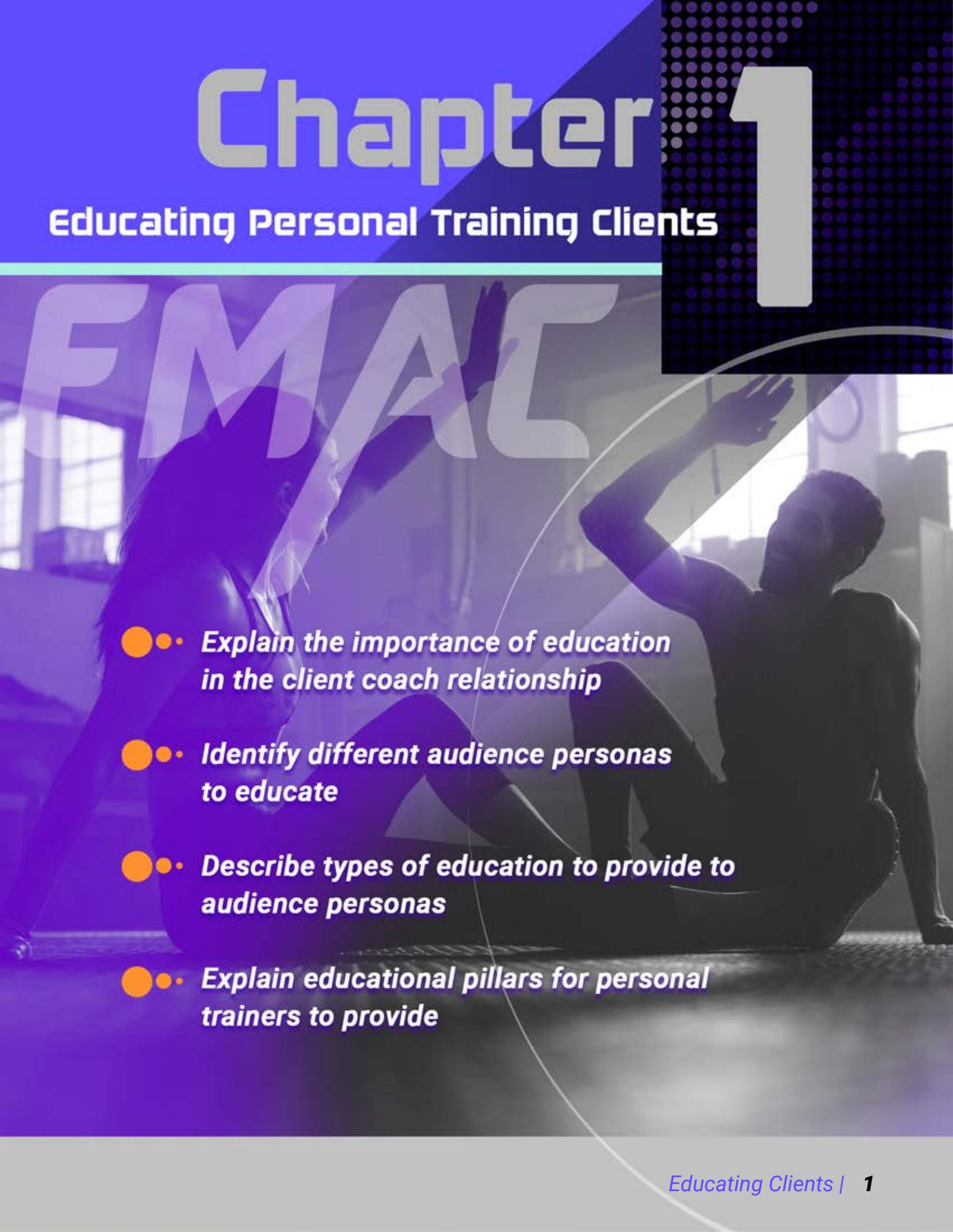


Chapter

1

Educating Personal Training Clients

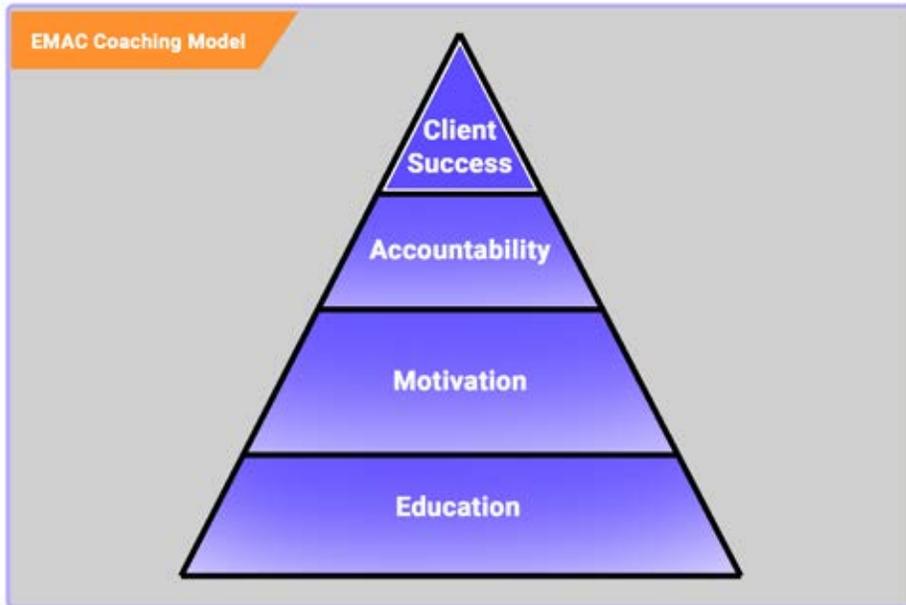
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- *Explain the importance of education in the client coach relationship*
 - *Identify different audience personas to educate*
 - *Describe types of education to provide to audience personas*
 - *Explain educational pillars for personal trainers to provide*

Coaching clients to make changes in their fitness level, and ultimately, lifestyle begins with providing them with foundational knowledge. Clients are paying you because you're the expert. And, when they're interested in making a life-altering change, they'll find the information somewhere. Your coaching role means being the primary source of information. This will help them wade through fitness and nutrition trends so they can see results that last. Your mission is to meet them with the education that perfectly fits their needs. It exists on a spectrum and needs to be balanced. This means you can't go overboard with technical language. And it also means you can't simply tell them what to do without explaining why. When you can meet a client with the right dose of education to match their needs, it sets the foundation for a solid professional trainer-client relationship from there forward.

