

Keeping Personal & Professional Desire Alive

(The following essay was inspired by and includes significant references to chapter 30 of Douglas Brooks excellent text "The Complete Book of Personal Training". Although Douglas has very kindly given his permission for me to use his work in this way I highly recommend you hunt down and read the chapter for yourself.)

From time to time we all can find ourselves in the dreaded rut of one-to-one training. Programming ideas seem to dry up and our energy and creative juices are just not quite there. What once captivated us now we find mundane and boring and if you've ever privately hoped that the next client might cancel its time to step out and re-evaluate.

One of my greatest challenges as a conditioning specialist is to truly keep the desire burning, I know my success is dependant on it. We need to make sure that from all angles our business and everything connected to it remains fresh, sharp and positive. We need to continually develop and grow both personally and professionally in order that we can deliver top draw training and the highest calibre service to clients, day after day after day!

Why Do We Burn Out?

Personal training and conditioning is physically and emotionally draining, even though I love what I do. Only when I acknowledge this fully and begin to recognise the signs in myself am I able to keep the desire alive consistently. We need to take care of ourselves, creating the right balance for us as individuals to demonstrate our true potential and experience real job satisfaction.

The greatest danger I face in this domain is myself; we are very often our own worst enemies. Over-scheduling of appointments, early starts and late finishes, not enough sleep, too little quality training of our own, lack of personal development or recreation time, inability to say no to clients...etc. I have rarely met trainers who do not suffer from "significant cognitive dissonance"; what they are doing and how they are working and living is far removed from intellectually what they know they should be doing or want to be doing. My experience tells me that as this "gap" increases the chances of burnout increase.

Strategies To Keep The Fire Burning (Common sense...yes, common practice...no!)

- Learn to be honest with ourselves about how we feel.
- Don't be ashamed or embarrassed to say no to clients.
- Start living right, make sure we sleep right, eat right and train right on a regular basis.
- Plan and schedule down time within our day or week (under no circumstances re-schedule clients in this time!!!) For me this is Friday afternoon, this is my time, it can be for sitting in the garden and thinking over business or personal challenges, meeting my partner for a walk in the park or for playing golf which is my passion. It's your time, you decide.

- Set personal goals, think about what you want from life and create a plan to help you achieve it.
- Decide how many **top quality** sessions you can deliver in one day and the time of day you are at your best. Then work within that time and session number.
- Never compromise yourself, your values or morals, even if it means losing a client.
- Build a management style that reflects assertiveness, fairness, listening, decision making and time management.

How Much Do You REALLY Enjoy What You Do?

We will all experience some kind of burnout at one time or another. If you address the issues I mention above and things are still not right, then perhaps you need to consider one or two other things.

- Do you believe your services are special and valued?

If not your energy, passion and business will flounder.

- Why do you do this work?

If the joy has disappeared, you need to take a closer look at where the pain is truly emanating from. Honestly chat with friends, colleagues and family. This may help you re-ignite your love or show you that other business or career opportunities interest you more now. Maybe you need to let go...or not?

How To Keep You & Your Conditioning Fresh?

Advancing Professional Growth

I remember 15 years ago when I completed my first fitness training course, I thought I knew everything, that was it, my fitness education was over. I was set for stardom. 15 years later I realise how little I know and how much there is to learn. It reminds me of a beautiful quote, I believe from Mark Twain:

“When I was 16 I couldn’t believe how stupid my father was. When I was 20, I couldn’t believe how much he had learnt in 4 years”

As a conditioning specialist / personal trainer, the day you stop learning is the day you close the business. Become a sponge for learning and information, pursue new information and updates, it can be hugely motivating and rewarding to feel you are continually progressing and staying as current in your field as is possible.

Striving for Professional Diversity

When we start out it makes sense to focus on the areas we feel we do well. As we mature and complete additional training and develop additional skills we can help

clients in a far more diverse way. Carefully diversifying can be an excellent way of maintaining our enthusiasm for our work.

Keeping the Focus on The Client

Although we should attempt to keep our training goal orientated, the challenge is to maximise the client workout based on their capacity that day and their emotional and physical status at a given moment.

Preserving A Personal Life

Douglas Brooks puts it this way:

“ (previously) I spoke of the greed/ego syndrome. Trainers must differentiate and preserve personal life from business life. A steady diet of training with no relief is a sure set up for failure. The key to personal training is consistent service that is of high quality and orientated to the client on a very personal level. If you’re exhausted, unfulfilled personally or otherwise distracted, you cannot keep the necessary service edge.”

(Complete Book of Personal Training p.536)

Final Thoughts

How do we remain energetic and not let the training jungle crush our spirit. Remember if you find a training session physically, emotionally or mentally demanding, lift your head and look up, you’re in great company it happens to all of us some times. If you are following the strategies to keep your personal and professional fire burning, then some final thoughts to help re-evaluate on a daily basis:

- Present an attitude that you care
- Present an attitude of service (its not always clients who need the attitude makeover!)
- The workout is always the clients
- Maintain hands-on correction and verbal and visual cues, “stay involved and present”
- Be firm in the belief that something worthwhile can and will be achieved in every workout
- Be flexible to client mood while maintaining direction toward goals
- Be true to yourself, maintain your style, you have one whether you know it or not.