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## FORWARD LOOKING, DRIVEN, FOCUSED

### QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

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#### **The most important thing people should know about working out?**

The most important thing that people should know about working out is that, above all things, working out is a way of developing health so that your potential as an individual can be greater. Whatever your occupation outside of the gym, exercise can enhance the way you conduct yourself, the quality of the work you do, and the quality of life you enjoy. More energy, which is a side effect of effective training, allows you to be more alert, more precise, and more focused. You gain a sense of body-awareness that influences how you eat, how you sleep, and how you manage your body during the day-to-day. Foods, for instance, becomes energy sources as opposed to objects of enjoyment or obstacles to your fitness goals. The interpersonal dimensions of a gym environment also make you more personable and accustomed to interaction with a wide-ranging group of people outside of the gym. The interpersonal benefits are true even if you don't attend a gym but you jog, swim, or play a sport. Even if you don't work with a team, you still develop stories to tell as you train, reach goals, and train harder. You develop your own story about your own development.

#### **What do you think of bootcamp training?**

Bootcamp training is as good as the bootcamp instructor and only worthwhile for certain people with certain needs. Some instructors can put together really good sessions using minimal tools and a set amount of space. The instructor must also be able to manage the class based on the fitness levels of the participants. If there are varying fitness levels, the work of the instructor is to accommodate a range of abilities. If a bootcamp is made up of people who are training at the same level of fitness, the instructor's job is to understand that level of fitness and train slightly above it so that the class is challenged. It is the instructor who must motivate,

challenge, and direct the class. I believe bootcamp training is great for people who want the kind of training that an instructor can offer. If I have a client with specific goals, I might recommend a bootcamp because bootcamps tend to be general good sweaty workouts. If a client wants increased flexibility, stronger back muscles, or sport specific training, a boot camp would likely not work to directly achieve those goals. If a client hits a plateau and if that client has never taken a bootcamp, bootcamp might be the perfect thing to push that client to the next level. Such a recommendation depends, of course, on the instructor of the bootcamp and on the bootcamp class make-up.

**This showcase can present you with opportunity. If you were to get 50 new clients, what would you do?**

Fifty clients could mean more than fifty hours of work a week once I account for transportation and administrative time. Since many of these clients will work typical hours (i.e. 9-5), they will need training before work, after work, on weekends, or over a lunch period. I can already foresee scheduling problems. I want to be as accessible as possible to my clients so that they know that I respect their business and so that I know what they need from me.

If I were to get fifty new clients, I would meet with each of them to discuss their fitness goals and to learn about the people who are coming to me for consultation. After this session, I would take on whichever clients I knew were good fits for my skill set, my time restrictions, and my own personal goals as a perpetually learning fitness consultant. Clients may want to meet every second week and that would make fifty clients manageable. All fifty clients might have concerns that are consistent with my skill set and I would then be able to take them all on. The more likely outcome is that I would have to cut the fifty new clients into a more manageable number so that I could guarantee good service to each one of them. Of course, I would not abandon clients who I am unable to assist. Knowing the needs of the clients I could not work with, I would look to my network for colleagues who could provide the service required in an expert and professional manner. If I am to consult a client or if I am to recommend a colleague of mine, the bottom line is always that the client's needs and well being come first.

**What is the biggest challenge facing you as a trainer?**

The biggest challenge facing me as a trainer is knowing exactly what the client wants so that the client's interests can inform the way I train him or her. This is an on-going challenge. Workouts need to be dynamic because people are dynamic. There are changes in the lives of clients; changes in client's lives (i.e. travel, holidays, moving) must be incorporated into the way I advise them or else there will be a misalignment between my advice and the realistic goals a client can achieve. Client approaches to training will change as we train together and the client might realize new fitness goals and our fitness plan will adapt to those new goals. I create relationships with lots of feedback so that I know how my clients like my solutions to their needs and so clients can let me know when their needs change. To get feedback, I ask lots of questions. I like to plan workout schedules into the long term so that clients understand that each individual session is a stepping-stone. Lastly, I work to ensure fitness fits lifestyle for each client I work with.

## **Most important advice you would give to another trainer?**

The most important advice that I would give to another trainer: learning is central to good training. Learning requires research, observation, reflection, and application.

If at any point you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, you are given an opportunity to learn how to be a better trainer. Urge your client to look for the answer to the question as well so that the client can join you as you learn. There's no reason to withhold knowledge. Knowledge is only one component of your expertise as a good trainer.

