

# 101 Personal Trainer Mistakes

And the Solutions for Each



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First off I want to thank you for downloading this e-book. The project's been something I've wanted to do for a long time. I watch, analyze, and help a lot of trainers and am constantly amazed at the mistakes almost every single one makes!

These are usually not big mistakes but ones that hurt the relationships with their clients and co-workers, harm their energy levels, drain their motivation, and take away from their income.

Compiling this list has been a 4 month project involving every one of the coaches on the PTDC. I want to take a minute to thank them for sending me mistakes they've seen and commenting with solutions. Without the amazing team we have this book wouldn't have been possible.

I truly believe we've listed every conceivable mistake that personal trainers make in this list and have figured out actionable solutions for each. If you only have one book to help you as a trainer this just may be it.

**The book isn't meant to be read start to finish.** There's an accompanying manual entitled *101 Personal Trainer Mistakes – Reference List for Gym Manuals*. My suggestion is to print that list and keep it with you at all times. Give the list to your manager and/or gym owner and have them include it in their training materials. Peruse the list and put a check beside a habit you wish to improve. Then go back to this book and read the corresponding section.

Enjoy the book. It's been a labour of love putting it together. Always feel free to message me with questions and/or comment. If you think we missed any mistakes please let me know and I'll add them in for the version 2.0.

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# 101 Personal Trainer Mistakes – And the Solutions to Each

**1. Using your cell phone** – Don't even bring your cell phone onto the gym floor. Leave it in your office or locker. Check messages quickly in between sessions ONLY to see whether there have been any scheduling changes. Texts from friends can wait if you have back-to-back clients. The session time belongs to your clients. Show them you value it just as much as they do.

**2. Frantically writing working 5 minutes before your sessions** – Prepare for your workouts in advance. A proper workout takes research and thought. Set aside 1-2hrs twice a week (I like Sundays and Wednesdays) to prepare. I also recommend taking 20-30min at the beginning of the day to go over last minute changes. Workouts will change on the fly but being prepared sets you apart from the competition.

**3. Cueing too much** – A new client can't process too much information at one time and a picture paints a thousand words. Show the client the exercise with proper form and have them demonstrate. At that point pick 1-2 of the *most important cues* and show the exercise with good form.

The cues should be 1-2 words maximum. In explaining the cue to your client you relate the action you're cueing to the word. The most effective cues are relatable, emotional, and specific. An example script if I want my client's chest up during a squat may go like this:

"For this next rep I want you to have your chest up. Picture as if you're a superhero flying through the air. This will make sure you have a neutral spine to keep your back safe. In doing so you'll be able to squat more weight and get more out of this great fat burning exercise. So when I say "superman" you lift your chest up. Ok?"

In this short paragraph I made the cue easier to understand by relating it back to something they now well (superheroes), made them recognize the importance in safety and why they should care.

Most clients can do 90% of complicated movements naturally so overloading them with cues will only work to confuse them. Pick the 1-2 pertinent form cues and make them meaningful.

**4. Cueing too little** – Not helping the client make a connection to the exercise through cueing can stop exercise instruction before it starts. Arguable the greatest coach ever, John Wooden, famously cued 1000s of times during a practice. The cues were short, meaningful, and specific. Using the example in mistake #3 I'll often say the word superman 8 times in an 8 rep set. It makes for dedicated practice and leads to accelerated skill development.

**5. Not spotting properly** – Aside from hurting yourself spotting improperly can also put the client at risk. For dumbbell exercises always spot on the wrists and for barbell movements spot outside the hands. Know that spotting is for safety and you shouldn't be helping out clients for an extra rep. Unless you're training very high level clientele (2+ years of serious training) it won't add to their training and puts both of you at risk. Spotting from personal trainers should be thought of as pure injury prevention.

Always keep your back straight and use leverage when possible. (I like to jam my knees into the bars at the bottom of a bench press so I can get more leverage if a bar needs to be lifted off of a client.)

**6. Wearing jeans** – Want to bend down to pick up a weight? How about demonstrate a lunge? You laugh but I see trainers all the time wearing jeans when I audit other gyms.

I've got news for you. Designer jeans might show off your ripped glutes but they aren't functional. Oh, that and it's not professional. Buy some nice looking athletic pants or shorts if you think your calves are up to snuff.

**7. Not showering** – Your wife doesn't enjoy your morning stench. Neither will your clients. Take a shower and put on some deodorant. True – you work in a gym. The best trainers treat the gym as their workplace and act professional. Be clean, take a shower, and wash your clothing. It's hard to build up meaningful relationships with your clients if you smell worse than Jabba the Hutt.

**8. Smoking during breaks** – I hope none of you do this. I worked with a trainer who did. He would come back into the gym and train a client smelling of smoke. We had to fire him after clients started complaining.

**9. Stealing clients from the gym** – If you decide to leave your gym there is an ethical and unethical way to do so. Contractually you probably can't take your clients with you but the reality is that most gyms will never push legal action.

The reality is that your reputation follows you and it's important to leave on good terms. If you decide to leave your gym the proper (and legal) way to do so is to tell your clients that you're pursuing another opportunity (you can tell them where you're going), thank them for being such an awesome client, and give them your contact info. The difference is that asking a client to come with you to your new gym is considered poaching. If they like training with you they'll ask to continue working with you wherever you are.

**10. Stealing clients from other trainers** – This is a touchy subject. If you do a great job (and if you're reading this I assume you do) then clients will ask to train with you because they're unsatisfied with their trainer. You have two recourses but both take into consideration the pride of the other trainer.

The first is to approach your manager and have them make the switch. This disconnects you from the situation and allows the manager to determine the terms for the switch. Hopefully they'll figure out a reason that's out of the other trainers control to maintain their pride.

The second is to approach the trainer directly. Tell them about the situation and that their client is dissatisfied. Often the client hasn't spoken to their own trainer about their feelings. In giving them the heads up the trainer can decide whether they want the client to switch or if it's a situation that they can fix. The trainer can then decide whether to open up the dialogue and try to fix the problem or switchover the client themselves.

The important point is never go behind a trainer's back. The relationship with your co-worker is more valuable than a single client.

**11. Promoting unneeded supplements** – Your reputation is your biggest asset. It takes years to build and seconds to break. Promoting supplements may seem like a good way to make passive income but I can't stress enough how careful you need to be when going down this route. There are a number of different companies that offer commission structures for trainers that promote and sell their supplements to their clients. The reality is that most clients won't benefit from supplements as eating whole foods and getting consistent work outs is what's stopping them from hitting their goals.

If you do decide to go this route I have two pieces of advice. The first is to make sure you're only promoting good products. Take an inquisitive look into the company and the quality of the products they produce.

The second is that you must tell your client that you receive commissions if they buy the supplement from you. You don't want them finding out afterwards as they may think that you were hiding it from them on purpose. Also, if your client loves training with you they'll want to support you and may go out of their way to buy the supplement from you instead of the local store.

**12. Recommending equipment to clients that's overpriced so you get commission** – My client wanted to buy a treadmill from home. I sent her to the store that didn't offer me a commission. Why? Because the treadmill was \$1500 cheaper than the store that offered me 10% on the sale. It's not uncommon practice for stores to mark up equipment 15%, give the trainer 10% and pocket the extra 5% for themselves.

