

*Million Dollar Baby Fitness*

# 21 SIGNS THAT YOU NEED TO **FIRE YOUR COACH** OR TRAINER



Whether you're a fitness model, a fitness competitor,  
or just training to get into shape, these 21 tips  
will save you from being sabotaged by a bad coach or trainer.

*Fabian Colussi*

## ***21 Signs That You Need to Fire Your Coach or Trainer***

*3rd Edition*

**This book is a free gift to you, from *Million Dollar Baby Fitness*.**

**You are free to share this e-book, provided that:**

- It is shared in its complete and unedited form, and not modified, cut down, added to, re-branded, or condensed in any way.
- No changes are made to its content and format.
- All references to [www.milliondollarbabyfitness.com](http://www.milliondollarbabyfitness.com), Fabian Colussi and Gloria Kaneko remain intact and unchanged.
- It is not sold for commercial or monetary gain.

### **Million Dollar Baby Fitness**

PO Box 3157

Bankstown Central NSW 2200

AUSTRALIA

**Website:** <https://www.milliondollarbabyfitness.com>

**Email:** [fabian@milliondollarbabyfitness.com](mailto:fabian@milliondollarbabyfitness.com)

Copyright ©2021 www.milliondollarbabyfitness.com & MPR Media Pty. Ltd.

All rights reserved.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this book may be reproduced or copied in any form, in any language, whether by photocopying, graphic, visual, electronic, filming, audio recording or any other means, including email, without the prior written permission of the author.

---

# **21 SIGNS THAT YOU NEED TO FIRE YOUR COACH OR TRAINER**

FABIAN COLUSSI

---

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Preface	2
Introduction	5
#1 – He’s Lazy	7
#2 – He Engages in Dangerous Practices	9
#3 – He Answers Questions With, <i>“Because I Said So”</i>	11
#4 – He Equates Success With Hardcore-ness	12
#5 – He Relies on Past Accomplishments For Validation	13
#6 – He’s Arrogant	14
#7 – He Doesn’t Treat You as an Individual	15
#8 – He’s Inaccessible	16
#9 – He Believes in Progress at all Costs	17
#10 – He Tells You to <i>“Just Follow the Plan”</i>	19
#11 – He’s Always Negative and Blames <i>You</i> For Lack of Progress	20
#12 – He Has a Huge Client Base	22
#13 – He Shoots For Rapid Results	24
#14 – He’s More a Drill Sergeant Than a Trainer	26
#15 – He Never Says, <i>“I Don’t Know”</i>	28
#16 – There’s Always Only One Right Way to Him	30
#17 – He Doesn’t Understand How the Metabolism Works	32
#18 – He Doesn’t Respect Your Specific Goals	34
#19 – He Prescribes Your Exact Diet Plan	35
#20 – He Makes Use of “Secrets” or Pseudo-Science	37
#21 – He’s Closed-Minded With Regards to Advancements	39
Parting Words	41

## **PREFACE**

The very first fitness competitor that Gloria (Kaneko – the other half of Million Dollar Baby Fitness) and I ever met was a woman who had competed only once in her life, in the Figure division. It was at the NSW Health & Fitness Expo that we met, and she swore she would never go through that ordeal again.

As she spoke to Gloria and me about the experience, I could see the utter disillusionment in her eyes. Her training had been extremely rough, she said, her dieting had been absolutely terrible, and after the show her weight exploded. I don't know how she had done in the contest, it didn't really matter.

When we met her, she was very clearly overweight. After looking as good as she did on stage, that was obviously very tough for her to deal with mentally and emotionally. She told us that when she secured a coach for her training and preparation, his words to her were *"Just do everything I say and I'll get you to the stage"*. Well, true to his word, he did just that. But at what cost?

The experiences of Gloria in competition have been just the opposite. Her first Figure contest was in October of 2012, where she placed 3rd in her division at state level. Since then she has competed as a natural athlete in sixteen more IFBB Figure shows at state and national levels, including three Arnold Classic Australia events, earning three more placings and narrowly missing out on several more.

Even though her lifestyle as a competition athlete is of course very challenging and involves a lot of dedication and sacrifice, she enjoys every aspect of what she does. In fact, she loves it. And competing on stage is one of the most exciting and fulfilling things she has ever experienced in her life.

So why such a contrast between the experiences of these two women? Some of it of course comes down to the individuals themselves, and their reasons for wanting to compete. But a major part without question was the coaching.





It's no different for someone simply wanting to lose weight and get into shape. The experience, although always challenging, can be painful and frustrating or it can be reasonably smooth and not too unpleasant. Again, a big part comes down to your coach or trainer, and/or how you go about it.

Hopefully throughout this book you'll see that just because you have a coach or a trainer by your side, it doesn't necessarily mean that he's someone you can rely on to make everything run as smoothly and efficiently as possible for you. As with all professions, there are both good and bad ones out there, and you need to be wary about falling in with the wrong crowd, so to speak.



If something doesn't feel right, you don't have to put up with it. Move on to someone that's a better fit for you. The old *"this is what it takes"* line isn't always true, I'm afraid. Success in weight loss or competition is not proportional to the amount of misery you have to endure. And there is never, ever, any excuse or justification for dangerous or unhealthy practices.

You may be tempted to think that much of what you'll read in this book is all very well and good for the "average" person, but it doesn't apply to you. Because you're *serious* about your fitness. Maybe your goal is to become an IFBB Pro, and even to stand on the Olympia stage someday.

So *safe* and *conservative* aren't words in your vocabulary. You're prepared to go the extra mile – to put up with a bit more than the next person, if that's what it takes to get to the top. Well, guess what? This applies to you just as much as it does to anyone else. In fact, maybe even more so. Top level training programs can be grueling enough, even without the needless torture imposed by bad coaches.

My major motivation for writing this book were the dozens of stories I hear on a regular basis about the unhealthy, dangerous and unnecessary practices that many competition athletes, both amateur and pro, are subjected to by their coaches. It's truly shocking. There's a real culture in a large area of the competition fitness world of success through extreme measures.

Don't buy into this. It's just a lie that's propagated by incompetent coaches who simply don't know any other way. And believe me, there are a lot of them.

Before I started coaching Gloria for her Figure competitions, she was a member of a very well-known and successful overseas coaching team. She was with them for exactly twelve months. Under their online coaching program she quickly became leaner than she ever had been before. Needless to say, we were both very impressed.

Over time however, as our learning curve in the world of competition fitness quickly progressed, it became very clear to us that her results that first year weren't so much due to the genius and effectiveness of the program she was following, as much as the enormous amount of grueling work (especially cardio) she had to put herself through.

Let's face it, any coach can get his client to achieve good results by simply working her into the ground. In fact, she can just as easily do that on her own, without his help. That's just not good enough from a professional coach. Any client/athlete should expect and deserves far better than that.



These days, Gloria is of course able to successfully get into contest shape with far less work and misery than she did in that first year – we've since replaced the old, "brute force" approach to training and preparation of her first "coach" with something far more sensible and scientific. The difference an athlete can experience through coaching changes really can be like night and day.

So the lesson here is to always keep your eyes and your mind open. Never just assume your coach is legit or that he knows what he's doing. Unfortunately, some bad coaches can be very convincing. Question everything. Hopefully the 21 points in this book will help you to do just that, and allow you to quickly sense when something is amiss and therefore avoid too much heartache.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coaches and personal trainers hold a very privileged position. We rely on them for good advice and guidance on our health and fitness – something that's obviously pretty important. And yet for some reason, we don't always hold them accountable to a very high standard.

When you consult with a doctor, a dentist, or any other type of highly-educated medical professional, you expect a lot from them. You expect them to be totally professional, dependable, trustworthy, unfailingly knowledgeable, and of course to have your very best interests at heart.

