

# JENNA MAERZ

*'the constant student'*

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## DYNAMIC, RESOURCEFUL, SUPPORTIVE

### QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

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

This is actually a great question for me, since I have recently decided to follow another career path. Personal training has been a fabulous experience that has confirmed for me what I have long thought of as my true passion - education. I have always wanted to help people, but have only recently realized that the best way to do this is to share knowledge with them so that they can help themselves. As a trainer you won't work with someone forever, so you need to be able to teach your clients about their own body, and how to work with it properly.

**What would you change about the fitness industry?**

If I could change one thing about the fitness industry I would want trainers to require a higher standard of education. Most fitness facilities need trainers to have a personal training certificate that they can acquire over a short two- to four-day course. Some fitness facilities will even hire people who don't possess a personal trainer certification, but have simply worked out a lot. They may know the equipment in the gym, and how to use it, but they don't necessarily have an understanding of how it is going to affect your body. This needs to change! Your personal trainer is manipulating the body of every person they work with. What they do and what they

teach you has lasting effects, and those who don't have a sufficient knowledge base unfortunately often end up causing injuries. By demanding more knowledge from your personal trainer, you end up creating a higher standard and a safer environment.

I believe every personal trainer should be required to have at least a college diploma in personal training or college level associated courses that covers how the human body is set up (anatomy), how it functions (biology/physiology), and how it reacts when you place it under certain stresses or forces (biomechanics). Knowledge in these areas would allow personal trainers to provide safe and high quality services to their clients, and would avoid the high turnover in most fitness facilities because it would ensure that trainers were truly passionate about what they're doing and willing to commit to the industry.

### **What do you think of extreme weight loss shows?**

My first reaction to this question is that it's a poor show that actually creates unrealistic expectations for people. It's unsafe to lose that much weight that quickly, and like fad diets people will often regain it back after a few months. Also, most people would incur serious injuries if they worked out that hard their first time in a gym. It's true that on the show they use doctor supervision, but then, when regular clients come into a fitness centre they expect intense and exhausting workouts like on the show. This is a great goal to work towards once your fitness level is a bit higher and you have less potential for injuries but it shouldn't be happening on your first workout with a new trainer.

There are, however, some benefits to the show, in that they advocate for a balance of diet and exercise, they show that changing your body is hard work and should be a lifestyle change, and I'm sure it inspires many people to start doing something about their health and fitness.

### **What is the most annoying act displayed by trainers around you?**

For me, one of the most annoying things that other trainers do is to not pay attention to the person that they're working with. They may do this in a variety of different ways, the most obvious being talking or texting on their cell phone when working with you. But another way is when they train all clients in the same manner, without taking into account their individual goals, requests, age, ability, or gender. It's called PERSONAL training for a reason! A good trainer should be educated and experienced enough to be able to work with almost anyone, and be willing approach other professionals for more knowledge when they need it. If someone uses the same routine or the same weights with every client they work with, they are not adapting to each individual and they are probably giving you a poor training experience.

It also bothers me when a trainer doesn't listen to their client when they inform them of a previous injury. I have overheard a client telling their trainer that they hurt their knee yesterday, and the trainer didn't ask any further questions they just said they would go easy on it today and proceeded to use the leg extension machine which puts a large amount of stress on the knee! Your trainer should be asking questions about the injury, avoiding putting any strain on it, and encouraging you to seek medical attention, not just "going easy" on it.

**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 had the privilege of working as a Kinesiologist at a Community Health Centre in Hamilton for a year and a half. This allowed me to work with a wide variety of people from all walks of life who had concurrent illnesses. One accomplishment that I am particularly proud of was the physical activity group for Muslim women that I spearheaded. I noticed that there was a need for a time where no men were allowed in the facility so that those women whose religion dictated they keep their head covered, could remove their coverings and participate fully in an exercise program. I also provided health and fitness information sessions and ran small group exercise classes to let these women try new things. By educating this group and making time for the women to access the centre after-hours I was able to share my knowledge, and create an inclusive environment which supported their health and fitness.

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

Of course it is possible for an individual to achieve strength without lifting weights in the traditional sense. If you look at any dancer, gymnast, or other athlete they all have unbelievable strength and the majority of them have simply worked with their own body weight to build it.

In our busy world this is a practical way of working out, and often more achievable to a wide variety of people. There are so many body weight exercises or exercises that you can do using your everyday surroundings that can be less stressful on the body, but will still challenge you and enhance your strength and physical capacity. Think about something as simple as a set of stairs. You can climb them to work on your cardio and leg muscles. You can do incline pushups off them to work your chest and arm muscles. You can do triceps dips off them to work your triceps. You can do planks with your elbows on them to work your core muscles. If you use a little creativity, you can really challenge your body and develop strength without ever setting foot in a gym.

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

The most important lesson I've learned during my training career is that the relationship between a client and trainer is just that - a relationship. And like all relationships, it takes hard work, dedication and above all communication to flourish. You have to be able to communicate clearly and effectively, and you have to be able to communicate in different ways as well - one approach won't always work with every person.

