

Living Fit

Baby “Bloomers” & Personal Trainers. Are You a Perfect Pair?

In several of our recent articles for *Attitudes Magazine* we have emphasized and hopefully demonstrated the significant benefits of weight-bearing strength training—especially those benefits which lessen the negative effects associated with aging.

For those of us (mature adults) who do have experience with traditional strength training, while we know the benefits, we may have some concerns that our body simply can't do what it once was able. And, quite logically, we may have legitimate concerns about safety and the possibility of injury. For those of us who have not had experience with traditional strength training, while we may have read about the benefits, we may have concerns about starting strength training “at our age.”

So the quandary for all of us is, while we don't want to (can't afford to) pass up an opportunity to fight the aging process, we're just not sure what to do. Enter the Personal Fitness Trainer. Although I prefer Personal Fitness Coach, for purposes of this article I will refer to them as trainers.

Trainers are not hard to find. These days almost every fitness facility has trainers available for individual personal training. You can also find personal trainers (yellow pages, internet) who work as independent contractors, either privately or at fitness facilities where the trainers pay to use the facility's equipment to train you. If you do use a facility's trainer, typically the trainer's fee will be in addition to any initiation or monthly fee, which the facility may charge. Also, if you have any fitness equipment available for your personal use (in your home, apartment building, or condominium), there are personal trainers who will conduct private sessions at those locations.

Although the rates may vary, the fees trainers charge can range from \$40 to \$100 for a 60-minute session. In some cases, trainers may offer a fee discount if you purchase multiple training sessions in advance.

While there is a cost for the trainer, my personal experience has convinced me that the benefits of using a trainer far outweigh the cost for several reasons.

- *Safety*: The trainer's primary job is to make sure that you have a safe workout.
- *Full Workout Benefit*: Each piece of

equipment is designed to strengthen a specific muscle or set of muscles. The trainer is there to make sure that you get the intended benefit. This includes proper positioning on the equipment, posture, breathing and relaxation techniques.

- *Motivation*: The trainer truly is your Coach — there to encourage, motivate and, yes, “push” you farther than you would push yourself. Our minds often hold back our bodies. The trainer is there to help your mind and body connect so that you can reach your full potential.

- *Accountability*: Some days we just don't feel like training. But we know that our trainer is expecting us, waiting to help us, and depending on us to show up for our session. The trainer becomes your partner who shares the responsibility of not allowing you to let yourself down.

If you should decide to use a trainer (or at least explore the possibility), here are some suggestions to guide your selection.

- *Certification*. Verify that the trainer has a certification from at least one of the many fitness training certification organizations and that the certification is current. Two of the more prominent of those organizations are the American Council on Exercise and the International Sports Science Association.

The problem is that there are such a large number of organizations (that few of us have ever heard of) that it's almost impossible to judge the value of the certification. Therefore, we recommend you verify that the organization is a member of the National Organization For Competency Assurance. Established in 1977, this is an industry-recognized leader, which sets quality standards for numerous certifying organizations including fitness certifiers. Their Web site is www.noca.com.

- *Experience*. This is a must. Ask the trainer to give you a resume that sets out his or her qualifications and actual training experience, including experience in training on the type of equipment that you will be using. In addition, you should not only ask for actual client references, but then follow-up by calling those references. Of course, if the trainer is smart, only satisfied references will be listed. But at least you will have an opportunity to talk to someone other than the trainer.

- *Insurance*. Make sure that the trainer has liability insurance – either individually or through the facility where you are being trained. And, ask for proof of the insurance.

- *Health Evaluation*. Trainers should not begin training you until the trainer has received and reviewed with you a comprehensive health history. This is essential for your health and safety.

- *Cost/Payment*. Get a detailed, written fee schedule. Make sure you understand the payment process, especially if you are paying for a multiple session package in advance. Does the trainer have a bond to protect you if the trainer does not or cannot complete all of the sessions that you paid for in advance? Is there a money back guaranty if you are not completely satisfied with a session? If you get part way through a multi-session package and don't continue, will the trainer refund all or a portion of the balance of your money?

- *Personality*. Although it may be hard at the first meeting/interview, don't be afraid to react to how you “get along” with the trainer. The relationship with a trainer is a close one – you are putting your fitness (health and safety) in his or her hands. Remember, there is a reason that they are called “personal” trainers.

So, here we are – us Baby Bloomers. (Since we really are in “full bloom” now, I feel that it is a much better term than “boomer.”) We are at a point in our lives where we have more free time than ever before. We have important goals and dreams and we simply don't want to let our bodies or our health slow us down. That requires us to eat right, get regular health checkups, and keep our bodies strong and free of the injuries that can prevent us from celebrating the rest of our lives. And, as we have preached, strength training and using personal trainers are undeniably two of the best ways to lessen the negative effects of aging.

Alfred R. Roach, Jr. and his wife, Virginia Phillips, are owners of 20 Minutes to Fitness ®, a private high intensity strength training studio located in Lakewood Ranch. Training sessions are individually supervised by certified personal trainers and are by appointment only. Phone: 309-8989. Web site: www.20minutetofitness.com