You don't expect them to make mistakes, or to be careless with their diagnoses and advice. Now, we all know that even doctors are human and can, and do, make mistakes. But we like to think that it's a rarity, and generally speaking, it pretty much is.

But with coaches and trainers it's a different story. We understand that their level of education and training is nowhere near that of a medical professional. So naturally we know that we can't expect quite as much from them.

We're also often led to believe that fitness and weight loss can sometimes be a somewhat hit-or-miss affair. Bad genes, big bones, and all that. So of course when your desired health and fitness outcome fails to materialize, again, they get the benefit of the doubt. You accept that a large part of your results is on your own shoulders.

While both these modes of thinking are quite rational and understandable, they can, however, potentially lead to a couple of serious issues.

Firstly and most importantly, you need to always keep in mind that you're placing some level of responsibility over your health and well-being on these people's shoulders. Not always, but in some cases, even to the same degree as a doctor. The fact is, irresponsibility and negligence on the part of coaches and trainers can and sometimes do lead to serious health outcomes for clients.



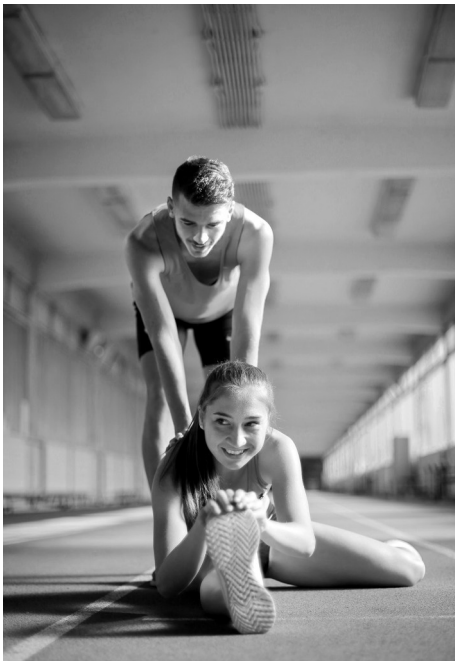


Don't believe me?

Well, apart from the obvious risk of training injuries, which can themselves sometimes become lifelong conditions, how about issues like stroke, passing out from dehydration, and displaced organs requiring surgical correction?

These are all conditions that I personally have heard about happening as a result of negligent coaching. Pretty scary stuff, I'm sure you'll agree.

Secondly, there's the simple fact that you're paying these specialized individuals for their services, so you should naturally expect reasonable results for your money. It's not good enough to simply accept that things didn't work out, or that it's all your fault that you didn't see any results.



Of course, if you in fact do fail to put the necessary effort in, you must personally accept some of the responsibility for failure as well.

But the fact is, just as in any profession there are terrible trainers, great trainers, and everything in between. So if getting into shape is important enough for you to pay a trainer for, it's certainly worth doing your best to find a good one. I believe that this book will help you do just that.

In the following pages are 21 signs that you should fire your coach or trainer, and look for someone who will help you successfully get the results you're looking for. This information applies whether you're just a casual gym-goer trying to get into shape, an amateur or professional fitness model, or an amateur or pro competition athlete.

I would say however that the higher the level of development you're hoping to attain, the greater the negative implications of poor coaching or training, and therefore the more vital it is that you understand this information and take measures against any coaching problem as soon as you recognize it.

By the way, these 21 signs of course apply equally to both male and female coaches and trainers, however throughout this book I'll be referring to them as being of the male gender, purely for the sake of simplicity. Sorry guys!

## **HE'S LAZY**

# 1

A lazy trainer really is one of my pet peeves, because there's no simply excuse for it. As a client of a lazy trainer, you will be in the unfortunate position of having to bear the cost of substandard service. Generally speaking, there are five main things that a lazy trainer does wrong:

### **1 He doesn't design effective programs.**

A lazy coach or trainer can't be bothered putting the effort into creating a program that's tailored to you personally, to your abilities and your goals. Instead he just relies on template programs that are the same or similar for everyone. That's much easier.

He also isn't prepared to take the time to make his programs as healthy, effective and as interesting as possible, by incorporating features such as variety, periodization, progression, deloads, and so on.

### **2 He doesn't prepare properly for a training session.**



A lazy coach or trainer comes to his training sessions unprepared and without any session plan. He's simply happy to "wing it". Some more experienced trainers feel they have this right because they have everything in their head, so to speak.

That may be so, but the bottom line is that a session plan that has had some thought and planning put into it is always going to be more productive than something that's merely "good enough".

A lazy trainer may feel that the extra time and effort involved in creating a well thought-out session plan isn't justified for the amount of difference it will make to your results. If you're a fitness model or especially a competitor, this trainer unquestionably doesn't have what it takes to produce the results you're looking for.

But even if you're just trying to get fit and healthy however, you most likely can do much better with someone else.

### **3 He puts no effort or interest into his training sessions.**

In the training session itself your trainer's time and attention should be devoted to you and only you. All the time. That means no wandering off for a chat while you're working through a few sets, no checking out the talent in the gym, no texting, no Tweeting, no working out the next client's session plan, etc.

He should be checking your form diligently, instructing you, encouraging you, counting your reps, and being present mentally and physically the whole time.

This is essential to ensuring that you're working out effectively and safely, and to keeping you motivated and interested in the training. Which brings me to the next point:

### **4 He lacks enthusiasm and passion.**

Working out is tough. That's precisely why so many people start out with the best of intentions and yet ultimately end up throwing in the towel.

Whether your trainer agrees with me or not, the fact is that keeping you interested and motivated is part of his job. That's what a good trainer does, especially if we want to have a lot of happy clients. He's providing you a service. And the more you enjoy and feel good about his service, the longer you're going to stick with him. And the better your results will be.



Lack of energy and drive in a trainer will pretty soon rub off on you, and you'll be looking for the exit door. I don't blame you.

### **5 He doesn't record and discuss your progress.**

Your trainer should be logging your workout session each and every time, otherwise it simply isn't possible to prescribe an effective program for you on an ongoing basis, nor to prepare for your following session. He'll have no idea whether you're improving, stagnant or going backwards, or whether your program is working great or needs tweaking. He should also be discussing your progress with you regularly so that you're both always on the same page.

## **HE ENGAGES IN DANGEROUS PRACTICES**

# 2

It always annoys me to read articles listing so-called dangerous exercises that you should “never” perform, for two reasons. Firstly, oftentimes these articles mention exercises that are in fact perfectly safe. And secondly, no exercise is dangerous if it’s performed properly. On the other hand, even safe exercises can be dangerous if performed improperly.

So in other words, there are no such things as dangerous exercises, only dangerous practices.

There are two main ways in which a questionable coach or trainer can have you doing something dangerous in the gym. One is simply by not watching you for correct form during an exercise, especially the riskier ones, and especially if you’re not yet very experienced.



The other is by allowing you to use excessive weight, or *any* weight before you’re ready for it. I see this all the time in the gym, but more so among gym goers training on their own (as in, without a trainer) and of course, more so among guys.

But it happens with inexperienced trainers as well. I have a friend, in fact, who found herself in physiotherapy for this very reason. After some time away from training she was assigned an inexperienced personal trainer for her free complimentary session upon starting at a new gym. He unwisely had her squatting with weight on her first day and the rest, as they say, is history.

Your safety should always be at the forefront of your trainer’s mind in the gym, and he should never allow you to get ahead of yourself.

But the risks don’t necessarily end when you leave the gym. Many coaches and trainers can prescribe a number of unhealthy and even dangerous substances and non-training practices to their clients, especially for fitness models and for competitors, for whom this kind of thing is unfortunately virtually epidemic.

Here are some examples of what I'm talking about:

- Excessively low calorie intake (starvation).
- Excessive cardio exercise.
- Inappropriate use of performance-enhancing or fat-loss drugs.
- Use of unhealthy supplements.
- Unhealthy use of diuretics.
- Extreme cutting of salt and water.
- Loading potassium while dehydrated (a potential death sentence).

