

Les Mills Lab: Intrinsic satisfaction study



Background

The level of satisfaction people feel in a fitness class is a key factor in determining whether or not they return, so understanding how to influence these satisfaction levels is beneficial in getting new exercisers hooked on fitness. Past research has highlighted three variables that are key to improving satisfaction during exercise. These are intensity, social connection and competence.

Method

To see how these three variables affect class satisfaction in LES MILLS™ programs, 25 non-active, but otherwise healthy, adults aged between 25 – 40 years completed a 30-week intervention.

The participants completed a 6-week familiarization protocol followed by two, 12-week blocks of 6-7 LES MILLS classes per week. After each class they completed surveys that included questions related to their levels of satisfaction with the class, what they thought of the instructor, the levels of intensity, their connection to the group and instructor, and their levels of competence. Collecting and analyzing data on these elements enabled an understanding of the impact that each of these has on satisfaction.

Results

Participants reported the greatest levels of satisfaction when:

- They felt more involved with the group task
- They felt more competent
- They felt they were encouraged by the instructor
- The class was of an adequate intensity

Feeling connected to the group and the instructor was very important in terms of the participants' level of satisfaction in the class and this was particularly evident during the first 12-week block. This connection allowed participants to cope with the discomfort of exercise and increase their enjoyment of the class. In addition, beginners were more satisfied when there was technical and clear instruction, enabling them to execute the moves well. Once they had developed the skills required to complete the moves, they were able to focus more on enjoying the class.

Conclusion

The study highlighted the importance of creating an optimal class environment to promote exercise adherence. New participants require a more structured and planned approach than regular exercisers and they also need to be introduced to exercise gradually and given options within classes. Clear instructions allow new exercisers to become comfortable with the moves and improve their skill level in the early stages.

Instructors are key to creating social connection; a great instructor enables new people to feel connected both to them and the class as a whole.

A link to the full study in *Frontiers in Psychology* is available [here](#).