- Athletes (recovery + longevity)
- General population (joint preservation)
- Beginners (confidence building)
- Post-rehab clients (safe progression)
- High performers (movement efficiency)



**WE NEED TO STOP LABELING LOW-IMPACT
AS "JUST FOR SENIORS."**

**LOW IMPACT IS ACTUALLY:
PERFORMANCE TRAINING FOR LONGEVITY**

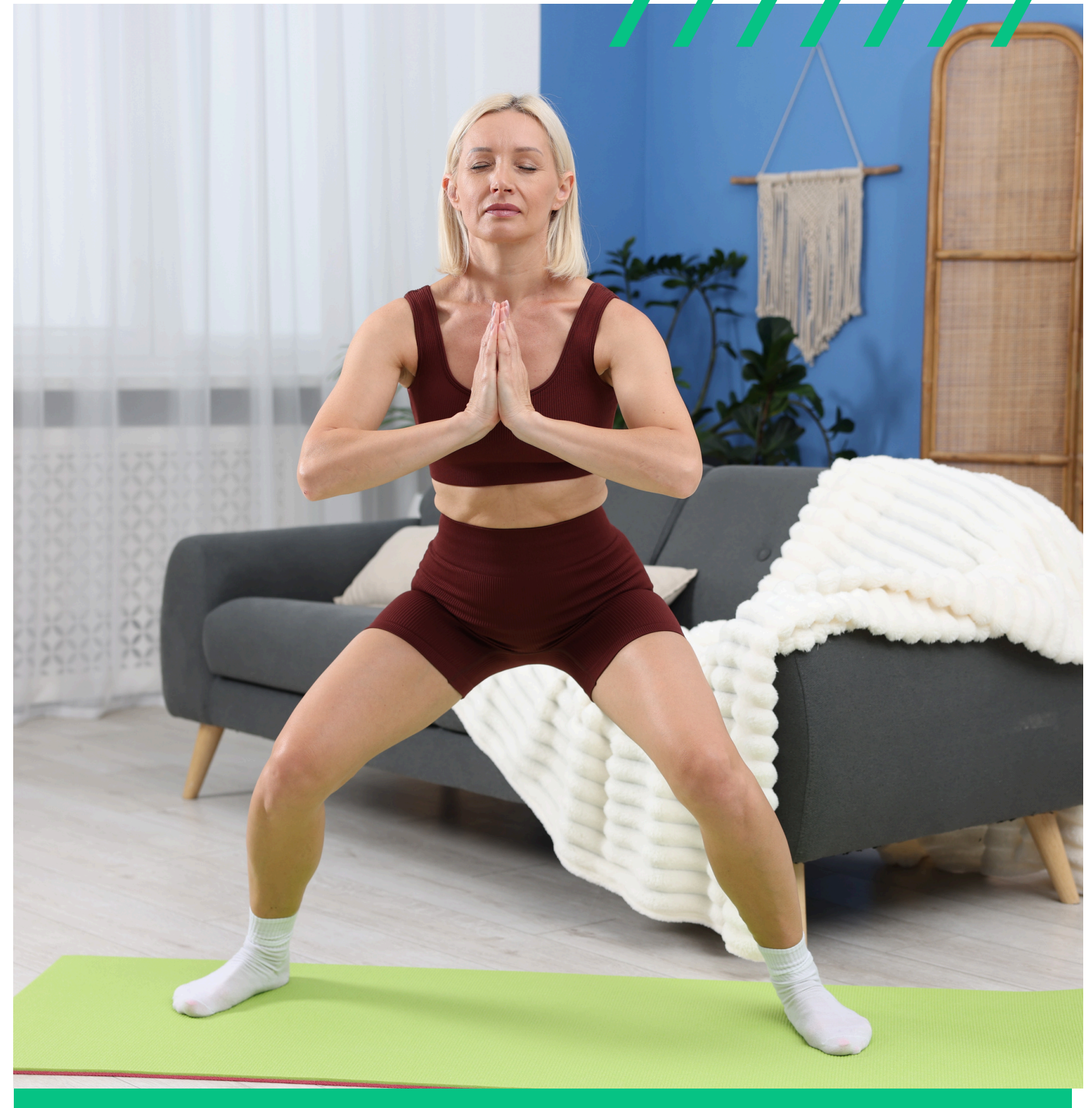
EVEN ELITE ATHLETES ARE NOW

INCORPORATING:

- **MOBILITY FLOWS**
- **CONTROLLED STRENGTH**
- **LOW-IMPACT CONDITIONING**

**BECAUSE THE GOAL IS NO LONGER JUST
PERFORMANCE...**

IT IS SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE.



