





THE BLOOM PROGRAM



Bloom Fitness is an organization of heart-led volunteers guiding the intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) community in life-long fitness. In addition to the benefits of fitness, our classes offer athletes connection and a sense of pride, belonging and love. Fundamental to our program is the belief that everyone at **Bloom** is an athlete, regardless of economics or ability.

Bloom Purpose

With partnership, heart, and by encouraging commitment, we build life-changing communities around fitness for the IDD population.

Bloom Mission

Lead all people with IDD to a lifetime of fitness.

Bloom Vision

Enable everyone with IDD to realize the athlete within.

Bloom Tagline

Lead with Heart. Fitness Follows.

Bloom Trueline

Ongoing, community-driven fitness for the IDD population.

Bloom Values

We guide all athletes with love, instilling pride, belonging and commitment to fitness.

GENERAL BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

The fact that you are reading this guide is a good indicator that you are already aware of the numerous benefits of exercise. But, it IS extremely important, so let's briefly review this topic.

Top 5 general benefits of regular exercise:

- 1) weight loss or maintenance of healthy weight
- 2) improvement of overall health & reduction of diseases
- 3) better sleep and boosts of energy level
- 4) reduction of stress/anxiety
- 5) overall better feeling



Most significant benefits of regular physical activity for adults with IDD:

Improved ability to carry out activities of daily living and increased independence

Overall enhanced sense of well-being, greater sense of joy

Improvement in sleep patterns and energy levels

Social interactions, less isolation, sense of belonging

Increased motivation

Decrease in frustration levels, reduction in anxiety & stress, mood-stabilizer

Healthier body image & more confidence

Improvements in self-: -efficacy, -esteem, -determination

Reduction in chronic diseases, fewer problems associated with premature ageing

Healthier weight, decrease in body fat, increase in lean body mass

Fitness-related improvements:
strength, balance, stability, flexibility, mobility, endurance, range of motion

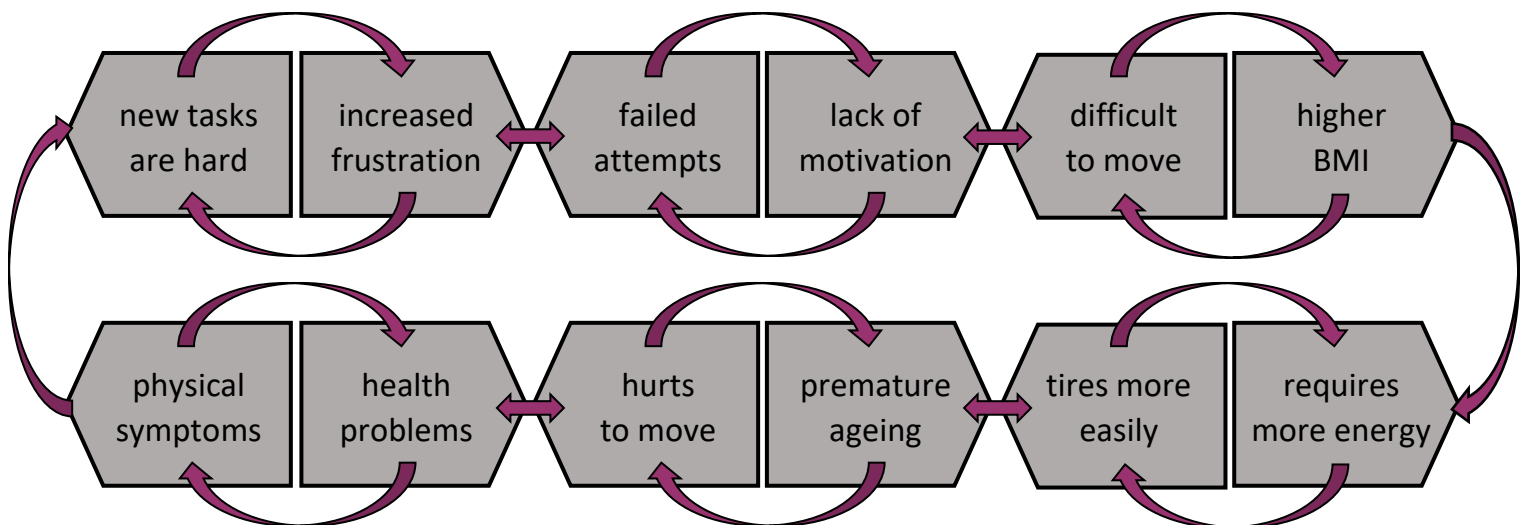
BENEFITS OF EXERCISE: IDD

For those adults with IDD, the benefits are even greater and more life-changing. Let's face it: many of us are exercising simply because we want to balance our life choices, hopefully cancelling out some of the negative effects of our indulgences: social gatherings revolving around delicious unhealthy foods, happy hours to de-stress, emotional eating, another birthday celebration at work, etc.

Even if adults with IDD consistently make healthy choices, they **MUST** move their bodies more. Why? This special population faces **inherent issues make the need for physical activity critical**; however, they also make exercising much harder, thus creating vicious cycles that must be broken.

