

## LECTURE 4

# The Role of a Personal Trainer

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- **The Role of the Personal Trainer**
- **Scope of Practice**
- **Continuing to Learn and Develop**

# The Role of a Personal Trainer

As a personal trainer it is really important to be aware of the impact you can have on your clients. This is both a valuable position to have, as well as being potentially problematic when it comes to understanding the boundaries and scope of practice, and when to utilise your network of other professionals for assistance. We are going to begin this lecture with an insight into the role of the personal trainer and some of the attributes that will make you successful.



**Lifestyle guidance** – the time you spend in the gym with your client is only a small part of their life. Ensuring you put proper guidance in place for their lifestyle is crucial.

**Delivery** – the way you teach and delivery complex exercises is crucial. One of the most important ways a client can ensure their progress is by staying injury free and being able to show up!

**Motivation** – a vital part of your job is to motivate your client to exercise. But more importantly to keep them exercising once their initial enthusiasm begins to wear off.

**Observation** – your observation will be tested in every session. Your ability to be able to see changes in fatigue, form, movement and other variables will help you make changes and help your client get the most from their workouts.

**Programming** – being able to programme progressively with an eye on the future is important so that your client doesn't hit plateaus and is able to move forward.

**Alternatives** – for a host of reasons, certain clients will not be able to do the same things that other clients can do. Because of this, having alternatives in your toolkit is important, whether that is advancements or regressions.

**Honesty & integrity** – being honest with your clients is a crucial trait, especially when dealing with goals and expectations. To help a client to understand what is reasonably achievable, you must be honest when discussing what is possible and what is not. Also in situations in which a client perhaps is not doing everything that they can, being honest and having integrity will ensure that you are able to discuss it responsibly.

**Empathy** – being able to put yourself into the shoes of your client and empathise with them about their situation. This will allow you to better understand their problems and provide solutions that will work for them.

**Educate** – education is one of the key foundations to making long term change, so being able to educate your clients around the reasons WHY we are doing something will help them to understand. That way they will be much more likely to implement long-term change versus just doing something with no understanding as to why.

**Feedback** – being able to provide clear feedback in a variety of ways to different clients so that they are able to understand and digest it.

**Knowledge** – being knowledgeable about your field.

# Scope of Practice

As discussed at the very beginning, we need to know where our assistance with clients is appropriate, and where the scope of practice ends. It is very important for a number of reasons that we respect these boundaries.

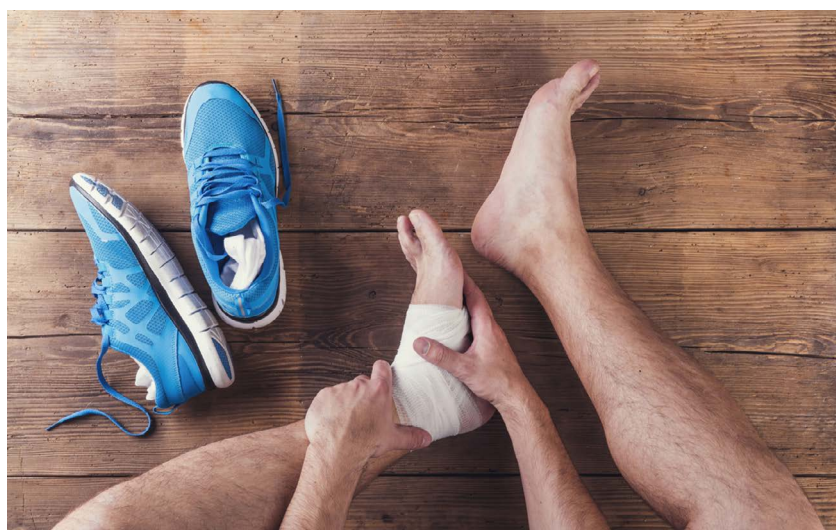
Here are some of the reasons.

