

So you want a personal trainer?

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So you want to get a personal trainer? You think your fat and out of shape, or maybe you just think you could get in better physical shape...and really who couldn't get in better shape?

- Who are the majority of your training clientele? (age, activity level, how many times they train per week, etc.)

Make sure the trainer has trained people that have similar goals as you do.

-What are your available hours?

Trainers work in a service oriented field. A lot of us forget that. If you can only come in and work out in the early AM or PM, make sure your trainer can accommodate.

-What are your certifications and where did you go to school at?

Anyone can get a certification these days. Make sure your trainer has a certification from an accredited agency. Ask them what their certification is, then go online and check it out. Also, ideally you want to work with someone who has some kind of four year degree in an exercise related field. Check up on them, if the trainer is legit then they will have nothing to worry about. I know plenty of trainers who don't have a college degree and/or are not current on their certification. Meaning they had one in the past but they let it expire.

-What is your training methodology, i.e. how do you go about training people to get their goals?

This is actually a fairly important question to ask. I hate cardio training, I love lifting heavy weights. If someone comes to me that don't like to lift weights but loves to do cardio...we might not be the best match for each other. Make sure the trainer has your best interest in mind. A good trainer can alter their training style to match the client's goals.

Note: As someone who is looking for a trainer, you really don't have that much say into what you are doing with the trainer. Remember, you hired them. If you knew what to do you wouldn't need them in the first place. How they get your goals should be left entirely up to them.

-Do you have anyone that you are specifically proud of training?

Every trainer should have a few “success stories”. These are people or groups that they are particularly proud of training. Ideally they should also have sources or contacts that potential clients could call and reference. After all, the best proof of a trainer’s character and success is given by their current and past clients.

-I have _____ (fill in the blank: junk shoulder, bad hips, sore back, shin splints, chronic sprained ankles, etc.) is that going to be a problem?

There is nothing worse than training someone for the first time and you find out that they played ten years of professional football with all the aches, bruises and injuries that go along with it. Be open and honest with your trainer. I used to train in an area where the top heart doctors loved to prescribe beta blockers to their patients. Every once and a while I would get one of their patients and work them to the bone. Their heart rates would stay very low for the intensity of exercise we were doing. After questioning them they would come clean and tell me they were on beta blockers! It drove me nuts that they didn’t say anything when we had the initial evaluation. Openness and honesty are the best things in life.

-How do you go about motivating people and keeping them on track?

I don’t have to deal with this one too much. Thankfully all of my clients are incredibly motivated. However, they still need a kick in the pants every once and a while. Personally, I use numbers as a way to motivate my clients, i.e. “You lifted 100 lbs last time, this time you lifted 110. Great job!” Make sure your prospective trainer has a way to keep you motivated and on track.

That about sums it up, there are of course other questions that you could be asking but the ones above cover the big picture. Below are some things to remember as a client:

-You don’t know what you’re doing. If you did, you wouldn’t have come to find a trainer in the first place. So mouth shut, ears open. God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. You should always listen twice as much as you talk.

-Your trainer always has your best interests in mind. You may not like a particular exercise but in the grand scheme of things if it didn’t matter you probably wouldn’t be doing it.

-Expect to spend money. This is your health were talking about. No one likes to spend money on things, however, if you’re dead because of a heart attack at age 40. Well then I guess you don’t need to worry about spending your money.

-Be realistic, don’t expect to lose ten lbs in a month. A good number to shoot for is 1-1.5% of your body weight per week. Also keep in mind that an untrained individual will put on muscle just as fast as they burn off fat the first few months of training. If the scale doesn’t go down at first, don’t be disappointed. You are making positive changes in your body and life every time you meet with your trainer.

-Enjoy yourself! You should never dread going in to see your trainer. On the other hand, if you are not getting reasonable definitive results don't be afraid to move on. You are spending decent money on your health and you deserve to get results. Being a trainer is a tough role, you're someone's counselor, nutritionists, trainer, motivator, therapist, friend, etc. But we still provide a service that you are paying for, if we can't deliver, you should move on.