

DARRIN ROBINSON

'the straight-shooting realist'

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HONEST, BLUNT, PRINCIPLED

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

What strengthening exercises would you recommend for clients with widespread arthritis?

Typically depending on how advanced the arthritis is I would start with body weight or light weight compound movements. Ensuring each movement is done through the full range of motion and accessing pain levels as exercises are being done. I would gradually add weight and eventually isolation movements once the client has started to feel the benefits of the training effect.

What do you recommend to clients wishing to take "certain exercise/fitness classes", but it bothers their lower back?

First I would evaluate their form to ensure that the pain in the lower back isn't caused mainly from poor form. If form is not the issue I would tell the client not to do the classes and to look at another approach to reach the goal they expect to achieve through the exercise class. Often exercise classes have many unsupervised unstable movements that the untrained participant can end up incurring a variety of injuries.

The most important thing people should know about working out?

When working out with weights your intensity level must be high. The last rep performed with each set must be the last rep that the person can do with good form. I always tell clients if you perform 12 reps of shoulder press and I come over and place \$10,000 on your lap and say "do one more rep and the money is yours" and you can do that rep then the set did nothing for you. There is a law of adaptation and you must give your body something to adapt to or you can not change.

Most important advice you would give to another trainer

Remember your client's goal and design your workout around that goal. All too often I see trainers performing athletic (agility/balance) type workouts with someone that has a goal of losing fat and toning muscle, not becoming more athletic. Often clients and the trainer share the same goal, to look and feel better. If the trainer does a body building style workout to achieve their goal why do they train the client differently?

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

I have gone through my own transformation which taught me more about my body than anything I could ever read. This also helps me to relate to clients and their struggles as I have gone through them myself. I live the lifestyle that I preach to clients 24/7 and expect as much from my clients as they expect from me.

What do you think of extreme reality weight-loss shows?

I think there are positive aspects of the show but they are outweighed by the negative ones. The positive side is that it shows people its never too late to start trying to change your body or improve your health. The results on the show are achieved through unrealistic methods that 99% of the population would never be able to par take in. Contestants on average eat less than 1000 calories a day and have to burn 8000 calories in activity each day. This means calories consumed vs. used leaves them far below their basal metabolic rate. The 8 hours of high intensity activity each day is also impossible for people to follow as most have jobs and lives. Another factor is the prize money motivator; most people will not receive \$250,000 for reaching their goal. This is why most people on the show regain a fair amount of weight after the show ends, the activity level drops, the contestant usually has a slow metabolism from the catabolic approach to weight loss and the motivation is no longer there to maintain the results.

Do you believe in bootcamp training?

Again it depends on the client's goal. If the goal is to become faster with more endurance and athletic ability, maybe the bootcamp will help. If the goal is to achieve a specific type of physique, no I do not. Bootcamps are not going to change the shape or composition of someone's body. That requires a combination of resistance training and proper diet.

Most annoying act displayed by trainers around you?

Not being 100% dedicated to the client they are training. That would include not spotting or instructing the client properly.

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?

The largest client I have worked with so far was just under 500lbs. She was in her mid 30s but had been seeing doctors and nutritionists since she was 10. Nothing worked for her in the past as the diets were too extreme or the exercise component was too difficult or demanding.

Her goal when we met was to be able to go for a walk with her friends. It was the most humble goal I had ever had a client mention. Her mobility and range of motion was extremely inhibited by her size. Over the course of a year she lost 230lbs of body fat and totally changed her life. She now has dramatically increased her lifespan and her quality of life has gone 180 degrees. This was a life changing and saving experience for her, I have been contacted by her family members thanking me for showing her how easy it can be to lead a healthy lifestyle. Her story also inspired other morbidly obese people to make a change.

How do you instill motivation when client struggling with commitment?

I am known for being a straight shooter and for not sugar coating things or pulling any punches. Therefore if a client is struggling with commitment I first try to find where the problem is, for example if its having trouble with the frequency of meal times or some inconvenience that I can make easier for the client. If it is a willpower or dedication issue I will remind them about their goals and why they are seeing me. If there are with me due to health concerns I will put the fear of the worst case scenario in their head. I will mention the consequences of their lack of commitment. If they cry they cry, and they have in the past. I will use whatever mental tactics I have to in order to get this individual back on track.

How do you deal with clients that give up after you have tried all and everything?