Again, your reputation is your biggest asset. If a client finds out that you knowingly sent them to the more expensive store so you could get a commission they'll be upset. I wouldn't blame them for firing you.

**13. Recommending equipment to clients that they don't need so you get a commission** – This point is similar in vein to #12 above but be sure that you're only recommending equipment to clients that they actually need. If you would like them to have it make sure they understand why and divulge that you get a commission if they choose to buy it. You don't want your client thinking that the only reason they bought their new fancy set of resistance bands was so you got a commission.

**14. Wearing bad socks** – I hate bad socks. Despise them. It ruins my day. Spend a little extra and get comfortable socks. Thank me when your feet are feeling great after your 10hr training day.

**15. Thinking you know everything** – Don't ever get complacent. There's no stable. You're either moving forwards or backwards. Check out the PTDC book list ([www.theptdc.com/book-list](http://www.theptdc.com/book-list)) if you're looking for something to read.

**16. Not reading "How to Win Friends and Influence People"** – If you want to build relationships this is a must read. Spoiler alert – SMILE!

**17. Not keeping abreast with the current research** – Don't read the same publications as your clients do. You're better than that. It's your job to critically look at professional publications or scientific journals and apply the research to your training. Coach Mark's Young's *How to Read Fitness Research* is a fantastic guide that will teach you how to easily find and apply research into your training. Start with review papers and work your way into more complicated studies. Figure out a way to gain access to the PubMed research database and start by narrowing your searches to review papers. Slowly make your way into reading full-length studies.

**18. Thinking sales isn't your job** – Every day you're selling the most valuable product in the world. Yourself. Believe in it and learn how to sell it. *Spin selling* by Neil Rackham is a must-read.

**19. Being afraid of sales** – Become comfortable of sales. It should never be the monkey in the room. You offer a valuable service that clients pay a lot of money for. Understand your value and learn how to communicate it. Sales is not trickery. You're not duping your client into opening their cheque book.

The best trainers at sales I've ever seen followed one simple trick which led to their success. They made sure to introduce themselves to at least one stranger every day. They did this on the bus, in the coffee shop, on the street, or in the gym. If you can strike up a conversation with a stranger then you can definitely sell the one product in the world you truly believe in. YOU.

The first step is knowing what your clients issues are. Get as much detail as you can about your client and why they want to exercise. Maybe they want to fit into a dress or maybe they feel that losing weight will give them more confidence. Upon knowing their issue it's your job to educate them on exactly how you can help them. Paint the picture of how you can solve their problem in as much detail as possible. They'll be happy to give you the sale. If you don't believe you can help them be honest and refer them to somebody who can. The referral builds strong relationships with other trainers who will be happy to return the favour. It also builds trust and the client will be happy to send you their friends because they know you'll take care of them.

**20. Forgetting to smile** – You're in the relationship business. Smile. When a client walks in the door a big smile says "I'm happy to see you" and engages them right away. You have the best job in the world so show it.

**21. Giving a magazine workout to your client** – It's tempting to read a popular magazine and want to try out their "workout of the month". There's nothing wrong with these workouts but your job is to give your clients a workout specific to them. Don't get lazy. You also don't want another member (or worse

yet your client) recognizing the workout from the magazine and calling you out on it. Remember what I said about how a reputation takes years to build and seconds to break.

**22. Saying “feel the burn”** – Don’t use clichés. Ever - unless you’re joking. Here are some others to avoid: “Power up!”, “love the “pain”, “loooove it”, “engage the core”, “pump it up”, “welcome to pumpsville, population you”. (Ok, nobody’s ever said that last one. I made it up.)

**23. Cold calling** – If possible always know something about the client you’re about to call. If they’re an old client of the gym check if there are any notes or get in touch with their old trainer to get some info about them. If they’re a referral from a client try to gain as much info as possible before calling them.

Try to find out their exercise history and why they weren’t successful last time or what they’re struggling with. Devise a solution before the call and have a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> best scenario planned out. First best may be a commitment to buy sessions. Great! Book in the client at least twice to come in (this way they’ll still have another session lined up if they cancel the first one). The second best may be a free meet and greet session to meet the client in person – no strings attached. A creative third option might be a combined free workout for the prospective client and your existing client who referred them. It makes for a softer meeting and comfortable relationship from the start.

Also get your client to give them a warning that you will call. It makes for a more friendly conversation.

**24. Not gathering testimonials** – If you’re client gives you a great compliment then ask them to write it down. If you have clients who have had success ask them for a testimonial right away. Keep these in a file on your computer even if you don’t need them right away. Once you launch a website or if you want to promote yourself in any way they’ll come in handy so always have them on hand.

From day 1 you should be gathering as many testimonials as possible. Testimonials act as modelling and are an important aspect of Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory. Prospective clients see these and automatically think they can accomplish what all of your other successes have accomplished – with your help.

**25. Not using humour** – Comedy goes a long way in building relationships with clients. These people will come in for workouts frustrated, stressed, and tired. Lightening the mood early on will help them disconnect and adds additional value to your service. I like to start each session with a funny anecdote to lighten the mood. Often I’ll “shock” my client by saying something like: “I’m having a terrible day!”. When they ask me why I explain that I forgot my favourite socks at home and have to wear these cotton clunkers. (Note: Remember mistake #14? I hate bad socks.)

Funny cues can also be more memorable. For example, “squeeze your butt like your cracking a walnut between your cheeks” is more memorable than “Flex your glutes”. Humour can also act to create long-standing effective cues. In the example above anytime I want my client to fire their glutes I’d just say “walnut”. Immediately they understand the specific cue I’m giving them and it adds some enjoyment to the session.

**26. Not giving homework** – You have at most 4hrs/wk with a client. It's not enough if they need to develop new habits or make any significant gains. I give daily homework to my clients early on in their training. It works especially well for teaching abdominal and glutes activation techniques.

Homework can also take the form of cardio and nutritional monitoring. It's your job to give the client guidelines and forms for tracking their progress as all of these components should be worked into their program.

The final piece of homework that my entire client base does is self-myofascial release. They have foam rollers and balls at home and I provide them with handouts usually from Mike Robertson's awesome self-myofascial release guide (free download by signing up for his mailing list). The key when giving homework is to be prepared. Show your client you're different and willing to go the extra 10% by not only providing them with a workout. Give them guidelines for self-myofascial release, cardio, and nutritional monitoring as well.

**27. Not loving what you do** – personal training is a physically exhausting profession and will wear you down if you're motivation is purely financial. You have to love your clients, your gym, and bettering yourself.

Personal training isn't a profession that you can coast through. It's a hustle. When you're with your client you must always be on. It's impossible to do well unless you love the job.

**28. Thinking personal training is only about fitness** – The best personal trainers promote lifestyle change. They work with other practitioners closely and encourage their clients to live a full and vital life whatever it takes. Unless you work with high performance athletes, which I would consider strength and conditioning and not personal training, know that we're in a service industry. Your job isn't always to give your clients the most intense workout you can. It's not always to give them a six-pack, and it's not always to get them to bench press their body weight.

A personal trainer's job is to provide their client with what's missing from their physical well-being. This may be an opportunity to distress and disconnect. It may also be a time for them to enjoy movement. You're their guide on this journey and must identify how you can best help them.

