

THE

**BARE
TRUTH.**

CONFESSIONS OF A PERSONAL TRAINER

D A V E S M I T H

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TRAINER

By

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013 my career as a personal trainer seemed to be taking off. My schedule was booked full of amazing clients, I had a large readership on my blog, and I had just won a prestigious award, being named “Canada’s Top Fitness Professional” by CanFitPro. However, I didn’t feel like much of a success. In fact, my passion for fitness had been dying for some time.

When I became a personal trainer in 2001 I thought I had found my dream job. I personally loved exercising and aiming for new fitness goals, so the idea that I could make a career from helping others do the same sounded perfect. I was enthusiastic and *knew* that I was going to change people’s lives through fitness!

Over the course of several years however, my eyes were opened to the realities of being a personal trainer. The amazing results I *thought* I was going to provide to my clients weren’t materializing. No matter how hard they worked, and no matter how much guidance I offered, “life-changing” results remained elusive.

I began to doubt the value of the services I was providing.

Maybe I just wasn’t a very good personal trainer?

I also had a difficult time being honest with my clients

How can I sell personal training services to someone when I know she isn't going to see the changes she wants?

I didn't have much confidence in my expertise and felt very much like a fraud. In fact, there were many times when I considered a career change, one that would take me away from fitness altogether.

I'm happy to say that I didn't give up on my career at that low point. Instead, I began looking for answers outside of the fitness community. My wife, a clinical counsellor, became one of the most important coaches I could have asked for. She taught me about the psychology of behavior change and helped me understand how to use these concepts in my work. I consulted with other counselling and psychology experts and began to redefine my beliefs about how fitness can be done successfully.

As I learned more about the psychological component of getting in shape (and staying in shape), and as I began applying these ideas, my clients began

experiencing better results. For the first time in years I didn't feel like a helpless personal trainer who was just hoping for the best. My excitement surrounding fitness began to return.

It took time to redevelop my approach to personal training, but I did find a formula that provides my clients with fantastic results. It is based in self-reflection, honesty, planning, teamwork, and accountability. It's simple but also requires some hard work.

Are you interested?

This book is broken into three sections and each offers unique value. Part 1 dives much deeper into my failures as a personal trainer, what I learned from these failures, and how the entire experience led me to a better approach to fitness. It's my story.

Part 2 is all about you. In this section I will help you discover what you really want and what you're willing to do to achieve it. You will begin to set your expectations and will start preparing for the process of changing your lifestyle.

Then in Part 3 you will learn the specifics of the program that I now use with my clients. While there is nothing magical about this program, it is structured differently than many others.

You won't have to eat strange foods, buy any products from me, or follow some crazy exercise routine. The "bare truth" of the program actually

comes from its focus on simple strategies that make behavior change more doable and sustainable.

I would love to hear from you as you adopt the plan you're about learn. Feel free to ask questions, talk about your challenges, and share your successes. I look forward to hearing your story,

Dave Smith

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Part 1: My Story, My Confessions

Chapter 1. Fat Legs, Skinny Arms

Chapter 2. Feeling Like A Phony

Chapter 3. I'm Not A "Sinkers"

Part 2: Your Story, Your Success

Chapter 4. What Do You Really Want?

Chapter 5. Barriers You're About To Face

Chapter 6. I Need You For 4 Weeks

Chapter 7. Planning For Success

Chapter 8. Staying Accountable

Part 3: Creating Your Program

Chapter 9. Hydration

Chapter 10. Six Days of Exercise

Chapter 11. Your 5-Day Eating Plan

Chapter 12. Creating Your 5-Day Meals

Chapter 13. Cheat Day

Chapter 14. Fast Day

Chapter 15. Putting It All Together

Additional Resources

Questions and Answers

Appendix A. Planning and Tracking Template

Appendix B. Healthy Foods List

Appendix C. Sample Meals

About The Author

Part 1:
My Story, My Confessions

CHAPTER 1 – FAT LEGS, SKINNY ARMS

When I was 7 years old my mom bought me a new pair of shorts that I absolutely loved. They were royal blue (my favourite colour) and they had red, yellow, and white racing stripes circling around the bottom of each leg. They were so cool and I was excited to wear them to school.

The next morning I put on my new shorts to go along with my favourite Bart Simpson t-shirt. In retrospect I'm pretty sure the two didn't match at all, but when you're a 7-year old boy creating a matching ensemble isn't top priority. I left the house feeling confident and looking good.

Arriving at school before the classroom opened, I headed straight for the playground to show off my new shorts. Brandon, a classmate of mine, was already at the playground and he piped up as soon as he saw me coming,

Nice shorts. They make your legs look so fat!

I was not an overweight kid at all and I certainly didn't have fat legs, but Brandon's comment destroyed my confidence that day. I didn't say or do anything in the moment – it seemed easier to pretend I didn't hear what he had said. When I got home I went to my room and cried. Those stupid blue shorts made my legs look fat.

This was my first experience with negative feelings about my body. It wasn't that big of a deal (although I didn't wear those blue shorts again), but it was meaningful enough that almost 30 years later I can still remember the pain I felt. Feeling self-conscious about my body wasn't fun.

