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PASSIONATE, PROFESSIONAL, CREATIVE

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

Being a group-type trainer, how do you ensure that each comes out with a full experience and also avoids injury?

First of all, I start by giving clear direction and excellent demonstration. You have to demonstrate "perfection" to get moderate reflection. Whether I'm teaching Bootcamp or Zumba, I do my utmost to demonstrate the activity at an Above Average level with the

knowledge that most will follow through with a moderation interpretation of what I asked for. In addition, I personally go around the room and offer verbal and physical correction to participants. I'm very hands on and am not afraid to correct people for their own good.

How do you convey to your clients that being involved in dance-type classes like Zumba can improve their day-day & future health- please give details?

As the expression states, "action speaks louder than words". The best thing I tell skeptics is don't knock it until you try it. I often relay testimonials of people that you wouldn't expect in a Zumba class, that have come and seen great benefits. For example, one man who competes as a Professional Boxer started coming to my class. After a few months, he noticed a considerable change in his agility in the ring and improvement in his cardiovascular endurance. Because a lot of the moves we do in Zumba require quick footwork and I teach a very athletic style of class, this benefits anyone in a sport that requires agility (i.e. racquet sports, boxing, etc)

Another lady said for years she struggled to rid herself of unwanted fat in her midsection, after a month of Zumba and all the wiggling and gyrating we do, she literally danced the fat away.

Therefore, I really don't do much conveying, I let others do that for me through their testimonials and by seeing real results. Many have also seen my body change since I began teaching Zumba. Years ago, although I was in good health, I was never comfortable showing my midriff as although I wasn't obese, I wasn't "cut" either. After a few months of teaching Zumba, I discovered I have a 6 pack and it helped to really define and expose my muscular physique.

The most important thing people should know about working out?

Fitness is a lifestyle, not a destination. Too many times I hear people talk about working out as a weight loss tool only and often feel it's only necessary if you are obese. This is a gross misconception. People need to be educated that exercise is a part of vitality, just like breathing or sleeping.

Most important advice you would give to another trainer?

Your perception is your reality. If you view training as a just a part time hobby, then that will become the reality. Clients quickly can see the difference between a dedicated passionate professional and someone who's heart is not in it. I would also advise that we have an important role in the lives of others that we should not take for granted. People come to us as "Healers". If you don't have the knowledge and technique to help someone to your best ability, its best to invest in yourself and acquire the skills or allow others who have the skill set to provide it.

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

I think what people notice instantly about me is my energy. People are naturally drawn to me in a professional and personal environment. I think people sense that I really care about them and I do. Therefore, they trust that I'm looking out for them, not just for a paycheck, but I want to see them fulfill their goals and live a happier and more fulfilling life.

What would you change about the fitness industry?

I would like to see more connection among Fitness Professionals. Currently there isn't anything that really draws us together like in other industries.

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

I think these shows are very entertaining and that is the purpose of TV – its entertainment. I'm concerned that some people may view this as an educational platform and believe they can lose weight in the drastic way that many of these shows portray the contestants as doing.

I remember as a kid, there were shows that would have a disclaimer at the beginning stating "don't try this at home kids". I think there should be a similar disclaimer so people don't actually think they can lose 30 pounds a week safely and effectively. However, I think if you watch these shows from the perspective of a motivational tool, I think many of these shows have demonstrated that anyone can achieve their goals if they stick to their vision.

Do you believe in bootcamp training?

Absolutely! I have facilitated both indoor and outdoor Bootcamp training. In essence, Bootcamp is interval type training that combines all elements of athletic training for the intermediate and elite participant. What I love about Bootcamp classes is that I can incorporate functional training that you wouldn't normally do in a traditional resistance program that relates to daily life functions.

Do you see yourself training in 5 years/ in what capacity?

Yes. I see myself as still be very involved in training others. However, by then I hope to own my own studio and be more involved in both Domestic and International presentations at fitness and health conferences.

Most annoying act displayed by trainers around you?

