

Finding Fitness Guidance Online

There is so much useful information online now, but the sheer volume of it can be overwhelming. Expert trainer **Charlene Hutsebaut** guides us towards a happy social networking experience.

Most of you will know the general history of the rise and rise of social media. Within years of their inception, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were gaining members in their millions. At first, many of us were not sure about sharing our details such as birth dates or our deepest thoughts, but now it seems that everyone is online sharing everything! Today this makes finding fitness and health advice online a positive prospect; the bonus being that much of it will be free. I'm here to inform you of where and how to find valid, effective, educated and safe advice.

Choosing a Real Professional not an Internet Bot

Finding a fitness or health professional to follow and gain information from online can be rewarding, yet tricky. What I really want is for you to find someone online who is educated, experienced and most of all, a real and interested person. If you have used social media, you'll know what I mean when I say a "real person". The internet bot can be very obvious on Twitter for example: you'll know them because they are re-tweeting mostly other accounts tweets, never interacting with anyone and look like they are always selling something. A bot is not a real person!

The reality with social media is that even when you find a real person, they will still want to show you what they have to offer beyond the initial free information. This is not a problem for most people as they understand that people are also running a business, but the trick is finding the professionals who know how to strike this balance with integrity.

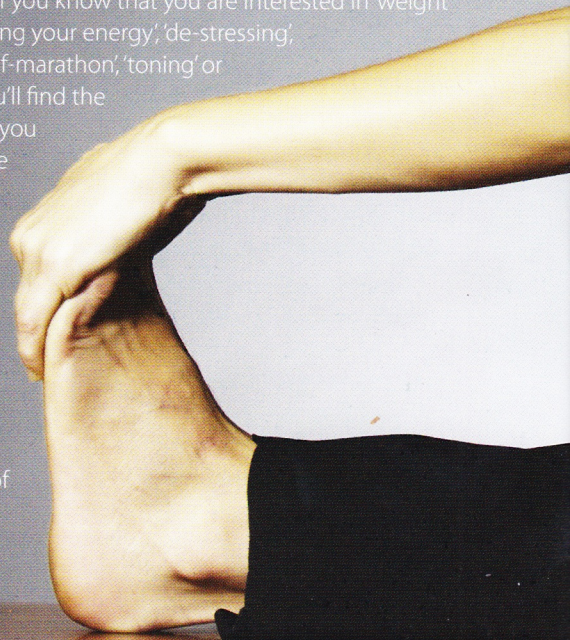
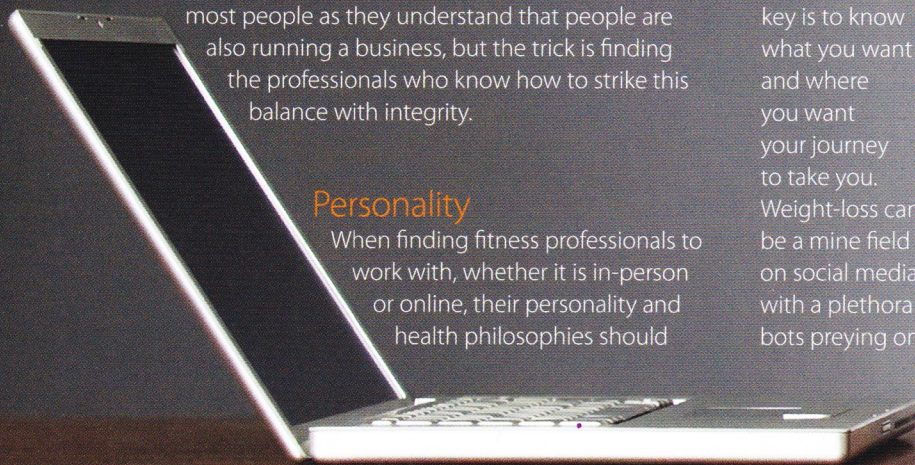
Personality

When finding fitness professionals to work with, whether it is in-person or online, their personality and health philosophies should

match or at least compliment your own. The way that I would describe this is: if you enjoy someone barking orders to motivate you, then you would want a similar approach online. If you prefer a gentler instruction, then look for someone who lightly guides. Figure out what your needs are and then look for someone who best suits you. Whether it is online or in-person, working with someone you enjoy listening to and being around is very important. You will be more apt to take their advice, try it and stick with it.

Twitter

Twitter at times can seem like a bit of a free-for-all. Be prepared for a constant stream of tweets and information being blasted your way. Fitness professionals can be found easily by searching topics or people. As I mentioned earlier, beware the bots! When searching for a pro to follow, it's important to know what your goals are so that you can narrow your search. Just entering 'personal trainer' will bring a search response of thousands. On the other hand, if you know that you are interested in 'weight training', 'increasing your energy', 'de-stressing', 'training for a half-marathon', 'toning' or 'weight-loss', you'll find the right mentor for you more quickly. The key is to know what you want and where you want your journey to take you. Weight-loss can be a mine field on social media, with a plethora of bots preying on



the public's desperation to be lighter. Again, hone in on your goals: what else do you want beyond weight-loss? Many of my clients come to me to increase their daily energy, function more efficiently through the day, feel positive about their bodies, be stronger etc. These primary goals are more specific than just weight-loss and will; when using social media for help, make your path smoother and more enjoyable.