*"Individuals with ID will engage in, and adhere to, meaningful physical activity **if given the opportunity to do so.**"*
(24)

Must break these cycles:



WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Regarding the specifics of the exercise program

“The exercise task initiated needs to be **simplistic in nature but at the same time sufficient** in terms of the imposed demand placed on the body... program that offers **diversity and interest** while at the same time **avoiding tasks that are either perceived as being complicated** or that are directly associated with being classed as exercise.” (3)

“**Exercises should be adaptable and modified** to accommodate an individual’s moods, behaviors, and levels of engagement on a session-to-session basis” (9)

“**muscle strength and balance should also be trained** [in addition to strength] to increase or maintain their daily living activities and prevent or delay functional decline, risks of falls and injuries” (22)

Regarding the importance & effects of the exercise program

“by increasing physical activity in individuals with developmental disabilities, **secondary health conditions can be lowered**, thereby reducing overall health care costs and **improving quality of life**” (9)

"The consensus is that exercise is of clear benefit to the Down's Syndrome individual both in terms of cardiovascular and neuromuscular responses. In a wider sense, **basic function and vocational performance is positively affected by exercise; improvements in adaptive skills** will make people with Down's Syndrome **more independent** in leisure and work opportunities" (3)

Reviewed 11 articles/research studies: **improvements in fitness** (balance, strength, aerobic capacity), lowered BMI, fewer maladaptive behaviors, reduced functional decline expected with aging, improved life satisfaction (9)

moderate to large effect sizes of exercise interventions on measures of **cardiorespiratory fitness** in adults with ID (20)

“Physical activity positive affects health-related physical fitness parameters, like **balance, muscle strength, and quality of life** in individuals with ID” (22)

combined physical activity program improved physical fitness and reduced BMI; improvements in aerobic capacity and workload indicate that participants should be **able to work and carry out day to day activities more efficiently** (22)

re: 12 week exercise program for DS: “participants experienced improved psychosocial outcomes including exercise **self-efficacy, life satisfaction, expected outcomes, and reported fewer cognitive-emotional barriers**” (24)

With numerous life-changing benefits, why don't more adults with IDD exercise?!?

- It is very challenging to create an appropriate, beneficial, effective, and ongoing wellness program for the IDD population.
- The multiple vicious cycles are extremely difficult to break, especially without additional resources.
- There are numerous physical limitations, chronic conditions, psychological and cognitive factors, and other barriers to overcome.
- A safe, supportive environment must be created where adults with IDD feel a sense of belonging.
- Workouts need to be engaging and exercises must be purposefully selected and carefully taught.



Top 5 Tips to Increase Physical Activity

(National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability)

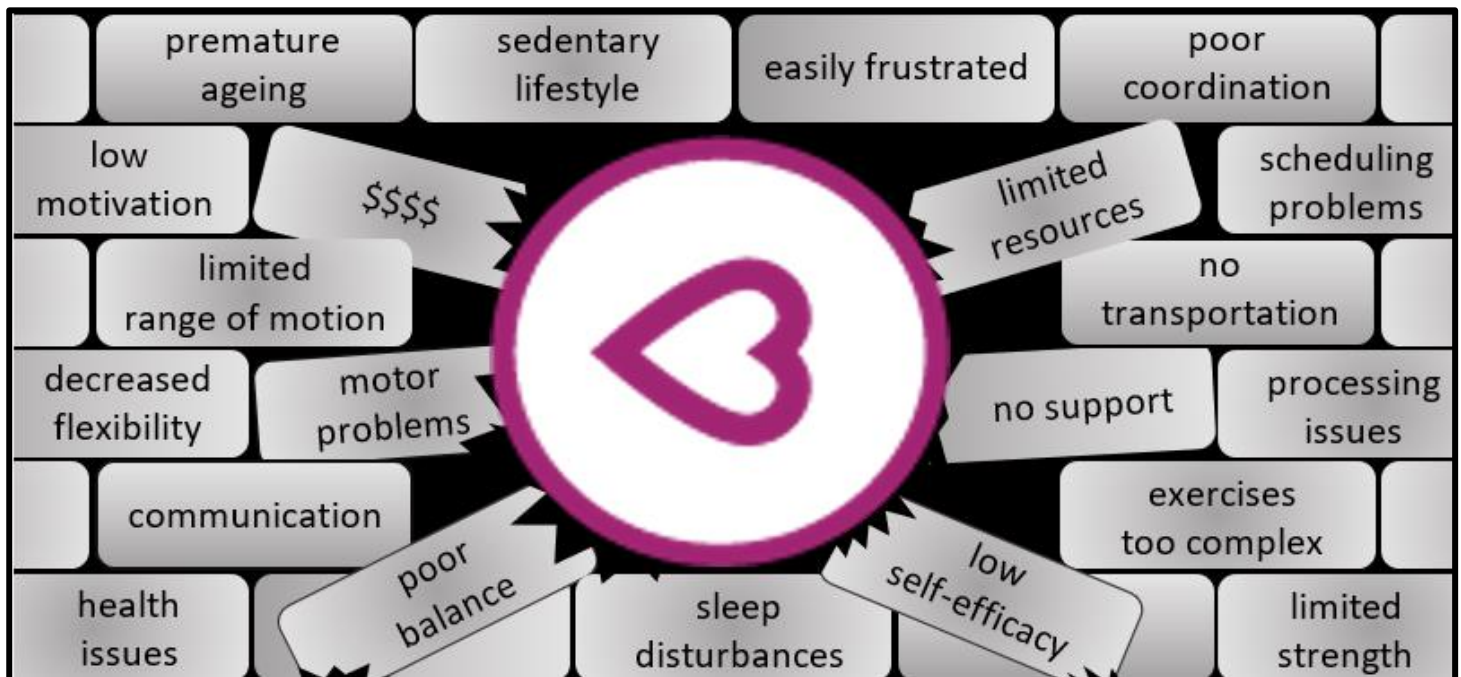
NCHPAD's Tips	Bloom's Approach
Overcome the barriers	Easily accessible program with inclusive exercises
Obtain the necessary resources	Support, multiple class formats, equipment
Increase accountability	Creating a sense of belonging & a safe, positive environment
Create a reward system	Tracking classes with board/app; celebrations; awards/Bloom swag for completing classes
Choose your activities wisely	Functional activities, simple exercises

BARRIERS TO EXERCISE

We already know that adults with IDD are caught in vicious cycles that make exercise anything but easy. But there aren't just cycles to be broken, there are entire walls of barriers that must be knocked down. Not only can adults with IDD have countless inherent medical issues, they often also face both physiological and cognitive/psychological restrictions which limit their access to exercise programs.

