



# Michele A. Aeck

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## Q&A

With Michele

### Tell us about your work as a health and exercise professional.

As an educator, fitness professional and registered dental hygienist, I am surrounded by team members, fitness students and patients. I strive to identify consensus, to find shared vision and direction—including a cohesiveness of purpose—and to develop a sense of commonality and shared values. These are all challenges. However, being a good listener with empathy can establish the trust and bond needed to assist individuals who want to change or modify their lives in order to improve their health and wellness. Some people may want to stop smoking, and some may be seeking individualized workout routines, while others may be getting through injuries. If I can't understand where my teammates and fitness students are coming from, I will have a difficult time meeting their needs and working collaboratively. My efforts in teaching and service are linked.



### You collaborate with many allied health professionals. How do these collaborations help those you serve?

I believe that my role in teaching and mentoring individuals is to facilitate the development of the total person. I work with other professionals to address needs that go beyond my scope of practice. I see myself as a resource for allied health professionals, helping them acquire public health and health promotion/behavioral science skills, such as critical thinking, evaluation, research and motivational interviewing. I work with leaders in the fields of public health, higher education, social work, urban planning, community psychology, health education and related disciplines. The "connections" that individuals make—through referrals for transportation, childcare, cultural issues, literacy, community-based organizations, access to health care and education—are necessary before behavior change can occur.

### How does behavior change further your work?

Behavior change is all about communication. The path to success comes from understanding how to help individuals make long-standing behavior changes that *they* want. Any kind of change is a complicated and rarely linear process. I have a set of tools, including motivational interviewing, that go beyond "telling" people what to do. I am able to develop a better understanding of a student's mindset and how it both hinders and facilitates long-term behavior change.

Learn how you can be an ACE Behavior Change Specialist like Michele: [ACEfitness.org/bc](https://ACEfitness.org/bc)