Facebook

Facebook is a different animal to Twitter because users seem to want fewer overloads on their timelines. You will find your fitness professionals either on a personal or business page. I personally feel that a division should be made on Facebook between the two: the personal page is for private friends and family, while the business page is for just that. The latter is the one where you press "like" and then receive that pages' posts within your timeline. Depending on your security settings, you can hide or reveal yourself to whatever extent you want within the page. If your personal page is public, then others will

be able to click through from your comments on a business page to see your information. This can be seen as a good thing if you are looking for a sense of community while reaching your health and fitness goals, but if you would like to be more private, then your personal settings should be as secure as you want.

When following your fitness professional pages, look for someone who is sharing relevant articles, information, motivational guidance and whatever else you are looking for. Just like in the gym; the page should be client-centred and geared towards you, not just posts constantly about the page administrator or the business. Businesses now realise that on Facebook, having a page where followers can post comments, links and photo/videos are the most powerful for everyone involved. These features give you a chance to interact and get the most from the fitness professional. Lastly, a good page should have someone sending comments back to people as well as limiting their posts to between two to four per day to keep you interested and not annoyed. You can see that Facebook gives a bit more freedom for interaction, while at the same time offering the followers privacy, whereas Twitter is for the most part public.

Blogs

Blogs are powerful for different reasons. In the early days, many people took great risks in sharing their deepest selves to the public. These were the groundbreakers online with this platform. Look at blogs in different arenas such as *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*; ironically not so secret! Or even better; watch the movie *Julie and Julia*, where a modern young woman writes a blog so readers can follow her journey when she cooks all 524 recipes in Julia Child's famous cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Nowadays, websites from the NHS to Martha Stewart have blogs attached to



allow members to create their own weight-loss, cooking, fitness and health musings to share their experiences with others. These create another sense of community online which many of us may not be able to find in real life. Here you can be writing your own blog and commenting on others or follow and read that of a personal trainer, nutritionist etc. These become more powerful when comments are allowed below each post. Be prepared for all sorts of remarks, both positive and challenging. If you don't want to be this open then I suggest following the fitness professional's blog as an observer.

Google + and Ustream

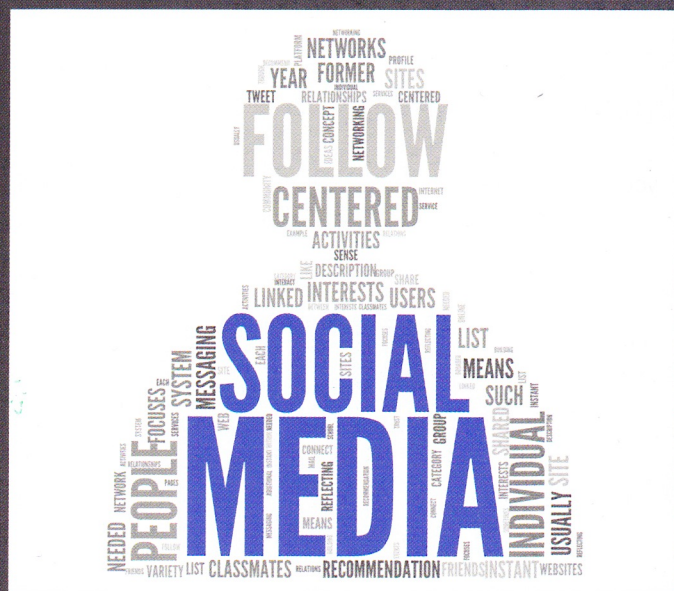
Google + has had much controversy surrounding it. I have an account and still haven't had time to figure it all out, but there are some features within it that I can advocate. Look for communities with your health and fitness interests - some will offer video Google "hangouts" in the form of workouts or health talks, which can be really interesting. Ustream is a platform which offers something similar. Search for the specific workouts that you are interested in - the videos on offer will be free.

YouTube

YouTube is an obvious choice for following a fitness professional or company that you like. Most will have a YouTube channel and those that are really on the ball have excellent instructional content. A great example is TRX Training: this group is brilliant at having educated and enthusiastic experts presenting short clip videos. They also have "favourite" personal trainers and others who are posting videos about their TRX equipment. The key here, as with any other social media platform, is to choose who and what you like.

Online memberships, email training & Skype

There are options to get the services of personal trainers, nutritionists and others remotely. Many will offer online memberships, email training or Skype sessions. This is a great way to get more inclusive time and guidance from these experts beyond social media and for fees that are usually much less than their one-to-one rates.



Finding & Following a Health & Fitness Expert Online

- Know your own personality and have two specific goals before searching
- Follow professionals who have actually been at a higher level
- Make your search phrases as specific as possible based on your goals and interests
- Choose the social media platform that you like the most
- Try talking to experts online and see if they respond – if they do, it's a good sign that they really are interested
- Have integrity and choose to interact with experts online as much as you feel would be appropriate if you were sharing work information for free
- Ask the questions you want – most people will get back to you on a social media platform
- Don't worry about "un-following" an account or person if they are not for you



About the Author

Charlene is a personal trainer and fitness entrepreneur with over 15,000 hours and 20 years of training experience. Her strengths are in biomechanics, rehab, posture, weight training and lifestyle changes. You can find her most days on Twitter @positivelyslim sharing her knowledge and also on Facebook and YouTube "Positively Slim". In 2011 she was the fitness expert for Huggies Diapers and currently for Siemens MyLife.Style magazine, The De-Stress Diet and online food shop Healthy Supplies. She has written for and been featured in Health Club Management, London, Grove, FitPro, Woman, BodyFit, Now Celebrity Diet magazines and many more. Charlene is director of www.charlenehutsebaut.com and online Health and Fitness membership www.positivelyslim.ning.com and sees clients at the exclusive St. Pancras Hotel Spa in London.