Don't think your job is always to push clients beyond their limits – often their bodies can't take it. Always ask yourself *am I adding stress to my client's lives or taking it away?*

**29. Teaching exercises you don't know yourself** – If you learnt an exercise at a workshop over the weekend take time to try it out a couple times and adequately understand it before programming it into a clients workout. The same goes for reading about an exercise on the internet. Have a trainer you work with act as a guinea pig as. Instruct the exercise to them before trying it out on a client.

It's easy to get excited about a new movement and that's fine. You should get excited. One of the joys in working out for me is the variation in ways to accomplish the same goals. When I'm at a workshop learning new movements I find myself visualizing which of my clients will benefit from it. With that being said it's your responsibility to take the time to try the new exercise before prescribing it.



**30. Using protocols you're not comfortable with** – If you've never completed a full program using GVT (German Volume Training) please don't prescribe it to a client. This goes for 5-3-1 protocols as well and the Tabata principle or anything else you may come across. It's exciting to read about a new method of gaining strength, burning fat, or putting on muscle. But it's impossible to fully understand the types of exercises that work within the protocols, how progression occurs and how recovery feels unless you've done it yourself.

This is one of the mistakes I see running rampant anytime I'm observing trainers. They enthusiastically talk about the benefits of the workout to a client sparing no details. For example, how GVT is an amazing way to put on muscle because of the incredible volume. Problem is the trainer has never made it through a full program themselves and doesn't realize the amount of soreness and mental fatigue it causes. Maybe if they had gone through a program themselves they'd know it wasn't a good choice of program to prescribe to their client who works 12hrs days and doesn't sleep enough. Yet, the trainers surprised when the client gets sick or hurt.

**31. Using a piece of equipment you're not comfortable with** – Just because you watched a YouTube video of a TRX exercise doesn't mean that you're an expert on the TRX. A kettlebell workshop at a conference doesn't make you a kettlebell expert. I understand that new fitness equipment is exciting. It's fun to play with. Remember that you're a lot stronger and more comfortable with new movements than most of your clients. If you're able to pick up a kettlebell swing within minutes doesn't mean they'll be able to as well.

Take the time to thoroughly learn a new piece of equipment before adding it to your training toolbox. For every piece of equipment in the gym you should know the advantages, limitations, drawbacks, safety considerations and where in workouts it fits. You should also be able to progress and regress each exercise at least 1part before instructing it. Instructing another trainer in your club on this equipment before you attempt to show it to a client is also a good plan of attack here.

**32. Over periodizing** – This one hits home for me. An old manager I had made all of us do a 3 month periodization plan for each client. I'd spend 2 hours on each client's workout once a week revising the plan. It was a complete waste of time. Personal training clients aren't athletes and interruptions happen often. Also, almost every client is in the beginner or early intermediate stage meaning that linear progression works best. Periodization is for high performing individuals with at least 2+ years of serious training under their belt.

Don't worry about block periodizing or pyramiding workouts. Instead always find ways to increase difficulty. Be creative. Some ways to increase difficulty over the course of a workout or program can be weight, sets, reps, angle, tempo, grip, rest period, and exercise order.

I'll only change the exercise when the client stops progressing which, for a new client takes a long time. The problem is that clients can get bored and you worry that they'll feel they don't need you if you don't change the workouts of exercises often. Here's an example where I have the client doing a close grip bench press for 10 weeks:

Weeks 1-2 : Close grip bench press

Weeks 3-4: Incline close grip bench press

Weeks: 5-6: Conventional (shoulder width) grip bench press

Weeks 7-8: Close grip bench press with fat gripz

Weeks 9-10: Close grip bench press

Here I changed the exercise enough so the client doesn't get bored but not too much that they stop progressing. For pressing movements some easy ways to change grips is to move from a close grip to wider one. For pulling grips you have your choice of supinated, pronated, neutral, and opposite holds. For all of the holds you have the choice of open, closed or hook grips. All can be done close or wide. If you want to have some fun and offer a different challenge fat gripz are an incredible tool for changing the activation patterns.

**33. Not studying** - I struggled with consistent clientele and questioned personal training as a career choice before deciding to read 1hr/day Monday-Friday and making up for any missed hours over the weekend. Within 2 months I had a consistent client and within 6 I was promoted to senior trainer at my club. My clientele became consistent, my retention went way up, my per hour pay increased, and I started earning a small salary.

I recommend this method to any trainer. Always have two books on the go – one on training and one on business/marketing/or sales. For a list of the most influential books on my life and career go to <http://www.theptdc.com/book-list/>.

**34. Not practicing what you learn** – While I don't advocate trying out new techniques you just learnt on your clients I'm not going to leave you out in the cold. Here are some great techniques to practice your new and exciting skills:

The first is to have a group of trainers at your club that you do weekly or monthly meetings with to 'play around'. There's not set goal to these workshops other than to practice. Each trainer is meant to come into the session ready to teach 1-2 new movements or cueing techniques to the group. The whole group then practices together.

Another way to practice that I've also had fantastic success is what I call *scouring the floor*. I've been known to walk around the gym floor with a textbook on stretching asking members if they'd be interested being my guinea pig. Usually the member is ecstatic to have a free stretch and to help. I get to practice my new technique while building a new relationship with a member. As another bonus it shows the member that I go out of my way to study, improve, and practice. I've gained new clients this way.

**35. Not willing to have your world turned upside down** – I used to instruct back squats to most of my clients. Only the truly advanced progressed to front squatting. Now my clients start with goblet squats, progress to front squats, and eventually some become advanced enough to try back squats.

I fought this transition every step of the way. Back squatting was natural but over time as I studied more I realized how difficult they were to teach and perform properly. I still love the exercise but the learning curve is too steep for most of my clients. Goblet squats have a similar effect and can be taught over one session. In addition the position of the weight forces clients into good form.

This is just one example where my world got turned upside down. The best trainers keep an open mind to new research and information and are willing to change everything they do if something better comes along. It's the way we evolve. Here's a quote to live by:

“Every 6 months I realize how bad of a trainer I was 6 months ago”

**36. Self-absorption** – Don't call yourself a TRX trainer or Identify with one particular type of training. The best trainers practice self-observation which means to watch everything around you as if it were happening to somebody else. Instead of calling yourself a TRX trainer call yourself a trainer who's found that he enjoys using the TRX as a tool.

It's a mindset and an important one. Once you're able to practice self-observation as opposed to self-absorption you're able to look at ways of training without feeling a connection towards them. Only then will you be able to pick and choose the best tools and training methods.

**37. Not having a personal trainer network** – Some of my clients were given to me by other trainers who work out of the neighbourhood. In return, I often get asked by people if I know a trainer in a specific area who specializes. I'm more than happy to pass on that client if I know the right trainer.

The more people you know the better off you'll be. Work to meet and keep in touch with trainers both close and far to you. You never know where your next referral is. In the past month I've referred clients to trainers in Florida, Maryland, Montreal, and Vancouver.

I keep a separate group on in my email account for trainers. Every week I send an email to 5 trainers asking how they are and how their business is going. This method of keeping in touch strengthens relationships and keeps me at the top of their mind.

**38. Program hopping** – Pick your plan and stick to it. It's easy to get excited about the most recent workout featured in Men's Health or Shape magazine. I'll often research new workout programming and think it's perfect for a client but I don't switch their plan. Your client will be better off finishing their current plan and then you can decide whether the new and exciting program is right for them. Always remember that no program is effective if you don't stick to it.

