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SPIRITUAL, ORGANIC, INSPIRING

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

What would you say that most individuals struggle with the most when it comes to their fitness goals and how do you approach this?

There are a lot of factors that can cause a person to struggle in reaching a goal, but the one thing that stands out to me above ALL others is... consistency. Of course, reasons for being inconsistent vary from person to person, but a big factor for a lot of people is TIME!

I approach this firstly by reminding my clients that in life, we will never FIND the time for anything. If we really want time for something, we must MAKE it. People need to believe they can make it work, and put their wellness goals high enough on their priority list that at least 80% of the time they're doing what they should, no matter what. I try to provide a personalized strategy to stay consistent, as each clients needs can vary so much. Nutritionally people often fall behind because they just didn't prepare ahead of time to have the right things to eat available to them. If you try to plan ahead, the odds you're going to be stuck having an unbalanced meal or eating something you shouldn't are a lot fewer and farther between. As far as workouts are concerned I remind my clients that ANYTHING is better than nothing. A lot of times people will skip over an entire opportunity to workout just because they don't think they have the time or energy for the entire routine. While it is very important not to take short cuts, if they just maintain an attitude to do whatever they can instead of nothing, odds are they'll find they really had more time than they thought, and their goals are met much more efficiently.

How do you deal with those individuals cautious about injury, or even convince them that after all and everything that they have been through, they can rest assured that their safety is paramount to you as a trainer?

I can really relate to individuals who are concerned about injuries or those who have dealt with injuries, because I myself have had to rehabilitate through quite a few. The most time consuming injury to recover from was my ACL reconstruction, but doing so actually taught me more about how the body works, and more importantly, what the human body is capable of, than any other fitness experience I've ever had. Injuries should only be looked at as temporary setbacks, not life-ruining catastrophes. The positive thing you can take from the experience is that you come away valuing your health and physicality a lot more, and become a lot more motivated to take better care of yourself. We gain the perspective on how wasteful it is to take our wellbeing for granted.

As an in-home trainer, I encounter a lot of people who have either suffered an injury in the past, or are still in the process of recovering from one, and need my help to bridge the gap back to where they used to be, and beyond. It's really important to me to impress upon people that no fitness goal is worth harming your body over. My most serious task as a trainer is to teach people to DO without DOING HARM. I believe it's my job first and foremost to help an injured client stop the cycle, and ensure a client who hasn't yet been injured stays that way. To accomplish this I educate people on the importance of building a proper foundation of strength. I want people to know that the human body is capable of a lot more than they realize; and when you learn to work with it and never against it, as well as apply the rules of foundational strength training, you can bring yourself through an amazing transformation.

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

Two things come to mind; firstly, knowing my client, understanding who it is I am dealing with... and secondly, observing and properly translating the needs of their body into the best place to start to build their foundation correctly. As health practitioners we can never "know it all" and no two bodies are the same... so I look at every new client as a chance to learn something new. Each clients individual needs will always be unique. That is why I undergo constant association with peers who keep me learning so I can continue to be better at assessing a clients' physicality properly as early on as possible. I am the clients chosen mediator between what they want, and what their body needs. It's important to me to query my clients enough to understand their history and what they are dealing with; but also what they like, and what they want to accomplish. I always take the time for an in-depth consultation to get to know my clients as well as I can first; that way I can really relate to them when it's time to explain what I took from their assessment, and what we will need to do so they can reach their goal. It's very important to me to educate clients on the WHY behind what we are doing... but that can be hard to do if I haven't taken the time to get to know the person in front of me. Personal training is just that, VERY personal. In my experience people don't care how much you know unless they know first how much you care. It matters to me to understand also how a client learns best, so I can ensure I am using proper methods to teach them what is paramount for them to know.

I want people to understand that their health is not a momentary frame of mind... it's something to be looked after for the long-term advantage. Initial assessment is so important because it's my first chance to teach a client that, and inspire them to look at what they're doing as an important and exciting lifestyle change, not a temporary goal.

What would you say is the most important aspect to losing weight? How do you help others address this?