As I mentioned, these practices are more common with competition athletes than clients simply looking to lose weight. Granted, some of these strategies *can* be implemented safely and effectively by an experienced and competent coach to get an edge in competition. But from my experience, I find that more often than not they're used to compensate for a coach's shortcomings and/or they're used dangerously or improperly.

Throughout my years as competition coach, I have seen or heard about things like competitors passing out backstage from dehydration, bikini competitors whose coaches insist they must take steroids (a clear indication of their ineptitude), and perhaps the craziest of all – a female competitor who had to smear Vaseline on her teeth to enable her to smile on stage – she was so dehydrated that she had no saliva.

Whether or not you're a competition athlete, if your coach or trainer is making any of these mistakes, either for you or for his other clients, you have to be skeptical about his knowledge, competence and understanding of health and safety.



If he has *you* engaging in any of these practices, it's important that you educate yourself by doing your own research and/or talking to others, so that you're well aware of the risks involved. It's far too dangerous to put your trust in just one individual where your health is involved, no matter how strongly he may insist that "this is what it takes to be at the top".



## **HE ANSWERS QUESTIONS WITH, “BECAUSE I SAID SO”**

# 3

As a paying client of your coach or trainer, it really isn't too much to ask to have him explain why you're doing something, or doing something a certain way. There's absolutely no excuse for being unwilling to answer any question that relates to the services he's providing you with, which as I said, you're paying for.

But there *is* a reason.

In my experience, any coach or trainer who's confident in his own abilities and knowledge is only too happy to pass some of it on to others. In fact, they actually *love* the teaching aspect of their job. It gives them a real buzz.



This is especially true if he's actively involved in furthering his own knowledge on an ongoing basis. This type of coach actually enjoys nothing more than engaging in conversation about the science of fitness and training, whether it's with a colleague, a client, or anyone else who's interested.

If your coach or trainer isn't willing to discuss the reasoning behind some of his decisions or techniques with you then it's a clear indication that he's not confident about himself, his knowledge, or what he's doing. It's time for you to move on.

It might sound like an overreaction but really it's not, this one is another deal breaker. This trainer is someone who merely likes to do things the way they've always been done, maybe because they worked for him back in the day, and therefore doesn't like anyone threatening the status quo.

So he's almost certainly not keeping up with the latest research and science, and therefore not providing you with the benefits of the latest, most effective training strategies and programs. At the end of the day, that means that you need to work harder for your results rather than smarter. No bueno.

## **HE EQUATES SUCCESS WITH hardcore-NESS**

# 4

If your coach or trainer believes that the more fatigued, exhausted and especially sore you are after a workout, the more effective it has been, he simply doesn't understand his own field. The same goes if he considers you throwing up during or after a workout as a good thing.

Obviously if you've put a lot of effort into your workout you should expect to feel tired afterwards, but by the same token you should also expect to be able to recover in a reasonable amount of time. If you're still fatigued when your next workout comes around, and you keep this cycle up ad infinitum, then sooner or later, something is going to give.

In any training program there can be specific periods of overreaching and that's fine, but only if they're programmed appropriately and not just done as a matter of course. Just like an eating program, an effective workout program needs to be sensible and sustainable, and to fit in with the rest of your lifestyle.



As far as soreness goes, it too is an inevitable part of training, but it's simply wrong for your trainer to think that the more sore you are, the more progress you've made. That just isn't the case and he should know better.

But expecting unreasonable hardcore-ness isn't necessarily just limited to the gym. If your coach believes that unless you do things like limit yourself to just a few approved, "ultra-clean" foods, bring pre-prepared, clean meals to your wedding anniversary dinner in a Tupperware container, or hit the gym on Christmas day then you're just not serious about getting into shape or competing, then basically, he's an idiot.

Making ridiculous sacrifices and making your life a total misery will not facilitate your success. All aspects of your fitness plan need to be sustainable and to fit in with your lifestyle. In fact, sustainability is probably *the* most important attribute, because if you can't stick with your program then sooner or later you're obviously going to wind up right back where you started.

## **HE RELIES ON PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR VALIDATION**

# 5

OK, so your coach or trainer was a champion athlete, bodybuilder, or whatever, back in the day. Or maybe even a current one for that matter. So what? That has no bearing on what type of coach he is. And that should be what really matters to you.

It could be that he's particularly gifted genetically or athletically, for example. And just because he personally has achieved success, it doesn't necessarily mean he'll know how to teach, motivate and encourage others, or design effective workout programs, or assess proper form. It also doesn't mean that he's continuing to further his knowledge of fitness – we talked about that a little earlier.



For example, I've personally seen several past and present fitness competitors instruct exercises in online videos incorrectly. You would generally expect these individuals to know better than pretty much anyone else, but it simply isn't always the case.

Advances are always being made in the field of health and fitness, so no one can afford to live in the past and to stop learning. To do so is to move backwards. The past is the past, and your trainer should be judged on his performance and abilities today.

Sure, there's nothing wrong with a trainer being proud of his accomplishments. And in fact, as a current or former athlete or competitor he can most likely give you many unique and valuable insights into training or how to achieve your goals.

But if that's all he has going for him, and that's what he relies on to validate his abilities and use as an excuse to avoid having to learn anything new, then I'm sorry, that just isn't good enough. A background "in the trenches" is great, but it isn't the most important thing on his resume. Being a great coach is. After all that's what you're paying him for and relying on him to be.

## **HE'S ARROGANT**

# 6

Unfortunately, there's no shortage of arrogant trainers around who believe they're almighty and know it all. This is without a doubt one of the top three worst personality traits to have in a coach or trainer. Not only because it's annoying and emotionally draining to be around people like this, but also because it will never allow them to learn anything new.

A good coach or trainer will always be learning, via research, talking to other experts, and also, believe it or not, from his clients. That's why experience is so valuable, because experience gives a coach the opportunity to learn from many individuals – what works, what doesn't, how they respond physically and mentally to different protocols, and so on. Unfortunately however, arrogance is a surefire ticket to a closed mind.



Dr. Layne Norton, one of the most well-known and sought-after bodybuilding competition coaches out there, rates humility as one of the very top traits to look for in a coach. A coach or trainer who's humble is one that's always aware that he's not perfect and will therefore always have an open mind and a desire to learn more. That's exactly what you want.

I realize that I have repeated myself several times on the issue of a trainer's constant learning. That's because it's very important. Fitness is an area where unfortunately, antiquated ideas can easily fly under the radar, because often clients understandably don't know any better.

A trainer that speaks down to you and others is often also insecure, or he can also be on an ego trip. Either way, it doesn't help you. You pay your coach or trainer your hard-earned money to provide you with a service, so he's working for you. It's not the other way around.

He has no right to make you feel as though it's a privilege to train with him. And if he does, it's time for you to find someone who's there for *you*, not for the benefit of his own agenda.

## **HE DOESN'T TREAT YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

# 7

Your coach or trainer should always treat you as a unique individual, both in terms of your program and how he interacts with you. If he doesn't, he's either lazy or just not very good at his job.

Any trainer worth his salt should know that every client is different physically and psychologically, and what works for one client won't necessary work as well for you. Added to that, every client is pursuing different goals. A trainer who trains everyone in the same way therefore is simply being lazy. I've already discussed that in the first point.

A good trainer knows that he needs to treat every client as a unique personality with unique circumstances. Some respond better to being encouraged to push harder than others. Some are more motivated or confident than others, and are more prepared to challenge themselves. Some get discouraged more quickly than others and need more positive reinforcement.



There are also other factors he should be taking into account that are just as important. How much experience exercising do you have? How much time are you able to work out each week? Do you have any injuries or are you prone to injuries? Do you have a preference for any particular style of training? How active or inactive is your lifestyle? And so on.

