

Overview

It's time to set the record straight: Personal training is at the forefront of preventative care -- exercise is medicine after all -- yet the elitist gap between the general public and fitness industry seems to be widening. This disconnect is unfortunate, because trainers are really here to help. In an attempt to bridge the gap, these are the 13 biggest myths about personal training.

MYTH #1: Trainers Know It All

The truth is that trainers get tricked into emptying their wallets just as much as the clients they serve. A trainer is inevitably a fitness fanatic and avid fitness consumer. While we've often figured out a method or two that work, we're also tweaking and testing new programs and exercises. When you ask us a question about a new workout fad, pill or supplement -- even if we've heard of it -- we probably haven't had a chance to read the research surrounding its effectiveness (if it exists). It's impossible to keep up to date with everything. What's most important, is to find a trainer that you trust and follow his or her guidance. The only surefire way to fail is to keep switching to the newest, hottest trend.

MYTH #2: Trainers All Have Six-Packs

Most trainers are human beings who don't eat broccoli and plain chicken all day. We indulge in an extra piece of cake, we occasionally skip a workout and we sleep in. Don't judge trainers solely on their appearances, because you might not be willing to do what they do and, even if you are -- everybody is different. Case in point? Tiger Woods has a golf coach, and I assume that he's not a better golfer than Tiger Woods. An expert has taken the time to study the craft, and the best trainers have a deep understanding of how the body works. Just because somebody has abs, it doesn't mean that he or she can help you get them for yourself.

MYTH #3: Trainers Are Paid a Salary

It's rare to find a trainer on a salary. Most of us get paid when we work. Also, in many gyms (especially large commercial gyms), there is a lot of pressure to hit sales targets. While I respect the hustle, this means that many trainers view the job in the wrong light. The best way to get and retain clients was and, always will be, to do a great job. But when a client cancels last minute and the trainer doesn't get paid, the job becomes stressful to the point where it's impossible to serve our clients. Even though you're paying for an hour session, recognize that at least an hour of preparation time has been put into that session in designing the program, scheduling and researching.

MYTH #4: Trainers Love to See You in Pain

Delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) occurs when your body does unaccustomed work. Any exercise you do that is different makes you sore. What's making you sore might also be helping you build muscle, but pain does not need to be present in order for growth to occur and, in many cases, it is counterintuitive. The truth is that the more intense the delayed pain, the fewer high intensity training sessions you can engage in. Hypertrophy (muscle gain) occurs via three primary mechanisms: mechanical stress, metabolic stress and muscle damage. A trainer monitors soreness because it's an indicator of how your recovery mechanisms are working. To get stronger and look better, you don't always need to be sore, and it's not (or at least shouldn't be) your trainer's goal.

MYTH #5: A Trainer's Job Is to Help You Lose Weight

Running a 5,000-meter race or losing 10 pounds are terrible goals by themselves. It's not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) to set such goals without solid reasons to back them up. Without those reasons, the numbers are arbitrary. A goal of losing 10 pounds always should have a deeper reason. Losing 10 pounds is the process by which to accomplish a greater goal, whether it is to fit back into your favorite outfit, look better naked, impress your in-laws or something else altogether. Ask yourself "why" you want to lose weight three times to figure out what your real goal is. Sticking to an exercise program is hard work. There are times when you'll

want to quit, especially in the beginning phases. Without understanding your “why,” you will have a harder time sticking to achieving your goal. A trainer helps you make SMART goals.

MYTH #6: You Have to Confuse the Body

Keeping the body guessing is not a good way to get fit. A trainer doesn't need to teach you something new every day -- they need to teach you how to do something better. All of the most important movements you can do in the gym should come rather naturally. Perhaps you still know how to perform them or maybe your body has forgotten over years of inactivity or improper use. Either way, what's most important is learning how to generate as much tension throughout a proper movement as possible. Trainers don't need to teach fancy new exercises. Instead, they should focus on teaching you how you should be feeling throughout a movement. Form and consistency are fundamental.