## Progression



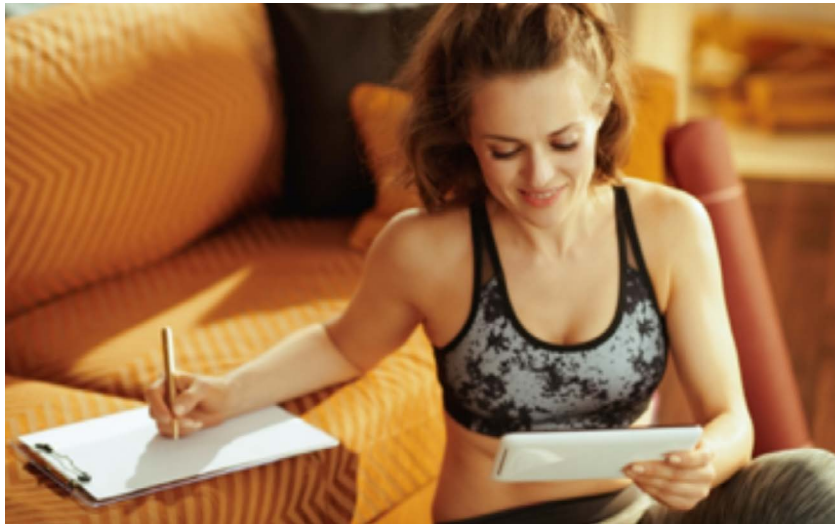
When you train clients, you are slowly working towards the achievement of their fitness goals. As you become more experienced you will be able to progress them more quickly as you have a greater understanding of what will work and what will not. It is worth understanding where the limits to your knowledge are in order that the client's progression is maximised. An example of this would be in athletic development, when very small percentage increases represent real achievement, and where the margins are so much slimmer. A qualified strength and conditioning coach or athletic trainer would be a good resource to include in your network in this instance.

## Safety



If a client requires a specific, very individual approach to their training, something for which you are not adequately trained, you should seek the best professional for them to work with. A key example of this is when a client becomes pregnant, or has returned to training following giving birth. Many people may try to help the best way they can, whereas in truth it would be worth bringing a specialist into your network that can either take over the process for a period of time or assist in your knowledge to ensure the client's safe progression. Another example would be when a client is returning from an injury. A sports therapist or physiotherapist will be well placed to assist in this process.

## Liability



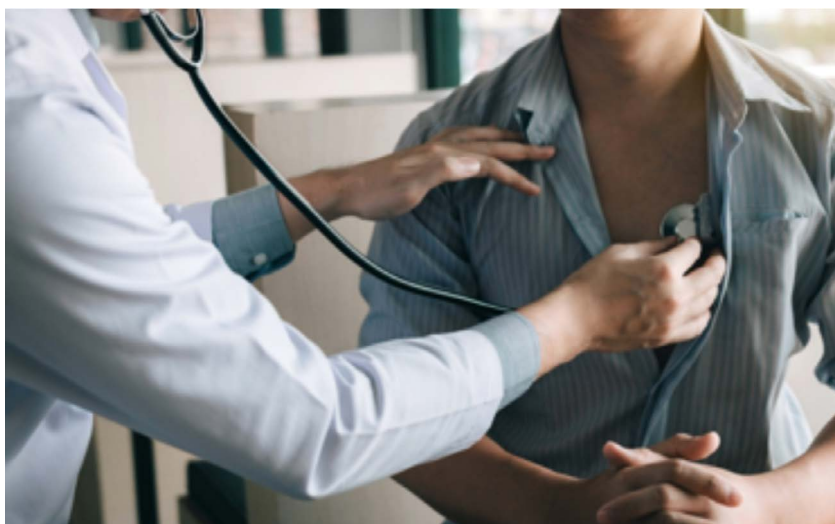
When you qualify as a PT you will need to gain insurance in order to practice. There are a couple of things to consider here. Initially it is important to offer the insurance company as much detail as to what you are planning to do with your qualifications as possible. This way you will be covered for every eventuality in your new career. An example here would be income training, online PT, or outdoor sessions. It is also important that you keep the insurer updated with any continuing professional development (CPD) that you have taken so that you are always covered for the roles you are performing. It is important that you do not perform any roles that you are not qualified or insured for.

If you find yourself in a position where you feel unable or unqualified to assist a client with a particular need it is important that you assist by utilising a more suitably qualified professional. This may be in isolation, or it may be that the client needs ongoing support that you may not be able to provide.

It is worth building your network of other professionals to include a wide variety of specialists in order that you can best serve the client. One thing we must all do is keep the best interests of the client in the forefront of our decision-making, and creating a solid network of individuals that you know, trust and who hold the right qualifications and personal attributes to be able to help is an highly valuable practice.

Here are just some of the other professionals to keep in mind...

## Medical Professionals



Medical assistance can come in many forms, from nutritional, to approval to exercise through a referral scheme, to psychological counselling and therapy. It is important that PT's know where the boundaries are in all these aspects and network accordingly.

