

A Day in the Life

There is much more to being an ACE-certified Personal Trainer than studying for and passing a comprehensive exam and keeping current with continuing education credits (CECs). There is a practical, hands-on aspect that is crucial to long-term success. Many would say that daily interaction with clients is the most important part of the job, but there are also business and administrative aspects that are often overlooked.

ACE spent the day with certified Personal Trainer Lisa Garrity to capture the minute-by-minute action involved in being a personal trainer. Even though Garrity's typical day may vary slightly or completely from what you do, her dedication, organization and skill may inspire or encourage you. Not only is Lisa Garrity an ACE-certified Personal Trainer, she is also an ACE-certified Group Fitness Instructor, Lifestyle and Weight Management Consultant, and education specialist for Fitness Express 2000, a San Diego, California-based personal training company that specializes in bringing training to residential and corporate venues. Fitness Express 2000 caters to 18 sites across San Diego with 35 personal trainers and 100 group fitness instructors. Although Garrity has experience training a wide range of clients, her specialty is perimenopausal women who just want to be healthy.

Tools of the Trade

Although most of the sites she attends have equipment, Garrity likes to bring her own "tools of the trade" to use with her clients. On this particular day, she brings a stability ball, medicine balls for plyometric work, elastic bands and trekking poles.

This is how Garrity breaks down a typical 40- to 50-hour week:

- 15 to 20 hours hands-on personal training
- 15 to 20 hours administrative work (scheduling, program design, invoicing, marketing)
- 5 to 10 hours group fitness instructing (a steady and sure source of income)

A typical work day

5:45 – 6:15 a.m. Garrity travels to a local residential community where she trains at their health club.

6:30 a.m. Garrity stays at the club and works with a client whose current goal is to prepare for ski season. The hour-long session includes interval training, and light strength training using machines and elastic tubing. Special emphasis is placed on balance training with trek poles that simulate ski poles. At the end of the session, Garrity utilizes a stability ball for abdominal exercises and stretching. Garrity then invoices her client and confirms future plans.

7:30 a.m. The next client arrives for her session. This woman has had three neck surgeries and has spinal flexion problems, so Garrity must be careful with her program design. The session includes a 5-minute warmup on a stationary bike, followed by light stretching, balance training with trekking poles and 20 minutes of strength training. As with her previous client, Garrity utilizes the stability ball for abdominal training. She ends the session with 5 minutes of assisted stretching.

8:30 a.m. Garrity checks voice messages and leaves for her next appointment. Depending on traffic, Garrity sometimes has to call and instruct her next client to start warming up.

9:00 a.m. Garrity arrives at another residential community. Her next client is a 60-year-old woman who has had a hip replacement, knee replacement, and was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She is taking Tamoxifen and has clearance from her physician to train with Garrity. When designing a program for this client, Garrity relied on her experience with aquatic exercise. She brings a bag of equipment with her to use with the client, who spends 5 to 15 minutes doing warm-up laps in the pool. Garrity takes this opportunity to eat a light snack while walking up and down the side of the pool observing the client. When the client rests, Garrity gives her suggestions and closely monitors her progress.

9:30 a.m. Garrity fits the client with equipment and cues exercises from the side of the pool. Since the client has been somewhat sedentary for four weeks, Garrity is cautious with her. The client is pleased with her results. "I like training with Lisa because she keeps things interesting, it's not the same workout every single time. She keeps me motivated and I am always wondering what she'll have me doing next. It really makes a big difference," she says. Garrity discusses her client's cancer only as it relates to her ability to exercise, issues an invoice and confirms future plans.

10:00 a.m. Garrity meets with a small group for strength training. The group starts out doing a cardiovascular warmup on their own, and then upper/lower body sequence circuit training, monitored closely by Garrity. This is followed by light plyometric training with a medicine ball, partner-assisted training with elastic tubing, all done outside. The hardest part of doing group training, according to Garrity, is finding a group that is well matched with one another.



11:00 a.m. Garrity meets with her next client for his first session after her initial assessment. The client, who has a history of stroke and prostate cancer and has been cleared for exercise by his physician, has a starting goal of being able to get out of a chair unassisted.

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. En route to next session, a group fitness class at the Tech Center, a corporate venue.

12:00 p.m. Garrity, who is also an ACE-certified Group Fitness Instructor, teaches a basic conditioning class.

1:30 p.m. Client cancels session. Garrity uses time to meet with apprentice to answer program design questions.

2:30 – 4:00 p.m. Garrity works from her home office doing administrative work. She is in charge of Fitness Express 2000's group fitness scheduling and she also heads the apprentice program. Garrity uses this time to work on her own program designs as well as other trainers'. She also double-checks her schedule of invoices and works with the accounting department to make sure she is current.

5:00 p.m. – on Garrity is on call in case there is an emergency or if she has to fill in for one of the trainers or instructors.