I try not to focus on negative actions of others, but I'd have to say unqualified persons who pose as Fitness Professionals bother me. There are many people who take a crash fitness course (this is especially prevalent in Group Fitness) and feel they are qualified to stand in front of a group of people and lead and advise them on health and fitness. When people see they don't know what they are doing, it not only makes them look bad, but brings down the industry and the profession.

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?

I was teaching an Indoor Cycling class and noticed one my regulars quite subdued in the back, but nonetheless working hard. At the end of the class, she approached me and told me she had received news that morning that she was diagnosed with cancer. Shocked that she wasn't at home crying and still came to my class, she told me she came because she knew that although I couldn't make the disease go away, coming to my class and being around my energy would help her cope. At that moment, I saw my role very differently. I'm not just someone who's here to train muscles; people see me as a "healer" in many ways. A healer of life's struggles, an inspiration, a reminder that they are not alone and someone cares. From then I began to see that although program design and technique are important in Group Fitness and Personal Training, what is far more important is "the experience". Did I make the time they spent with me the best hour of their day? Did I inspire them or at least give them a more positive outlook? If yes, than I feel I've done my job.

If you can get one client in particular back and train them over, what would you do differently?

I'm usually very in tune with my client's needs and get their feedback early in the training and check regularly throughout the training so I can make immediate changes to their program or to a class format based on their individual needs. So there is little I would change from the past. There are some clients that you can never please and not all trainers are the best match for a particular client.

How do you instill motivation when client struggling with commitment?

I continually use affirmations to keep them motivated. I encourage them to join my mailing list and follow me on Twitter so they can see comments I make to inspire them to stay focused. I also encourage the Buddy system where I ask members to connect with each other and call each other if they are missing from class. Since I see so many people each week, it's hard for me to keep track of everyone, so I get them to share in helping me help them by connecting and motivating each other.

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

I believe in vitamin supplementation as our food lacks much of the nutrients we need. I'm cautious about physical enhancement supplementation as the side effects are numerous. Due to liability, I avoid giving any specific advice in this matter as only licensed Dieticians can prescribe and advise on specific nutritional programming and supplementation.

Do you think that trainers hold too much influence over clients and in what way do you see abuse of this?

No, I think being in the information age people are aware of many health trends and concepts. I think trainers don't have enough influence over clients. Many don't see our role as necessary and try the "monkey see monkey do" technique of training or the "download this or that" technique and wonder why they get injured, don't see results and don't take the time to understand the science of biomechanics and human kinetics.

Do you feel that trainers should hold scholastic certifications or be required to complete 2 courses per year?

Yes. This is already in place. Any reputable facility will request that their Fitness Professional staff hold a certification at a recognized Certification Institution like Can Fit Pro, ACE or AFAA. All these Institutions require you to obtain CECs (Continuing Education Credits) to maintain your certification.

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

Yes. I'm living testimony. I do little loading and do many activities with just the use of my body weight.

There are 2 ways to improve your muscles or make them stronger. You can grow the muscle fibres, which will allow you to manage or lift a larger load and give your muscles an aesthetically larger look. Or you can maintain the size of the muscle fibers and train them to sustain a load. This is often what people call toning. Both techniques can be accomplished without loading (lifting weights), however loading is necessary if you want to grow your muscles beyond what your body weight can accomplish.

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

I've learned to be true to myself and to stand by my own code of ethics. I used to struggle with finding the kind of trainer I wanted to be by thinking that I had to please everyone. Rather, I've learned that although it is important to be a good listener, it's more important to strive for excellence. I've seen clients request things that I know are against every training principle imaginable and I've also seen some trainers give into their whims because they were afraid of losing potential income. However, I'd rather lose a bad client and gain the respect of colleagues and other potential clients who saw me uphold my integrity, than hold onto someone that will probably negatively affect my image in the long run.

