

# BRENDA MCKINNEY

*'not just another weight loss story'*

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## PASSIONATE, DRIVEN, HUMBLE

### QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

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Though I am new to the training game, I know that I will be a great trainer because...

I know what it takes to make real changes, because I've made my own real changes. Because of that I'm really able to relate to people on a "real person" level. I also know that people are capable of far more than they think they are, which means I know exactly how far outside of their comfort zones I can push them.

### **What would you say is the most important aspect of initial assessment?**

There are 2 things. Number one is information gathering, especially for me because I work with a lot of clients who have had or who are currently in the process of recovering from an injury of some sort. If I don't have the full back story I could do more harm than good. Goal setting would be the second. I also work with people who tend to have long term goals, substantial weight loss would be an example of that. We need to be able to break their goals down in to smaller attainable goals to avoid frustration.

### **What would you say is the hardest aspect to losing weight? And how do you help others address this?**

Fully and truly understanding that you didn't put it on overnight, it's not coming off overnight and there is no one-size fits all solution. This is about making sustainable changes to your life not just about going on a "diet". What worked for one person may not work for another, we are all individual. It's especially hard for me since I myself have lost over 130lbs, so I often get people who just want to do everything I did but that isn't realistic. It's also VERY important for people to realize it's 80% what you eat and drink, so you can workout all you want but if you're not fueling your body properly you won't get the results you are after.

### **What is the major difference between you and the other trainers around you?**

I think that something that differentiates me is that I have been on the other side of the clipboard so to speak. It helps people relate to me on a "real person" level. I believe that some of the best trainers are the ones that have had their own struggles to overcome.

### **What do you think of some of those extreme weight-loss T.V. shows and other related programs?**

Interesting question. I think if people can use what they see on tv as inspiration to make positive changes then that is great. BUT, I also believe that some of those shows can create unrealistic expectations for people who are trying to make changes. People need to understand that those people are in controlled environments, in some cases they are working out over 6 hours a day they are eating very calorie restrictive diets that are monitored by doctors—that's just not realistic for everyday people nor is it sustainable in the long term.

## **Do you believe in bootcamp training?**

Yes and no. "Bootcamp" has become such a marketing buzzword. Want to sell a group fitness class call it a bootcamp! Having said that, I don't believe in the bootcamp style classes that "guarantee results", overcrowd their classes, don't correct or teach proper form, don't explain why you are doing the things you are doing and don't modify moves for different people. If you're going to take a "bootcamp" class then you need to know what you're in for, some of them treat you like you're in the military, can't handle the moves then you get called out in front of everyone. For some people that might be great, but if you're new to fitness and don't have a lot of experience chances are you're going to get frustrated and give up. As for the "results guaranteed" thing, I believe results are not guaranteed—they are earned. If you have the right instructor and the right environment people can actually have great results from these type of classes. They can be very motivational and supportive groups not to mention fun!

## **Most annoying act displayed by trainers around you?**

Seeing trainers in the gym watch someone do an exercise incorrectly and choose to say nothing, because they are not being paid to do so. And also trainers who have no regard for the personal space of others who are working out in the gym. Just because people are not paying you to train them doesn't mean they are not paying a membership to be there, have some respect and don't train your clients in front of things like doorways or equipment that others may be wanting to use.

## **There are certain memories, occasions, or success stories that tend to mold us and ignite the passion for our career what is one that you hold dear?**

This actually happened before I became a trainer, but it was the moment that I knew what my purpose was and where I was headed.

I had lost my first 40 lbs or so (so I was still around 275lbs) I proposed a Biggest Loser Style challenge to the company I work for, they told me it would be fun and maybe we would get about 40 people to join. I stood in a room of over 60 people who were facing similar battles with their weight and I shared my story, my failures and my successes. I wanted to show them that it WAS possible without gimmicks and stupid diets to lose weight and get healthy. I spoke for about 40 minutes, by the time I got back to my desk I had over 10 voice mails and 40 emails from people who had either been in the room with me or who had heard about it. Incidentally, 180 people signed up and over a 12 week period they lost over 800 lbs as a group a couple in that group have also become group fitness instructors.

Now that I am a trainer, I love when clients start off not being able to do something and then one day they realize without even thinking that they can suddenly do it and they get excited and freak out — I love that.

**Do you believe it possible for an individual to achieve ‘strength’ without actually lifting weights?**

Yes, a perfect example of this is if you are working with someone who has been carrying around a lot of extra weight. When you start working with them they usually begin to realize they have a lot of lower body strength. It happened to me, I was like “wow I’ve got really strong legs” well of course, I had been carrying 300+ pounds around everyday for 10 years, every time I sat down it was like a squat!

Having said that, even people who are not overweight can build strength just by using their own body weight. It’s the best piece of equipment you have if you use it correctly!

### **Greatest mistake most trainers make?**

Assuming that there is a one size fits all solution, especially when it comes to people who’s goal is weight loss. Also, judging a book by it’s cover. I’ve seen “skinny” people who can’t walk up a flight of stairs without gasping for air and I’ve seen larger people who can run up stairs with no problems....don’t assume things!

### **Do you work in conjunction with any other professionals for the benefit of your client, is it done enough, do you think more trainers need to do the same?**

Yes, I work with a lot of restorative care type people. I work closely with their Physiotherapists as well as Osteopaths, Kinesiologists or whoever they are seeing. I think it’s important and helpful, together we build them back up in the best way possible. Even if I am working with someone that is not currently seeing anyone, if I see the need I will often suggest they go. I’m not a doctor, but I can tell the difference between “ow this hurts because it’s hard” and “OW this pain is wrong” I think more trainers should do this, it benefits their clients in the long run and in some cases could prevent injury from training...or over-training. Not to mention you have no idea how much I get to learn so much from other professionals!

### **What specific area of training would you consider yourself an expert and list why that is?**

I don’t really consider myself an “expert” in any specific area as I am constantly learning. I am a huge fan of functional training though. I like movements and exercises that relate back to everyday life.

Do you specialize in one-on-one training or group training—do you feel one is better than the other, and how did you settle on this vantage point?

I do both, it really depends on the situation and the people/person being trained. I find in some cases group training can be beneficial if done correctly. It can create a really positive environment where people can lean on, support each other and push each other. Having said that, there are some cases where people are not comfy being trained in a group and in those situations its better to train one-on-one.

## WORDS TO LIVE BY...

*“Results not guaranteed  
— they’re earned! ”*