And, even if all these barriers can be overcome, the vast majority of exercise programs are not appropriate or accessible for these athletes with IDD, which will only set them up for failure, thus continuing the vicious, unhealthy cycles.

Hence, the critical need for **Bloom**, a program that can help break through the barriers and end the vicious cycles.



"Specific characteristics of this population, such as limitation in the understanding of activities, lack of motivation, interest, and effort, and tendency to obesity, and limitation in the area of adaptive skills, among others, should be considered for the ideal planning of the physical exercise program."

(#?)



OBTAIN THE NECESSARY RESOURCES

③ SUPPORT SYSTEM ③

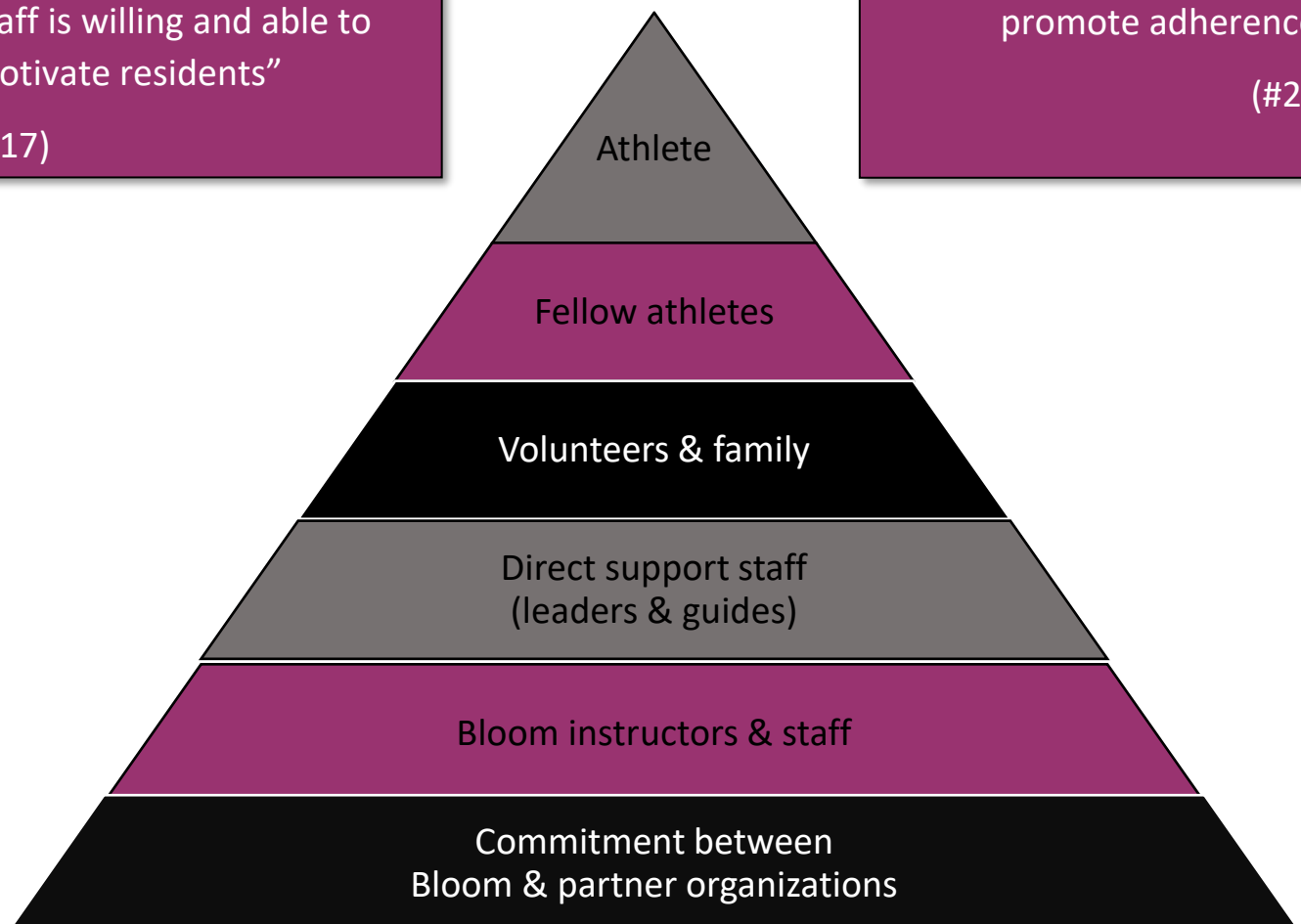
The overall success of our wellness program is based on the strong commitment to continuous improvement between **Bloom** and all its partner organizations. This partnership is built on regular engagement and communication with set roles and responsibilities. **Bloom's** Program Manager and Coordinator help ensure that everything runs smoothly and consistently. Trained and experienced **Bloom** instructors work with partner support staff (leaders & guides) to guarantee that athletes have the necessary support (with proper training and tools) for a safe & fun workout. Additionally, athletes have the support of volunteers, family, and fellow athletes.

“Increasing physical activity in various settings where persons with developmental disabilities reside will have a higher rate of success if staff is willing and able to motivate residents”

(#17)

“Adults with intellectual disabilities will be active ... but the direct involvement of others is needed to facilitate participation and promote adherence”

(#24)



OBTAIN THE NECESSARY RESOURCES

③ CLASS FORMATS ③

The key to the success of **Bloom**'s classes is consistency with a little bit of variety. Our athletes know what to expect with our class formats: approximately 30 minutes long with warm-up, work-out, & cool-down phases; pre- and post-class rituals; familiar, standard exercises that are interwoven into all class formats. Despite having standard formats, there is still great variety with **Bloom**'s classes, including dance, Pilates, yoga, cycle, strength, & chair fitness. Variety ensures that athletes never get bored while receiving full benefits of an exercise program, improving: strength, balance, flexibility, mobility, & endurance.



