



Wellness Revolution 101™

Dr. Justin C. Lin, DPT, CSCS

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confessions

of a

**personal
trainer**

consumer guide to finding a quality professional

Confessions from a Personal Trainer:

A guide to finding a qualified personal trainer (so that you don't get hurt)

Why is this manual here in the first place? Because people spend thousands of dollars on getting fit not knowing they are actually hurting themselves. They trust their bodies to their irresponsible trainers and get hurt and then have to see me as a physical therapist for a long rehab process.

Not all personal trainers are created equal

You finally feel it's time to make a major leap in your health and invest in yourself to achieve your fitness and personal health goals. Before you sign up to work with a trainer, you need to do your homework and shop around.

Fortunately for many of you, I have been a consumer, provider, and loud critic of the fitness and wellness profession for years. Most trainers train because they like to exercise, think they know a lot about working out, and believe they have what it takes to motivate individuals to exemplify fitness. In most cases it is a second job, a career change, or a recreational job that some may not take as seriously as they should.

Unfortunately there are thousands of misconceptions being relayed to clients every minute because many of the trainers do not have the proper health education from an exercise physiology, physical therapy, nutrition, or physical education degree.

To avoid some serious injuries and to get you where you want to be, you need the best trained eyes, mind, and personal touch.

Certifications do matter, but not all certifications are reliable. Can the trainer effectively teach you the correct exercise philosophy for you to follow? Read more below.

3 things you need to do before you look for a trainer:

1. Remember to consult with your licensed medical or health care provider first, especially those of you who may have previous injuries or illness
2. Make sure you are committed and can make time aside from the time you spend with the trainer to practice and retain the new workout routine
3. Write down and bring your questions or concerns to the personal trainer or fitness manager at your gym. In regards to previous injuries, the manager would be the person who knows best which one of the trainers is best suited to address your specific needs in light of the injury. Make you sure you list all your medical history and make sure the trainer asks in depth questions about them, including when and if it is resolved. The more detailed the questions/list, the better it is for you.

Common Consumer Misconceptions

1) Don't judge a book by its cover

A nice looking trainer with a nice body isn't going to get you looking like them. I'm sure it may or may not occur to you that they may absolutely put very little effort and be blessed with a great form. I've seen trainers eat fast foods and smoke regularly. Make sure they set a good example and practice what they preach themselves. Trainers should train you specifically to be the most fit and to be the best for your body type.

2) Training you for only your aesthetic goals and not your needs

Although it is important you reach any goal you set, trainers should find a good balance in their exercise program of what you want and what you need. Focusing on weaknesses in your posture, gait, or movement is the key for a more effective way in reaching any of your goals.

3) Be WEARY of fancy medical terms that aren't explained

I don't feel this is necessary to explain, but time and time again consumers are suckered in by people who know the latest fad exercise terms leaving the consumer confused and curious. If big words are used without a thorough explanation, the truth is the trainer doesn't know either. SO RUN AWAY FROM THEM!

Things your personal trainer should have:

1) CPR

All trainers in gyms HAVE to carry an up to date CPR card, so you should ask to see it. Also they should be trained in AED, which most CPR classes teach. For private trainers, you should definitely ask. It takes seconds of doing the right thing to save your life. It is CRITICAL that you ask.

2) Certifications

“Certified Trainer” could mean that the trainer has a general in-house gym certification. You shouldn’t take this term or title as seriously as you think. Most in-house certifications are weekend-long, open book exams.

Below are my top 3 certifications that demonstrate your trainer could be better than the rest. All certifications below follow standards that their individual associations have been created to demand professional and ethical practice.

National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)

It is the first and most renowned certification. In order to receive this certification trainers are required to have 4 year degree from a college or university to sit for the test. The test is a two-part proctored exam such as the Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) and Certified Personal Trainer (CPT) and video assessment of movement analysis. All exams are performed at a testing site. NSCA produces the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* which publishes research regarding health, rehab, and performance enhancement. Those who have a CSCS are likely to receive such journals. The CSCS and the CPT certifications are the first two nationally recognized health certifications by the **National Commission for Certifying Agencies** (NCCA). NSCA follows the strictest and most rigorous criteria of testing and curriculum for their certifications.

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)

Certifications have now been recognized and certified by the NCCA. Many of our health related articles and government standardized testing or recommendations come from research they perform in their journal, *Health and Fitness*. Exams are proctored at a testing site.

National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM)

Certifications have now been recognized and certified by the NCCA . Founded by a physical therapist and training methods taught to trainers are modeled after physical therapy philosophies. It used to be an open book exam taken online. However, now there is a fully integrated testing site. They have a lesser known journal being circulated called *National Academy of Sports Medicine*

All others certifications have a poorer testing structure and curriculum in my scale and I believe most high school teenagers could pass them with a quick perusal of the textbooks.

