

dealing with difficult clients

but what if it doesn't all go according to plan? What if you have a couple of clients who simply aren't performing as you wish they would? Despite your best efforts, and the application of your key techniques – and skills that you know work because they're reaping success elsewhere – for some people you just can't seem to make the difference you know you're capable of. So what can you do to move them forwards?

First and foremost, you need to carefully assess the situation. You must talk to your client and find out what's going on. Someone once said there is no such thing as difficult clients, only inflexible instructors, so take active responsibility for discovering what's going on so that you'll be open to adopting new approaches if necessary.

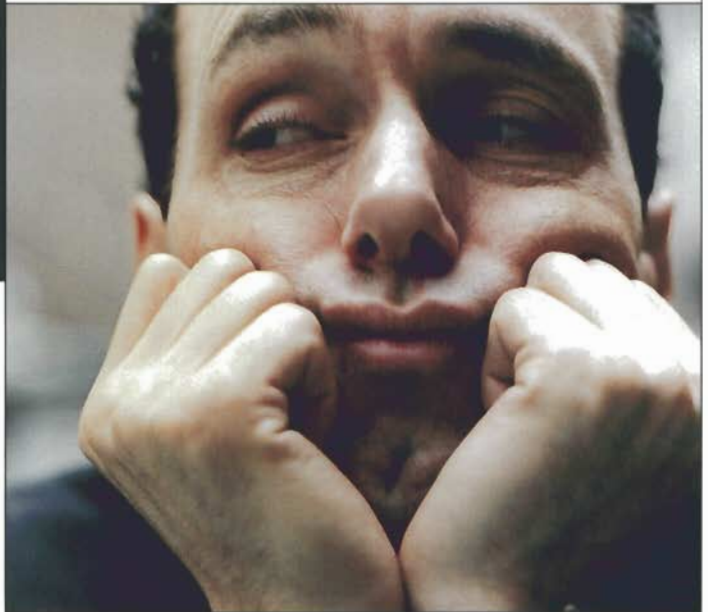
It could be that you feel a client isn't putting in as much effort to their training and lifestyle programme as you feel they ought to. You will at some point have sat down with them and carefully asked them what they want to achieve, agreed what they are capable of achieving and by when, and then given them the knowledge and instruction to make their dreams a reality. But for one reason or another, it's just not happening.

Don't waste valuable time trying to read the minds of your clients because you'll never know whether you're right or wrong. If someone is often late for your sessions, it might be they're not motivated to work out with you or it may just be they are late for everything in their lives. Good timekeeping may be of vital importance to you but it may not even have entered their mind. Find out whether it's something you need to worry about or not and decide what you're going to do about it. If they're not motivated, discuss what might need to happen for them to feel more motivated to attend sessions on time. If they are simply habitually late, decide whether or not you are going to settle for this in the future. If you decide you're okay with this, you'll no longer get stressed every time it happens. If you're not okay with it, you need to make this clear to your client and inform them they either need to respect your values on timekeeping or find another trainer.

Similarly if they're not achieving quick results you could spend many a sleepless hour wondering where you're going wrong. At the same time your client may have accepted that they have such a chaotic life that exercising between your sessions just won't happen for the moment – so they're happy exercising with you when they can and are enjoying the limited results they are getting. You need to know what they're thinking so you can

wouldn't life be great if all your clients performed brilliantly in each of their training sessions, exercised regularly between sessions, ate healthily and reached their goals quickly and efficiently? Your weeks would be deeply satisfying and you'd be able to relax at the weekend safe in the knowledge that you're doing a great job

report: Jeff Archer



decide where to apply your concern and your efforts – you certainly don't want to be kept awake by needless worry.

If you're finding a client difficult, it will very likely be related to the fact that they are compromising one or more of the values you hold dear regarding your role as a professional. Whether it be timekeeping, honesty, commitment or dedication; if you feel a value is being compromised do not keep it to yourself, as it will only become more and more frustrating. Voice your concerns and find a way to work through them with your client. They will respect you more for dealing with things openly and directly.

Finally, remember that it's not your role to shoulder all the responsibility for a client achieving their goals. You have been employed by them to make a difference between what they could achieve by themselves, and what they will be capable of with experienced guidance. But you can only work with what's going on with their life at any given point. You do have the responsibility to investigate all the details of why they may not be progressing as fast as you may like them to and make sure you're not confusing what you want for them with what they are really capable of. Sit them down and get up to date with where they are at the moment and how the relationship between you currently stands, and make sure it still suits you both. Then decide on how you are to proceed with an updated and clear brief that will lead to success for both of you. **fm**



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