Bloom Dance keeps athletes smiling and moving—taking the “work” out of a workout. Bloom dance combines scalable low- and high-intensity dance moves with flexibility, balance, strength, and other cardio exercises into a fun and engaging workout set to today's popular music.

Bloom Pilates consists of low-impact flexibility and muscular strength movements emphasizing proper posture, core strength, and balance. Pilates requires no additional equipment (although it can sometimes be added) and is easily scalable to each athlete's needs. Movements have been strategically selected to enhance the mind and body, thus improving overall well-being.

Bloom Yoga involves the formation of body postures, breath control, and meditation. Athletes follow a certified instructor through adaptable movements that encourage cross-body movement, balance, strength, and flexibility. Simple meditation adds a focus on mental health and overall relaxation to the mix.

Bloom Strength combines light dumbbell resistance training with bodyweight strength training, and exercises can be performed either seated or standing. Athletes complete intentionally designed movements focused on proper form and body alignment, increasing overall strength, mobility, and coordination while improving muscular and bone strength.

Bloom Chair Fitness combines the best elements of **Bloom** yoga, dance, Pilates and strength to facilitate movement while seated. The class is designed so that anyone can participate and is not limited to athletes with a mobility disability.

Bloom Cycle provides athletes access to top-quality equipment specifically chosen for ease of use and quality of experience. Athletes receive extensive training on the mechanics of operating spin bikes safely and efficiently before attending any classes. (**Bloom** cycle is the only class that is in-person only.)



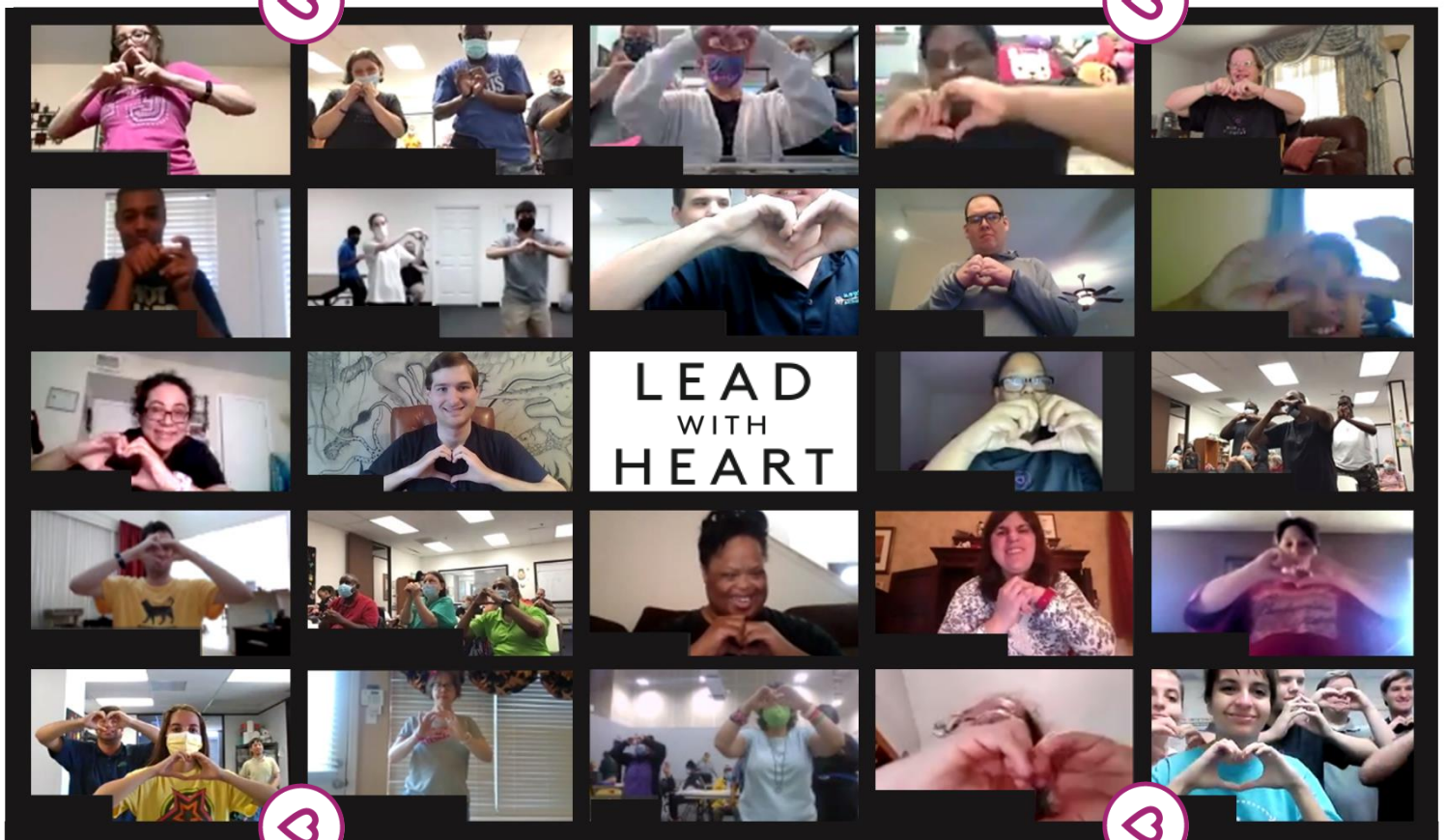
ACCESSIBLE CLASSES



The **Bloom** program eliminates the accessibility barriers by making it easy for adults with IDD to attend fitness classes. **Bloom** instructors regularly teach at partner locations, and **any** of our athletes can access **any** of our classes from **anywhere** (with a device and internet service). Bloom is committed to ensuring that scheduled classes always happen, and the new Bloom app makes it even easier to access the **Bloom** Live! and on-demand classes.