Your primary role as a personal trainer is to get clients the results they're looking for. It's common for even existing trainers to think this comes only in the form of the workouts and nutrition recommendations they provide. However, especially in the case of clients who have a longer journey ahead of them, it's so much more. One of the foundational things clients need from a personal trainer is education. This can be basic education around monitoring heart rate and form. And, for an advanced client, it can be about monitoring anaerobic thresholds or how to achieve personal bests. The bottom line is the art of coaching in personal training all starts with how to educate clients. Education is the foundational pillar of the **EMAC Coaching Model**. This is a practical and evidence based approach to working with clients beyond simply telling them how to workout and what to eat. The model's roots are in psychological applications and support client retention, compliance, and program success. More simply put, it's the applied art of fitness and nutrition coaching. Education is the first layer and the foundation of the model. As with any foundation, if it isn't laid correctly, everything above it will be faulty. As you'll later learn, you can't motivate, hold your clients accountable, and coach them to success without first serving as the expert they can trust.

EMAC Coaching Model:

An evidence based approach to working with fitness clients to improve the likelihood of a healthy lifestyle adoption and fitness success



EDUCATION IN THE CLIENT – TRAINER RELATIONSHIP

Regardless of whether you're working with clients online or in a traditional gym setting, you'll be educating them along the way. Whether accidental or intentional, your client will pick up on things they learn from you.