THE SCIENCE BEHIND LOW IMPACT

Why It Works (Science)

Low-impact training:

- Reduces joint compressive forces
- Improves neuromuscular control
 - Enhances motor learning
- Supports connective tissue health
 - Reduces injury risk

Here's what's happening in the body
When we remove excessive impact:

- Better control
- Better alignment
- Better muscle activation

Which leads to:

- More efficient movement patterns
- Less compensation
- Longer training lifespan

The High-Impact Low-Impact Formula

Effective low-impact training includes:

Mobility
Strength
Cardio
Balance
Cognitive training
Fun



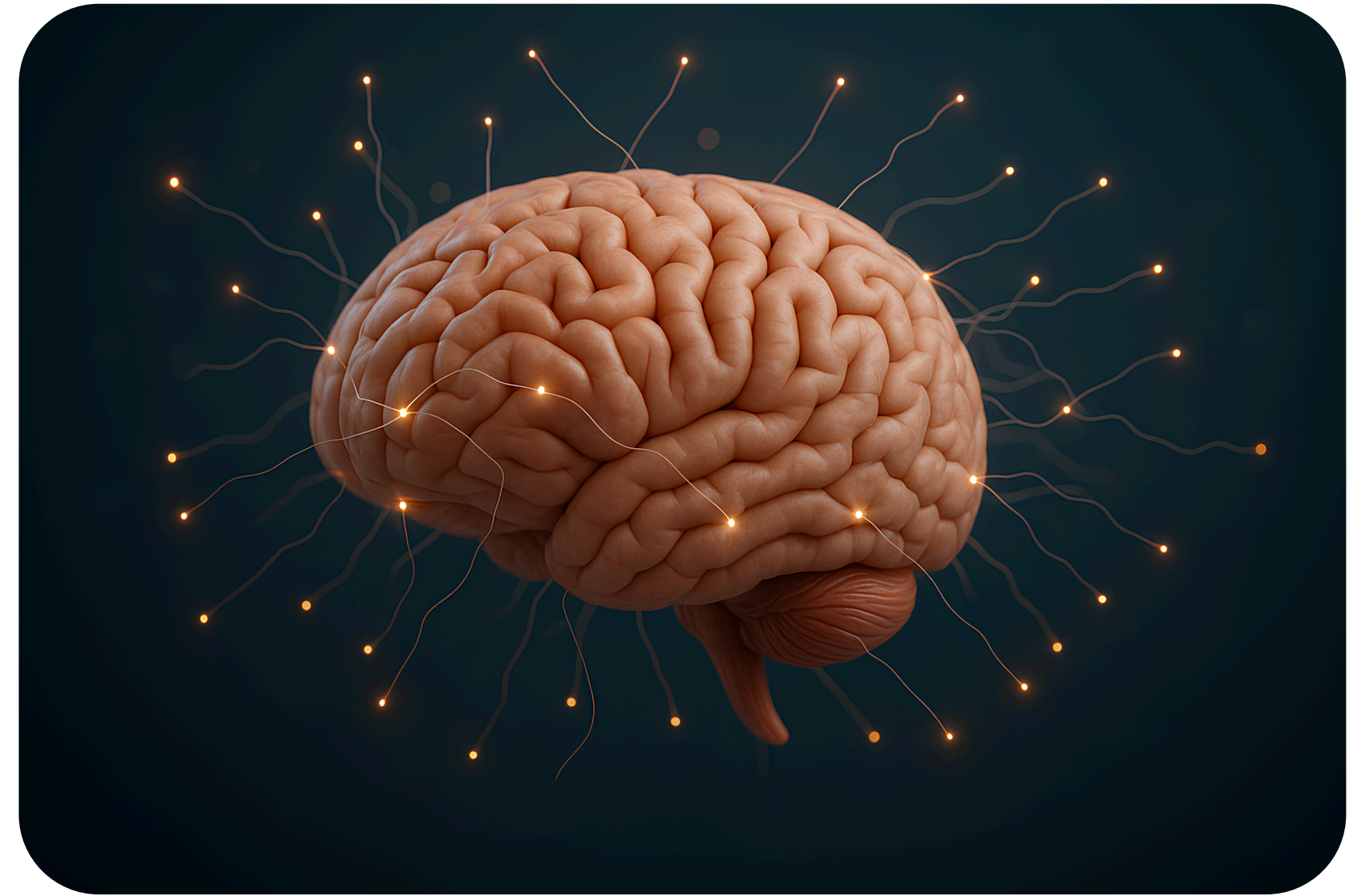
What Makes a Class Memorable?

Participants remember:

- How they felt
- Social interaction
- Success moments
- Fun challenges

MOTOR CONTROL & BRAIN CONNECTION

- Movement = Brain Training
- Low-impact training improves:
 - Proprioception (body awareness)
 - Coordination
 - Reaction time
 - Cognitive function



Movement is not just muscular.