READILY ACCESSIBLE CLASSES		
In-Person	Bloom Live!	On-Demand
Regularly scheduled at partner locations	3 scheduled classes/week (T, W, Th @ 10 am CST)	Available ANY time
Variety of class formats	Regular rotation of formats (chair fitness every Wed)	Multiple videos offered of each class format
Led by Bloom instructors	Led by Bloom instructors and trained volunteers	Library of professional videos is continually expanding

LOVE ON BLOOM LIVE!



OBTAIN THE NECESSARY RESOURCES



EQUIPMENT



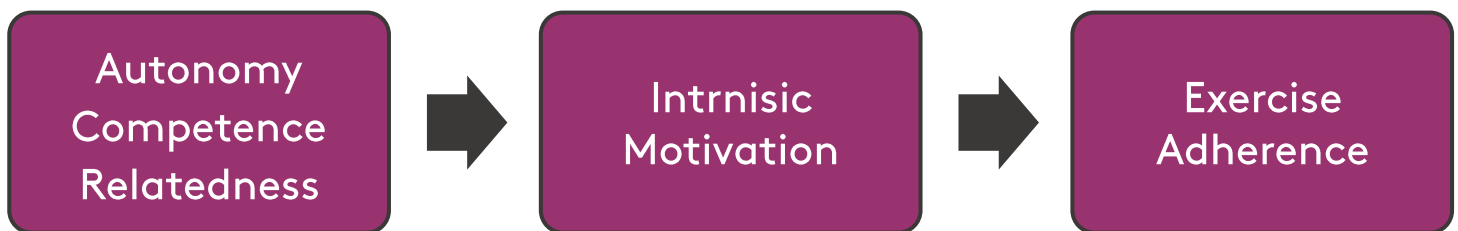
Most **Bloom** classes do not require any equipment, other than the athlete's own body! Any necessary exercise equipment (Pilates balls, yoga mats, hand weights, bikes) is carefully selected for the IDD population and properly stored in **Bloom** rooms at partner locations. Required media equipment (tablets, monitors/projectors, speakers, headsets) is also provided as part of the **Bloom** program and set-up at partner locations.



INCREASE ATHLETE ACCOUNTABILITY

Inherent, personal accountability is rare in this population (think of all the barriers & limitations), so accountability often needs to be externally driven. Simply providing easily accessible & appropriate classes is not enough! In order for athletes with IDD to be successful in a physical exercise program, the environment must be encouraging, motivating, & positive. Additionally, the support system is not just needed to ensure athlete safety and success, but also to help create a sense of belonging and fulfill the need for feelings of affiliation and community.

Bloom's exercise program aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which states that there are 3 vital needs that impact involvement in and adherence to an exercise program: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. "The fulfillment of [these] universal psychological needs and the attainment of intrinsic motivation may lead to the necessary involvement in exercise and PA programs, which, in, turn, may guide individuals with ID across their life span" (#?: effects of exercise program with ID).



3 major factors that limit athlete accountability:

- Affective & sensational influences
 - Lack of internal motivation
 - Low self-efficacy

Due to processing difficulties, fear & anxiety, past failures, & other frustrations, many adults with IDD have a negative internal dialogue. Self-talk is powerful, and these emotional statements greatly impact their desire to participate in classes. Shifts in attitude/emotions can be drastic and sudden, and support staff should be prepared to provide necessary support & encouragement. Creating a positive environment where the athletes can experience future successes will help to turn around the negative self-talk and encourage adherence to the exercise program. Additionally, the physical feelings associated with exercise experiences will greatly impact both attitude and adherence. So, be sure to limit excessive physical discomfort by choosing exercises wisely, encourage athletes to listen to their bodies, and avoid doing too much too soon.

Internal Motivation

For the most part, internal motivation will initially be low for many of our athletes. This is why the supportive, community-driven **Bloom** program is ideal. With encouragement & continued personal successes, athletes will gain the confidence necessary to fuel internal motivation. Over time, internal motivation will continue to increase and athletes will be able to more easily overcome obstacles, adhere to an exercise program, and commit to a lifetime of wellness.

Self-Efficacy

One of the biggest barriers for adults with IDD is their lack of self-efficacy, or belief in their ability to execute a certain behavior. Self-efficacy is an inner-confidence that comes with success & knowledge, and it is one of the key factors involved in the social cognition theory. This theory identifies the relationship between environment, personal factors, and behaviors—changing any one of these variables influences the others. Remember: for our athletes, past experiences often have not been positive, frustration levels are high, and expectations are low. When these adults perceive something new as too challenging (think pretty much *every* exercise), there will be limited motivation to try. As athletes are successful with new exercises and compete more workout classes, self-efficacy will improve, and they will feel more comfortable challenging themselves.

“Self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of physical activity.”
(AFAA)

Simply stated, improving self-efficacy will improve exercise adherence.

Tips to help athletes increase internal motivation & improve self-efficacy:

- **Don't go too big too soon!**
Set athletes up for success by starting small, then build on their accomplishments.
- **Keep encouraging athletes to try their best!**
Also remind them that it is ok to have an “off” day, that energy levels & abilities waver.
- **Show athletes the proof!**
Objective data can include heart rate, increase in reps/time, changes in weight, completion of classes.
- **Model other athletes!**
Bloom is community-driven, so remind athletes to work together and model others—
“if they can do it, so can I!”
- **Keep the athletes engaged & motivated!**
Use reward systems, encouragement & support, positive coaching & feedback.



LEAD WITH HEART



Model what you expect from the athletes: positivity, high energy & determination

Create fun & humor—it really is contagious

If you are clearly having fun, it is highly more likely that the athletes will also have fun!

Set the athletes up for success (start by having a pre-planned workout, but be flexible)

Ensure the athletes feel competent

(by selecting appropriate exercises & providing adequate instruction)

Have adequate support

Create group affiliation by encouraging support and connections:
cheer on one another, high-5's, wave to each other on **Bloom Live**!

