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1155 words

I Don't Have the Time (and Besides, It's Really Too Expensive)

On my sixty-fifth birthday, I gave myself a gift: I signed up with a personal trainer. Of course, I knew all about personal trainers. This was the kind of thing that people who lived in gated communities spent money on, so they would have something to talk about at cocktail parties. Somehow, it just seemed, well, effete. Me? Hire a personal trainer? Why spend money on something I could do, myself? Hiring a personal trainer made about as much sense as buying water in a bottle, when it's so easily available at the tap.

But having said all that, I signed up with trainer Matt Pendola, craftily figuring that after two or three months I would have all of the routines down pat and could do them, myself, after that. Besides, I signed up to train at the same time as a girl that I've been half in love with for many years and looked forward to spending the time with her. Now how's all that for porous motivation?

I simply lucked out in my poorly-conceived choice of a trainer. I didn't do any shopping around. I just signed up. I know now, after three and a half years of training three and sometimes four days a week, that the profession of personal trainers is unregulated and conducted with very little oversight. You really need to find a gym run by a highly-trained and extremely motivated professional. Look for the credentials on the wall—they should reflect accreditation from nationally-recognized personal-training

associations, such as the National Academy of Sports Medicine. Matt Pendola, owner of Pendola Training on Longley Lane near McCarran, has these credentials and demands like credentials from trainers he hires. But even if a trainer *does* have the credentials, he or she has to have the dedication that goes with it—the dedication to make you—*you*—the best you can possibly be. The best of personal trainers are a combination of the worst boot-camp drill sergeant you can think of and your hair stylist—someone who can absolutely grind your butt into the ground to get results, yet someone who comes to know you personally: your fears, your loves, your family. But yet, they “know when to hold ‘em and know when to fold ‘em,” as the song goes. They will only insist on you reaching your own personal limits. Sound tough? It can be. But, then what are you here for? It’s no spa. But having said all that, you are the one who sets your own personal-effort dial to wherever you want it.

Here to lose weight? This top-notch, 10,000 square-foot gym has a nutrition coach who comes along as part of the training—no extra fees required. Your professional personal trainer is educated in nutrition, as well. You won’t lack for information. But as you begin a rigorous training regimen, a curious thing happens. You begin to pay attention to what goes into your mouth at mealtime. With all this physical work you’re putting in, you just don’t want to sabotage it with poor eating habits. With the plethora of diet books on the market, it all boils down to a simple and easy concept which you already know: eat better and exercise. As you build muscle tone, you burn more calories compared to a person of like weight who has no muscle tone. Your regimen will involve weight training to build muscle mass and

cardiovascular exercises improving your heart and metabolism—burning those extra calories at the same time.

Well, I'm a pretty smart guy, or so I like to think. What happened to my idea that I could learn it all myself in two or three months and then do it on my own? A couple of things. First, a good trainer takes you through an endless variety of physical drills and weight routines that you could simply not recreate yourself. He or she keeps the variety coming to match your progress and avoid making the process a hum-drum one. The second thing, is I just wouldn't *do* it on my own. Going to the gym on your own is so easy to postpone. "Well, I'd better do the shopping first." or "I'll just stop by the office for a few minutes to see how things are going...then, I'll go to the gym." Before you know it, the day is gone. "I'll make it for sure, tomorrow," you promise yourself. Yea, right. Last Friday, I was on the phone with a lawyer who was trying to set up a meeting with me for the following week. "My week is really pretty open," I told her, "I can make it most any time, except 9:00 a.m. Monday, Wednesday or Friday." That's how it works for me.

What have I gained from my training? I didn't join for a weight loss program. I weighed 185 pounds when I started, and that's pretty close to what I weigh, today. But,...but, I have put away my size 38 Levis and have retrieved the 34's that have been hanging in my closet, hopefully waiting for me, for the past several years. I figure that some ten pounds of fat have been repositioned in stronger legs, core and upper body. I feel good, now, wearing my jeans with my T shirt tucked in. I have watched other clients in the gym melt away the pounds, not with the diet-of-the-month program, but a slow but steady change in their lifestyle of good nutrition and exercise.

One major benefit to me, personally, was training to run in the recent Reno/Tahoe Odyssey, a 24-hour relay race for runners. I had never run in my life, before I began this training. Was I fast? No. Did I finish the race? Yes. You can read more about it in my article “The Running of the Reno/Tahoe Odyssey” on pendolatraining.com.

There is always time to schedule something that’s important in your life. That answers the first statement in the title of this story. Expensive? Well, let me tell you a short story. One day, I had finished my workout and was standing there, still sweating, drinking a glass of water. Matt, the owner of the gym, was engaged in a conversation with a potential client, explaining the program. I stood there listening. The potential client turned and asked me, “Is it really expensive?” I nodded at him and said, “Yea. It is.” Matt shot me a raised-eyebrow look, his eyes saying “What?” I was still looking at the potential client and said, “But, compared to what?” The potential client nodded slowly in agreement. My point: What better could you spend you money on than your own personal health, strength and well-being?

Coming up next: Why a training program can mean so much more to us old dudes than you young studs and studettes, out there.