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REPORT: CHARLENE HUTSEBAUT

# which personal trainer?

GET IT WRONG AND YOU COULD BE POURING YOUR MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN. BUT GET IT RIGHT, AND THIS COULD BE YOUR MOST PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP YET

**C**hoosing a good PT can be a bit like choosing a husband. It's important that you click with them, enjoy spending lots of time with them and share the same goal – ie, your fitness. If you're going to be investing your time and money into this long-term commitment, it's important that you shop around thoroughly before settling for the right one. Here are some very important factors to take into consideration:

## personality

If you click with someone initially this is a fairly good indicator that you will work well together. If, after a few meetings, you feel as though there is something not right, this isn't the person for you. You will be spending a good amount of time with your PT so having a good working relationship will be important for you to want to attend your sessions.

## your personal programme

A "client-centred" programme is one of the most important features you can look for when shopping around. This means that the PT will do their utmost to assess your current fitness condition, and formulate a programme exclusively for your needs. A good PT with a client-centred programme will:

- offer a lifestyle assessment all about you
- have you fill out a PAR-Q form (Pre-participation questionnaire)
- ask you about specific goals and discuss how best to attain them
- do fitness and lifestyle tests with you, eg, blood pressure reading, strength and/or cardiovascular testing, measurements (All of these monitor your progress and can help motivate you to see results and reach your goals)
- ask you what activities you like or dislike. Are they then making you do activities you dislike? This will not help you to adhere to a programme
- offer to set up programmes for you when you are away from the gym or on holiday/business trips
- look at you as a whole person; eg, lifestyle, foods and exercise
- offer to speak with other practitioners in your life, such as your physiotherapist, GP, osteopath, massage therapist, etc
- communicate well with you and show up on time

## location

If you already belong to a gym, look at the PT board and read about each professional. The ones who have experience in the areas you need help with will be a good start. If you don't have gym

membership you may want a trainer who visits your home. A good place to start is on the Register of Exercise Professionals website. You can also look on the net generally or find advertisements in health and fitness magazines, but keep in mind all of the above qualifications mentioned when shopping around.

## education

Tertiary education is probably the most important box to tick. A PT with a sports science or physical education degree means you have someone with advanced training in anatomy, physiology and other human studies essential for creating a safe and effective programme. Having said this, there are many great trainers who have taken other forms of professional qualifications.

## training

Professional qualifications are shorter-term courses than tertiary education degrees. If you choose a trainer with this type of background, ensure the qualifications are the equivalent to an NVQ Level 2 or above. Professional qualifications can come from around the world. Some of the best are from America. The NSCA (National Strength and Conditioning Association) offers a certified strength and conditioning specialist diploma as well as other levels of certification. To take this course a trainer must already have a degree. The ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) is another highly recommended certification.

## cost

Ask about prices before you start, and make sure you're comfortable with what's on offer. If you can only buy 30 sessions up front and there are no other choices, you may want to look elsewhere. If they offer you different packages to suit your needs then they are offering a good service.

Overall, you want someone with strong qualifications, a personality that works well with yours, a convenient location and an affordable cost scheme. If you choose carefully and know exactly what to look for, you and your PT can achieve excellent results, together. **fp**

 Charlene Hutsebaut BPE, B Ed, CSCS is a personal trainer and wellbeing consultant who takes a holistic approach to client fitness and lifestyle development. Building on extensive education and 15 years' experience, she educates people on exercise, nutrition, women's health issues and lifestyle changes. She also teaches Level Three courses with Drummond Education. Contact Charlene at wellbeing@charlenehutsebaut.co.uk