

Serious Nutrition FOR WEIGHT LOSS SUCCESS

by Gabrielle Maston

As a registered personal trainer the majority of our client base is seeking successful weight loss. Producing fast results in this area is potentially the most attractive factor for clients enlisting your help. As we know, weight loss isn't easy and it requires a combination of both exercise and dietary modification.

Fitness professionals have superior knowledge on exercise programming and training. However, nutrition education training is limited during certification. Our training does not equip us well enough to be able to provide clients with individual nutrition advice. Admitting this to ourselves is one thing, but telling our clients we don't know is difficult. Clients expect us to have all the answers on both nutrition and exercise. They look at us for inspiration and want to do exactly what we do. This means eat the way we do, too. That should produce the same results, right?

This way of thinking is wrong for so many reasons. In general, clients are typically less active than we are and people of different gender/body shape/age have different nutritional requirements. It's not as simple as putting clients on a diet that works for you. This

could have detrimental effects on their metabolism and emotional food association.

How can we arm ourselves, as exercise professionals, with effective tools that enable us to create weight loss through diet within our professional capacity?

All medical and health professionals use a referral system when they don't know the answers to particular health concerns. They refer patients to someone more specialised in the area. As a trainer, we can do this too. For professional nutrition advice you may like to refer to Dietitian or Nutritionist. Referring clients to someone more knowledgeable will look more professional, and produce faster and safer results. You may want to consider this option for clients with chronic health conditions or food intolerances, where general healthy eating advice may not be enough. In doing this it opens a door of opportunity for personal trainers to form professional networks with Dietitians and Nutritionists. And, because Dietitians and Nutritionists are not exercise experts they may find it convenient to be able to refer their clients regularly to someone trusted for exercise programming.

Alternatively, there is simple, general healthy eating advice that you can access to pass on to your clients for free. The Australian Government Department of Health and Aging produces numerous handouts and downloadable reading materials to promote healthy eating and eating behaviours. There are program kits available on their website on several current


government initiatives, such as the 'Australian Guide to Healthy Eating', 'Go for 2 and 5' and 'Measure Up.'

These can be accessed by everyone, at no cost. Visit www.health.gov.au. Reading the material posted on the government website will give you some knowledge to be able to answer simple dietary questions backed by well-founded evidence.

The information provided by these programs can be used by you to teach and demonstrate to your clients portion control, daily serving sizes, meal planning and recommended health targets for prevention of chronic disease. In doing this you will be able to give well-researched, simple dietary advice according to government recommendations in Australia.

There are also regulatory associations such as the Dietitians Association of Australia (www.daa.asn.au), The Heart Foundation (www.heartfoundation.org.au) and Sydney University's Glycemic Index research service (www.glycemicindex.com). They produce position statements, allow access to food data bases and provide client friendly handouts on various therapeutic diets and nutrition topics on their websites. These associations have influenced the movement and messages produced in government campaigns. They have also played a major role in revolutionising formulations of food products, lobbied for mandatory food labelling and members regularly produce research on nutrition topics.

Private companies such as Nestle (www.nestle.com.au), Sanitarium (www.sanitarium.com.au) and Kellogg's (www.kelloggs.com.au) employ Dietitians and Nutritionists who regularly compile free newsletters and recipe Ebooks that can be distributed to your clients. The materials enable you to regularly enforce good nutrition messages, as well as giving ideas for family friendly meals, within your professional capacity.

By sourcing well-researched information with professionally produced material, it will give your exercise service well-deserved credibility. Your clients will receive serious, science-based nutrition advice... not another weight loss diet their trainer put them on. It will also steer you clear from any possible litigation in the future. 

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Gabrielle is a Registered Personal Trainer with 8 years' experience in the industry, now turned Dietitian. She is writing to help other trainers get up-to-date with nutrition, without spending years at university.

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