

Why Every Personal Trainer Should Get Fat

Before and after pictures of the latest weight loss trend are flooding social media – a shake, a workout program, an app. Promises of losing 10lbs in a short period of time or boosting metabolic rates. But what seems to be missing from those social media posts are fat personal trainers. I was one of them and this is my story.

My first wakeup call. I was always an athlete in younger years but the stress of college took its toll on my body like many young adults, along with various injuries which took me out of sports completely. In college, I was the heaviest, largest student amongst my Exercise Science classmates. I remember the anxiety around the body composition chapter of my exercise testing and prescription lab. Donning a sport bra and shorts, I became even more aware when my skin was pinched and measured, when I was dunked underwater in a cage, and finally, when I used the handheld body fat analyzer. My female lab partners exclaimed when their numbers read 18%, 20%, 22% - I was at 33%. Obese at a size 10. Who would want to hire a personal trainer that looked like me or that was just as unhealthy as the clients I would be working with?

As I moved into my first position as a wellness coach, I was able to do what most women do – I hid my insecurities behind a shirt that was two sizes too big. The gym environment I worked at was more inclusive to all abilities than other boxed gyms in the area which helped make me more comfortable. I was able to study and pass my personal training exam with flying colors. Yet, I still struggled to get clients as the other trainers flaunted chiseled and toned physiques. I started to focus instead on talking to general members about moving better. I developed a strong skillset by using my coaching words instead of showing off crazy exercises only the elitist could do. This new approach resulted in finding my way to amazing clients who helped me get healthier while I helped educate my clients on healthier habits. I was on a roll after three hard years with barely any time in my schedule to rest – I achieved a size 6 physique with 24% body fat, and a newfound appreciation for moving better.

A job opportunity opened up for my fiancée that led us to moving several hours away from this inclusive gym and my amazing clients. The rural area which we moved to had only one chain gym with no interest in adding another personal trainer to the team. I ended up having to settle on a job within a law firm because it was steady and a nice break from the crazy schedule I would have as a trainer. After all, I had learned that working 16-hour days was not that feasible or sustainable for my health. Three years where I expressed my hate for my job daily, where I spent lunch eating my feelings, my nights with drinks to forget the day as soon as 5:00pm hit. All of this led me to the heaviest and unhappiest person I ever was – size 14, 38% body fat. I needed a change. My parents were willing to house us in a new place states away to help me get back to a more urban area for better opportunities as a personal trainer. An opportunity to restart and refresh.

We took the leap and I applied to every fitness facility within the nearby city. Every interview made me more aware of the missing gap in trainer – client relations. I was able to land a job with a high intensity interval training franchise with the understanding that I, too, would be an example of the company's program and its effectiveness. My first classes were rumored amongst the members as the new trainer was a 'chubby girl' who looked more like the clientele walking in the door. Clients were curious to see how a fat personal trainer could help motivate a group of discouraged, overweight clients. Over the next few weeks, our free trials were filling up with more and more people wanting to connect with someone who was going through the same struggles and weight loss journey. I had countless conversations about

how my clients were more inspired because they were watching me transform. Within eight months, I was able to boost our membership and lose 50 pounds, dropping down from a size 14 to a size 4, my body fat from 38% to 22%. I was able to help many others achieve the same results by struggling through the 30 minutes of torture several times a day.

By going through my personal journey of health and wellness, from fat to fit, I found that I was able to empathize with my clients more and encourage my clients more by showing it can be done. My success became my clients' success. Many personal trainers may not have ever had the feeling of dread stepping on a scale, or getting a larger sized clothing item to help hide the fat. I have and I am grateful I did for I was able to gain more than just weight – I was able to gain empathy for each and every weight loss client I have had the honor of working with.