

Sixteen Weeks

Chapter 27 - Pick the Right Coach From the Beginning

What you want to see when you look in the mirror is the only thing that defines results; that is all that matters. I personally enjoy looking a little beefy and a little like I could kick down a door, but the next woman, may not want that look. Therefore, how each of us defines results is different.

Most every coach I know, wants their clients to feel better, move better, live better, and arrive happily at their results, with their mental health intact. The client/coach dynamic is a unique and special partnership, and in that partnership, there should be elements of a successful relationship: honesty, trust, compassion, integrity, loyalty, respect, and someone to tell you, "No!"

The Initial Consult

During the initial consult, you are going to be excited. After all, you are talking to the individual that is going to help you achieve your goals! I am quite certain you will be thinking about outcome and results-related questions, as you should be. But there are several other aspects of the client/coach dynamic that seem obvious, yet are easy to overlook. Communication style, accessibility, boundaries, expectations, clear and realistic goals, and the manner in which your exercise programming will be delivered, are just a few additional considerations. Along with a coach sending you out the door with a quality program to execute, the items above hold equal value and can quickly overshadow and color your experience, either positively or negatively.

On your initial consult, listen carefully to your potential coach's responses and read between the lines. Just because you are sitting across the table from an industry expert, does not mean this person will be your industry expert. Follow your intuition without wavering. If a single part of the intake process is off, I can guarantee something else will be off. No, I'm not talking about the coach simply rushing in five minutes late, due to the five-car pileup that you were sitting behind too. No, not that. I'm talking about feelings

Sixteen Weeks

and vibes we humans pick up on, but too often ignore because we want something.

The individual, the individual's coaching style, and the individual's communication style can make or break your experience. I have learned that communication is the most important. Believe it or not, something as simple as the client onboarding procedure, falls under communication.

While you're searching for the right coach, if you find that you, and the coach you are initiating contact with are missing each other, let that be information to you. From the time you make the initial contact with your potential coach, to the time you receive your workout program and nutrition protocol in hand, should be about one week. That is reasonable. It doesn't matter how amazing a coach's before and after pictures are, if there is lousy communication during the initial engagements.

During my time sitting across from potential clients in consults, I found there were many more questions that should have been asked, but weren't. A phenomenal coach will be more than forthcoming, and never vague.

Below you will find several general topics that you will want to ask directly. Ask as many of these questions as you possibly can, and any other questions that you can think of.

Is this your primary business, or do you work another job?

However you choose to word the question, you are asking, "How much time do you have for me and how responsive will you be to me?" You are asking your coach to set and manage expectations around time.

What time of day do you typically communicate with your clients?

Many fitness professionals are entrepreneurs; if I'm awake, I'm working. But boundaries around communication times are still important. Saturday night during date night probably is not the ideal time to respond to a client just because she is at the grocery store and has a question. From a coaching perspective, I understand the client who works the 48-hour firefighter shift, and texts me questions on the slow overnights at the fire house. I expect him to text me at strange hours, but the expectation of me as your coach would be that I respond

Sixteen Weeks

to you the next day during my office hours.

On the flip side, what if your coach does have another job and works third shift, and you two are constantly missing each other? Without an explanation during the initial consult, in a very short while missing communication will become frustrating, and you will deem your new coach unresponsive.

During the initial consult, a simple, "I'm a night owl, I do some of my best thinking and planning in the wee hours of the morning and because of that, I may text you. Please don't feel obligated to respond, just know that I was up working, respond to me when you're available." This short statement works for both the client and the coach. It establishes some boundaries around the dynamic.

How long should I expect the delay in communication to be?

The short answer twenty four hours. This is a dynamic relationship and it is business. If your doctor's office doesn't call you back within twenty four hours, like any human, your brain starts working and typically not for the better. The doctor's office hasn't called back, maybe they lost my records, maybe it's something bad and they need to refer me to other doctors. Sure, there's a saying that "No news is no news," but we are humans. We want to know.

When your Coach tells you "Give me a bit and I'll pull your nutrition plan together," but seven days later you still have not heard from him, you shoot a brief and polite text that says, "Hey let me know what's next!" and you still hear nothing; anyone who's been in prep knows, that four days makes a difference, especially if you need to go to the grocery store based on adjustments to your nutrition plan. I understand that life happens; your coach is a person and is juggling lots, so have patience, yes. But I tend to lean towards lack of time management and this is business.

How often do you communicate with your clients?

This depends on your goals and how closely your coach wants to monitor your progress. I think every other week is reasonable. Some clients prefer once a month, at the beginning of the month, to set them straight. It depends, but definitely ask.

Sixteen Weeks

How often do you expect me to communicate with you?