Honestly, if I have tried everything and I still can't get through to them I do one thing. Let them. I put a lot of time and energy into my clients and I expect the same amount given back. I don't want to waste my valuable time with someone that doesn't respect it. I can't have a client suck the life out of me and be 100% for my next client. I have in the past cut clients loose as their constant cheating on their diet or skipping workouts makes me look bad. I would rather that client spoke to a therapist to get the root of their lack of effort than spend more money with me and continue to waste my time.

What is the biggest challenge facing you as a trainer?

The amount of poor quality trainers out there. They reflect poorly on the entire industry and it can be hard getting the kind of respect I should as a fitness and health professional. I believe that trainers can be the most important professional one can work with to improve their health and body image but the medical community is far more respected than the training community.

Do you believe in supplements, physical enhancers, and do you believe in giving advice where these are concerned?

I do believe in the advances that science has made with certain supplements. I first and foremost tell clients that supplements are for people like me that have achieved all they can naturally and to go any farther need to look at the supplement market. The average person only needs to eat properly and train correctly in order to achieve their goals. When advising clients on supplements I will only recommend supplements I have first hand experience with and I will cover the pros and cons and let the client make an educated choice.

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

Yes to a degree, using exercises and movements with body weight can obviously increase one's strength. Strength by definition can mean many things from absolute strength (how much weight someone can lift) to strength endurance (how long they can lift x amount of weight). I do not feel that someone is going to become impressively strong by doing push ups and body weight pull ups but they can become stronger than the average person. I feel to become truly strong resistance training with actual weights is required.

Most important lesson you've learned during your training career?

There is no such thing as normal, everyone is so different and nutrition and training has to be specific to the individual. Too many trainers hand out cookie cutter diets and programs that may work for some people with ideal genetics but that doesn't work for the average person.

Would you say that there is a difference between training men and women?

I found that the mental aspect is different but physically they are quite similar. Men take to resistance training easier than women, women have more fears about lifting weights than men. There is often the fear of building many muscles, which rarely happens. Men and women have different areas that they are concerned about but I always look at the body as a whole and my training philosophy is the same with both sexes. They both have to train to failure to force the muscle to grow or maintain during caloric restriction etc.

What do you feel about training two people at a time?

I feel unless the two people are at the same fitness level and share the same goal it's not a good idea to train more than one person at a time. After all we are "personal" trainers, you lose the personal component when there is another person that the trainer has to focus on too. Typically the workout has to be a compromise to ensure both clients are getting the most out of it. I prefer one on one for best results.

Greatest mistake most trainers make.

Not taking their profession seriously enough. As a fitness manager for Canada's largest health club chain I was exposed to many trainer horror stories. Many don't respect their client's time by being late for sessions or not showing up at all. Or like mentioned earlier they tend to focus more on what's going on across the gym than what's happening with their client at the time.

How do you stay above and beyond the rest?

I practice what I preach; I maintain a fit body image year round and mentor and inspire clients by doing so. I can honestly say I do not do the amount of research and reading that I used to when I first got involved in the fitness industry. I have had enough real world experience at this stage to know what I need to teach clients in order for them to get the desired results as quickly as possible. But I am always coming up with new ways for clients to have an easier time leading a fitness lifestyle. That could include talking with chefs in restaurants to understand what goes into the dishes on their menus so I can instruct client about certain restaurants and what to order to stay on track and keep moving forward but still leading a normal life.

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?

I have associated myself with a high end health and wellness clinic in Toronto that employs some of the top sports medicine doctors (Tony Galea being one) in the world. Any client with orthopedic issues I send to this clinic for treatment. I also have clients that have achieved extremely low body fat levels but may have an odd deposit of body fat that is resistant to diet or would leave the client emaciated in order to lose that last deposit. In cases like this I am affiliated with a plastic surgeon that performs "mini" lipo for fit people. I would rather the client had this fat removed by the doctor and come back to me then become frustrated and leave my studio. I am also affiliated with high end salons and spas, I don't see trainers as only health professionals but also image professionals. I have sent clients for makeovers once they have changed their body in order to help them change on an even deeper level. They become brand new people inside and out.

I feel that some of the trainers that own or operate studios may have connections like this. Most gym trainers would not. I think it's in the best interest of the trainer to have a group of professionals that they can turn to and send people to and possible have people sent to them through these other professionals.

WORDS TO LIVE BY...

"There is no off season..."