If you have access to them, look to academic information sources when you are confronted with a new question. Academic information sources can be tough to locate and tough to read but I recommend you do the work to seek out current research because it is empowering to know up-to-date theoretical information and it is even more empowering to work with that knowledge to advise your clients. Use your network to find good information. Coaches, other trainers, professors, teachers, athletes, and other gym users can all offer good perspectives when you are confronted with a trying question. These people will also be proud of themselves when you, a personal trainer, look to them for their assistance. Also look to public domain material for answers because you are likely not the first person to confront the question at hand. But take care when you research because not every source is accurate and not every source is proven, certain, or applicable to your particular client. Observation and reflection will help you sift through the answers you find and apply the best recommendation to your client.

Reflection and observation are on-going parts of your learning work. As you train yourself, be mindful of what you are doing, be mindful of your best practices, and be mindful of the workouts taking place around you. Ask other people why they do certain exercises; your genuine interest will likely bring you good feedback.

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

It is certainly possible for an individual to gain strength without lifting weights. While push-ups, chin-ups, dips, body-weight squats, and body-weight lunges do not require free-weights, they do require the lifting of body-weight, which is a kind of weight lifting. There are many options for strength building that do not require lifting weight but that require that you control your body. Swimming, yoga, martial arts, walking, running, sprinting, boxing, cycling, and paddling are examples of activities that do not require sets or repetitions but that will certainly strengthen a body. That list is a short list. All of those exercises will engage muscles in different ways. It is that engagement that will strengthen an athlete's body.

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

From a physiological perspective, I believe that there are rarely differences between the way a woman's body can be trained and the way a man's body can be trained. Personally, I do not train based on gender. I train clients based on goals, fitness level, and client lifestyle. Culturally, however, women tend to seek out different fitness goals than men seek out. Simply put, women's goals are often more feminine and men's goals are typically more masculine. This makes sense because people of both genders define health based on cultural notions of health

that depict men and women in distinctly different ways. When there is a difference between the training of a man and the training of a woman, that difference is most likely the result of a difference in the goals men and women establish for themselves.

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

I will gladly train two people at once if those two people want to train together, if those two people share goals, and if those two people motivate one another. Group training has benefits: a client has a defined workout partner who knows the work-out and reinforces the work-out plan. Of course, the two people must be a good fit to train together or they will not enjoy the benefits that I mentioned above.

### **How do you stay above and beyond the rest?**

I stay above the rest by always learning, always applying what I learn, and always communicating with clients. I challenge clients and I motivate clients to continually seek out challenge in the gym. I don't just hope to challenge my clients; I hope to teach them the intrinsic value of seeking out and taking on challenge. I also lead by example. I keep myself in shape by applying the lessons I learn and challenging my self in the gym.

### **Do you work in conjunction with any other professionals for the benefit of your client and if so, do you think more trainers need to do the same?**

I urge clients to take fitness classes with specific instructors if I see a good fit between class and client. I bring questions to experts as a part of my routine research method. These experts might be doctors, trainers, professors, coaches, or athletes. There is a lack of communication in the fitness industry. This lack of communication is a problem since each fitness professional has his or her own area(s) of expertise and the more information that can be shared, the better clients can be served.

### **What do you think about the use of thermogenics?**

A great majority of athletes/clients/gym users do not require thermogenic products for either weight loss or for good workouts. Body builders and models in competitive industries may benefit from an informed application of thermogenic products but I do not consult with these kinds of gym users. I advise my clients to lose weight sustainably. By sustainable weight-loss I mean that I guide clients to workout and to develop healthy habits that fit with their lifestyle. I do not believe in quick fixes. I believe that personal fitness and health are disciplines of on-going development that must be integrated into the everyday experiences of my clients. I think that thermogenics are not a necessary product for the clients that I work with.

Can one work out too much, and how does one recognize this and avoid?

One can certainly work out too much. Listen to your body. Drowsiness is a typical symptom of too much working out, which is also known as overtraining. If you are too tired, you have burnt too many calories and you have not rested your body sufficiently. If you normally sleep seven hours but, after intense exercise, you find that you require nine or ten hours of sleep and that you are still drowsy, you've likely over-trained yourself, under hydrated yourself, and/or undernourished yourself.

You can avoid working out too much by training sustainably and by enhancing your training in a gradual step-wise fashion. The way you do this depends on your fitness level and on your history with the training you are doing. Also remember that food is energy and that good food is even better energy. Monitor your eating and sleeping as well as your training. Reflect on what you observe and you will be able to better listen to your body and avoid overtraining.

## WORDS TO LIVE BY...

*"What is the next challenge?"*