It's hard to say one aspect is more important than another, because losing weight is a very individualized thing, and can vary a great deal from person to person. No two people have identical requirements to being successful with this. I will say that attaining a weight loss goal is not as critical as MAINTAINING it. So the key aspect is to impress the attitude that the changes that are being made are permanent lifestyle changes, not temporary goal getters. Consistency really is everything, and consistency hinges greatest on balance. First I make sure clients understand that exercise and nutrition have to walk hand in hand to attain balance in health and wellbeing. Together we have to discover what will allow them to maintain their personal balance between those two elements no matter what it is life is going to throw at them. Something I have recently learned that is so important, is how much a person LIKES their methods of exercising and what they have to eat...plain and simple. If they don't enjoy what they are being asked to do, it's highly unlikely they will be able to stick to it over the long term. I constantly try to improve at balancing the exercises a client needs to do for their homework with exercises they also enjoy doing. Most people like variety, and body-weight functional routines provide a lot of that! I also encourage clients to make a list of their top 10 favorites (fruits, vegetables, sustainable carbohydrates, proteins) so they can be set up for success when they're planning out what to eat. As long as an appeasable consistency between what they eat and how well they stick to balanced workouts can be met 80% of the time, a person should be able to not only attain their weight loss goal, but maintain it for the rest of their life.

What would you change about the fitness industry?

I have always lamented the fact that a lot of people get involved in fitness just to achieve an esthetic look, or enhance their appearance, because they have been led to think they aren't attractive the way they are, or that their body's natural attributes aren't acceptable. So many people have unnatural expectations about how their body should look, and about what methods are acceptable to attain a certain appearance. I think many influences in our society have really obscured people's idea of physical beauty, and I have always wanted to see more fitness professionals promote the enjoyment of a highly functioning physical framework, teaching people to care about attaining it the HEALTHY way, knowing we are taking the right steps to maintain our body so we can enjoy the most out of life. Enjoying how we look as a result of our fitness choices should be the cherry on the cake instead of being a die-hard goal regardless of the consequences. Human beings aren't best defined by how they look... but by what they can DO, what they overcome and accomplish. I think it's our job as fitness professionals to teach that first. There are a lot of trends in the fitness industry promoting

methods that can be very harmful to the body, all for the aim of achieving a certain esthetic ideal... and no esthetic should ever be worth that. Everyone has the right to be motivated to be healthy for their own personal reasons, and let's face it, it's wonderful to feel good about how you look. But our endeavors to do so should never result in doing more harm to your body than good.

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

I definitely see myself training in 5 years... it's something I intend to be involved with for the rest of my life. Nothing I've ever done has made me feel like I'm making more of an impact in the lives of others and truly helping people than being a personal trainer. In 5 years I would like to establish myself out of a private facility in combination with doing in-home training with people. I enjoy working with people in the comfort of their home a lot, because it's an extremely valuable service to some individuals. Some people just wouldn't get started without that option. But having people come to me in a private setting would allow me to work with more clientele on a daily basis, allowing me to spread my message and energy to a greater capacity of individuals.

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?

As an in-home trainer, I've been in a position to find myself helping a lot of individuals I never even dreamed I was in a position to be of help to. A father once contacted me to work with his daughter who had been the victim of a spinal chord injury many years ago. She hadn't done any physical rehabilitative activity for around 10 years, and had been paralyzed from the neck down. My first instinct was that I was too in-experienced to help her; but I associate with peers for ongoing professional development, and with their perspective I was able to see that as long as I stuck to the fundamentals in the realm of my field, and didn't overpromise anything, I could be of help to this person.

I had put together a program and for a while things seemed pretty slow going, until one day, she did something that she had not been able to do for over 10 years... she closed her right hand almost into a fist. I was shocked. We had been working diligently for many weeks making baby steps and increments in progress, but I never expected this! I remember saying to her, "I didn't know you could do that" and she just said, "Neither did I". It was a moment I'll never forget that moment for as long as I live. This was a person who'd been told she wouldn't move anything from the neck down the rest of her life... and after a few short months of applying the basics of foundational strength, here she was making a fist with her right hand.

She has made even greater gains since that day, such as being able to sit up freely using her own core strength, and she's getting stronger all the time. Working with her taught me how amazing our bodies really are, and what it really means to go after one's true potential. I always

ask myself, if she can overcome the odds that she has, what does that say about what the rest of us are really capable of?