## Sports Therapists



Sports massage therapy is a useful addition to a client's overall training programme. During training, the body is subject to lots of different stresses, and overload. The inclusion of either occasional or routine sports massage can help to maintain the health of the soft tissues.

## Rehabilitation Specialists



Regaining and improving functional capacity is the domain of the rehabilitation and functional specialist. This may be a physiotherapist, a sports therapist or similar. This is a valuable addition to your network as injuries and poor function is something you will see throughout your career.

## Physiologists



Physiologists are normally involved in research around function and biology. They may be able to assist in testing and treating issues related to the functioning of various bodily systems.

## Occupational Therapists



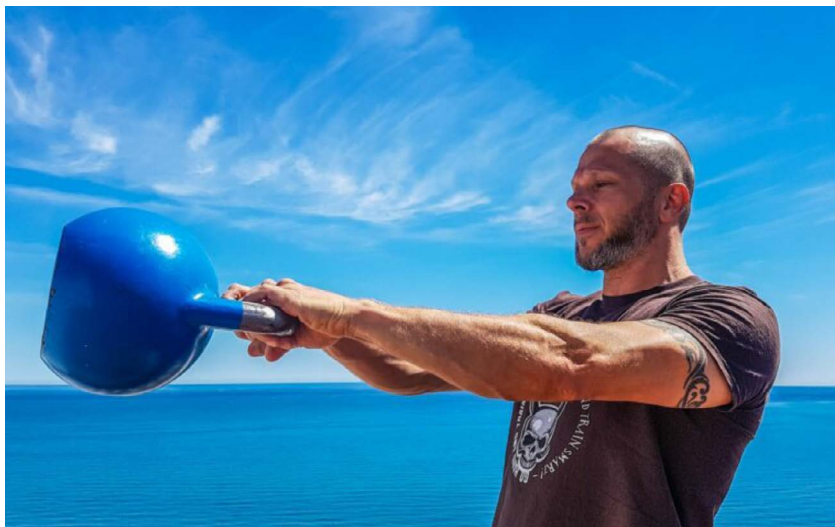
Occupational therapists are there to assist in improving someone's ability to perform their everyday tasks. This may be related to age, disability or recovery from an illness or injury.

## Exercise Referral Specialists



A fitness professional who has studied further in the field of medical conditions and may liaise with a GP to offer exercise to patients dealing with the management of a range of various issues.

## Strength & Conditioning Coach (S&C)



An S&C coach will have knowledge of a whole range of anatomical, physiological, nutritional and programming principles that can enhance athletic ability and human performance. The finer details of training and how they fit into a periodised training plan for athletic development can help to ensure peak performance.

## Pre / Post Natal Specialist



An expert in pre/post-natal exercise prescription can offer clients good advice on how to exercise in a manner that is safe for both mother and baby throughout pregnancy and beyond. There are many guidelines to adhere to throughout this process, making an expert in this area a great person to include in your network.

## Nutritionist



Nutrition is a major determinant of health, wellness and fitness and as such, an expert in nutrition is a valuable resource to have in your network. Depending on their level of qualification they may be able to advise on exercise nutrition, medical issues, allergies and maintenance of a healthy diet.



# How Can I Continue to Learn & Develop?

## Mentorship



A mentor is someone who can offer advice and guidance relative to the industry to enhance your development. They are typically a seasoned professional who informally helps to guide a lesser experienced person in their career. They might be able to guide you in terms of the role you hold, the business aspects of the industry, your career path, and the continuing professional development (CPD) that will help you realise your potential. Typically, a mentor will be a trainer that is more experienced than you and can enhance your development based on their own career experiences.

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD)



CPD is a requirement of the fitness industry, a workplace that moves and evolves very quickly. As this is something that many insurance providers, and the professional body, CIMSPA requires of you, it is valuable to plan your progression so that your career is able to progress in the way that you want it to. It is worth remembering that the PT qualification ensures your eligibility to work in the fitness industry, but it is the starting point of your career and there are many different, interesting avenues to explore.

## Further Education



CPD and fitness education come in many different forms. There are formal, certificated qualifications such as the personal trainer course you are studying now, and a host of other courses of varying commitment – from single-day CPD courses such as studio cycling through to higher-level learning like Level 4 Low Back Pain Management.

In addition to this you can learn an interesting amount of new knowledge around client management, training techniques, nutritional guidelines, and business by simply reading and searching for the information. It may not result in a certificate, but it will immeasurably enhance your career.