You probably won't know how your trainer deals with other clients, but what's important is how he is with you. If he is indeed treating you as an individual, you'll know it. You'll just "click", and feel as though he's on the same page. It will be a pleasure to work with him and you'll really enjoy the entire process.

If you often feel frustrated with your program or with what you're being asked to do, on the other hand, then that's an indication that something's wrong. It's important to communicate your concerns with your trainer because sometimes it can be the result of a misunderstanding or miscommunication. If then things continue to not feel right, it will be time to move on.



## **HE'S INACCESSIBLE**

# 8

This is an issue that's relevant mostly to fitness competitors, whose coach will generally have them on a training and/or nutrition program and leaving them to work mostly on their own, or at very least a good part of the time. Your average gym personal trainer won't be expected to be accessible outside of session times, but for competition coaches it's a different story.

Competitors make substantial sacrifices as far as their lifestyle goes to achieve an elite level of fitness, and they often rely heavily on their coach to guide and support them along the way. Sometimes that can extend to emotional support as well.

It's not uncommon therefore for an athlete to need to contact their coach unexpectedly from time to time for a number of possible reasons. It might be for some clarification about their program, for advice on some situation that may have arisen, or even just for some support when she needs it. This is especially important as contest time draws near.



That doesn't mean of course that you can expect your coach to answer your phone calls at 4:00am, or to come and collect you from a party after you've been drinking (usually). But during reasonable hours and for relevant reasons, he should be reasonably easily accessible to you.

It's not good enough to contact your coach about something that's obviously important to your training and/or preparation, only to have him get back to you a few days later. He should be getting back to you promptly, and certainly within 12 hours at the outside. With today's technology it's not hard to do.

You want to know that your coach will be there for you when you need him, and that you're getting an appropriate level of personalized attention from him. If you're not, then either he has too many clients to handle or maybe he just isn't as concerned with your progress and success as he should be.

## **HE BELIEVES IN PROGRESS AT ALL COSTS**

# 9

Progress with your fitness program is obviously very important. After all, if it wasn't, you wouldn't be enlisting the help of a coach or trainer. But you also have to consider what achieving that progress entails. The fact is, there are right ways and wrong ways to get results with your fitness, whether or not you're a fitness model or competition athlete.

Your coach or trainer should firstly understand that everyone progresses at different rates, so while regular progression in the gym may be attainable on an almost-weekly basis by some people, for others it simply isn't. You can't get blood out of a stone, and he needs to be sensitive to your capabilities, not put you in harm's way or have unrealistic expectations of you.

Secondly, some trainers are prepared to resort to extreme measures in the name of progress, either to compensate for their own shortcomings, or to overcome your difficulties in seeing results in what he might consider to be a timely manner. This is true whether you're a competition athlete or simply a more casual gym-goer.



Earlier I mentioned the example of bikini competitors being forced by coaches to take steroids. Gloria and I personally know of one case in which a woman wishing to compete for the first time sought out a suitable coach, and the first two she interviewed made it clear that unless she was prepared to take steroids, they wouldn't be willing to take her on.

The bikini division doesn't require significant levels of muscular development, relatively speaking. In fact, it's fair to say that the physical preparation required to be successful in this division is very much achievable naturally, with the right know-how.

And therein lies the problem. So many coaches simply don't have that basic know-how. And they therefore place unhealthy demands on their poor, unsuspecting clients to compensate. Oftentimes they get away with this by insisting that it's simply the level of commitment and sacrifice necessary to get to the top ranks. This, of course, is utter garbage.

This issue however isn't just limited to the taking of drugs. An equally inept coach with an ineffective training and nutrition program will lead you to suffer negative effects of *metabolic adaptation* (more about this later), thereby greatly hindering your progress. To overcome this he might then resort to placing you on too low a calorie intake, or performing an inappropriate amount of cardio exercise each day, in an attempt to force your body to respond.

Again, you pay for his incompetence. These types of cases are unfortunately not isolated, but troublingly common in the world of competition athletes.

While measures such as these may achieve their objective and get you looking great, they will have done so at a cost. It may be at the detriment of your health, or the need for you to work many times harder than necessary by using brute force methods of making progress. You should never be made to pay the price for your coach's lack of expertise.

Slow progress may not always be your trainer's fault, it may just happen to be that you're a slow developer. Either way, no coach likes to see his client failing to achieve results, or doing so very slowly, as it can be seen as a bad reflection on his abilities.

That's no excuse, however, for encouraging progress the wrong way. Getting into shape is a lot of hard work and one of the major reasons you hire a coach or trainer is to make it as efficient and painless as possible, not unhealthy and more work than it needs to be.

It's important to talk to other people to get their experiences, and also to do your own research, so that you can make an assessment about whether or not your coach is actually doing a good job for you in this regard.

Not enough people take the time to do this. It's shocking how often I hear fitness competitors' stories of being on calorie intakes of 600 to 800 calories a day, and/or doing two hours of cardio daily, yet still struggling to lose any body fat, all the while believing that this is normal. It most definitely isn't normal and if you're experiencing these issues with your coach, your best solution is to run the other way. You've been unlucky enough to hook up with one of the worst.



## **HE TELLS YOU TO “JUST FOLLOW THE PLAN”**

10

When your coach or trainer advises you to *“just follow the plan”*, it indicates that he’s either lazy, too busy to give you personal attention, doesn’t understand fitness, or any combination of the above.

There’s absolutely no valid reason why you would need to follow a given plan implicitly, to the letter, with no possible deviations – even if it was devised specifically for you by ten of the world’s most powerful fitness minds. Fitness is never a rigid step-by-step process. It’s fluid and flexible. Things change. You change, your body changes, your situation changes, your lifestyle changes, and your goals change. So naturally, your program should also be able to change.

Regardless of what kind of eating program you’re following, there’s no reason you can’t switch foods around. There’s no reason you can’t replace one type of bicep curl for another. There’s no reason why you can’t do your cardio after your workout rather than before. And so on.



Of course, there will be cases where changing things around in your program isn’t optimal, where it *is* better one way than the other. Even so, being told to *“just follow the plan”* is inappropriate. If you feel the need or the desire to change something, your coach or trainer should be prepared to at very least discuss it with you.

He should listen to you and consider your reasons for wanting to change something, and then give you his opinion about what the best course of action is. He should also give you a sensible reason as to why he thinks that.

Telling you to *“just follow the plan”* is either an arrogant way for your coach or trainer to avoid having to take the time to hear your concerns, or it’s the result of his not understanding how changes to your program will influence your results. Either way, it’s a clear indication that he’s not great at his job.

## **HE'S ALWAYS NEGATIVE AND BLAMES YOU FOR LACK OF PROGRESS**

11

I mentioned earlier that a very important job of any coach or trainer is to encourage and motivate his clients. That means being positive towards them at all times and not bringing them down or discouraging them. This is especially important in the case of clients who lack confidence, are new to fitness, or who have been struggling for some time to get into shape.

That doesn't mean however that if he thinks you could be applying more effort or you're not working hard enough that he should simply keep it to himself. He should always be honest with you, and you shouldn't fault him for that. It's possible however to put this point across in a positive way, rather than berating you or calling you slack or lazy. That's just unprofessional and not acceptable.



One of the very worst things a coach or trainer can do is to blame you for slow progress. Slow progress may actually be the fault of him and/or his program, it may be a result of you not putting in the necessary effort, or it may be no one's fault.

It's his job however to do his very best for you in terms of designing an effective program, and to see to it that you execute it to the best of your ability. That's where the "coaching" part of his job comes in. He should understand you as an individual and know how to get the best out of you. For some clients he needs to be very encouraging and gentle with them, and for others, he needs to be a bit firmer.