Clients need your educational support to:

- Make good daily lifestyle choices.
- Do workout and activity recommendations correctly.
- Learn how their body should feel during training sessions or workouts.

DAILY LIFESTYLE

Your client won't be working with you 24 hours a day. Even if you're meeting with a client for three, one hour sessions per week, that still leaves 98% of their time for making independent decisions. Of course, at least a third of that time will be spent sleeping. However, during their waking hours, they'll be making decisions on what to eat, how to manage stress, types of activity



to do, and more. They'll also be making lifestyle choices such as whether they'll drink alcohol, smoke, meditate, or provide self-care.

Without basic education, you're leaving it up to the internet or past experiences for clients to make choices. Or, worse, letting them make their own assumptions on what they should be doing. Therefore, part of the educational model with a client includes teaching them about lifestyle choices and how to handle them. Without education around their daily activities, your client won't have the best chance at achieving their fitness goals.

CORRECTLY DOING WORKOUTS

Chances are pretty good your client will workout when they're not with you. This should be the case regardless of whether your coaching practice is online, traditional personal training in the gym, or a hybrid version of both. Some trainers avoid supporting **client autonomy**, which is the ability of the client to make independent fitness and nutrition choices, including doing workouts without trainer supervision.

Client autonomy isn't the enemy for personal trainers. Instead, the more autonomous your clients are, the more able they are to achieve their fitness goals. You should be giving clients both strength training and cardio training workout recommendations. This allows you to keep the time you have together to be focused on what they need the most. This might be higher intensity workouts or it could be coaching them into better habits. Regardless, make sure your client knows how to do the independent workouts you're asking of them correctly. To name a few, this education can include:

- How to monitor heart rate and what they should be aiming for
- Duration and type of intervals in cardiorespiratory training
- Exercise names and descriptions
- Correct exercise technique
- Sets, repetitions, and tempo for exercises
- Progressions and regressions

SELF AWARENESS DURING EXERCISE

During your personal training sessions, you should always be working on getting the best form and performance from your client. For many beginner and even advanced fitness clients, they don't know what this should feel



Client Autonomy:

The ability for a client to make independent fitness and nutrition decisions, including working out without a personal trainer's supervision.

like. For example, during a row, they might feel like they're performing the exercise right. But when you watch them, you can see their shoulders actually round forward during the movement and they aren't getting the correct "scapular retraction" they need to see the right results. Therefore, every training session should be educational. This is especially the case when you're teaching clients new movements or working to improve their posture. Exercising with wrong form, as you'll learn, can be detrimental and cause pain or injury. Therefore, personal training clients should know what they should be feeling and how they can raise their self awareness during exercise to get the best results.

MYTHS OF PROVIDING FITNESS EDUCATION

It's common for personal fitness trainers to think they don't want to "give too much away" for free. In these instances, the thought is likely that their knowledge is the secret sauce of fitness results. However, client education is one piece of the pie that a great fitness professional offers.

Here are some myths on providing fitness education.

- If I give away too much for free, they'll never sign up with me. FALSE. Although some people will always be takers, this is a very rare exception. In fact, it's a well researched theory in interpersonal influence called **reciprocity**. The theory of reciprocity states that people generally don't like to feel as though they owe someone something. It's a social norm that humans will return favors. Therefore, if you follow this theory, you realize if you give something away, the person will be more likely to buy from you.
- My client can't be trusted to do exercise on their own. FALSE. People all over the world are doing exercises they shouldn't. And, somehow, the large majority of them are somehow remaining injury free. It's not a good assumption to make that the client should be completely dependent on the personal trainer. In fact, the more autonomous a client feels, the more motivated they'll be to continue their exercise and nutrition program.