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

Absolutely! Research is showing that body-weight functional exercise is a fantastic builder of the type of strength we need most to do activities of daily living, and allows people to really master the importance of using their muscles without doing any harm to their joints. It's something that has revolutionized my approach the way I train my body, as well as how I train my clients. Having physical strength is simply having the ability to be able to do all we want to do, or need to do. There are many paths to achieve this, and certain principles in technique, form, tempo, and nutrition must be applied for those paths to reach the same end... but in my experience, functional body-weight training has been one of the best rehabilitative tools to use in helping individuals rebound from injuries or from leading a sedentary lifestyle. When someone has lost their basic range of motion in one or more planes of movement, lifting weights can be a great detriment to their progress if introduced before a proper foundation has been built. Most individuals need strength training options that enable their body to restore itself from a flexibility and endurance perspective first and work on any imbalances or weaknesses they have, so they can properly apply the muscular strength needed for weight lifting; then it can take it's rightful place in their training progression.

What do you feel about training two people at the same time?

It's something that can be very fun and motivating if the goals of those two individuals are similar enough, and have similar fitness levels to be working with. I know many couples and friends who have greatly enjoyed the dynamic of working out together. However I have found that no two bodies have the exact same needs in order to provide the best balance. Each routine should be tailor-fit for a persons' unique anatomical framework and functional imbalances. Each clients program should reflect what they require as an individual, and a two-person setting often takes away from a trainers ability to really streamline a routine for what each client should be working on to attain their goals as efficiently and enjoyably as possible. Just as we all have varying physical needs, what we enjoy doing varies, too. I find people in general get a lot more out of their training experience by having one on one attention and doing routines that have been customized for their unique tastes, as well as individual physical needs.

How do you stay above and beyond the rest?

Constant association with like-minded, positive, inspiring industry professionals and clientele! I think it is so important to surround yourself with people who have a positive attitude, who want to constantly learn and grow, and who consciously enjoy sharing the best aspects of

themselves with other people. I perceive my ability to stay above and beyond the rest as always being able to be somebody that a person can look forward to spending and investing their time with. I may not be able to make someone laugh or smile EVERY time I see them, but I want them to feel glad I came... and I can't do that if I'm not positive. I have to be hungry for my own personal growth, but also professional development. That's why I constantly educate myself through research, as well as invest my time with those more experienced in the industry than myself, who have gained tried, tested and true empirical knowledge that no theory can teach me. It's been an extremely important influence to maintain in my life, and that is why I have to continue to invest in affiliations with organizations and peers who constantly push me to learn and grow, strive and thrive. I try to remember it's not about being recognized for what you already know; it's about staying humble to the fact that you will never know it all. There have been so many instances where my clients have taught me just as much, if not more, than I was able to teach and pass on to them. To me, this is one of the greatest fruits of life. We have to maintain our humility, and remain a constant student.

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

To me this is very simple... our dynamic and associations with other people is what keeps us accountable to what we want to accomplish in life. It's always been my goal to give back to my community, to contribute to a cause greater than myself, specifically to do this by helping people get the most out of the experience of living in that fleshy physical framework we call our bodies. I am very passionate about inspiring people to be all they can be from a health perspective, and realize their true potential. On the other hand I'm human just like everyone else...I encounter the same setbacks, same challenges, same frustrations that many of the clients I work with do. I find that being a personal trainer makes me far stronger than I ever would have been because of accountability. Even though I am relatively new to the training game, I know I will always be a great trainer because I don't believe in asking someone else to do something if I'm not living the example of it myself. Just when I have days where I want to quit or hold back, I am slammed back to reality by drawing upon the experiences I've had encouraging the people I've worked with not to quit, not to give up. If I told them they can't give up, how can I? We are all challenged with being self motivated in our own unique way. It can be a very personal journey and experience. But we don't have to go it alone. When you stay connected with people who have decided they want to climb higher than where they are, and want to do it with integrity... it makes such a huge difference in the decisions you make in your daily life to keep doing the same.

WORDS TO LIVE BY...

“Every passing moment is another chance to turn it all around...”