It would of course be unfair of you to blame your coach for your own lack of effort though. You need to take some responsibility for that as well. And only you truly know how much effort you're putting in. As long as your coach or trainer is positive, encouraging and doing his best to keep you pushing yourself and moving forward, that's all you can ask. The rest is up to you. From that perspective, it's very much a team effort.



Even if, for whatever reason, you're only able or willing to put in a less than one hundred percent effort, you should both accept that that's OK and keep moving ahead in a positive way.

Your training sessions and your interactions with your coach should always be positive and optimistic, and as long as they are and he's continuing to do his best to encourage and motivate you, all is well. If you come away from your sessions feeling frustrated or inadequate on the other hand, he's falling short in his responsibilities.

Some coaches will become particularly difficult when your progress is slow because they take it as a personal indictment on their ability. They think it makes them look bad. If that's the case it's probably not going to work out between you, and you need to find someone with more patience, and perhaps less of an ego. I've come across several such trainers in my time who only seem to be enthusiastic about their job when they're with a client that appears to be in good shape and/or a high performer.



Amazingly, I've also actually heard of cases where competition coaches have fired their clients as a result of poor progress, either out of frustration at their own inability to get results from them, and/or for fear of it damaging their reputation as a coach. If this happens to you then it solves your problem, you're better off without him anyway.

It's very easy to coach someone who is a low-maintenance client and a rapid responder. Clients like that can make any trainer or coach look good. It takes a special coach, on the other hand, to squeeze out good results from someone that's tougher to work with or who has some impediment to progressing at the normally expected rate.

## **HE HAS A HUGE CLIENT BASE**

This one may seem counter-intuitive, since you would expect that a coach or trainer with a lot of clients is obviously popular and therefore must surely be great at what he does. In the case of personal trainers, this is generally true.

12

But as far as competition coaches go, there are some out there, often very well-known ones, who simply have way too many clients (or “team members”, as they sometimes refer to them as) for any individual client to get the appropriate level of personal attention. We’re talking hundreds of clients, all at the same time.

Athletes are often drawn into these teams purely based on their fame, reputation and star-quality, and the level of success among their better-known members. And while being involved with them may seem very glamorous at first, it’s usually a very different story when you look beneath the surface.

Gloria has had first hand experience with this in her first year of competition training.



Statistically speaking, within any large team of hundreds of athletes there will always be a small group of outliers who achieve particularly good results, and therefore success in competition. And this can easily be quite regardless of the standard of their coaching.

You therefore can’t assume that the success of this handful of

“superstars” within the team is representative of the results you personally will achieve, or that the quality of coaching you’re getting is of a high standard. It may be, but not necessarily.

Ask yourself what happened to the remaining hundreds of athletes in the team that haven’t achieved the same level of success and recognition. What results are they achieving? What are their experiences? How much attention is being paid to their progress? How helpful is the coach in supporting them with their

challenges? Chances are, the experiences of these clients will be far more representative of what you might expect yourself.

The other issue with large teams is the level of personalization you're actually receiving. Realistically, with hundreds of members, you're getting virtually none, if any at all, regardless of what your coach might claim. It simply isn't logistically possible. The truth is that in all likelihood you're receiving cookie-cutter workouts and diet plans that are exactly the same as everyone else's on the team.

As I mentioned, Gloria has had first-hand experience with this. During her first year of training for competition, before I took over as her coach, she was a member of such a large, high-profile competition team. And on one occasion, she was inadvertently emailed the wrong workout and meal plan for the week. The team member for whom the email was intended was actually a significantly larger woman than Gloria, and guess what?

Yep, that's right . . . her training and diet program were both identical. As I said, cookie cutter.

Sure, being a part of a well-known, glamorous competition team can have its perks. It can give you a sense of being part of something great. And that, as well as the example and support of some of your better-known team mates, can give you the motivation and inspiration to achieve more.

That's all well and good, but unfortunately it's no substitute for good coaching.

Even if you're an experienced exerciser or competition athlete, if you're serious about getting the best possible results, you need to make the shift to a real coach. Someone who has the time and focus to create a program that's tailored to work for you personally.

If your heart really is set on being a part of a high-profile team, then at very least you may want to consider supplementing your program with some guidance from a more personal coach, who can fill in for any shortcomings of your generic team-based plan.



## **HE SHOOTS FOR RAPID RESULTS**

Take a look at virtually any diet or weight loss program ad and chances are you'll hear talk about what amazing results you'll be able to achieve in an amazingly short period of time. That's because fast results sell – everyone loves the idea of being able to reach their goals quickly and easily.

13

The truth is however that fast results often times come with consequences. This is especially the case when you're dealing with fat loss. Your coach or trainer should hopefully understand this. Generally speaking, the faster you lose weight, the more it impacts your metabolism, which means the more your body will fight against you and oppose what you're trying to do. That's the very opposite of what you *should* be trying to achieve.



Not only that, rapid weight loss also increases the likelihood of you regaining the lost weight when you're done. Again, this is because of the metabolic adaptation it causes. This is what leads to yo-yo dieting and to what's known as "rebound". Rebound is particularly common among fitness competitors.

An interesting case study was done among 14 contestants of Season 8 of *The Biggest Loser* – a TV program where participants are made to lose weight very rapidly. Their average weight prior to filming was 328lb, after 30 weeks on the show it was 199lb (a loss of 39% at 4.3lb per week) and 6 years after their final on-camera weigh-in it was 290lb (an average regain of 70%).

Perhaps even more troubling, their *Resting Metabolic Rate* prior to filming was 2,607 kcals burned per day, after 30 weeks on the show it was 1,996 kcal/day (a decrease of 23% through metabolic adaptation) and 6 years after their final on-camera weigh-in it was 1,903 kcal/day. In other words, their metabolism had slowed by 27% long term and they needed to eat a massive 700 fewer calories a day to maintain their body weight. Pretty miserable, I'm sure you'll agree.

So then, why would your trainer try to get you to lose weight too fast?

Well, if he's a good trainer, he won't. But if he's simply interested in impressing people with his clients' results, or in enticing you to train with him through promises of rapid fat loss, he may do just that. A good trainer who's interested in your long-term success will explain the importance of slow, steady fat loss using a program that's easy to adhere to and sustainable long term, and that doesn't trash your metabolism.

What an appropriate rate of fat loss is depends very much on the individual, but only in rare circumstances, in the case where someone has a lot of weight to lose, would a fat loss target of more than two pounds per week be recommended. In most cases, half a pound to one pound a week is ideal, with the lower end of this range probably being preferable.

Your trainer may try to convince you that a rapid fat loss phase is the way to go, followed by a transition to a maintenance program. In this case he might argue that you can get into great looking shape sooner, which of course is very tempting especially if summer is approaching.

While this may be true, your program will be much harder to stick to because of the lower calorie intake and/or higher cardio workload. It will almost certainly also require a period of restoring your metabolism back to health after the resulting metabolic adaptation.



It's important to note that while your personal trainer may be able to provide you some general guidance as far as your diet goes, he is certainly not very qualified in this area and should therefore not be giving you any in-depth advice, especially with regards to aggressive dieting or making major changes to your diet. There may be exceptions to this however, where your trainer has taken it upon himself to do further study in the area of nutrition. If not, it's always best to consult with a nutritionist or dietitian for any dietary advice.

A good trainer's primary concern will always be on your well-being and your long term success, which means both getting you to your goals in a healthy and timely manner, and ensuring that you're able to maintain them for life.



## **HE'S MORE A DRILL SERGEANT THAN A TRAINER**

14

I was watching an episode of *The Biggest Loser* some years back, which was the opening episode of a new series. The first challenge the contestants needed to face upon their arrival was to race to the top of a big, steep hill peak and back down again. The benefit of doing well in the challenge was that as they completed the race, they were able to choose their trainer. So the quicker they finished, the more chance they had of selecting the trainer of their choice.