MY SKINNY ARMS

A decade after the blue-shorts incident I had no more worries about fat legs. I had the exact opposite problem in fact – I was 18 years old, 6-feet tall, and I weighed about 140lbs. I was a string bean.

I knew I was really skinny but it didn't bother me for the most part. I was good at sports, got good grades, and was the president of the high school students' council. These things gave me a good self-confidence despite being such a beanpole.

One of my jobs as student president was to emcee school assemblies. I really liked this job because it gave me a chance to be in front of an audience and to

hopefully get the attention of some of my female classmates. It was my time to shine!

After one assembly I was walking back to science class and was feeling pretty good about my performance as emcee. I had engaged the crowd and my jokes made people laugh – things went well.

Nadia, a girl in my science class, found me in the hall and started walking with me back to class.

“Dave, you know what I noticed when you were on stage in that assembly?”

This is exactly what I was hoping for! I was pretty sure Nadia was going to mention how funny I was, or how cool I appeared in front of such a big crowd.

“What’s that?” I replied.

“You’ve got REALLY skinny arms. I think they’re skinnier than mine.”

(For the record, this was worse than Brandon’s “fat legs” comment).

Of course I didn’t let on that Nadia’s comment was just about the worst thing she could have said. I laughed it off and pretended that I didn’t care. I did care though. I was embarrassed knowing that everyone else in that audience had been staring at my skinny arms. They were likely laughing at me, not my funny jokes! I instantly hated my skinny arms.

HITTING THE GYM

One day after the “skinny arms” comment I got my first gym membership. I didn’t know anything about working out but I was pretty sure that lifting weights was the only way I’d build man-sized arms.

I remember going into the gym for the very first time. Everyone there looked like they knew exactly what they were doing. They were all wearing the right clothes – I’m talking *real* workout clothes, not the basketball shorts and t-shirt I was wearing! Some of the guys even carried around little notebooks that they would write stuff in. What were they writing? I wanted to know their secret messages.

People moved around the gym with purpose and nobody looked as lost as I felt. I could feel the others sizing me up, and I knew that *they knew* I was a first-timer.

My first workout lasted about 8 minutes. I did a couple of biceps curls (I had seen guys with big arms doing those on TV), did maybe 12 push-ups, and then left as quickly as I could. Maybe skinny arms aren’t that bad after all?

Instead of going back to the gym that week I decided to do some research. What would it take to change my body? How could I do it as quickly as possible?

Keep in mind that this was all taking place in the late 1990’s so the Internet wasn’t a go-to resource like it is today. I actually went to the library (yes, the library!)

and began reading about bodybuilding in various books and magazines. I learned how to put together a workout program that consisted of more than just biceps curls and push-ups. I read about protein supplements and other foods that would help me build muscle faster. I also discovered stories of other skinny guys who morphed into muscle-bound men after finding the right formula of exercise and nutrition.

The following week I went back to the gym and this time I had a plan. I even bought a little notebook from the dollar store so that I could carry around my own magic muscle-building formula and track my results.

I was still the scrawniest, weakest guy there but I was determined to change that no matter how out of place I felt at first.

When I wasn't at the gym I was studying everything I could get my hands on related to exercise, fitness, and nutrition. The interconnected systems of the body, how they worked, and how they could be changed was so fascinating. I couldn't get enough.

Three months after my exercise love affair began, I had gained about 20lbs of muscle and my arms weren't that skinny anymore. Even more empowering was the knowledge I had acquired along the way. My body wasn't set in stone. I had the power to transform it with a little hard work and dedication. What a feeling!

A DREAM JOB AWAITS

In September I went to university to study Marketing and Business. I was excited to meet new friends and to experience university life, but I was really excited about the university's athletic complex located just a block from my residence.

Most of my free time that year was spent playing sports, weight training, or studying more about the science of fitness. I loved my Business classes, but my passion was exercise and fitness.

It was during my second year at university when I saw a poster in the athletic complex advertising an upcoming personal training certification course. The course was 40 hours long and was followed by a set of 2 exams. Passing both would certify me as a personal trainer - I could actually make a living by helping people exercise!

I paid my \$400 and registered for the course that day. Hello dream job!

All my fitness studying and research came in handy – The certification course was a piece of cake and I passed both exams with flying colours. Soon after I began training a few clients, something I considered mostly a hobby that I could enjoy while finishing my education and then exploring careers in Marketing.

It wasn't just a hobby for long though. While I worked a corporate Marketing job, I had a hard time focusing

on my tasks and responsibilities. I wanted to be a good employee but my heart just wasn't in it.

With a small client base already established, I launched my first personal training company in 2006. I was ready to change the world by helping others find their own passion for health and fitness. I was going to teach people how they could morph their body (by shedding fat or gaining muscle) just like I had done for myself. All of the knowledge and personal experience I had been accumulating for the past several years was going to change people's lives!

CHAPTER 1 QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a specific instance that made you self-conscious of your body?
2. How did you respond in that instance? What did you do about it?

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