



personal trainers

Have you ever used a personal trainer? Seems a bit of a luxury but how helpful are they? Do you really need someone breathing over you every session to help you achieve your fitness goals? Here are some guidance and suggestions of how to get more out of personal training one to one sessions.

By Miriam and Guin Batten

I am due to meet Stephen Price, personal trainer to the rich and famous, the beautiful and the busy. He is going to give me my first one on one personal training session. Stephen is an ex pro cricketer who personal training style and evolved from what he felt he lacked in support as a player. Not just how to train and get fit but an all round holistic approach to the mind and body. How to enhance the quality and enjoyment of your life? The importance of massage and relaxation as well as alternative therapies to combat stress and relieve pressure. Stephen advocates the importance of the whole. It's no good having a really fit and strong body if the mind is not in balance.

Case Study

We start the session with a warm up run on the treadmill. He chats away and I feel at ease, so without "interviewing" me he has assessed what my lifestyle is like, how

busy I am, what my main stresses are and then what my fitness goals and base level of training is. We then start some stretching on the mat. Before long Stephen has identified areas of muscle imbalance and weakness where I am injury prone. Better to address these now than start training for the half marathon I would like to run and spend a valuable 2 weeks of treatment not training. I have poor rotator cuff muscle balance caused by all those years in a rowing boat pulling an oar. It also affects my posture which is very hunched forward and rounded shoulders. I also have a weak periformus (muscle in my bottom) which must be from sitting down too much and also an imbalance in the two leg muscles above my knee. This could cause knee problems as I start building up the time I spend running.

Stephen then spends a short time showing me stretches and exercises to do to start to build up muscle to combat



lifting and injury prevention. Personal trainers can specialise in certain areas, massage, physiotherapy, weightlifting, aromatherapy and many others.

Ideal number of Sessions - Recommendations

Beginners

Most gyms offer an introductory session with a personal trainer to get you started off on the right foot. As a beginner it would then be worth you having a personal trainer six weekly catch up session to check for

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progress, sort out any problems and re evaluate, set new goals and a new programme. It would also give you the motivation to make an improvement before you see the personal trainer again.

Lose weight/build muscle

You would probably need 1-2 sessions per week with your personal trainer if you wanted to lose weight or put on some muscle. This would be supplementary to the specific sessions you would do on your own throughout the week.

Elite Level Athlete

As part of their training programme most elite athletes will do gym work; cross training (running, stationary bike swimming) and weights 3-4 times per week. They would have a specific programme set by a fitness and conditioning expert who would often accompany them during the session to ensure good technique and support. If you fit into this category it is often worth the personal trainer coming to see you do you specific sport, or even better still trying it themselves so that they have first hand experience of what the training muscle requirements are and the areas where injury might occur. They can then work with you having a far better understanding of what your needs are.

Benefits

- **Motivation** – Having someone waiting for you so you have to turn up. You are paying for the session after all.
- **Well Structured Programme** – Just doing a few random sessions when you feel like it will not get you fitter or lose weight or put on muscle..

the imbalances. He also likes to emphasise that doing static exercises to combat muscle imbalance is not ideal and would prefer to work on how to find a moving exercise or recruit the relevant muscles whilst actually running. Muscle balance on the go.

Before long the session is over. I come away feeling very relaxed but inspired to look at all areas of my body rather than just training for a fitness goal. We did very little actual training but I have had some very good advice that I would not have found out on my own until it was too late.

Personal Training – The Benefits

Personal trainers are experts in training the body. If you had something wrong with your tooth you would go to the dentist. If you were ill you go to the doctor. The body is complex and personal trainers have the expertise to help you to exercise and remain injury free and give you motivation to keep exercising.

They are not only trained in use of all the machines and equipment in the gym they study the musculature and anatomy of the body, basic physiology, setting training programmes, nutrition, weight



- **Specific for you** – A personal trainer can act like your coach and design a programme for you that meets your needs and fits into the time you have
- **Highlights areas you might not be aware of** – We often think we know it all. However having an expert point out a few things like muscle weakness might avoid that injury waiting to happen.
- **Gives you a goal and helps you achieve it** – That phone call of “How are you getting on?” is all you need to kick start you back into action

Qualifications

Most personal trainers have a qualification. There are a massive number of courses that anyone can do. One of the most respected and well recognised is the Premier Diploma and is an intensive course comprising three distinct modules: Foundation Certificate in Fitness Instruction, Fitness Trainer Award and the Certificate in Sports Massage. www.premierglobal.co.uk It is worth checking what qualifications the personal trainer has before you start with them. Word of mouth and personal recommendation obviously counts for a lot. However make sure that your expectations can be met. Otherwise you will be disappointed. Personal trainers for a beginner might not be so good for helping you run the London Marathon.

Cost

This can vary hugely by gym and region. Some Fitness First Gyms have a great offer. £18 for a Triple Pack. This is 3 x 1/2

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hour sessions and would be a good taster to see if you like it.

Generally it is more expensive in the South East and London, most sessions are around £20 per 30 mins or £35-£50 per hour session.

Often the more sessions you buy the better the deal. Virgin Active have a 30 mins for 12 session deal at £227. Roughly £19 per session.

Of course you pay more for an experienced or “master” trainer.

If you want to do group training with a personal trainer this is also an option and can make it cheaper.

Where to find a personal trainer

Most gyms have a photo board near the entrance where you can see the personal trainers that operate in the gym. How they work varies from gym to gym. Some have their own client base and operate privately, others are employed on a retainer by the gym and some are paid a percentage of the sessions they carry out in the gym. What is really important is their manner and how you interact. They should be able to get on well with you and understand how you like to train, if

you like to be pushed or nurtured and supported.

Premier Training have a free search service to help you find a personal trainer in your area. You can specify what area you would like the personal trainer to specialise in. Aerobics, boxercise, martial arts, pilates, resistance training, weight management, body building, circuits, outdoor work, post or pre natal, self defence, yoga, body massage, core stability, sport injury massage. www.premierglobal.co.uk/training/default.asp

Most people think of personal training as being at the gym, sport centre or health club. Of course if you have your own gym in the basement of your house that’s fine and they can visit you in situ. However have you ever thought of the personal trainer being your training partner/coach? If you want greater flexibility most independent personal trainers can meet you at your sport specific training venue. The sports club, the park for running or sprinting. What is important is they are able to add support and knowledge to what you are doing. **UF**