What I found very interesting was the fact that a high proportion of the front-runners chose Jillian Michaels as their coach over Bob Harper. Clearly the majority of the contestants preferred Jillian's aggressive, in-your-face, tough-love style of training.



When you consider the background of the contestants, it makes sense. They of course were all significantly overweight, in many cases they had been for a good portion of their life. Many of them had probably failed numerous times to lose weight, and so their self-esteem and self-belief were at rock bottom. They all believed, therefore, that they needed someone to “kick their ass” and whip them into

shape, tough love-style, because they were incapable of doing it on their own.

Personally, I disagree with this style of training, for two main reasons.

Firstly, as someone enlisting the help of a personal trainer specifically to help you lose weight, you may already have low self-esteem and little confidence in yourself and your abilities. And being yelled at and berated would do nothing to improve that. Secondly, while being yelled at by a loud, angry drill sergeant would certainly motivate you to work harder, it would do absolutely nothing to teach you how to motivate and empower yourself.

This style of training may look entertaining for TV and may even be what some people believe they need, because at the end of the day what they're primarily interested in is getting results. But what happens once the drill sergeant is no longer around to kick their butt if they slack off? What happens when that incessant "motivation" is gone? In all likelihood, they revert back to their old ways with their self-esteem in tatters, that's what.

A good coach or trainer knows that to transform a person's physique, it needs to be done from the inside out. In other words, he should be teaching you how to believe in yourself, motivate yourself, and train yourself.

He should help you to build your self-belief and your self-confidence, by letting you prove to yourself that you are capable of doing what it takes on your own terms. He should guide you to empower yourself, and find your own strength so that one day, you will be able to take care of yourself if necessary. I don't believe that can be achieved by hitting you over the head with a stick.



As I mentioned in the previous point, your trainer should be concerned with your long-term success, not just your immediate results. That involves shaping you into a fit, healthy person not just physically but mentally as well.

Having said that, there indeed are some individuals who in fact do need some tough love to get them going. The necessary change of mindset and lifestyle can sometimes be hard to muster for some. In such situations, a more commanding and forceful approach by the trainer may be appropriate. But at drill sergeant intensity levels? I don't think so. That's almost always counterproductive, as I explained.

And only for as long as is necessary. Quite often, even people who have been lazy and sedentary for the better part of their lives can make fairly surprising turnarounds once they've been shown what they're capable of achieving and they learn to believe in themselves.

## **HE NEVER SAYS "I DON'T KNOW"**

Yes, you read correctly. Not only is it OK for your coach or trainer not to know everything, it's actually a good thing. Well, admitting that he doesn't know is, anyhow.

There will inevitably be times when you ask your coach or trainer a question that he can't answer off the top of his head. Realistically, this is to be expected from time to time, since no one knows everything there is to know about fitness, regardless of their level of experience or their academic qualifications.

How he responds in this situation however, can be very telling. If he's a good coach or trainer, he'll be confident and secure enough in his own abilities to be honest and simply tell you that he doesn't know. He should then take it upon himself to do some research and find the answer when he can, both for your benefit and his own.

15



A poor coach or trainer, on the other hand, will try to save face by flat-out lying to you, confidently providing you with an answer that's he's actually guessing about or not sure of, or trying to bamboozle you with pseudo-science and double-talk.

It's important to note, and poor trainers may not actually realize this, that even the most highly experienced and qualified individuals out there are unsure about some things, and they don't mind admitting it. Their entire professional lives are based on a process of constant learning, so to them it stands to reason that there are still things they have to learn. It's a normal part of life. They feel perfectly comfortable with that fact and with letting others know about it as well.

Bad coaches and trainers are very different. Something inside them makes it almost intolerable for them to have to admit not knowing something. This is either because of ego, or because their own self-belief is so shaky that they perceive everyone's belief in them to be fragile and easily dented as well.

Unfortunately, it's not always so easy to tell when a trainer is faking it, particularly when you don't have much of a background in fitness yourself. Added to the difficulty is the fact that it's not uncommon for even experts to disagree on some points in this field, so getting a second opinion on a question isn't always going to resolve the matter. A bad trainer can sometimes easily stand his ground with apparently unshakable confidence, when deep down inside he just doesn't know. Confidence can often be far more convincing than facts.

The best you can do is to simply try to be as aware as possible of whether your coach or trainer comes across as genuine, or basically just a know-it-all. When you ask him a question, also try to gently dig a bit deeper with a few follow-up questions to get a better sense of his level of sincerity.

Some simple things to look out for that would possibly give him away are:

- He never, ever uses phrases such as *"I don't know"*, *"I'm not sure"*, *"I think"*, etc., but rather everything he says is spoken as indisputable fact.
- He gives meaningless answers such as *"It just is"*, *"Because"*, *"Trust me"*, *"This is how it's always been done"*, etc.
- He uses language to answer a question that's clearly confusing to the lay person, aimed at either impressing you or confusing you.
- He seems reluctant to explain an answer at length but rather just cuts it short, almost as though he's explaining something obvious.
- He sounds somewhat condescending in his answers to embarrass you into deciding against asking for clarification to what he's saying.



Make no mistake, a trainer or coach such as this is a liability. Despite his apparent confidence, he usually won't have the necessary knowledge to provide you with a good, effective program, or of how train you correctly. He may even be dangerous. His attitude will also pretty much prevent him from learning anything new. You can do better.

## **THERE'S ALWAYS ONLY ONE RIGHT WAY TO HIM**

16

Fitness is certainly a field in which there's more than one way to skin a cat. And any coach or trainer who's too much of a zealot, or too set in his ways to accept that different methods or exercises modalities all come with their own unique set of benefits, is simply too narrow-minded to see reality.

For example, there are trainers out there who believe that exercise machines are pretty useless and only for novices, and that all serious exercisers should use free weights. Others believe that all exercises should be totally functional, and that traditional bodybuilding-style gym exercises are rubbish. Some insist Crossfit is the Holy Grail. Then there are the body weight exercise evangelists, the kettlebell fanatics, and so on.



Your trainer should certainly make recommendations to you about the optimum type of exercise for your particular goals, but at the same time he should be open to discussing changes and/or alternatives if you have your own reasons for wanting them. That doesn't mean he should allow you to go ahead with an inappropriate training program however.

For example, let's assume your goal is to compete in Figure competitions, but you want to limit your training to Pilates, yoga and a few basic and familiar body weight resistance exercises.

Your coach or trainer should explain to you that the exercise modalities you've chosen just aren't able to provide the level of muscle hypertrophy (growth) that you need, nor the ability to define your physique in the required way. He should then advise you that your goals can only be met through more resistance-based training involving a greater variety of movements.

Perhaps you feel uncomfortable and intimidated using heavy free weights. In that case your trainer should start you off training with machines and body



weight exercises, while gradually getting you comfortable with free weights, starting with small isolation exercises and progressively working up to larger compound exercises from there.

By working with you and your needs in this way he'll be able to steer you successfully to your goals. A coach or trainer who's unwilling to compromise will only make your life miserable.

With regards to the type of resistance training he prescribes, also be wary of any trainer who believes in adhering to just one religiously. For resistance training weight machines, free weights, body weight exercises and bands all provide unique benefits, and relying on just one means you miss out on a lot of valuable benefits from the other types. The most effective programs will usually incorporate all available types.

The same goes for cardio. Again, there are many available modalities – machine-based cardio, plyometrics, calisthenics, cardio with free weights, kettlebell cardio, circuit training, HIIT, and so on.



A good trainer will know that even if one type may be optimal for burning body fat, it's good to incorporate a variety for best results in the long term. It will keep things interesting, prevent your body from adapting by always doing the same thing, and ensure that you get a variety of benefits from the program. A bad trainer, on the other hand, will insist on doing his favorite so-called "best" way all the time, and you and your results will inevitably suffer.