Law Of Reciprocity:

The researched theory that states it is the human norm to do something for a person once they have done something for you, ie. returning the favor.

- When my clients know how to do it on their own, they won't need me anymore. FALSE. Again, education is just one piece to the larger role of a personal trainer. It's the foundation, but it's also ongoing. Clients need you for accountability, motivation, and program oversight. Further, the likelihood that they'd ever invest as much time in their education as a fitness professional would is extremely unlikely. Knowing this means you should aim to provide the right dose of education to clients. This leads to the next myth.
- My clients should know everything I know. FALSE. Surprisingly, some personal trainers overwhelm their clients with excessive information that's meaningless to the client. Or, sometimes, they'll use technical terms when common phrasing is just as important. For example, why tell your client to perform "prone iso-abs" when you can just as easily tell them to do a "plank". Part of the educational process is meeting your clients educational needs with the right delivery. This gives the greatest impact to the client.
- I should leave it to the experts and avoid doing things like webinars or eBooks. FALSE. Realize you are the expert to the average person. And, anything that you put out there is better than nothing. Have confidence in the knowledge you have, or are about to gain, and realize how many people can benefit from even a fraction of what you know. Some trainers fall into the **imposter syndrome**, thinking they don't have the expertise to give away more than just a workout. Don't overthink the education you provide. Instead, just make sure it's within your scope, and go with it. It will make you more effective as a personal trainer.

Imposter Syndrome:

The feeling an individual has that they doubt their abilities and feel like they are a fraud, often limiting their own abilities.

1.1 TRUE OR FALSE OF FITNESS EDUCATION

STATEMENT	T/F
If I give away too much for free, they'll never sign up with me.	False
My client can't be trusted to do exercise on their own.	False
When my clients know how to do it on their own, they won't need me anymore.	False
My clients should know everything I know.	False
I should leave it to the experts and avoid doing things like webinars or eBooks.	False
By having achieved my own fitness success, I am already knowledgeable enough to help others	True
Giving away free webinars, workouts, consultations, and eBooks will help others trust me and see me as an expert.	True
By telling my clients why I'm making certain recommendations, they'll be more likely to stick to their program	True

DON'T FORGET

You are the expert! Even though education is an ongoing process and you should never veer outside of your scope of practice, you're the fitness expert to your prospects and clients. Don't fall into the trap of imposter syndrome. Instead, see your successes and convey your expertise as much as possible.

EDUCATIONAL AUDIENCE

PERSONAS

It's a fair assumption to think all of your fitness education will go to existing clients. However, as you'll be learning, a large part of your marketing efforts will go to prospective clients. In these instances, the type of education you provide will be different from the personalized fitness instruction you give existing clients. Therefore, the first step in becoming an expert in fitness education and instruction is identifying who the audience is that you're teaching to. Then, you can create a plan so you know what type of education to provide, to whom, and in what forum.

The primary education audience **personas** to explore are listed below. We use the word "sales funnel" but don't worry. This doesn't imply that you'll be selling. Instead, it's to look at what part of the customer journey the client is in. Your primary educational personas for fitness instruction include:

- Top of sales funnel- prospects
- Mid to bottom of sales funnel- qualified leads
- Existing clients

PROSPECTS

Prospects include anyone who can benefit from your personal training services but just don't know it yet. You'll find these people on social media or they'll find you on your website. When educating prospective personal training clients, your goal is to get them to trust you. You'll do this by demonstrating you're an expert when it comes to fitness and nutrition. Eventually, you'll determine who your niche is, or who your ideal client is.

For example, you might be great at working with people who need to lose a moderate amount of weight, like 40 pounds. Or you might find your ideal client is a working mom who wants to get stronger and feel better about yourself. When you know your ideal client, educating prospective clients becomes easier. Until then, follow this guideline for how and where you can demonstrate your fitness expertise and get people who don't know you, to trust you.

Personas:

The attributes, characteristics, or behaviors of a person using your fitness services.