In my experience, clients seem to be at polar opposite ends of the spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, there are clients that text you every day with a new realization about their body or a super specific question about a macro. On the other end of the spectrum, there are clients who pop up once a month with one question and they are truly happy out there, executing their plans independently. Everyone else fits somewhere in between.

How do you define clear and realistic goals?

This is something your coach should be asking you and you should be asking your coach. There was a time in my life when training on a six-day split, ninety minutes a day, eating thirty prepped meals and one cheater meal at Chick-fil-A on Saturday, was clear and realistic. There have been times where clear and realistic is a thirty-minute full body circuit. At other times in my life, clear and realistic was a twenty-minute low intensity walk in the middle of the day. Clear and realistic is not always “beast mode” and “going hard.” Clear and realistic lends itself to consistency. How you remain consistent is a moving target. As an athlete, keep account of where you are mentally at all times and communicate that with your coach. That will help both of you continue to define clear and realistic.

What is your training style?

Most coaches have a philosophical foundation from which they work. If you hire a coach that is a former bodybuilder and you walk into the office and say “I don’t eat carbs,” that consultation may not go well. Expect to lift weights and expect to eat a healthy amount of carbohydrates. If you hire a former cyclist to be your coach, expect some foundation in cycling as a part of your cardio training program. If you are looking for a High-intensity interval training (HIIT) program, I am not your person. Yes, as a client, you may want the coach to deliver something; but all coaches have a style, and quite frankly they don’t have to change that style for you. Their style makes them phenomenal at what they do! Respect the coach enough, to allow him or her to stay in their lane of mastery. Do your due diligence and make sure you find a coach whose training style aligns with what you are looking for, and what you need.

Sixteen Weeks

Which virtual platform do you use?

Some platforms are not as user-friendly. That makes a difference at 7:00 am, after standing for a twelve-hour nursing shift and you have mustered what is left of your energy to get to the gym. Now you are standing on the gym floor fighting with your virtual platform. That is not quite the recipe for success you had imagined.

For me, I'm an analog girl and this is a digital world. I still prefer to walk into the gym with my workout printed on paper, folded on a small clipboard, and a mechanical pencil. It never fails, when my phone is in my hand, I somehow end up checking emails. Knowing that about yourself is information you need to take with you to your consult. Picking the right coach is as much about the person, as it is how they deliver their product. It seems like a small thing, but make sure you are comfortable using a digital platform.

How many days a week are your training plans?

You want a coach that is going to listen to your needs. A weight loss program will have different training requirements than an athlete sculpting a physique for a bodybuilding competition. Remember that honesty piece? You have to be honest with yourself, and your Coach about what you are really willing to execute. In your head, you may be in the gym six days a week. But in real life, three days a week is clear, realistic, and what is actually happening. Communicate where you really are with your potential Coach.

How much do you trust your client's knowledge of his or her own body?

I'm not talking about a client who says, "I like eating potato chips because they make me feel good." No! You have been in your body for x-amount of years. For me, the day I walked into the gym, I had been in my body for thirty-six years. When I walked in the gym and sat for my consult, I told my coach four things: 1. I played soccer. 2. I have an injury to my right side 3. I don't know how to cook. 4. I don't eat eggs. At that time in my life, that is what I knew about my body, so that's what I communicated.

It is your responsibility to communicate everything you know about your body. A great coach will be listening to everything, even the things you don't say. When I say communicate everything, that includes, food preferences, foods that you enjoy but don't agree with you,

Sixteen Weeks

which forms of exercise have worked well in the past, number of pregnancies, miscarriages, frequency of bowel movements, sleep patterns, etc. Everything. In my experience, it benefited my coach to know most everything.

For me, my coach and I learned together, that my cardio was best done right before bed, like right before bed. The next morning, it actually looked like my body had been working through the night, chiseling and shredding.

This was also where I learned the value of rest and recovery. Recovery is a part of the workout. You need to know that. If you switch the order of your meals, if you changed the time of your cardio, tell your coach. Be an active participant in your training and in your prep. You know your body; communicate what you know. At the same time, allow your coach do his or her work. Blend the two together and there really isn't a reason you won't come home with a medal. This is a team effort, so participate!

Do you have a contract?

Remember, at the end of the day, the client/coach dynamic has to work for both individuals for you to achieve results. As a coach, if you are a handful, I don't want to be stuck with you counting down the months until this is over and as a client, you don't want to be stuck with me if I don't deliver. Signing on the dotted line means nothing as it relates to your results. If the client/coach dynamic works, it works! A contract is not going to make the relationship more successful.

Pricing?

If you choose to work with your coach for in-person personal training, expect to pay the personal training fees, and then once you shift into a 16-week prep, a different set of fees. e from about \$850-\$1900 for a 16-week prep.

The following are a set of more prep-specific questions for you to ask your potential Coach.

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