Coaches and trainers who insist on one "right" way generally do so because that's the way they learned in the past, and that's where they're still living. They may be former competitors or athletes who trained a certain way so that's all they know, and that's how they train everyone because it worked for them.

Things change in fitness. Science progresses and a coach needs to keep up with the times to be effective. He also needs to understand that each individual responds differently to different training modalities. A coach or trainer who's stuck in his own way is only going to hold back your progress.

## **HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND HOW THE METABOLISM WORKS**

17

Understanding the metabolism is very helpful to any trainer, but absolutely vital for weight loss or competition coaches, so this is a very important point.

I mentioned earlier that personal trainers are not really qualified in the field of diet and nutrition. Given that this is the area with the most direct effect on metabolism, they can be excused for not being totally familiar with how it works. But as I said, it would nevertheless be helpful for them to have enough knowledge about it to be able to offer their clients some valuable guidance for fat loss.



Amazingly, there are numerous coaches out there today, even competition coaches, that still don't believe in the concept of metabolic adaptation. I hear about them weekly. Yet anyone who has ever tried losing any significant amount of weight will know that their progress often plateaus at some point. Serial dieters will be familiar with yo-yo dieting. Fitness competitors will be familiar with post-contest rebound. All these conditions are caused by a slowdown of the metabolism while dieting – in other words, metabolic adaptation. It's real.

Bad coaches who are blind to metabolic adaptation inevitably get caught out. Or should I say, their clients do. Once this happens, rather than working to correct the metabolic issue immediately – remember, they don't believe there is one – instead they add fuel to the fire. They cluelessly start resorting to “brute-force” fat loss methods such as starvation and excessive cardio, in an attempt to overcome the resistance their client's body is putting up against their flawed methods. This, of course, only exacerbates the metabolic adaptation further and things spiral from bad to worse.

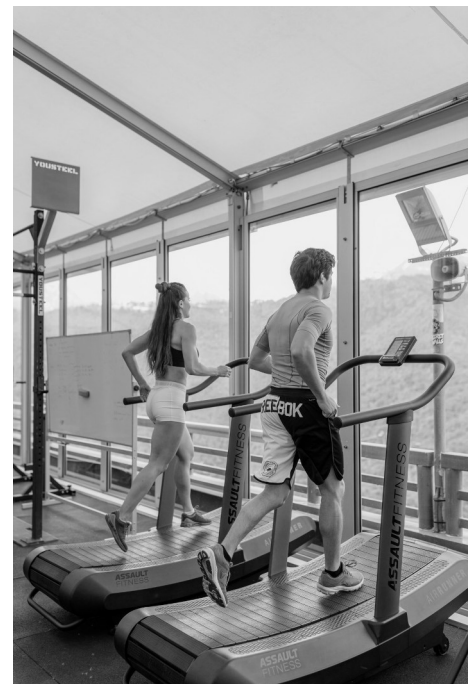
It always amazes me how athletes with great coaches manage to cut down to contest shape so happily and painlessly (relatively speaking), while those less

fortunate ones with poor coaches have to suffer through hours of cardio each day on poverty calories, and their coaches still don't get it. It really is a disgrace and it happens to far more athletes than you would imagine.

Your coach or trainer needs to be very familiar with this whole area so that he can have you losing fat slowly and using safe, healthy, appropriate methods. He should also be very familiar with the process of *Reverse Dieting* to restore your metabolism to good health if and when necessary.

If your coach or trainer has you on excessively low calorie intakes and/or has you performing excessive amounts of cardio exercise, it's a sure sign that he doesn't understand the metabolism and you simply need to fire him. Immediately. Unfortunately there's no compromise on this, as you're always going to struggle terribly under his guidance, as will your health.

As a competition athlete please be wary of these incompetent coaches, tragically the fitness industry is plagued with them. They impose their unhealthy and often dangerous methods on unknowing clients, leading to metabolic issues, health issues, eating disorders, and so on.



It's not at all uncommon, for example, to hear of Bikini and Figure competitors on calorie intakes of 600 to 800 calories a day, performing two or more hours of cardio each day, as a normal part of their contest preparation process. Most, if not all, would struggle terribly to lose body fat under these conditions, for reasons that their coaches simply don't understand. Predictably, they have no better strategy than to continue prescribing more and more severe brute-force methods, digging the hole deeper and deeper for their client.

At the end of the day, your coach can either make general fat loss or contest preparation a smooth, healthy and easily-sustainable process, or a miserable, painful, unhealthy nightmare.

That kind of suffering is NOT what it takes to be a successful athlete – don't believe that nonsense. Just ask any successful athlete with a decent coach.

## **HE DOESN'T RESPECT YOUR SPECIFIC GOALS**

18

The lines of communication between you and your coach or trainer should always be open, and he should always be open to listening to your perspective and what your specific goals are. And most importantly, he should always be doing his best to help you reach those goals. After all, that's what you pay him for.



Although your trainer should always be willing to share his points of view and opinions on your fitness program, you shouldn't have to tolerate him forcing them on you. At the end of the day, you're the one in charge, and his job is simply to advise and support you. If he's not prepared to do that then he's simply not the one for you.

Let's say, for example, that your goal was to compete as a natural bodybuilder. Your coach or trainer should respect that choice and do his best to help you achieve it. He shouldn't intentionally try to hold you back by providing you with a less-than-optimal training program, simply because he personally feels that too much muscle isn't appealing or healthy for a woman. That's not for him to decide.

Someone responsible would simply let you know that you would be better off working with an alternative coach or trainer if he can't agree with your goals on ethical grounds, for concerns over health, or for any other reason.

An important trait of every good coach and trainer is the ability to understand and accept that each individual has his or her own set of values and beliefs. Some people are more prepared than others to follow an extreme or so-called unbalanced lifestyle. Their goals may be more important to them, and so they're more prepared to make greater sacrifices in their life.

You need to know that regardless of your objectives, your coach is going to be right behind you all the way. If he isn't, you need to find someone who will be.

## **HE PRESCRIBES YOUR EXACT DIET PLAN**

# 19

This one may come as quite a surprise. You may be of the opinion that having someone lay out in precise detail exactly what you need to eat and drink each day as part of your program is actually a blessing. There are a number of potential problems with this practice, however.

Firstly, as I've already mentioned, a personal trainer doesn't really have a background in nutrition. That doesn't necessarily mean however that your particular trainer has no knowledge of nutrition, after all he may have taken it upon himself to educate himself further. But you can't simply assume that he knows because he's a trainer. Technically speaking, the only person actually qualified to be providing you with specific meal plans is a dietitian.



Secondly, by relying on someone to provide your daily meal plans in this way, you're not really learning anything yourself and so you'll always be dependent on others. It's unlikely that he would provide you with the underlying principles and calculations from which to learn how the plan was formulated. This clearly isn't an ideal long-term solution.

Thirdly and most importantly, coaches and trainers who engage in this practice generally do so not just to make sure you're getting the appropriate calorie and/or macronutrient intake – that can be achieved in many ways. Rather, they do it to limit you to certain so-called “approved” foods. These are sometimes referred to as “clean” foods, as I mentioned previously.

Overly-restrictive “clean eating” is unfortunately a practice that's quite widely followed in the fitness community, even among competition coaches. In fact, they are often some of the worst offenders.

Limiting your diet to just a handful of selected foods is neither necessary nor desirable. Doing so means that you're also restricting the variety of healthy nutrients that you're putting into your body, potentially leading to deficiencies.



Perhaps even more importantly, it makes your life miserable and your diet extremely difficult to adhere to without frequent guilty bingeing. In other words, it can have a tendency to promote eating disorders.

The whole clean eating versus flexible dieting debate is far too involved to go into in this book, however suffice to say that many people's interpretation of clean eating, which has no official definition, is far too restrictive.

