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DRIVEN, APPRECIATIVE, DEDICATED

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

Do you feel that people with congenital or acquired underlying issues need to ease back or be more diligent when it comes to their fitness practices?

I know from personal experience that it can be a scary thing to begin an exercise program when you first find out that you have an illness. The most important thing is to really consider the possible impacts on your health. Your issue may largely determine the frequency and intensity at which you are able to train. Personally I took it upon myself to become more educated about diet and exercise, and how it could positively impact my health. It is so crucial to maintain a positive attitude about what you are ultimately trying to accomplish. There are some days where my diabetes does not afford me the energy that I wish I had in the gym, but I have come to accept that being there and doing the best that I can, and training at my maximum intensity for that day is in itself an achievement! I am grateful that this disease has made me so mindful of my health, and given me the opportunity to be my very best.

We all know how important nutrition is when it comes to maintaining healthy lifestyle, do you have anything further to add to or support this?

In talking to many colleagues that are experts in the area of nutrition I have to say that this is one of the most important parts of training. I try to keep things as natural as possible. The less ingredients in contained in something the healthier it is for you. Fresh fruits, vegetables and various meats and proteins make up my diet. Being diabetic it helps to maintain more level blood sugar. In lengthy discussion with my doctor and other specialists I have had to reduce my protein levels to half of what my intake was. I am now down to around 90g of protein a day. It is difficult to build muscle under this tight a regimen, but I am working hard to maintain what I currently have.

The most important thing people should know about working out?

That getting to the gym is an accomplishment in itself. I find that often I may not feel as though I accomplished everything that I wanted to, but have come to realize that you have to begin somewhere. It is a process, and involves constantly challenging yourself to be your best every time you are in there. There are days when I don't have a great deal of energy and feel my workout was weak. It happens. I think that a session at the gym, that time for yourself is worth it's weight in gold! It is a necessary part of my day. It helps to balance your life.

Most important advice you would give to another trainer?

That making a connection with each client is the most important part of the job. Connect and realize what their goals are. Don't make your goals their goals! Not everyone is a Mixed Martial Artist, or a fitness competitor. Find their strengths fitness wise and as an individual. Try to help them realize the importance of working on the areas that they can improve in the gym and in life. It's all about balance and the sense of accomplishment.

If you weren't training, what other career path would you have taken?

I actually already have a career path. I am a grade 7/8 teacher. As a personal trainer I would like to see Physical Education become a more important part of the curriculum. Right now my class has Physical Education 4 out of every 10 days. This is simply not enough. All the data shows that fit students have a greater self esteem, perform better academically, and are generally more productive. Previous to becoming a teacher I had considered baseball, as well as the air force. Unfortunately baseball was a long shot, and as a diabetic the Canadian Forces Air Force dismissed my application even though I had done very well in their testing.

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

My unique knowledge and experiences make me very different from other trainers in the industry. I have a different motivation than many other trainers. I see fitness not only as a means to be aesthetically pleasing but more so to help control my blood sugar and maintain a healthy lifestyle. I realize that many people have different goals for themselves, and their personal goals must be reflected in the type of training that we create together for them to reach these goals. There are so many different ways to train and I really tailor my programs to each individual right down to the exercises.

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 think of the day that I found out I was diabetic and ended up in emergency with a blood sugar level of 26! I was down to 140 pounds and pretty down on myself, constantly low on energy. This was such a life changing moment for me. I look back at pictures and realize how sick I looked, and that although I was always a very active person I was not very fit looking. I am so thankful every day to all the doctors that have helped me, and to my wonderful family that supported me and when needed gave me the tough love that I needed. I am truly grateful. I look at how far I have come since then, changing careers, putting myself through teachers college and actually securing a job. I became a personal trainer and started a side business, gaining a unique skill set by becoming a Twist Gold Level trainer. I guess what really excites and ignites me the most is that I can get on stage with some very incredible fitness professionals and hold my own despite being diabetic. So many wonderful people have been supportive, and express their amazement to the event coordinators, hosts and myself that I am diabetic and so fit. I really love to hear that. It drives me, motivates me. At this point in my competitive career I have accepted that my role will be so much more than winning a trophy. This illness and strict diet make adding the necessary muscle to be competitive naturally very difficult. I have never considered being anything but natural, and I will continue to compete as a purely natural athlete. I really hope that I can motivate other people to work through adversity and reach their goals, whether it be on stage, or just to better themselves both physically and mentally. This is what I train for, and why I train others!

This showcase can present you with opportunity--if you were to get 50 new clients, what would you do?

Train people full time. This would be my new career. Although I do love teaching I feel that there are so many areas where I could make a difference. My goal has always been to teach. Whether it be at a school or in a gym both would fulfill that desire. I love being in a gym and working with people who are hungry to attain a goal and work to reach their own personal best. I love the whole aspect of training people and with people. Training can take place in so many settings, and I love the endless possibilities!

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

I am certainly no dietician, or nutritionist but I do believe in eating healthy foods and maintaining a realistic diet. As a diabetic who takes at least 5 needles a day this is such an important part of my lifestyle. Often people want a fast fix to their issues. They want big muscles, or sharp abs. Many things about the supplements are not known. I know there are many people in the industry that dabble in steroids as well. As a teacher and a trainer I would never recommend it, nor would I do it myself. It is hypocritical, and unhealthy. I guess my advice would be to see a nutritionist and keep your intake as natural as possible. Long term health should always be the goal!

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

I definitely agree that an individual can achieve strength without lifting conventional weights. Body weight exercises are extremely useful and can be made to be quite challenging. In my experience with training both older clients as well as young athletes I have found this to be true. In these two groups of clients I find that strength can be found in creating challenging body weight exercises on various types of equipment, challenging smaller muscle groups that are useful in daily tasks through balance and body weight challenges. Some of my clients use very little, if any traditional weights. They have enjoyed an increase in strength in muscles that they use every day that are rarely challenged by traditional weight training and machines.

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

I have trained a variety of children, some who are athletes. I find that it is most useful to train their balance and body weight strength and endurance. Children typically are not in as good physical condition at the adolescent age as my generation was. I see this in my Physical Education classes as a teacher. I find that my students enjoy doing circuit and balance training, and they see real benefits in their overall fitness and they find this very exciting. They are able to measure their successes by seeing improvements in their number of pushups and sit ups and pull ups that they are able to do. Children are most motivated, in my experience, when they are able to see the benefit to them in the training being done. What I mean is that a hockey player will buy into the program when he or she is able to see how it will help their game. Challenging drills and exercises can be done with the use of bodyweight and different pieces of equipment. Balance being the most important skill in my opinion.

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

I consider myself an expert in designing sport specific training programs. Being an athlete the Twist program really interested me, and so to maintain my CEC's with Can Fit Pro I continued to take these courses. Recently I completed my Gold Level Certification. There are almost no trainers in the Niagara Area that have this level of designation, so I have the market cornered. I enjoy the challenges presented to myself as well as my clients in creating an interesting and dynamic workout which includes the high level intense cardio, plyometric and balance training. This type of training is unique and one that I see rarely used by most trainers. My tools of choice include balance boards, Bosu Balls, Slastix trainers, the Lebert Equalizer, plyo hurdles and the TRX. Although I do like using conventional equipment I find my clients like using the different types of equipment. It keeps things interesting for them, and keeps challenging them and pushing their fitness levels. They definitely appreciate my knowledge and expertise in the use of different training methods.

WORDS TO LIVE BY...

“Champions do not become champions when they win the event, but in the hours, weeks, months and years they spend preparing for it. The victorious performance itself is merely the demonstration of their championship character.”

~T. Alan Armstrong