

MY TRAINER, MY SHRINK??

Would you ask your therapist for a weight training program? Would you have your pharmacist perform brain surgery on you? After all, both professionals have a great deal of knowledge in a related field. The therapist would have some knowledge of how the body functions and the pharmacist would certainly know how to manage your pain after surgery. Do these questions sound absurd? They do to me and so does the topic of fitness professionals dabbling in psychology.

There seems to be much ado about ‘life coaching’ in the fitness business lately, and I feel compelled to look at it a little closer. The first thing you need to ask yourself when you decide to get into fitness and seek advice from a qualified professional is, ‘what am I looking for in a trainer?’

A fitness professional should have extensive training in anatomy, physiology and movement science. He or she should have a working knowledge and expertise in the area of how the body moves and how it reacts to a training stimulus. They should feel comfortable with providing sound advice when it comes to setting up a fitness program to deal with physiological changes required to get a body into condition. This can encompass activity related advice as well as possibly diet modification to enhance body composition changes required to maximize fitness results. This is the scope of practice for the fitness professional.

A qualified psychologist or therapist should focus on aspects of your life that you may not want to disclose to others and is bound by professional standards of confidentiality. They are qualified to deal with the varied intricacies of life and they know how to ask the right questions or make the right suggestions to get the client to focus on the real issues. The therapist focuses on what he or she is qualified to do.

When the fitness professional starts dealing with issues related to the psyche of the client is where the waters are muddied. What training does this person have to deal with the many complexities of a client’s life? If it relates to fitness, this is deemed as ‘fitness life coaching’ and fits into the trainer’s area of expertise. However, many trainers are including ‘life coaching’ in their personal training fees or programs and attempting to deal with issues out of their scope of practice.

What motivates a trainer to become a lifestyle coach? On a website advertising a lifestyle coaching course, see one reason (note the number):

#1 WEALTH:

Now Fitness & Wellness Practitioners Can Become A “Certified Fitness Lifestyle Coach” And Make Up To \$100,000 More, Working Less!

Are you interested in having someone that has this type of motivation and a weekend course, or even a one year program at an unrecognized institution counseling you? Is this money and time well spent? Many professionals in the field of psychology take issue with these facts.

Sport and psychology are no strangers. Olympic and professional teams have hired psychologists to gain an edge in sport for years. The point is, they look to those with years of education and experience to help athletes best, leaving psychology to the experts. Why would anyone think that a personal trainer can do the job of someone with degrees in the psychological field? This is an important question to ask yourself when you are budgeting for your fitness programming.

By Shawna Kaminski