Make personal connections with the athletes

Reiterate positive feelings associated with exercise

Be informative (with simple explanations)

Give positive feedback & encouragement

**Encourage two-way communication with the athletes
(check-in with them periodically; ask for feedback, thumbs-up, etc.)**

Engage and observe with every athlete:

if in-person, move around the room and immerse yourself with athletes
on **Bloom Live**! pause your workout, approach camera, and check-in on athletes

Did I already mention to HAVE FUN!!!!!!!!!!!!





COMMUNICATING WITH ATHLETES



Clear and concise instructor communication is a critical aspect of leading a safe and effective class. Remember that communication comes in many forms: words, tone, facial expressions, gross motor movements, and even music selection. Ensure that all of these forms of communication are helping create an environment of love and belonging.

Continually connect with the athletes to keep them engaged & motivated.

Periodically, individually address each athlete by name.

Communicate not just with your words, but also body language & eye contact.

Make sure all communications convey empathy & warmth, while being genuine.

Communicate to all 3 learning styles: kinesthetic (feeling), visual, & auditory.

Provide clear & concise information on specific exercises.

Feedback must be positively worded: speak about what you want the athletes to do, not what you are trying to correct.

Chunk your instructions—just a little at a time; provide detailed instructions in steps

Give the athletes more wait time to process instructions.

Periodically check for understanding by observing and specifically asking

Verbal cues for exercises need to be short & specific.

TYPES OF TRAINING CUES (NASM Personal Training Manual)	
Alignment	Detail the proper alignment of each joint
Informational	Purpose of exercise; how it relates to daily living; muscle(s) targeted
Safety	Informs about potential injury risk & how to minimize risk
Breathing	Reminders to breathe through each movement (exhale on exertion)
Affirmational	Motivate athletes; energizing, upbeat, commanding, encouraging
Imagery	Creatively think about or feel exercise in a new way; “imagine” or “pretend”
Visual	Demonstrating proper form, pointing to parts of body, etc.
Wrong/Right	Moving body into and out of correct alignment
Tactile	Hands-on techniques



TEACHING TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CLASS



Pre-class

- Prepare your exercises (but also be prepared to be flexible!)
- Have your music ready
- Remind yourself to relax and have fun
- Check all equipment to make sure it is working properly
- Eliminate any distractions
- Preview the class, letting athletes know what to expect
- Greet all athletes as they enter the room
- Possible phrases to use
 - Wonderful to see everyone!
 - Thanks for committing to wellness!
 - If you do your best, failure is not possible!
 - Let's do this together!

Workout

- Keep your energy levels up and have fun (remember, it IS contagious!)
- Engage with and encourage athletes throughout the workout
- Move around the room or approach the camera to connect with athletes
- Briefly preview and demonstrate new exercises
- Remind athletes to drink water
- Carefully monitor for signs of distress (mental or physical)
- Possible phrases to use
 - Keep moving! Keep it up! Don't quit! Give it your best!
 - Only ___ more left—you got this! (use countdowns)
 - I see you, (insert athlete name), doing (something specific)

Post-class

- Thank athletes for showing up, doing their best, & prioritizing their health
- Model appropriate congratulations & encourage athletes to do the same
- Remind athletes to keep the energy & love going outside of class
- Preview any upcoming classes
- If needed, help athletes get credit for class (checking-in to app or sticker board)
- Clean the space, turn off all equipment, properly store all items
- Possible phrases to use
 - Thank you for joining me!
 - We did it together!
 - You are amazing!

CREATE A REWARD SYSTEM

Remember that many of our athletes (at least initially) lack the internal motivation to exercise and adhere to a program long-term, so we must help them (again, at least initially) find this motivation externally. Much of this external motivation will come from the support & encouragement integrated into the **Bloom** program; however, some athletes might require more tangible rewards. To satisfy this need and drive future internal motivation, **Bloom** has both the Champions scorecard and digital app to track number of completed classes. This class count is tied into specific goals with regular celebration ceremonies and tangible rewards (Bloom swag), fulfilling this population's common "need for positive extrinsic reinforcement" (#24).

Setting and striving for appropriate goals can help one overcome common barriers (including lack of internal motivation) to exercise. In fact, "helping [athletes] set appropriate goals is one of the most important things you can do to incite change" (NASM personal training handbook). **Bloom's** reward system challenges athletes to work hard and *earn* the tangible rewards, including certificates, medals, water bottles, sweat bands, socks, shirts, shorts, & towels. And these rewards are not simply given haphazardly; instead, athletes' dedication & hard work are recognized as a community during regularly scheduled (approx. every 4 months) celebrations at partner locations.

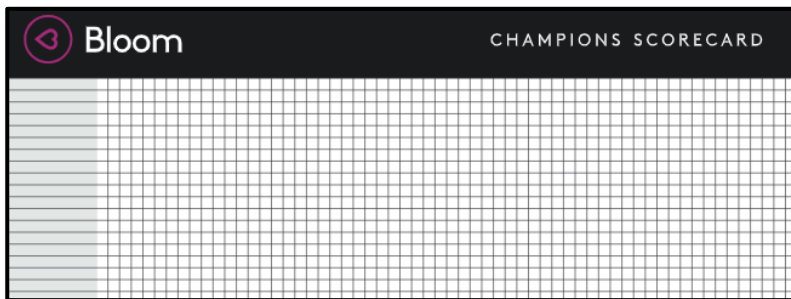
There is tons of research that proves that the best goals are challenging yet attainable and SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely). **Bloom's** tracking system with regular rewards fulfills all these requirements. **Bloom** athletes know exactly what they are working towards, when they will achieve the next reward, and they are willing to put in the work.

Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Timely
S G	M O	A A	R L	T S
What are you trying to achieve?	How will you know when you achieve it?	Is it possible to achieve this goal?	Why is it important to you?	When do you want to achieve it?