However, these tests and materials can cost from 300-800 dollars. It's better to have a trainer who is serious in showing that they are better than the rest. These three certifications (above) require an up-to-date continuing education schedule and recertification process every 2 years. Make sure you ask to see their membership card and see if it is up to date and is not just false advertising.

3 Tests Your Trainer Needs to Perform on You

As a trainer, our livelihood is dependent on the hustle. Some trainers don't care about getting you results safely. All gyms rely on the revenue trainers bring to maintain the business. Marketing is good! So you have to be smart and choose wisely. It's ok to talk to the personal training manager of the gym and ask who they have on staff is most qualified and best suited for your needs.

Three assessments that all Personal Trainers should perform to insure you're safety are:

1) Blood Pressure Measuring

Why is this important? Just in case you haven't been to the doctor recently, it's a good measure to keep track of your blood pressure regularly. Let your professional know if you have high blood pressure and/or taking medication for this condition such as ace-inhibitors, beta blockers, or blood thinners.

2) Postural Analysis

Why is this important? Let's the professional know what needs to be strengthened or stretched. Improving your posture can go far. It will decrease any likelihood of injury and restore balance to opposing muscles, not to mention you look better with a good postural alignment.

3) Check movements such as a squat test, a gait or walking assessment, range of motion

Why is this important? You may look good standing up or be aware of your posture while in front of professionals but movement dysfunctions never fooled anyone.

It is good to track how you move before and after, the quality of movement is essential in dictating whether you have a disposition for certain overuse injuries. With better movement patterns, you will produce a more efficient movement with less injury.

Correct Exercise Philosophy

It is your right to test the trainer in front of you. You need to find out what philosophies drive their program regime. If their views differ from mine, please don't sign up with them. RUN AWAY and do it quickly.

- 1) Soreness is bad and that the "no pain and no gain" theory is wrong

The reason soreness is bad is because you are causing small micro-tears to your muscle. Over a prolonged time of this your body will resist against you and ultimately fail.

- 2) Adjust away from a cookie cutter program that includes only machine use

Importantly, some of these exercises prescribed should be simple enough without equipment and can be performed at home. If you are only using machines at the gym, you will only rely on those machines. General programs should be fluid and based on form, (NOT THE MACHINE) you can apply this form from place to place whether you go for a vacation and use the hotel gym or exercise bands. All forms should resemble what you learn. Your trainer should always think outside the box and be ready to have a new game plan if things don't feel right. There literally hundreds of exercises to target the correct muscle groups. if one doesn't work then go to the next.

- 3) Avoids the fad exercises

Those fancy military exercises are meant for the military personnel. They get two hours a day to work out and stay in shape. Most people sit at their desks all day and when they try to perform these exercises, the result is disastrous. If you're not ready to perform the exercise, DON'T.

- 4) Always starts with the basics

This includes working on the core muscles and stability muscles that don't require crunching movements or any movements at all. Trainers should be hands-on, giving you the right cues on initiating the right stabilization needed. Simple movements are to be performed before complex movements. Communication and understanding on your part is essential. Make sure the trainer speaks to you in a way you can understand. If you don't understand ask the trainer to explain better.

- 5) Training you for independence

It may be nice to be like a celebrity and have a trainer at will. However, the reality is that you are struggling in this down economy just like everybody else. All trainers should set you up with a thorough program in 10-12 sessions. If you wish to continue, the trainer should decrease the 3x/ week to 2x/ week and then to 1x/ week within a 3 month time period, then

to 1x/month to just review programs. It takes about three months for any individual to see solid and real fitness gains.

ALWAYS have your trainer contact your health care providers if you are undergoing any concurrent treatment. They can discuss what to avoid and what is medically recommended for you. This also shows accountability on the part of your trainer who actually cares for your safety!

Remember that most important is to find an enthusiastic positive trainer, not one who is out to just collect a check and your money. Find one with passion and someone you can look up to for the right information and protection. This is a fun and exciting process for you, so at least make it worth your while. You're finally investing in yourself!

I wish you all well and success on your wellness journey!

Sincerely,

Dr. Justin

Dr. Justin C. Lin has been a personal fitness trainer for 10 years and currently practices as a licensed doctor of physical therapy in the D.C. Metro area. He also has been a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist from the National Strength and Conditioning Association. He is the owner and author of products from Wellness Revolution 101™ www.wr101.com. He has been an advocate for change in the fitness field and wishes consumers to demand greater quality control in the fitness profession.