It is neurological.

When we slow things down and add control

We improve:

Brain-to-body communication
That's where real change happens.

ACTIVITY 1 (EARLY MOVEMENT)

Feel the Difference

Do This Together:

- March
- Add arms
- Add speed
- Add direction

Did your heart rate increase without jumping?"

Answer:

YES → intensity ≠ impact



Intensity comes from:

- Range
- Tempo
- Coordination
- Cognitive demand

BUILD VS OVERWHELM

What happens when we give clients too much at once?

- Confusion
- Frustration
- Disengagement
- Loss of confidence
- Fear of doing it wrong
- People stop moving altogether

Build vs Overwhelm

Most clients don't quit because they can't physically perform the movement.

They quit because,
They don't understand what's happening.

When the brain gets overwhelmed,
The body shuts down, and when that happens:

- Movement quality drops
 - Confidence drops
 - Engagement drops



That's not a fitness problem.
That's a coaching problem.

THE LAYERING SYSTEM

The 6-Level Layering Model

Base Movement (simple + safe)

Add Arms (increase coordination + HR)

Add Direction (spatial awareness)

Add Rhythm (timing + flow)

Add Cognition (brain engagement)

Add Load or Balance (strength/stability challenge)

ACTIVITY 2 – BUILD A MOVE

Round 1 – Base

Step touch

Round 2 – Add Arms

Step touch + overhead reach

Round 3 – Add Direction

Step touch forward + back

Round 4 – Add Rhythm

Double step touch (1-2, 1-2)

Round 5 – Add Cognition

Name animals while moving

Round 6 – Add Balance

Step Touch + Single Leg Balance

Challenge doesn't come from impact,

It comes from complexity, coordination, and control.

WHY THIS WORKS

When layering happens:

- Brain builds new movement patterns
(motor learning)
- Nervous system adapts
- Coordination improves
- Reaction time improves



This is neuroplasticity in action

High-Impact Low-Impact Lab (6-Layer System)

Create a 3-move combo that feels HIGH ENERGY using LOW-IMPACT movements

Step 1: Pick Your Moves

- 1 Cardio → (step touch, march, grapevine)
- 1 Strength → (squat, lunge, overhead press, hinge, row)
- 1 Balance → (single-leg, toe tap, tandem)

Example 1: Base

- Squat (sit to stand or bodyweight)

Add 3 Layers

Rhythm → slow tempo (3 down, 1 up)

Arms → reach forward or overhead

Cognition → count backwards or name animals

Step 2: Add 3+ Layers

Choose at least 3:

- Arms (reach, push, pull)
- Direction (forward, back, diagonal)
- Rhythm (slow, pulse, double time)
- Cognition (animals, colors, counting)
 - Load (weights, bands)
- Balance (single-leg, narrow stance)

Example 2:

Standing row: **Balance** → staggered stance or single-leg, **Rhythm** → pause and squeeze (2-second hold), **Direction** → diagonal or cross-body pull

Strategy	What It Does	Example Exercise	Why It Feels “High Impact”
Tempo Training	Increases time under tension	Squat 3 down, 1 up	Muscles work longer → more intensity
Pulse Movements	Keeps constant muscle activation	Lunge + small pulses	Burns without joint stress
Multi-Directional Stepping	Challenges coordination + agility	Step forward, side, back combo	Feels dynamic + cardio-driven
Resistance Band Cardio	Adds resistance to movement	Band rows + march	Strength + cardio combined
Isometric Holds	Builds stability + control	Squat hold or wall sit	Muscles stay engaged longer
Combo Movements	Trains multiple patterns at once	Squat + overhead reach	Full-body demand increases HR
Balance + Strength	Challenges stability + strength together	Single-leg squat or row	Core + stabilizers activated
Rhythm-Based Cardio	Uses timing + flow for intensity	Step touch double time	Keeps energy high without jumping
Reactive Drills	Trains quick thinking + response	Call “left/right” step reactions	Brain + body engagement
Partner Mirroring	Adds social + coordination challenge	Follow partner movements	Fun + unpredictable = engaging

DUAL TASKING SCIENCE

Why Dual Tasking Works

Research shows:

Combining cognitive + physical training:

- Improves memory
- Reduces fall risk
- Enhances coordination
- Increases engagement



ACTIVITY – BRAIN + BODY

March in place and call out:

- **Animals**
- **Veggies**
- **Colors**

Exercises:

Red = squat

Blue = Lunge

Green = Modified Jack

Yellow = High Knees

The brain slows movement = MORE control

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING

Train for Life

Every movement should connect to:

- Getting up
- Reaching
- Walking
- Rotating
- Carrying



If your client cannot:

- Get off the floor
- Carry groceries
 - Turn safely

Then strength alone is not enough.