ATHLETE SCORECARD & AWARDS BOARD

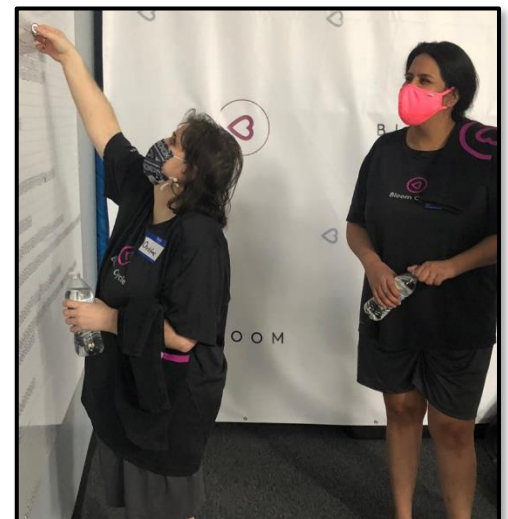
Both the Athlete Awards Board & Champions Scorecard are prominently displayed in specific **Bloom** rooms at each of our partner locations. Athletes have a constant visual reminder & can answer 3 main questions regarding progress on current goals & rewards:

1. Where are you going?
2. When are you going to get there?
3. Where are you at?



Athlete Awards	
Bloom Award	Classes Needed
Water Bottle	1
Rose Heart Shirt	25
Socks	100
Blue Heart Shirt	150
Shorts	200
Gold Heart Shirt	250
Website Wall of Honor	300

As part of the post-workout celebration, **Bloom** athletes are each awarded a sticker to track their progress on the Champions Scorecard (official tracking is done through the **Bloom** app).



③ PARTNER CELEBRATIONS ③

Bloom Partner Celebrations: some might say that this is when the real fun happens!!

Partner celebrations are regularly scheduled (approximately every 4 months) at each of Bloom's partner locations. The Bloom community gathers to celebrate the individual achievements of the athletes, presenting hard-earned rewards. The love, sense of belonging, and individual pride can be felt in the room.



CHOOSE YOUR ACTIVITIES WISELY

The Athletics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA) developed the following 5 questions as a guideline to help fitness instructors select appropriate exercises for their diverse group classes:

1. What is the purpose of the exercise?
2. Are you doing that effectively?
3. Does the exercise create any safety concerns?
4. Can you maintain proper alignment & form for the duration of the exercise?
5. For whom is the exercise appropriate/inappropriate?

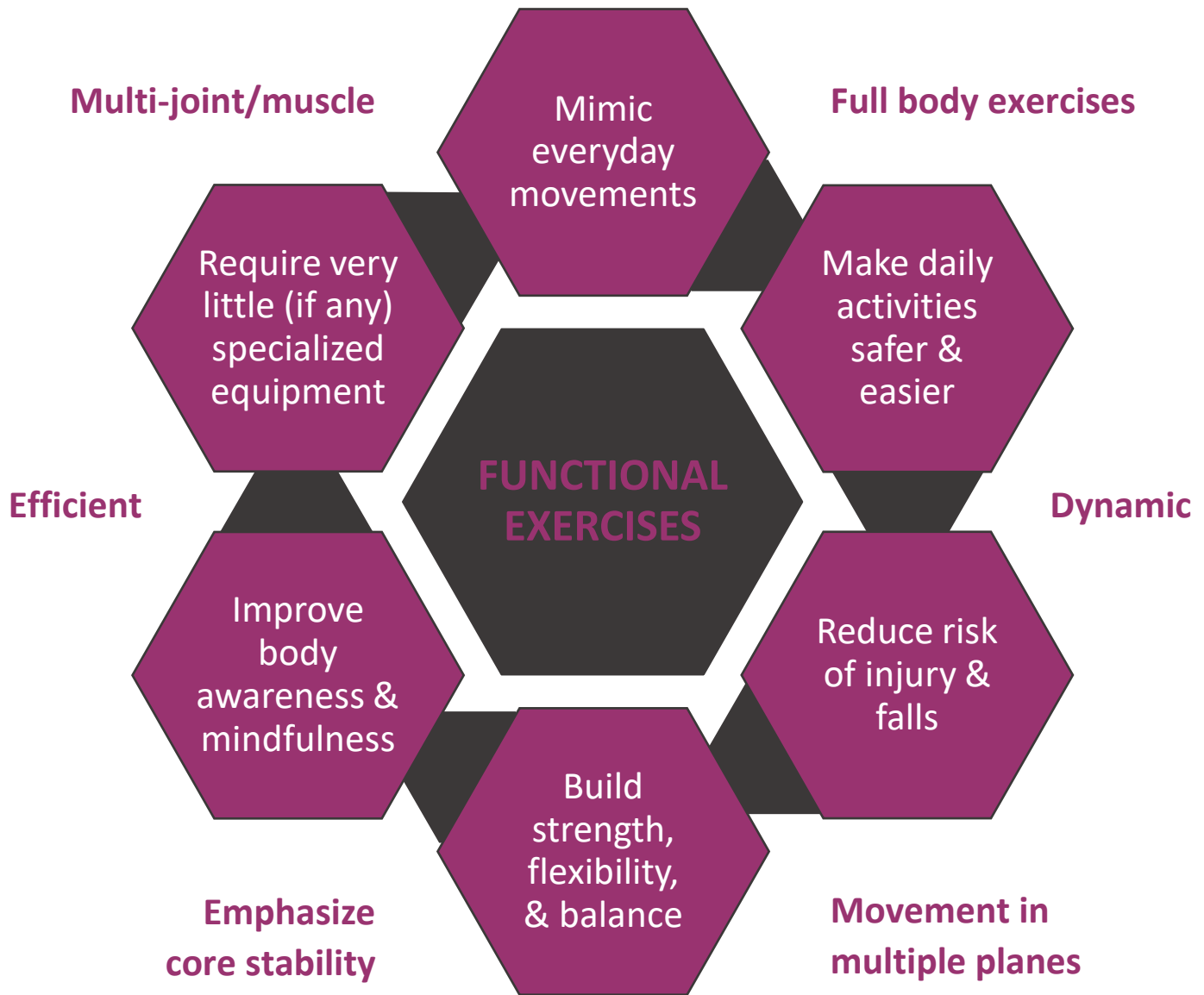
Although these 5 questions were not developed specifically for working with IDD athletes, they do provide a basic framework for selecting appropriate exercises for the **Bloom** program.