There's nothing inherently wrong with your coach or trainer providing you with a list of high-quality foods that he recommends. Using this as a guide could, for example, help you to make choices that ensure you get enough dietary fiber, avoid trans fats, avoid excessively fatty (and therefore calorie-dense) foods, avoid processed, nutrient-sparse carbs, and so on.

In my experience however, specified meal plans are generally far too restrictive in the foods they permit. And they quite often don't allow any substitutions or deviations from the plan. They also can't possibly cater to your personal tastes, which is a major factor in making a diet plan sustainable for the long-term.

A much more useful approach would be for your coach or trainer to provide you with a set of guidelines or rules for healthy eating, rather than forcing you to adhere to his strict menu. For a competition coach, he could perhaps provide you with a quantitative framework (how many calories, proteins, carbs, fats, etc) and leave you to design your meals accordingly. This way your diet would be on point and you would be learning to self-sustain at the same time.



If your coach or trainer is providing you with a daily meal plan however, before jumping to conclusions it's best to discuss it with him. It could be, for example, that he's doing so simply to help you get started and provide you with some examples of healthy eating. There's nothing wrong with that.

If, on the other hand, he insists that you must stick religiously to his "special" diet to get results, then he's another "only one right way" trainer that I talked about earlier and you're far better off with someone else.

## **HE MAKES USE OF “SECRETS” OR PSEUDO-SCIENCE**

20

“Secret” and quirky weight loss or fitness techniques that have no scientific foundation are something you’d normally expect to hear about from people pushing gimmicks and fad products. It’s not at all uncommon to see this kind of thing in infomercials, magazine ads, online, and so on.

Disturbingly however, there are also a number of coaches and trainers out there (even some very well-known ones with successful, high-profile clients) who use these with their clients as part of their training programs. This is very disappointing, to say the least.

In some cases, the gimmick is something the trainer inexplicably believes in. Other times, particularly in the case of trainers who have a stronger focus on promotion than on the quality of their work, it’s used as some engaging tactic to make them stand out above their peers, or to make their clients feel as though they’re privy to something special by being with them.



Either way, it doesn’t bode well for you to be a client under the guidance of such a coach.

Some examples of the kinds of techniques and gimmicks I’m talking about might be:

- Diet plans that supposedly manipulate hormone levels and therefore fat and muscle mass distribution in your body.
- Diet plans based on your DNA or blood type.
- Gadgets aimed at reducing your waistline – through any one of a variety of means.
- Programs or gadgets that supposedly achieve site-specific fat loss, usually waist, belly, butt or thighs.
- Creams or wraps that supposedly burn body fat and cellulite from any area to which they’re applied.

- A new one I heard about just recently is cryotherapy for rapid fat loss – it supposedly “burns away” your body fat, and is endorsed by a very well-known and influential fitness individual.

All of these examples are very real, by the way.

It's important to note that in some cases a trainer or coach may have some type of proprietary technique or methodology that he has devised himself, and that although it hasn't been formally tested and verified by science, may nevertheless have some merit and be producing good results for his clients.

It's not always easy to distinguish between a gimmick and something that has validity however. In fact it can be downright confusing. This is especially so in the case of a coach or trainer who has a good reputation, when you consider the fact that his clients may be experiencing good results *despite* his special technique or gimmick and not *because* of it.

If your trainer is very secretive or elusive about exactly how and why his secret technique or gadget works, then it's virtually a given that it's not legitimate and he knows it. It's most likely nothing more than a promotional scam.

If his explanation is convoluted, confusing, and includes what sounds like a lot of pseudo-science, again, it's validity would be highly questionable.

In such situations the best you can do is to simply do some research and talk to other people whose opinions you can rely on. If you keep an open mind at yet at the same time a healthy level of skepticism, sooner or later the truth will present itself.



One almost-certain sign that your coach or trainer is knowingly using a gimmick however is that he insists on your keeping it strictly secret. This is to either to add to its supposed mystique or to avoid the trainer being ridiculed by others who aren't so easily fooled. Either way, it should make you highly suspicious of both the gimmick and the coach.

## **HE'S CLOSED-MINDED WITH REGARDS TO ADVANCEMENTS**

21

Advancements are happening all the time in the fitness field, involving all areas of training, nutrition and supplementation. If your coach or trainer isn't open to accepting new ideas, new discoveries and new methodologies, then unfortunately you're the one who will suffer.

There are many coaches and trainers out there who consider themselves "old school". They pride themselves on it, and boast that simplicity and "the old way" is the best way.

They like and trust what has always worked since back in their day and believe that "keeping it simple" is a virtue. As a result, they view most new things with a high degree of skepticism, and claim that you simply don't need them. Although simplicity isn't always a bad thing, the fact is that this type of attitude is really nothing more than an excuse to be lazy.



It's the duty of a good coach or trainer to get the best possible results for you in the most effective and efficient way possible. And that means always being on the lookout for better ways of doing things. Otherwise, what good is experience? Does your coach have twenty years of experience, or one year of experience twenty times?

If getting optimal results in some situation means using old school methods, so be it, there's nothing wrong with that. But if there's a new and better way to do it, he should know about it. It's his job, after all.

Unfortunately, fitness can be very confusing at times, even for coaches and trainers. Scientific studies can sometimes be difficult to decipher and oftentimes even appear to contradict one another. But even so, by doing regular research and applying himself, your coach or trainer will fairly quickly

be able to identify when new ideas with real validity and real results come along. And he should be ready and willing to implement them once they've proven themselves.

Don't let your coach or trainer convince you that anything new is just fancy and complicated. Just because something is new, it doesn't automatically make it complicated. The only thing that makes something complicated is when it's not understood. And the only way to understand something is to take the time to learn about it.

Even if a new training methodology or program can get you results say 5% easier than older methods, it's definitely worth implementing because that makes a big difference to the amount of work you'll need to do in the gym over time.

Another undesirable type of coach or trainer is one who isn't necessarily against using the latest innovations in his work, but just doesn't really make any effort to discover them. This is yet another example of laziness.

As someone who is engaged in health-related work, and often also work whose outcome is judged by performance, every trainer or coach worth their salt should be diligently keeping themselves at or near the cutting edge of their field. There's always something new out there to learn.

Although more basic, or traditional trainers are also quite capable of achieving results for you, you owe it to yourself to only be with a trainer who actively looks for ways to improve his methods on a regular basis. It will make your job a great deal easier and your results considerably better.





## **PARTING WORDS**

As a fitness enthusiast, I feel that it's very important to both your health and your progress for you to have been made aware of the information you've just digested. Hopefully it hasn't turned you off trainers and coaches as a whole, however. That certainly wasn't my intention.

Nevertheless, if you get the impression is that this landscape is a real minefield, you wouldn't be too far wrong. And from my experience, that's especially the case with coaches for fitness competition. But armed with the knowledge in this book, that won't be the case for you.

I would like you to keep your options open and your mindset optimistic. Don't convince yourself that all coaches or trainers can't be trusted. That definitely isn't the case. I can honestly say that the majority of personal trainers are actually pretty good, and there really are some great competition coaches out there as well. You just need to find them.

If you personally have any concerns or questions about your coach or trainer and are uncertain about whether or not he's doing a good job for you, feel free to contact me via email, my address is [fabian@milliondollarbabyfitness.com](mailto:fabian@milliondollarbabyfitness.com).

I'd only be too happy to give you my opinion and help you in any way I can. The same goes for anything in this book that you'd like clarified, just ask.

So anyhow good luck on your journey. May it be an exciting and fulfilling one, and I hope that you succeed in reaching your fitness goals.

Train hard, and take care.

**“A good coach will show you what you are.  
A great coach will show you what you can become.”**

(Adapted from a quote by Ara Parseghian, American Football Coach)

---