



PHILOSOPHY IS NOW A PART OF FITNESS



Duncan Peak

Duncan has over ten years' experience in leadership and personal development. In the last five years, he has devoted himself to teaching yoga in Australia and overseas with world-renowned fitness guru, Baron Baptiste. Duncan owns Power Living Australia, one of Sydney's busiest and most popular yoga studios. To find out more visit www.powerliving.com.au or call 02 9904 4874.

AUTHOR'S BIO

➤ Personal trainers are adept at inspiring their clients to go the extra mile, to lose a few extra calories, to look sharp, be sharp and to think sharp. Is that right – think sharp? Are personal trainers now psychoanalysts as well?

True fitness is not just about looking great, it is about a holistic lifestyle that brings health into the dark corners of your life. A trainer that only works on the physical side of things will soon become a lonely trainer. Television shows like *The Biggest Loser*, the increasing yoga movement and the growing popularity of lifestyle consultants and coaches are all indicators that people need more than to simply be physically fit – they need to be happy to be healthy. Clients' long term self-esteem is not found in the size of their biceps or how fast they run a marathon, but in a balanced life with understanding and acceptance of one's self.

It is known that some individuals who become addicted to exercise are not doing so just because they love fitness – rather it is symptomatic of a mild form of depression. The anger generated from the depression gets channelled into a seemingly positive avenue like exercise, but this doesn't address the actual problem itself – low self-esteem.

So, do personal trainers have a role to play in the mental health of their clients? Many trainers will reply 'no, of course not – my job is improving the physical fitness of my clients', but if they take some time to reflect upon the way in which they interact with, educate and motivate their clients, they may well reconsider the role they play. Like many counsellors and psychoanalysts, however, in their attempts to help others improve their lives, they neglect their own wellbeing and find themselves unable to find balance and happiness. True health and fitness includes happiness, and happiness is

found in the ability to accept ourselves without constantly wanting more.

In the ancient philosophical teachings of many religions and yogic texts, happiness is found by serving others and not being attached to things in your life. Does that mean you can't work hard and buy a BMW? Does it mean you can't build the successful business that you've always wanted? Of course not, these aspirations are natural, but it is your relationship to them that could be the concern. Non-attachment is not about giving up everything and becoming a monk. It is about not relying on your possessions or role in life to provide you with your sense of self. It is about seeing others as equals, or seeing the unity in all life rather than the differences.

So how does this apply to personal trainers? The movement is already underway to expand upon the role of personal trainers. Many more trainers are now combining their fitness training



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skills with basic psychoanalytical education skills, and in effect, learning how to teach people to take control of their lives and be happy. According to Eastern medicine, the cure should be for the cause of a problem, not its effects. Making a client run 20km a week won't have a sustainable effect on their health if they continue to binge eat at the bakery every lunch time.

The following steps will help trainers to make their foray into the growing lifestyle fitness market and to ensure that their clients are receiving the best advice they can give.

1. Be an example not a warning. Work on the dark areas of your own life so you have that experience to share.
2. Understand a client's motive for training, and then identify the cause of their inspiration. Check if this is a healthy motive or one driven out of fear and advise accordingly.
3. Educate your clients about total fitness, i.e. body, mind and spirit. Introduce the philosophy elements gradually so that they can absorb it over time.
4. As you train clients, bring some inspirational messages into the session that go beyond the 'no pain, no gain' mentality. Advise your clients that true health is a healthy approach to training not dependence for self-survival.
5. Teach your clients to be mentally 'present' when they work out, not lost in the negative, repetitive thinking patterns that condition us. Being 'present' will kick-start more joy in their life, which will lead to word of mouth referrals to send your business soaring! 

Interested in learning more about how to better relate with your clients? The workshop entitled Health Coaching for Personal Trainers covers many concepts to help you better understand how to effectively communicate with your clients. If you are interested in a future workshop, please contact the Network Education department by e-mailing karen.grech@fitnessnetwork.com.au or calling 02 8424 7200



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