For all the information you'll ever need on program design check out Joe Dowdell's Peak Performance Seminar DVD set.

**39. Lacking confidence** – Confidence is paramount to your success. The client hired you to help them. *You're the expert.* Remember that. This was a hard concept to grasp early on in my career. I didn't think that a 50 year old doctor would listen to a 22 year trainer. Therefore I didn't think that they would pay for my advice. Once I realized I had value my clients started to trust me more.

Speak with authority and explain yourself thoroughly. If you don't know the answer to your clients question then say that you will follow up and do your research – then follow up.

**40. Not keeping track** – Walk into any gym and an easy way to tell whether a trainer is serious about their job or not is whether they're carrying a clipboard. It doesn't matter what method you use to monitor the workouts but every set, rep, and weight should be tracked. Do this both to improve your clients' results and also to protect yourself legally.

**41. Not being armed with progressions** – If you're not armed with at least 2 progressions for every exercise you prescribe then go back to school. A progression can be the same exercise with more weight, more reps, less rest, slower tempo etc.

A progression can also be a more difficult form of the exercise. Some examples are to make the movement unbalanced or single leg instead of two legs. Progressions can also be a completely different exercise. For example a Romanian deadlift is a perfect progression from a cable pullthrough.

**42. Not being armed with regressions** – If you're not armed with at least 2 regressions for an exercise you prescribe then learn them. Most trainers have their favourite exercises which is fine. Figure out what works for you and your clientele. Make sure that you're able to alter those exercises for every client that comes in and, when a client takes some time off, be ready to regress the exercise to build them back up to the same movement.

A regression can be an easier form of the exercise or a decrease in weight or increase in stability. An example of a regression is a band assisted chin up from an unassisted chin up.

Take a notepad and write down your 5 favourite exercises to do with your clients. (Mine are the deadlift, bench press, goblet squat, chin up, and straight leg raise.) Write down 2 progressions and regressions for each. Post this piece of paper somewhere that you can always refer back to it.

**43. Getting absorbed in trends** – This is one of the biggest mistakes I see with new trainers. It's easy to get excited by new equipment or workout trends. I get it. Learn the basics first. Prioritize your learning the same way that you do your training. Fitness manufactures make money when they put out a new product and convince trainers to buy it in addition to sign up for the certification course. They don't make money convincing you that teaching your client to control their own bodyweight before suspending them in the air. Remember that when you go to trade shoes and watch fitness videos.

The equipment may look fun for you to use but take an inquisitive look as to it's benefits and drawbacks before purchasing it. Learn where to place it in your training and focus on what matters.

**44. Teaching equipment before you learn it** – Just because you watched a couple YouTube videos made by people you don't doesn't mean you should start using the bosu ball with every client. Your clients pay good money for your services. Your responsibility to them is to take your years of experience and mistakes to help your client avoid them. Trying out all of your new toys on your clients before you've taken the time to delve deeply into them should be considered malpractice.

**45. Avoiding your gut feeling** – If you're client's squatting and something doesn't seem quite right. Stop them. If they're doing a bench press and your stomach starts to churn. Stop them. Your gut feeling is often right. Sometimes it takes a minute to assess the form to figure out what was going wrong but having your client finish the set can be dangerous. It's a judgement call and I'd veer on the side of caution. I'll often stop my clients after 2 reps in a set if something "seems off" even if I can't pinpoint the problem yet. If you're been working out and/or training for 10+ years then you're qualified to trust your subconscious instincts. Malcom Gladwell gives a great overview of this concept in *Blink*.

**46. Not blaming yourself** – I stole this one from Mike Boyle. If a client gets hurt, it's your fault. If they come in with a pulled muscle and say it's from sleeping wrong, it's your fault. If a client isn't getting results, it's your fault. Don't blame them.

It's your job to keep them healthy and it's your job to make sure they eat well. If they aren't sticking to a good nutrition plan then figure out another one that works. Don't blame lack of results on their lack of commitment. The best trainers take this opportunity to be creative. Try another method. Maybe teaching them how to make and store nutritious shakes is the solution? The minute I started holding myself accountable for the errs of my clients was the minute I became a better trainer.

**47. Not celebrating your achievements** – I learnt this early on. Celebrate the little things. When a client hits a weight loss goal – take you girlfriend out for dinner, when you hit your goal in terms of hours trained in a month – take the night off and see a show with your boyfriend. Whatever the achievement is big or small celebrate it. Never forget that it's the journey that matters.

“Stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more and cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.” – Robert J. Hastings

**48. Not celebrating your clients achievements** – Make it a big deal when your client hits their weight loss goal or nails a full range squat for the first time. These achievements may not seem like a lot to you but they mean the world to your client. Take a couple minutes and help the client relish their moment. Reminisce about their struggles and how far they've come as you paint a picture of how amazing their accomplishment really is.

Make an award or have some sort of a giveaway for hitting each goal. It could be a branded water bottle, t-shirt, gym bag etc. Get creative but make sure you celebrate their goals. I personally like doing a write up of my client on my website (<http://www.jonathangoodman.ca/>) where I highlight the struggle and what they did to overcome their personal adversity.

**49. Not taking time off** – Personal trainers work long days. Our salary is directly dependent on how hard we work and, in many cases, we don't earn anything when we take time off. Paid vacations aren't common. What I recommend is to plan out your year in advance. Study the trends in your demographics and plan your vacations at low points in the year. For example I know that the Jewish high holidays are low points since many of my clients are Jewish. I plan a long vacation during the Jewish high holidays each year during whatever period they fall. (Dates vary as the calendars are different.)

New years and Christmas will always be slow times as will March Break in most populations. Those are also expensive times to travel so if you have a period specific to the demographic you train like I do it could be a great cheap way to vacation. This past year my Dad and I did a 2 week hiking and rafting trip through the Grand Canyon and Zion National parks. It was a trip I'll remember for the rest of my life.

**50. Learning a new exercise and giving it to every client for two weeks** – Avoid this trap like the plague. I can't count the number of times we do workshops in our club showing new progressions of exercises. Without fail I see some trainers using the new exercise every single session for two weeks with every client. Then I never see the exercise again.

Workshops are great. Continuing education is great. Perhaps the best skill a trainer can have is the ability to recognize movements and figure out where and when to use them for the great effect.

**51. Getting your clients to warm up for 5 minutes on the treadmill** – A warm up does not consist of a 5 minute slow jog. This doesn't prepare your client for weight lifting physiologically or neurologically. The best warm-ups are planned carefully with the following workout in consideration. Think of a warm up as a watered down version of the workout.

The goal is to stimulate the nervous system and get it ready for the specific work load the client is about to put on their body in addition to warming their muscle tissue. The best trainers' warm-ups are specific to the workout their client is completing that day. For example, if your client is squatting then warm up the squat movement pattern.

**52. Complimenting too much** – Don't get caught in the trap of saturating your compliments. Saying "good job" after every set is redundant and loses its value quickly. Compliments must be specific and meaningful. Save them for when they'll have the greatest effect. My favourite story is when I waited two months to give a client her first compliment. Sure I'd give her a quick high five after a set but it wasn't until she really blew me away did I cough up a full compliment.

You better believe that compliment was a doozy. I specifically congratulated her for a perfect deadlift. I took 5 minutes and painted a picture start to finish of her journey, her struggles, her a-ha moments, and her mini-successes. I outlined all of the form cues that she finally nailed. She's been dead lifting perfectly ever since.