## CIMSPA and REPS

One of the primary responsibilities that the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sports and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) and the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPS) have is the management and regulation of the fitness industry, the various roles and occupations that exist within it, and to ensure people are appropriately skilled and qualified for the roles that they hold.

### Benefits to Membership

Joining CIMSPA or REPS as a member offers you the chance to build a profile for others to see on their website and directory. It offers you a level of respect and credibility that you have gained your status through a trustworthy and approved route.

A part of being a fitness professional is to operate within a codes of ethics in your job role. In the fitness industry in the UK, CIMSPA and REPS provide a code of conduct to adhere to for fitness professionals.

A fitness professional should always strive to honour the code of ethics as failure to do so reflects badly on the organisation as well as the instructor themselves.

In addition to the code of conduct there are a series of things that you need to potentially be aware of if you are a PT working in a health club. Among them, the operational procedures as they relate to your role. Some of the aspects that you need to be aware of are as follows.

## Site Policies & Procedures



A PT in a club, employed or self-employed should be aware of the policies and procedures of the club. An understanding how the relationship works from a PT's standpoint is important. You might, for example, be called upon in more club-based situations such as to assist in an evacuation.

## Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

### Situations (COSHH)



It is unlikely that a PT is going to be regularly assisting in the cleaning duties at the club unless they are employed and not a rent-paying trainer. However, an understanding of what chemicals and cleaning products are at the club, and where and how they should be stored is important - even if it's for letting the full-time staff know that something has been left out when it shouldn't have been.

[COSHH is dealt with in greater detail in the lectures on Health and Safety]

## Reporting



Regardless of employment status, it is important that you understand the reporting expectations and processes of any issues that require it. Accusations of abuse, safeguarding issues, and bullying are all examples of situations that you would be required to report.

## Safeguarding



An understanding of how to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, and the expectations around your behaviour and conduct are vital in order to keep everyone safe, and to protect your professional reputation. At a health club there will be policies and procedures around this subject. As a self-employed PT you should know how to protect yourself and to effectively safeguard all participants.

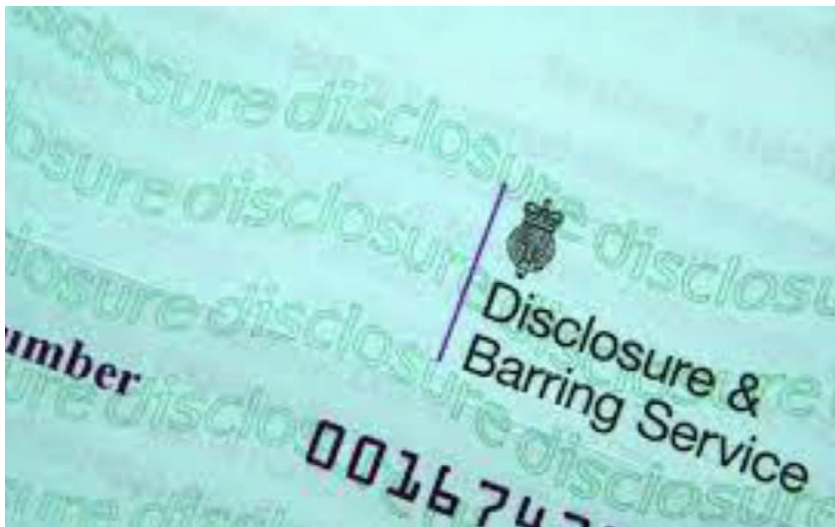
[Safeguarding is dealt with in great detail in the lectures on Health and Safety]

## Insurance



As a student on this course, once you pass and obtain your certificate, you are entitled to purchase discounted insurance through our sister organisation, the Association of Independent Personal Trainers (AIPT). You can also purchase it through CIMSPA, or it can be sourced through a wide variety of different providers. They all offer varying levels of cover, and it is important that you make sure all your proposed business activities are covered.

## Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)



A DBS check will almost certainly be required by your employer, and it is a worthwhile practice for you to utilise in your own business, either for yourself, or for any employees you have in order to satisfy your clients.

[DBS and its various levels are dealt with in great detail in the lectures on Health and Safety]

## First Aid



A first aid qualification is a requirement in the fitness industry, dependent upon where you work. Regardless, it is a great idea to become qualified in this discipline for your peace of mind, as well as that of your clients. More detail in the Health and Safety Lectures.

## Data Protection



It is an important consideration that you manage data correctly and lawfully. In the fitness industry we may need to collect and store data related to personal information as well as payment details etc. You should be aware of how best to protect this data, and your clients effectively. More in the Health and Safety lectures.