Train Movements, Not Muscles

- Squat = getting up
- Hinge = picking things up
 - Push = opening doors
 - Pull = grabbing
- Rotate = daily movement

Apply it to real Life
Scenarios

Make These Exercises Low Impact

High-Impact Exercise	Low-Impact Version
Burpees	
Jump Squats	
Mountain Climbers	
Push-Ups	
Deadlifts	
Jump Lunges	
High Knees	
Plank Jacks	

High-Impact Exercise	Low-Impact Version	How to Keep It Challenging (High Impact Feel)
Burpees	Step-back burpee (no jump)	Add tempo + reach overhead
Jump Squats	Squat + calf raise	Slow tempo + pulse at bottom
Mountain Climbers	Slow step climbers	Add core control + hold
Push-Ups	Incline push-ups (wall/bench)	Slow tempo + pause at bottom
Deadlifts	Controlled hip hinge	Add tempo + single-leg option
Jump Lunges	Reverse lunge	Add pulse + balance at top
High Knees	March with arms	Add speed + direction changes
Plank Jacks	Step-out plank	Add shoulder taps or hold

THE DANCE EFFECT

Why Dance & Movement patterns Work:

- Improves memory
 - Boosts mood
- Increases adherence
- Builds coordination



MINI Pattern COMBO

- V Step
- Grapevine
- Forward Puch
- Cha Cha/ Cross Body Step

People don't just want exercise

They want an experience.

BALANCE TRAINING

PROGRESSIVE BALANCE

Balance = Confidence

- Reduces falls
- Builds independence
- Improves reaction time

Level 1:

- Two feet

Level 2:

- One foot

Level 3:

- Add arms

Level 4:

- Add head turns

PROGRAM DESIGN: The Smart Flow

- 1. Warm up (mobility + rhythm)**
- 2. Cardio layering**
- 3. Strength (functional)**
- 4. Balance (fresh brain)**
- 5. Recovery**

Phase	Goal	What to Include	Example Exercises	Why It Matters (Science)	Common Mistakes
Warm Up	Prepare body + brain	Mobility + light rhythm	March + arm swings, step touch, torso rotation	Increases blood flow, activates joints, improves movement quality	Skipping warm up, starting too intense, no mobility
Cardio Layering	Build heart rate + coordination	Layered movement patterns	Step touch → arms → direction → rhythm	Brain is fresh → better motor learning + engagement	Giving too much too fast, no progression, confusing cues
Strength (Functional)	Build real-life strength	Squat, hinge, push, pull	Squat + reach, row, reverse lunge	Muscles are warm → safer + more effective loading	Only isolated exercises, no functional patterns, rushing reps
Balance (Fresh Brain)	Improve stability + control	Single-leg, tandem, controlled holds	Single-leg hold, toe taps, tandem stance	Balance is neurological → best trained before fatigue	Placing at end, rushing balance work, no progressions
Recovery	Reset + restore	Stretching + breathing	Hamstring stretch, chest opener, deep breathing	Lowers heart rate, supports recovery, improves flexibility	Skipping cooldown, rushing stretches, no breathing focus

COACHING IMPACT: WORDS SHAPE EXPERIENCE

Our words don't just guide movement,
They shape confidence, effort, and whether someone comes back.

Your coaching language affects:

- Self-efficacy (belief in ability)
- Motivation (intrinsic vs extrinsic)
 - Emotional safety
 - Adherence (do they return?)
- Positive cues → increase dopamine → motivation
 - Negative cues → trigger doubt → withdrawal

COACHING IMPACT: WORDS SHAPE EXPERIENCE

Say This (Empowering Language)

- "Find your level"
- "You're improving"
- "That looked strong"
- "Move at your pace"
- "Choose your challenge"

Instead of This (Limiting Language)

- "This is the easy version"
- "If you can't do this..."
 - "Keep up!"
 - "That's wrong."

Upgrade Your Coaching

- "You're doing it wrong"
 - "Try it this way"
- "Go lower"
 - "Control the movement down"
- "Don't fall"
 - "Stay steady and focus"

COACHING IMPACT: WORDS SHAPE EXPERIENCE

1) Fix the Cue

“This is the easy version”

- “Choose your level”
- “Here’s another option”
- “Find what works for you”

2) Say It Better

“You’re doing it wrong”

- “Try it this way”
- “Adjust your position like this”
- “Let’s tweak that together”

Core Takeaways

Low impact does NOT mean low intensity

Intensity comes from layers, not jumping

The order of your class shapes the results

Your words shape the experience

Make Classes

Fun

Functional

Low impact... and HIGH energy



**THANK
YOU**

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