**53. Complimenting too little** – The best way to avoid this is to have a complimenting plan. (I know it sounds ridiculous but here me out.) With every client you train pick 3-4 mini goals on their way to their 3 month goal. For example if their 3 month goal is to lose 15lbs your mini goals might be the 5lbs mark,

the 10lbs mark, and the 15lbs mark. Personally I like exercise goals and make a note to compliment every successful progression towards a difficult lift.

The point is that a plan allows you to organize your compliments and not miss out when the client deserves it. When you do give a compliment – make it count. Highlight the struggles and successes. The more specific the better and try to relate the compliment back to the clients goal. Later you can refer back to that compliment because you’ve made the experience emotional for the client. An example might be:

“Great job the deadlift. You kept your hips back and I could tell that you were firing your glutes. Guess all that activation work paid off! Now that you’ve nailed the form we can start increasing the weight and building you an awesome butt.”

**54. Starting off the session negative** – It doesn’t matter what’s going on in your life. Whenever your client asks “How are you” always respond with “great!”. The session is their time that they’ve paid good money for. Don’t bring down their energy with your problems. Leave them at the door and deal with them after the session. Body language is everything. Remember that 80% of a personal trainer’s job is getting the client to the gym. You can be the most technical trainer in the world but if your attitude sucks your client will never come back.

**55. Not putting a positive spin on everything** - On the same token if your client comes in negative it’s your job to turn the situation around. Put a positive spin on the situation. If they’re frustrated from work then remind them how good it feels to train. Tell them that you’ll add in some medicine ball smashes so they can let some steam off.

If they feel like they aren’t getting results then take them into an office and have a discussion. Get to the root of the problem. Weight is never the issue. The emotion behind weight is. Nobody is upset that they haven’t lost “x”lbs. People are upset because they don’t feel good. Figure out when they felt fat and remind them of a previous a-ha moment where they felt great. If your client mentioned to you a week earlier that they felt sexy in their red dress on a cruise with her husband then remind her of that. Paint a picture and make it as detailed as possible.

**56. Not explaining why it matters to the client** – This crucial step comes into play when you’re instructing exercises. Explaining why each exercise is important specific to the client’s goals or background will make them want to learn it faster. For example, if your client’s main goal is to lose weight but they’re also going on a sky trip here’s what I would say while instruction a single-leg squat:

“I chose this exercise for you for two reasons. The first is that it will make you better at squatting. As I said before, squatting is one of the best fat burning exercises due to it’s large muscle recruitment. Additionally the single leg squat will help you get stronger for skiing. It will improve the stability around the ankle, knee, and hip.”

**57. Doing too much for them** – The best trainers understand that their goal is to make their clients self-sufficient. Let your clients put their own weights away. Give your clients articles to read for homework and ask their thoughts on it when they come in.

The more your clients are willing to learn about exercise the better they'll do. Remember that their success is your success. Don't ever worry about training them too much so that they won't need you. First off, if you continually research you'll always be able to offer them more. Second off, if they reach a point where they're skilled enough not to need you I can promise that they'll refer you 3 other people jumping to make the same gains.

**58. Veering on your plan** – Financial situations differ. In a perfect world every client would be able to train as much as they need to accomplish their goals. The reality is that very few clients can afford to train more than 1-2x/week. During an initial sales meeting assume that the client will train as much as they need to. Figure out their goals and perform the assessment before deciding on their plan.

When it's time to present the plan the objection will often come up that they cannot afford to train with you that much. (However many times a week it is.) *This is the crucial step where many trainers fail.* Your plan is the plan. It's what they need to do. If they need to train 4x/wk to accomplish their goal but can only afford 2 then don't change the plan. Figure out a way for the client to train twice by themselves and twice with you. Sometimes it takes a little creativity. Just don't change the plan to two workouts a week. It makes you appear weak and your plan loses all value.

**59. Not making realistic programs** – Goal setting is incredibly difficult. It takes a keen understanding of physiology and without following your clients 24hrs/day is almost impossible. Yet – it's still a staple of the business and your gym will probably ask that you make goals with all of your clients to be held accountable too.

This is fine and not a big problem but you must be comfortable telling your clients what it will take on their end. Also make sure to explain the difference between weight loss and body composition change. If they want weight loss they must seriously change their dietary habits. Body composition change will happen and can be measured in any of a number of ways. (I like waist to hip measurements personally.)

Understand that bigger gains will happen in the first month due to water loss and decreasing inflammation with the addition of vegetables and fish oil to the diet. Explain to the client that these massive gains won't last. Gains later on may be lower in the absolute sense but are just as important.

**60. Not having a great inter-professional team** – Perhaps the greatest strength you can have as a trainer is your network. The best trainers know enough about all different disciplines to recognize when to refer out and to whom. I advise you to set out and find the best chiropractors, massage therapists, naturopathic doctors, physiotherapists, rolfers, Graston practitioners and whatever other professional you feel you want to add to your team in your neighbourhood.



Keep their cards in your desk and be ready to refer out. Send these professionals Christmas cards and follow up monthly with emails saying hello and asking how their business is doing. This simple task will make sure that your clients are looked after and may act as a great source of referrals in return.

**61. Burning out** – Sure it sounds like a good idea to work as much as possible. That way you make the most money right? Wrong. Schedule your clients in bunches. Figure out the times you want to work during the week and only put clients within those slots.

If you feel like you need a break and aren't excited to go into the gym then take a long weekend. Disconnect and get some rest. Exhaustion creeps up on trainers. The money lost while taking a short rest will come back ten-fold if you do a better job.

**62. Not eating well** – Food is energy. Caffeine isn't energy. Wake up early and eat breakfast before your morning client, have shakes prepared to have quick calories in between clients, and drink lots of water. It sounds obvious but isn't always followed. Here are a couple tips to ensure you eat well on those busy days:

- Drink a cold glass of water first thing when you wake up.
- Always have a water bottle and keep it full.
- Make supershakes and always have them on hand. These contain 1 fruit, 1 vegetable, 1 protein, 1 healthy fat, and 1 topper. My favourite is banana, walnut, spinach, protein powder, and coconut shards.
- Keep calorie dense snacks on hand at all times. My staples are trail mix, protein powder, and nut + fruit bars.
- Put BCAA powder in your water. It slows down muscle breakdown in a fasted state for those loooong days.

**63. Not finding mentors** – A mentor can be another trainer who works at your gym, your manager, or even a client. Remember that everybody on this planet has something that they can teach you. Always be looking for teachers and never be afraid to ask questions.

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear” – Buddhist Proverb

**64. Being a generalist** – Would you want to see a doctor who pretends to be an expert in everything? I wouldn't. So why pretend to be an expert at all types of training. No trainer is skilled working with fat loss, muscle gain, pre/post natal, injury rehab, and chronic illness clients. Pick the 1 or 2 clients that you jive with and focus on them. Do a better job than anybody else in your neighbourhood and start providing written materials specific to your type of training.

For example, have a handout about low back exercises to give to your clients and publish it on the internet. You choose to be the expert – it doesn't choose you. It does however take a concerted effort on your part to step into the role. Being a generalist ensures that you stick in the middle of the pack. Becoming an expert allows you to rise above.