You also have to be able to listen; listen to what people are really saying, and listen to what their body is telling you as well. People may either tell you one thing and then show another, or will forget to tell you certain important things. By attentively listening to what people tell you and asking questions for clarification, you can create a better workout for them because you will understand what they truly want and need.

Never forget that communication is not only speaking and listening, but also observing. You need to be able to watch your client's body while they complete an exercise to ensure they're doing it properly and nothing is moving in a way it shouldn't. And never be afraid to correct someone's form or technique - it's better to catch it right away before they injure themselves. Observation like this takes skill, but can give you more feedback than anything else.

**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 think that working with other professionals should be something that many more trainers need to start doing. As mentioned previously, I have worked in a Community Health Centre and there I had the opportunity to work with doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and community health workers. This created very symbiotic relationships between practitioners because there were many inter-referrals, which allowed us to provide the best care for each client all in one place. This also created continuous learning opportunities and greater understanding of the other professions, which challenged me to better myself and my practice. Ultimately, working in conjunction with other professionals provides maximum benefits to the client, increases individual knowledge and experience, and should be done as often as possible. You will never be able to be an expert in every area of health and fitness, so by becoming a specialist in your own area of interest and using the resources and people that surround you, you will create a better environment for your clients.

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

I do not think that children should be weight training using heavy weights because their bones are still developing and undue stress placed on the growth plates can cause future damage such as bone fusion leading to stunted growth. This applies to youth as well, because skeletal growth is not complete until on average the age of 15 to 17 for girls and 17 to 19 for boys.

Children and youth should definitely be active as often as possible, for at least an hour a day. Organized or unorganized sports and creative play in different environments are two great ways to develop health and fitness in children. If a child specifically wants to do 'fitness training' then they should work with a trainer who specializes in working with kids. Children should learn exercises without resistance first, and then once proficient could move towards body weight exercises. These can help a child to become more aware of their body and allows them to develop a greater skill set. Proper form and technique should be emphasized throughout, and you should always include a warm-up, cool-down and stretching.

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

Training two people at a time has its benefits and drawbacks. Often clients work better when they have a friend or family member exercising with them. They're able to motivate each other and they hold each other accountable, so in the end they will do a better workout, and they will do it more often. When it comes to training two people at the same time however, it can be very difficult to provide a quality program to both individuals. This is especially true when one or both of the clients have injuries or special considerations.

Personally, I prefer to meet each client individually a few times first so I can get to know what they need from me the most and help them overcome any obstacles or barriers that may be preventing them from exercising to their full potential. Once I have a better understanding of their needs, and they understand what I expect for basic exercise form and technique, then I would invite the two individuals to train together as long as I felt I was able to give each of them personal attention throughout the session.

## **What generally takes longer to heal, a fracture or a sprain?**

The length of healing of a fracture or a sprain is going to depend on many factors, including the severity of the injury, the area of the body injured, and the age and health of the injured person.

When it comes to sprains there are 3 different degrees. A mild or first degree sprain is going to heal relatively quickly, within approximately 3 to 10 days, whereas a third degree sprain is severe and often results in tearing of the ligaments, can damage other surrounding tissues, and can require surgery and intense rehab, which in extreme cases can last up to 8 to 12 months.

Different types of fractures change the severity of the injury. A closed or simple fracture is relatively basic and can heal with minimal interference within 4 to 6 weeks, whereas an open or complex fracture is very involved and often comes with other complications, sometimes requiring surgery and taking up to 6 to 12 weeks or more to heal, not including time for rehabilitation.

Of course when it comes to both fractures and sprains, the area which is injured often plays a role in severity of the injury and consequent healing time. Weight bearing body parts generally take longer to heal because they need to be able to withstand greater amounts of force and stress.

Age and health of the injured person also play a role, as a younger person will generally heal faster than someone who is older, and of course a person in poor health or with an underlying medical condition usually takes longer to heal than a healthy person.

There is no specific answer as to length of time to heal for a fracture or a sprain, but as always the best approach is prevention. By strengthening your muscles in a safe manner and giving your body the proper nutrition and rest it requires you will go far to decreasing severity and preventing injuries.

## What is the difference between using heat and ice?

To understand the difference between heat and ice you need to understand their basic qualities. Ice is cold - cold causes elements to decrease in size. This allows ice to decrease swelling and inflammation, which helps to decrease pain as well because it isn't pressing on things crowded together in an already small space (i.e.: your joints).

Ice should be used the majority of the time, especially on any acute injury and on a recurring injury after stressing it.

Heat on the other hand, causes elements to expand and increase in size. This often happens naturally with an injury, as you'll notice when swelling occurs in the body, it often feels hot to the touch as well. This means though that heat should not be used on an injury because it will just exacerbate the condition. Really the only time heat should be used on an injury is if you have excessive stiffness in the morning upon waking up. Then heat can be used to increase suppleness and ease of movement. This often helps people who have arthritis, however ice should still be applied at the end of the day as tolerated to decrease swelling and inflammation from that day's use.

## WORDS TO LIVE BY...

*Live Simply...*

*Love Generously...*

*Care Deeply...*

*Speak Kindly...*