Prospects:

Anyone who can benefit from your personal training services but may not know it yet.

- Social media posts that include educational tips such as:
 - » How to correctly do a lunge
 - » Common pushup mistakes and how to fix them
 - » Common pushup mistakes and how to fix them
 - » Tips for meal prep
 - » Exercise benefits facts
 - » Healthy eating facts
- Free educational webinars on topics such as:
 - » Weight loss 101 (calories in vs. calories out)
 - » Flexibility training to get more from your workout
 - » Staying motivated under stress
- Free group workouts either live or online such as:
 - » 30 minute bootcamp
 - » Bodyweight circuit for everyone

QUALIFIED LEADS

People who fit your ideal fitness client type and show interest in your services are considered **qualified leads**. Here, they already are viewing you as an expert. In fact, they likely attended a webinar of yours or started to like some of your social media posts. And, they might already have basic knowledge on fitness and nutrition. Therefore, this audience persona needs more education on the value of your services.

Again, you aren't necessarily selling. Instead, you're providing valuable instruction that closely aligns with services you offer. In these instances, you should include these types of education:

- Email newsletters with sample meal plans or sample workouts
- Invitation to closed Facebook group where you answer fitness and nutrition questions
- Live social media feeds of workouts you take clients through that others can follow
- Free eBooks with exercise technique tips or sample exercise plans

Qualified Leads:

People who fit your ideal fitness client type and show some form of interest in your services.

EXISTING CLIENTS

Especially when you're at full capacity with clients (which will happen faster than you think), you should be constantly educating your existing clients. The more foundational and advanced education you provide them, the better they'll progress and see results. Remember, it's far more common to lose a client because they aren't seeing results than it is to lose a client because they are seeing results and "no longer need you".

DON'T FORGET

It's far more likely that you'll lose a client because they don't get results instead of losing someone because they figured it all out on their own. Give your clients everything you can to fit their needs and guide them to success.

Here are the foundational pillars of information you should always be providing existing clients:

- **How and why you structure a program.** For example, let them know why you are including certain exercises or why logging their foods is just as important as attending a session. This type of education will increase their buy-in and, ultimately, their compliance with your recommendations.
- **Expectations of the client-trainer relationship and why.** If you have a 24 hour cancellation policy, let them know it's just as important for their compliance as it is for you to sustain a business. When you educate and communicate expectations up front, it builds a better trusting relationship where you both know what to expect.
- **Proper exercise technique form for independent workouts.** Constantly provide your client with feedback on their form. Help them execute it perfectly so they can master the movement and then progress.

- **Nutrition behaviors.** Even if your state doesn't allow you to provide nutrition guidance, or you don't have the education, you should still provide instruction around healthy eating behaviors. This can include the importance of meal prep, how to measure foods, and how to read nutrition labels. Trending diets will always be around, and if you don't provide guidance on basic nutrition, your client will find the information elsewhere.
- **Progressions and regressions.** Your client will very likely be performing exercises on their own. It might be as simple as running but they'll also be doing common exercises like pushups, squats, and more. It's important for them to know how to make it easier and harder. This way, when they're doing their workout, they have their trusted fitness professional in the back of their mind, telling them the modifications they should be doing.
- **Coping skills.** The reality is, life happens to everyone. Whether it be the holidays and reasons for celebration or negative stress and setbacks, clients should be prepared. You can teach them coping skills (you'll learn them) to help them in times of turbulence. Part of your discipline of education should include giving them the "how-to guide" for continuing a healthy way of life no matter what other stressors, good or bad, they might experience.

CONCLUSION

As a final conclusion, remember, part of your role as a personal trainer is to teach your clients. Don't worry you'll lose clients. Instead, realize the importance of the education you offer. And, intentionally structure it into your communications for prospects, leads, and existing clients. It will increase your perceived level of expertise while also increasing the value of what you offer.

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