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

Physically there is no difference. I'm tired of seeing books on training that place gender biases and make it seem that women are somehow inferior and they are not supposed to weight train or have defined muscles. However, many of those books don't consider, if woman are so fragile, how the heck do they manage to carry a baby for 9 months, somehow survive the birthing process and haul that kid on their backs weighing 15 – 20lbs just weeks after birth?

Yes, it's true that if you take a man and a woman of similar height, bone structure and body mass, men tend to be stronger because they build muscle fiber at a faster rate than woman and they will have more lean tissue than a woman.

Really, the only difference in training men and women is emotional. I design my programs based on the client's goal regardless of their gender. However, I will approach and conduct the session differently based on gender. For obvious reasons, I have to be careful when dealing with someone of the opposite sex especially since I need to be in physical contact with the client. Some woman use the training session as therapy, therefore I have to be in tune with their emotional needs. Men often are not looking for a connection but a more methodical approach.

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

If we're doing a Personal Training session and not a Group Fitness class, it can be a nightmare if each person has different goals. I've done it in the past and prefer not to as I spend too much time setting up and not enough time monitoring and ensuring effectiveness and safety. With group fitness, the more the merrier.

Greatest mistake most trainers make?

Training clients the way THEY train. Trainers need to train a client based on the goals, strengths and limitations of the client.

Do you believe in weight training for children, if so how do you proceed and if not, what do you recommend?

Yes. Anyone who has muscles and bones in their body needs to train. However, with children the program must be designed to suit their body type and individual strengths and limitations. Would I hand a pair of 20lb dumbbells to a 9 year old and have them do deadlifts? No, of course not, but I would engage them in both cardio and resistance type exercises to stimulate and set a pattern of good physical activity that they can carry throughout their life.

How do you stay above and beyond the rest?

By always remembering that the road to excellence is never ending. The minute one feels they know everything there is to know, they begin a downward slide. Everyone can be replaced and there is always someone more talented, more committed, and more knowledgeable than you. There is a verse from the Bible that I always remember in circumstances like this and I hold dear, "he that wants to be the greatest among you must be the least". My cup is never full when it comes to knowledge or experience. I'm always listening and learning and open to share what little I know and willing to experience what the world is kind enough to show me.

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 advise and refer clients to other professionals all the time. I don't know for sure, but I think most other do. I've received many referrals from other health professionals also.

What is the greatest change you have made in your given routines in the past 2 years?

I'd say in my group fitness classes, I have more fun and am not afraid of poking fun at my participants. I'm much more open in the past few years than I was at the earlier part of my career where I was so worried about being politically correct.

In personal training, I've added more functional training and plyometric training.

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

My passion is Group fitness and I do well in front of groups. I especially thrive in Zumba Fitness classes.

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 think they go hand in hand. I think everyone should start with one-on-one training as it's like learning how to drive. You need that hands-on personal attention to ensure you are doing the exercises correctly. It's hard to correct 20 people at the same time when you only have 1 minute before moving onto the next exercise. Once a foundation has been built, group training is great to motivate and keep a person going. However, many do not like being in groups so they can opt to workout on their own and that is fine too. However, we are social beings by nature and just being in the room with other people with similar goals helps to motivate and keep you going. Also, people will tend to be easier on themselves than if they have an Instructor leading them.

Who or what have been some of the biggest influences in the development of your routines and why does it make you great?

I've always had respect for Mindy Mylea and Geoff Bagshaw – longtime Fitness Gurus – whom I one day would like to follow in their footsteps and present at Fitness Conventions around the world.

How is it exactly that training makes you a stronger person in your day to day life?

It certainly reduces stress, makes me physically stronger and a more responsible human being. I'm aware that I could bump into a client at the grocery store or someone could see me in a social setting, therefore I recognize I am a role model and am careful about the messages that I send.

WORDS TO LIVE BY...

“Do or Do not, there is no try”

Jedi Master Yoda

*“But you are not to be like that.
Instead, the greatest among you should
be like the youngest, and the one who
rules like the one who serves”*

Luke 22:26