MYTH #7: Hiring a Trainer is Enough

Most trainers don't go into the business to get rich. While I can't speak for everybody, most trainers I know had their lives changed by finding fitness and decided to make it their goal to spread that passion. Because of this, trainers get frustrated when their clients don't do their homework and adhere to a prescribed nutrition and workout plan. We don't get angry with you; we get frustrated because we desperately want to help. Your success is our success -- both personally and financially. So, if something is wrong and you don't like the program, you need to tell us. If not, get it done. Even if you work out with a trainer three times a week, there are still 165 hours a week that you're on your own.

MYTH #8: You Need to Work Yourself Up to the Gym

Please stop thinking this! Personal trainers are trained to work with people at all levels. Some specialize in working with people new to training, while others focus on the advanced; in either case, we're here to help. The gym is meant to be an inclusive place where everybody is welcome, and if you're not comfortable for any reason, let your trainer know. We understand that you might be nervous stepping into a gym for the first time, but there's no better time than the present. If you don't feel comfortable in the gym you're using, change locations and find one you enjoy. Building a community with other exercisers is a great incentive.

MYTH #9: Trainers Also Supply an Intricate Diet Plan

This is a bit of a sticky subject, and the rules do change depending on where you live. In most places across North America, trainers may advise you on nutrition as long as that advice doesn't extend beyond government guidelines. That said, few trainers have adequate training in nutrition. A trainer may be knowledgeable if your situation mimics his or her own, but much of his or her research will have been on his or her own nutrition; trainers often don't know what the proper guidelines are for you. There are exceptions, but a trainer's job is primarily exercise. If you're looking for in-depth nutrition guidance, there are professionals – such as registered dietitians – who can work in tandem with your trainer.

MYTH #10: One hour Is the Absolute Perfect Amount of Time for a Workout

Most personal trainers hate the one-hour session. Workout protocols change depending on the goal of the session. A fast-paced metabolic workout might require 30-40 minutes, while an intense hypertrophy (muscle gain) workout could be as long as one hour and 30 minutes. If a trainer ends a session in 50 minutes, it's not because he or she is hungry or slacking, but because that was the optimal time to accomplish the goals of that training session. Trainers have to maintain a schedule and because of that, we have to stick to charging for either 30 minutes or 1 hour. Think of it this way: You're not paying for an hour of the trainer's time; you're paying for the accumulated knowledge that the trainer has spent years acquiring.

MYTH #11: The Workout Is the Most Important Part

If it feels like you've hired a trainer to give you 10 exercises and stand over you while you sweat to make sure that you count properly, you're getting ripped off. Requirements for an exercise program are basic for most beginners. A trainer's job, first and foremost, is to get you to want to do the program and the workouts. It's our job to get you comfortable, confident and looking forward to coming into the gym. Hopefully we know how to count, too.

MYTH #12: You Have to Train in Person

I love online personal training. With the advances in technology, more trainers are taking their services partially online. There are four main reasons why online training is great for the client: First, it's often a cheaper solution. Training one-on-one can get costly very quick. Second, it's location independent. If you live in a remote area where there isn't a gym or you're not confident in the abilities of the trainers close to you, this is a good option. Third, matching your schedule with your trainer's schedule can be a pain. Training online helps avoid the problem. Finally, online training allows you to research and find an expert in dealing with your specific needs.

10. STRONGER 8-Week Online Workout Program

These 10 body-shredding HIIT, strength and plyometrics workouts were created by celebrity trainer Nicky Holender to get your body looking like you've spent hours at the gym in just 30 minutes a day. The workouts are challenging and fun and there is no equipment needed, so you can do them in your living room, your bedroom, your basement or a hotel room. Best of all, they are completely free and you can view them anywhere you have an internet connection – on your laptop, your mobile phone and/or tablet. PRICE: FREE.