**65. Drinking coffee on the floor** – I plead guilty to this early on in my career. I now view coffee drinking during the session as unprofessional. Have your coffee in between clients and chew a piece of gum afterwards or keep 100mg caffeine pills on hand to mix with water. Your boyfriend doesn't appreciate your coffee breath and neither do your clients.

**66. Not offering support outside of the gym** – Personal training is a 24/7 job. The best trainers are those who care enough to check up on their clients in between clients and surprise them with emails.

I love sending clients articles I come across dealing with their specific condition. I'm doing the research anyway and the smarter they are with respect to their injury or goal the harder they'll work towards it.

You must also be good with emails and text messages. Respond quickly and with thorough answers. Your clients are everything and they come first no matter what. Take care of them even if it means you don't have time that day to call other prospectives. They may just refer you somebody ready to buy as a result.

**67. Ignoring nutrition** – The saying that "abs are made in the kitchen" is mostly true. I'll also debunk a myth right now and tell you that nutrition *is within your scope of practice*. You are fully in your right to speak to your clients about nutrition as long as it isn't deemed unsafe practices. So unless you're telling your clients to take illegal supplements you're probably ok.

I always think back to a client I had 3 years ago that threw up every second session. After a month I finally delved into what was going on and found out that his diet consisted of half a bagel before seeing me. Our sessions were at 4pm! We had a long talk about breakfast and pre/post workout nutrition.

After that point I always made sure to speak about the basics of nutrition with all of my clients. I don't go into detail (if they need more precise recommendations I refer out) but I make sure to educate them on proper breakfast, snacks, and pre/post workout nutrition.

**68. Ignoring rehabilitation** – While I don't agree that trainers should be rehabilitating their clients what I do think is that trainers should have knowledge of rehab. The best trainers know enough to recognize different injuries when they see them and know what they can and cannot deal with. They have the network and knowledge to refer out to the proper professional. Dean Somerset's Post Rehab Essentials is a great way to ensure you build a great post-rehab personal training niche.

**69. Not having business cards** – If you don't have business cards yet stop reading this now! These are a must have and are cheap to make. Don't worry about a logo or fancy design. Keep it simple. Name, personal trainer, and contact info. If you like you can choose your favourite motivational phrase at the bottom.

Every single client should have your business card and you should always have 5-10 in your wallet. You never know when a lead will appear.

**70. Not being a linchpin** – If you don't know what this is go out and buy Seth Godin's *Linchpin*. Becoming indispensable is a sure fire way to be successful. Do this by going the extra 10% and solving problems

before they become problems or helping out without being asked. Pick garbage up off of the floor even if it isn't your job and arrange a workout with the new trainer to get them comfortable without being asked.

**71. Getting caught up in trends** – This is a biggie. I cringe every time I walk into a fitness expo at the workouts and exercises done with the “toy of the month”. Trends come and go. Take a long and hard look at the trend be it a piece of equipment or new workout routine and figure out what it's best used for (if anything).

Also note that your clients will ask you about the hottest workout trends. Great! This keeps you on your toes. Research and learn about them so you can give an educated opinion. Always be positive and never say anything bad about the product or workout even if you're thinking it. Doing so will make you appear unconfident. Instead point out its strong points and weaknesses.

**72. Failing to network** – You're as strong as the number of connections you hold. In this social media driven day and age this statement has never rung more true. I've gotten clients referred to me by trainers across North America whom I've never met. These clients were primed and ready to go.

The best thing to do is to start reaching out via Facebook (add me if you haven't already: <https://www.facebook.com/jonathan.goodman101>) to the top influencers in the Fitness World. If you want some suggestions feel free to shoot me an email at [jonathan@theptdc.com](mailto:jonathan@theptdc.com). From there you can meet like-minded fitness folk from around the World who comment and interact with each other. If somebody else “likes” a comment you made or you agree with a statement somebody else's made then send them a message saying hi. You would be amazed at how valuable these connections become.

**73. Not using social media well** - Social media will single-handily make you an expert and provide you all of the leads you will ever need. Get on Facebook and become friends with your clients. Tag them in posts when they accomplish a goal and snap pictures to upload (with their permission). When a friend of theirs comments on the pictures send a private message asking if they have any fitness related questions.

If you teach group classes the effect is magnified. Start a Facebook page for the group program and add all of the members. Take pictures each class and tag the members in them (get them to sign off on permission first). Think of the reach: 5 clients with an average of 500 Facebook friends will be 2500 leads who all know and respect your client. You can't ask for better advertising.

**74. Moving around too much** – A great mentor once told me to find a great gym and stay there. Build your reputation. The personality of a trainer is usually somebody who can't stand still. That's one of the reasons why we do what we do. We get bored easily and need constant change. In terms of business that can kill you. It takes time to build up a reputation and clientele and must be done in one place.

Additionally, since the industry is transient by nature other trainers at your club will likely move often. When they do they leave behind clients that are committed to the organisation and want to keep training (usually with paid sessions in their accounts). If you've done a good job then you should have

introduced yourself to the existing client long ago and developed a relationship with them. Who do you think they'll approach to take them on as a trainer? Some of my best clients are directly from other trainers leaving for a "better opportunity".

**75. Not having an outside hobby** – Working out's fun. I get it. I love it too. I also like playing hockey and writing. It keeps me on the ball. Have an outside hobby and make time for it. Playing with your model trains will give you enough of a separation from the fitness world to keep you sane.

**76. Having bad grip strength** – This one may surprise you a bit but hear me out. You spend the whole day gripping. I use pinch grip to take the weights from clients and constantly load and unload machines. I counted one day where I trained 10 clients that I moved 5600lbs of weight without doing a workout myself.

A strong grip will protect your body from wear and tear. Gripping a weight hard 'packs' the shoulder and protects the joint. When grip tires your body usually goes with it and it could put you in a compromising position.

Aesthetically our forearms are also seen more than any other part of our body so muscular forearms can act as a selling point as well. Build them up!

**77. Not having a strong low back** – Deadlift, deadlift, and deadlift. That's the best piece of advice I can give you if you want to work long days. I suffered a serious back injury 2 years into my training career. Aside from taking 3 weeks off of training I almost had to leave the career. I spent the next 5 months training in pain. It was miserable. Before the injury I didn't know how to deadlift so avoided it. I started studying the lift intensively and can now pull close to 3x my bodyweight. Aside from the aesthetic gains, I'm also confident spotting and lifting weights for my clients. It's kept me healthy.

I highly recommend becoming adequate at both the barbell and single arm dumbbell variations of the deadlift. It will save your career and keep you feeling good. Adding in carries into your workout as well will help. Both the 2-handed farmer's walk and the single-arm suitcase variation will help protect your body. After all, you only get one of them.

**78. Not working with other trainers** – Forget text books or workshops. Your best resource is other trainers that work at your club or in your area. Arranging a 1hr block of time once a week with 1-2 other trainers for a communal workout is a great way to pick up new tricks and practice old ones. Pick a topic for the day and leave the workout open-ended. Theory has it's time and place but nothing can replace practical experience from people already successfully using it.

**79. Not offering help to friends** – I don't train my friends but I'm happy to offer them advice whenever possible. Fact is that I view personal training as a business and I'm serious about the profession. I like to separate work from personal life.