For **Bloom**, it is important to select exercise that serve multiple purposes, rather than just building muscle mass. Although increasing strength can be one of the benefits, exercises should also help improve other aspects of fitness, including flexibility, balance, coordination, endurance, and overall mobility. For our athletes, it is *most important* to select exercises that are functional, incorporating normal movement patterns that help make activities of daily living (ADLs) easier. And, since functional exercises are full-body incorporating multiple muscles and joints, they are also extremely effective.

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that many of our athletes have limitations that make exercises more challenging, so safety is a concern with *all* exercises. If unsure, it is always best to start basic, and gradually progress, if needed. **Bloom** instructors must select exercises that can be taught on multiple levels, adding progressions or modifications based on athlete's individual abilities. Providing pointers & feedback in addition to the progressions & modifications will help

Functional Exercises

The exercises we select must be safe & simple yet effective and, ideally, functional. By its most basic definition, exercises are functional when they have the specific purpose of enhancing overall quality of life. Simply put, they provide “the most bang for your buck.”



Functional exercises use 5 primary movement patterns, which mimic activities of daily living:

- 1) Bending/raising (lifting/lowering)
- 2) Single-leg (balance)
- 3) Upper body pushing
- 4) Upper body pulling
- 5) Rotational movements

6 Components of our Fitness Program

At Bloom Fitness, we strive to improve the overall health and wellness of our athletes. Our fitness program is specifically designed to work on: Body Composition, Cardiovascular Endurance, Muscular Endurance, Muscular Strength, Balance, and Coordination.

Bloom Fitness offers dance, strength, indoor cycle, Pilates, yoga, and chair fitness class formats. Regardless of format, every Bloom Fitness class is designed to incorporate exercises that target each of the six fitness components listed above. Although each of these classes incorporate all 6 components of fitness, each individual class format targets some components more than others. This is why participating in each format is encouraged, allowing athletes to improve across all the domains. Some specific exercises carry over across more than one focus; therefore, instructors will commonly use these movements in most class formats.

Additionally, each of these exercises can be modified based on specific goals and/or abilities. Start with the most basic form of the exercise and give options to increase intensity, as needed:

- Increase range of movement
- Hold the pose longer
- Increase the number of repetitions
- Step-up the pace
- Add additional movements (i.e., add arm movements to leg exercises and vice-versa)
- Combine two exercises (e.g., combine flyes with pull-downs)
- Add directional movement (e.g., march forward and back or side to side)

Bloom Fitness Sample Class

Uptown Funk

- Swing Arms in Front
- Fast run
- March Forward
- Swing Arms up high
- March Side to Side (add arms overhead during last chorus)

Timber

- Circle Clap
- Sidestep with butterfly!
- Circle Clap
- Short dip and reach up
- Circle Clap
- Cowboy hop

Yeah

- High Arm Pushes
- Side Squats, with Balance on one foot for 10 seconds each leg
- High Arm Pushes
- Sidestep squats – bonus move, raise one leg at top

Stronger

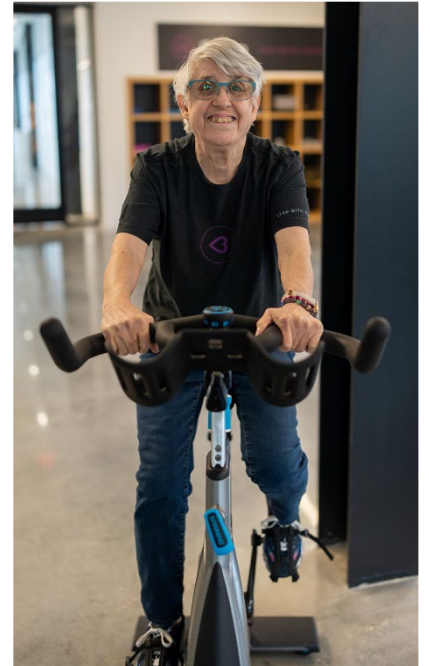
- Squat to Knee Raise
- Front Punches
- Squat to Knee Raise
- Sky Punches

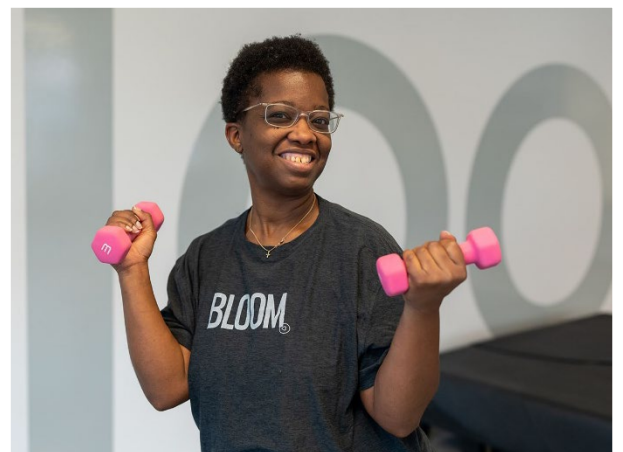
Shake It Off

- Side Arm Lifts
- Flying Arms with fast marching
- Fast Jumps during chorus

YMCA

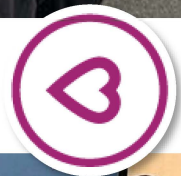
- High Knee Marches
- Short hops during YMCA chorus







BLOOM



LEAD WITH HEART





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