

# fitting fitness in

report: Jeff Archer

when asked if they'd like to be slimmer, fitter or healthier, the majority of people would immediately respond positively. When questioned if they'd like to incorporate more activity and exercise into their lives, most people say yes, but usually with some form of qualification and this more often than not relates to time...there's just not enough of it

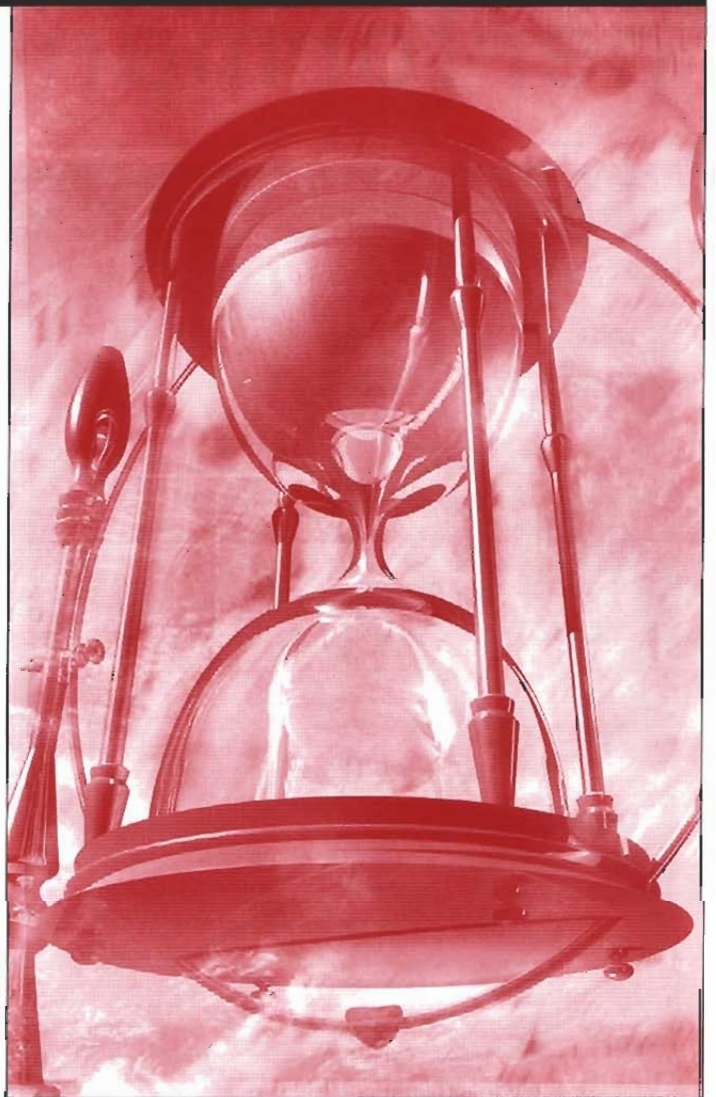
**t**here's always a good reason for people not to exercise but the **negative** consequences of these reasons are that they **won't** achieve what they say they want to achieve. Then they often accuse exercise of not working for them, which seems a little unfair. So how can you, as the fitness professional, help these people? What new insights can you offer them that they haven't already thought of?

Well first off you can challenge them in ways they haven't yet managed to challenge themselves. Encourage them to see their situation in a new light. If they claim they're looking for a particular result, namely improved fitness or a more toned body, ask them why they aren't behaving in a way that will bring them this result. To want to change your body without changing your habits is like wanting to eat your lunch without opening your mouth – the behaviour is not appropriate to the task at hand. If they want a different result from that which they are experiencing at the moment, they need to try some different behaviour and that means not finding so many reasons to avoid exercise.

Secondly, change the language they use so they must use the word excuse instead of reason. Most people are happy finding a good reason not to exercise, but don't so much like the idea that they're making excuses for themselves. Ask them to re-classify every good reason as an excuse and then see if they feel it is still strong enough to stop them from taking positive action.

Thirdly, challenge anyone who claims they don't have time for exercise, or for anything else they claim they want to achieve. Every individual has the same number of hours in their day and week yet some manage to make better use of them than others. Rather than a question of time, it's more a matter of planning and prioritising. If someone says they don't have time for exercise, what they really mean is that exercise isn't yet a high enough priority for them to find time to fit it into their schedule. We all know people who can find time for it each week and sometimes every day because these people see it as a top priority for which they are prepared to move other commitments and make any necessary sacrifices.

For those who don't have exercise as a priority, the reasons are usually that their objectives aren't clear enough and they don't have a good enough reason to fit exercise into their schedule; or they simply don't enjoy the exercise or activities they are currently trying. This is where you can make a real difference to them, and make them realise how good you are at your job and why they came to you in the first place.



If you can work with someone to properly define their goals (see *FitPro Network Aug/Sept 04 pp35*) you'll help them to understand why it will be beneficial to them to prioritise exercise and make it happen regularly. Even better than that, if you can open their mind to new ways of exercising and help them to discover something they really enjoy, they'll want to prioritise their fitness, and fitting it in will no longer be a struggle.

Challenging the beliefs of clients and the language they use can seem like a tough thing to do, but it is an essential process if you are to make them fully accountable, both to themselves and to you, and totally responsible for achieving success. Any client who can rise to the challenge and accept the responsibility will be one step closer to achieving their goals, no matter how busy their schedule may be. ■



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