Many trainers base their clientele off of friends and family. When a friend asks me for training I always tell them that I'm happy to meet and learn as much as I can from them and offer some advice. If they're looking for training I'll refer them elsewhere. I do however go out of my way to offer the best advice

possible. I like to provide them with tons of info on their goals and possible barriers (injuries etc.). I'll often have other clients referred to me through my friends because I showed the exceptional service I was willing to offer.

**80. Devaluing your services** – Don't discount. This was a lesson I learnt early and have clung to. I've never offered a % off of my services. If I want to do something special for my client I offer a free session and value it at the whole session price. The minute you offer discounts your value goes down.

If I have a valued client that's renewing a package and I want to show them how much they mean to me as a client I add 2-3 sessions at the end of their package. I don't offer to train them for less money per hour. That would lead to my other clients becoming upset if they found out. To add to this point, if I'm raising my prices I raise them for everybody. No exceptions. The clients who have been with me for a long time may get a session for free as a thank you to help offset the cost.

**81. Wanting to only train athletes** – It seems that everybody wants to train athletes these days. There are very few trainers who successfully train athlete's full time. Fact is athletes often have very little money. It takes years and a lot of hard work to get to a level where you train high performance athletes making big bucks. Even then there aren't a lot of positions available.

Personal trainers should focus on the everyday clientele. If you do a great job with regular people athletes will come along. I've worked in a boutique style gym my entire career catering towards weekend warrior types yet have had the opportunity to work with kids entering (successfully) the NHL draft, an LPGA golfer, and a national team skier preparing for the Olympics. I never searched for these clients but they were referred to me through everyday clientele that I did a great job with.

If your goal is to train athletes and you want to stick with it stop personal training and get an internship with a high performance strength and conditioning facility. Mike Boyle, Eric Cressey, Joe DeFranco and Kevin Neeld are good places to start.

**82. Trying to sleep with your clients** – Really? I need to explain this? Don't do it! If you're attracted to your client stop training them immediately and make your feelings known. Don't hit on them when you're still their trainer. It breaches some important lines and could forever hurt your reputation in addition to having legal ramifications.

**83. Training while sick** – Take the day off and get better. If you get your clients sick then they'll take off a lot of time leaving you with big frustrating holes in your schedule. You'll be down much more money if you pass on the disease. Aside from that reason – it sucks to train while sick. Why put yourself through it?

The best plan is to have all of your programs prepared and to have good relationships with the other trainers you work with. If you're sick be ready to pass on your clients to them for the day. They'll reciprocate when they're sick and everybody wins.

**84. Using the same program for every client** – It's ok to have a template. In fact I'll go so far as to recommend you use the same template for every type of client you deal with. Why not? If you find a

type of programming that works for fat loss clients stick to it. The same goes for hypertrophy clients and so on.

The best trainers are those who are able to adapt the same protocol for the individual. Changing up seemingly small details such as the grip on an exercise can make a big difference for clients with particular needs. Figure out what works and stick to it but make sure to individualize it whenever it's needed.

**85. Not correcting good technique** – Good is not great and good won't suffice. Your clients should be great. Always be correcting and improving and never be satisfied. Constant little cues are the best way to make technique a habit and learn new skills. A simple "butt out" on the RDL goes a long way.

**86. Having relationships with co-workers** – This isn't necessarily a mistake but usually leads an awkward working environment. Be careful when deciding to develop a romantic relationship with a co-worker.

**87. Talking too much about yourself** – I'll admit that I fall in this trap myself. The time spent in session belongs to your client so try your best to keep the focus on them. If they ask a question about you don't skimp on the details but be sure to follow up with a question about their family, job, or interests (favourite sports team etc.).

Always start the session asking a directed question of them. You could ask how their body is feeling or about their family. The specifics don't matter. What does matter is that focus is immediately shifted to them at the beginning of the session and keeps on them throughout.

**88. Not putting the equipment away** – Set an example and put your stuff away. Out of respect to the gym, other exercisers and other trainers this is a golden rule. If your clients see you putting the weights away they'll follow suit when they train.

**89. Not teaching gym etiquette** – I have a 5 minute conversation with every new client and go out of my way to teach gym etiquette on the floor any opportunity I get.

- If I'm setting a mat up on the floor I make sure to put the weight far out of the in a corner of the gym. I make sure to tell my client to always set their mat up out of the way, even if the gym is empty. You never know when somebody is going to want to use the open space.
- If I'm walking from one side of the gym to another I make sure to direct my client the long way around to avoid walking in front of an exercisers vision. At this point I'll tell them how it's good practice to never walk in front of anybody in the middle of a set.
- I always respect the no-lift zone (5ft behind the weight rack). No matter the exercise I make sure my clients picks up the weights from the rack and walks them far away leaving the rack free for others to use.
- As mentioned in #88 above, always put the equipment away.

These are just a couple examples and I'm sure you can think of more. The take home is to teach gym etiquette whenever possible. The quicker your clients are comfortable in the gym the more chance there is they will stay. Self-efficacy increases if a client knows that they're following good etiquette.

**90. Bashing other trainers** - I understand the barriers of entry to become a personal trainer are low. This means that you will likely work alongside other trainers whose methods you don't agree with. First off, don't automatically assume they're incompetent. Unless you know the detailed background of the client they're training it's hard to jump to any conclusions.

More importantly nothing ever good comes from bashing other trainers. In fact it will make you appear unconfident. Keep your mouth shut and do the best job you can. If the trainer isn't doing a good job they won't be successful. You creating bad blood or saying things behind their back won't do any good.

**91. Speaking negatively about workout programs or videos** – It's your job to understand whatever workout craze is trending or whatever in-home workout dvd people are into. Your clients will ask what your opinion is on them. Have a good answer. Don't bash them without proper info.

I like to point out a couple positives on the problem followed by some potential limitations it may have. For example when people ask me about p90x here's what I say:

"It's a great program and will work if followed for 90 days. There's good progression and the exercises are instructed about as well as they can be considering it's a video. To be honest I wish I had come out with it. Fact is that most people use a trainer to hold them accountable. No video can ever replace the face to face interaction you get with a trainer. In addition it's impossible for the video to individualize workouts and help fix injuries. So for what it is they did a great job. If a healthy person has the intrinsic motivation to stick with it for 90 days they'll be successful. For the rest of the population it can be limiting".

I didn't put down the video. Instead I intelligently laid out the positive and negative attributes of it.

**92. Not introducing yourself to every member of the gym** – The most successful trainers in a gym settings are the most popular ones. They're the people who are on the floor saying hi to the members by name and introducing themselves to new members. The more approachable you make yourself in the gym the more likely people will ask you about training.

I've never asked for a member off of the floor to train with me. Instead, I've introduced myself and helped them with whatever they had a question with. I send them info afterwards if I have an article with more info. The member may not immediately ask you to train them. That's fine – don't push the subject. Keep saying hello and be available if they have questions. When they bring a friend into the gym take the opportunity to chat with the friend.

The more people in the club you know the better. You'll quickly become the go-to trainer at that club.

**93. Not gifting your support staff** – Bring the receptionist coffee whenever you go. If there's a cleaner at your club randomly bring them a gift card. There doesn't have to be a reason. These people are what make your business run and don't make much money. It doesn't take much to show appreciation. This is another way you can become a linchpin as #70 describes.

**94. Not cutting your nails** – Cleanliness is close to godliness. That and clients hate it when you scratch them while they're being stretched.

**95. Not talking client** – It always comes back to knowing your client. My clients that are medical doctors appreciate when I use jargon whereas my weekend warrior types don't understand the term pelvic tilt. The best trainers are able to alter their speech every hour and meet the client at their level while still getting their point across effectively.

**96. Not making time for small talk with clients** – Relationships will make or break you in this business. Depending on the client you can plan for small talk at different points in the session. I usually opt to do it during the warm up and mobility portion. Having 5 minutes of small talk at the beginning allows me clients to separate them from whatever's going on in the outside world and focus on the workout.

It also gives you a brief window into your client's lives. From this brief small talk you can usually extrapolate how they're feeling and get some insight into their lives outside of the gym. Knowing your client inside and out will help you build the ever-important relationship.

**97. Not being open to learning opportunities** – Napoleon Hill's book "Think and Grow Rich" taught me that there's something I can learn from every single person on this planet. Since realizing that I stopped trying to learn one thing new every day, instead I started learning 10+ new things every day. Whether it's your clients giving you business advice, a co-trainer teaching you a new exercise, a manager giving you sales tips, or the PTDC dropping knowledge bombs on you always be open to learn. Never be afraid to ask questions. In Jewish culture the wise child isn't the one who knows everything. The wise child is the one who isn't afraid to ask when he doesn't know anything.

**98. Not reading the newspaper every morning** – You need something to talk to your clients about for 2 minutes at a time right? If you're training clients that you haven't already built a great relationship with I highly recommend you subscribe to a newspaper and read the headlines every morning. When there's an awkward silence (which there will be) you can ask them if they heard about the latest happenings in the world. *Boom icebreaker!* If you ever feel awkward during a session and are looking for something to say go out and buy a newspaper. You should always have 2-3 topics on hand to bring up.

**99. Not having a good relationship with your manager** – Managers are humans too and it's important to manage your manager. The best way to do this is to make their job easier and to make them look good. Instead of complaining about not getting clients ask them to start a program to market yourself. When they say yes – run with it. Take initiative and bring business to the club yourself. You'll quickly become not only a busy trainer but somebody the manager trusts and values.

It's also important to build a strong relationship with your manager by getting to know them personally. Figure out what their interests are and support them anyway that you can. For example my manager is in a rock band. I enjoy the music and go out of my way to attend the shows when they play in town. Usually I'm the only trainer there. It means a lot that I'm willing to take time out of my personal life to support him in endeavours outside of the gym. Through that we've built a great relationship and mutual respect each other.



**100. Not showing your client that you're human** – Do you drink beer? Do you occasionally eat a chocolate bar? Do you miss workouts sometimes?

Everybody does! Show your client that everybody's human and it's possible to attain a great physique while occasionally cheating on your plan. The important part is consistency over the long term but there will be dips. The unrealistic image of having to count every calorie and never missing a workout stops some clients from training. Self-efficacy stems from believing that one is actually able to accomplish the goal. If your client thinks that they have to be perfect in order to reach their goal self-efficacy struggles. Show them that you're human and tell them that you cheat to. Make sure they know how to let it get them down and that sticking to the plan over the long term is what's really important.

**101. Not going the extra 10%** - Always under promise and over-deliver. I can't possibly list the number of ways to do this but I'll name a couple:

- If they ask a question go out of your way to answer it fully. Provide them with lots of information to take home with them.
- Keep records of their workouts and show them their progress (I'm amazed at how few trainers actually do this)
- From time to time randomly send them relevant info on their goals or injuries. Send Christmas cards
- Keep protein powder and snacks at your desk. When your clients come in malnourished always have food on hand for them.

#### **AND NOW THE EXTRA 10%**

**102. Not remembering birthdays** – Call, email, or send a card on your client's birthday. It goes a long way to building the relationship and shows them you're willing to go the extra 10%. The easiest way is to create a reminder system using whatever calendar system you have. I use my phone and put my client's birthdays in immediately when I start training them with a reminder set to go yearly. It doesn't matter how you do it but you can automate the whole process really easily.

Note: This is also a great way to reconnect with old clients. If a client has stopped training with you you'll still get the reminder via whatever system you set up that it's their birthday. Send them a message anyway wishing them a happy birthday and asking how they are. Don't mention anything about training, wait for them to bring it up. It's a fantastic way to reconnect.

**103. Not doing regular massage or foam rolling** – Take care of your body, it's your money maker. I get a massage once a week and foam roll every day in between clients. Training 5-10hr days spotting clients can be dangerous if you're stiff and sore. Improving and maintaining your tissue quality is one of the best ways to ensure you don't hurt yourself on the job.

**104. Not cleaning your training gear** – Dry-fit clothing stinks if it isn't washed regularly.

**105. Not sending out holiday cards** – The holidays are the perfect time to reconnect with old clients and congratulate your current clients on their progress. A month before Christmas I pull a list of all of the

clients I trained the past year (including inactive clients) and ask the receptionist to write down their full addresses for me. I then order the corresponding number of cards from Unicef. (I like Unicef cards because they're really nice quality and the money goes to a great charity.)

Then I start writing. Every card is personal. I try to congratulate my clients on the a-ha moments they had in the past year and recall their accomplishments. If they fought through any adversity I do my best to bring it up as well.

For inactive clients I make sure to wish them and their family a happy holidays (trying to call everybody by name). I wish them the best of health in the New Year. Never do I mention anything about asking them to train with me again. They know why I'm writing the card and have my contact info if interested in starting back up. I'm never surprised when they call.

I then address each envelope personally and send them off 2-3 weeks before Christmas.

**106. Not sharing your knowledge with others** – Create and participate in forums whether it's in your own community or own Facebook. (I always have great forums on my Facebook wall. Please add me as a friend: <https://www.facebook.com/jonathan.goodman101>). Don't be afraid to speak your mind and share your knowledge. The best tool I have to organize my thoughts are friends and family who allow me to bounce ideas off of them.

**107. Not having food on hand at all times** – Always be ready to knock down a meal in 5 minutes in-between clients. Calorie dense foods are key. I keep nuts and seeds in my desk at all times and never leave the house without at least one supershake containing a protein source, nuts, vegetables, fruits, and a topper. My favourite right now is blueberries, protein powder, walnuts, spinach, and cinnamon.

I also keep food in my desk for clients as I've found they often come into the workouts malnourished. High sugar foods like fruit are great to have in addition to protein powder. If a client comes in and hasn't eaten I immediately give them a snack before starting the workout.

**108. Not having a book on hand at all times** – You never know when a client is going to cancel and you're left with an hour block. Instead of wasting your time on Facebook or twiddling your thumbs why not get smarter? Even if you think you have a packed day always carry a book in your bag just in case.

**109. Not sleeping enough** – Personal Training is a high energy job. You can get by on a couple hours sleep for some time but your body will eventually break down. In my early days training I would sleep 4-5 hours at night. I kept a pillow at work and became adept at building a bed out of mats and towels.

**110. Not referring to other trainers** – You don't know everything and aren't the perfect fit for every client. In fact, I probably refer to other trainers more often than I take on clients myself. Your reputation is everything and other trainers will be more than happy to return the favour if they have a client who would be a good fit for you. The best trainers know and understand where they're skilled and where they aren't. Their first priority is always that the client is best taken care of.

**111. Not reading every book on this list** - <http://www.theptdc.com/book-list/>