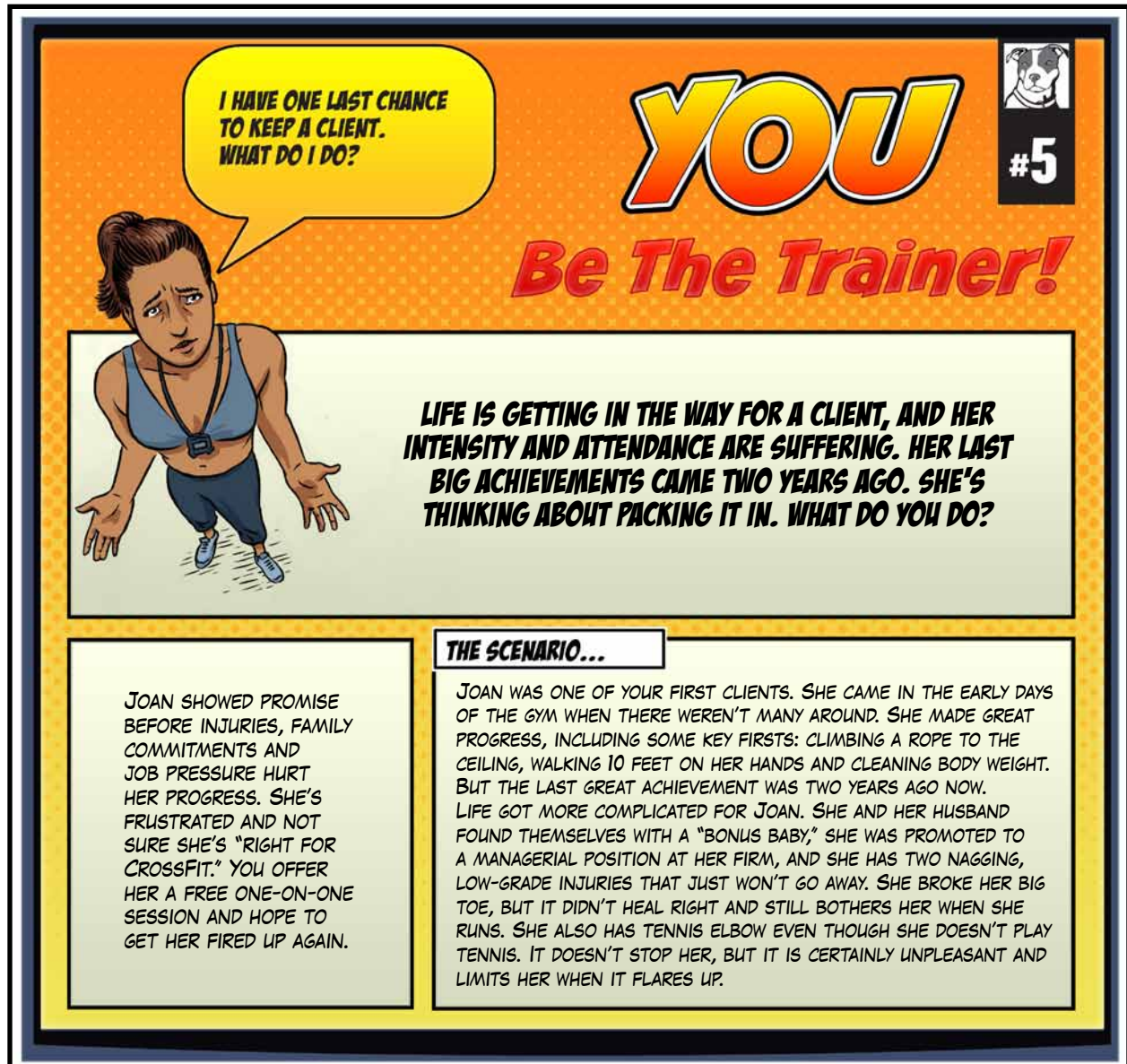


THE CrossFit JOURNAL



I HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE TO KEEP A CLIENT. WHAT DO I DO?

YOU #5

Be The Trainer!

LIFE IS GETTING IN THE WAY FOR A CLIENT, AND HER INTENSITY AND ATTENDANCE ARE SUFFERING. HER LAST BIG ACHIEVEMENTS CAME TWO YEARS AGO. SHE'S THINKING ABOUT PACKING IT IN. WHAT DO YOU DO?

THE SCENARIO...

JOAN SHOWED PROMISE BEFORE INJURIES, FAMILY COMMITMENTS AND JOB PRESSURE HURT HER PROGRESS. SHE'S FRUSTRATED AND NOT SURE SHE'S "RIGHT FOR CROSSFIT." YOU OFFER HER A FREE ONE-ON-ONE SESSION AND HOPE TO GET HER FIRED UP AGAIN.

JOAN WAS ONE OF YOUR FIRST CLIENTS. SHE CAME IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE GYM WHEN THERE WEREN'T MANY AROUND. SHE MADE GREAT PROGRESS, INCLUDING SOME KEY FIRSTS: CLIMBING A ROPE TO THE CEILING, WALKING 10 FEET ON HER HANDS AND CLEANING BODY WEIGHT. BUT THE LAST GREAT ACHIEVEMENT WAS TWO YEARS AGO NOW. LIFE GOT MORE COMPLICATED FOR JOAN. SHE AND HER HUSBAND FOUND THEMSELVES WITH A "BONUS BABY," SHE WAS PROMOTED TO A MANAGERIAL POSITION AT HER FIRM, AND SHE HAS TWO NAGGING, LOW-GRADE INJURIES THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY. SHE BROKE HER BIG TOE, BUT IT DIDN'T HEAL RIGHT AND STILL BOTHERS HER WHEN SHE RUNS. SHE ALSO HAS TENNIS ELBOW EVEN THOUGH SHE DOESN'T PLAY TENNIS. IT DOESN'T STOP HER, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY UNPLEASANT AND LIMITS HER WHEN IT FLARES UP.

THE DETAILS

Joan is frustrated. She still comes as often as she can, but it's probably only two times a week on average. She can do most of the workouts you program, though she often scales the weight. You find that she works hard, but not nearly at the same intensity as she did in the early days. You've been reluctant to push her because of the injuries and the lack of consistency. You know she wants to come in more often, but she struggles to manage all the various responsibilities.

Nothing is dramatically wrong with Joan. She's generally healthy—5'3", 122 lb. She eats pretty well and drinks in moderate quantities, but every night. Compared to the broad population, she's nearly a poster child for what the doctor prescribes. But you know she's not satisfied, and she could be so much more.

Her workouts so far this week:

SUNDAY

15-mile bike ride with her 3 kids (her 12- and 10-year-old boys rode their own bikes while the two-year-old girl sat in a seat on Joan's bike).

MONDAY

Two 20-minute (mostly) brisk walks with the dog (he did have to mark his territory).

TUESDAY

Joan was on her way to the gym when she got a call from school informing that her younger son got hit by a baseball. She took him to the doctor, and luckily there was no concussion.

WEDNESDAY

A co-worker left early to get a flu shot, so Joan missed coming to the gym again. She did 3 rounds of 20 squats and 10 push-ups while the fish cooked.

THURSDAY

Joan got her husband to take the boys to school while she brought her daughter to the gym. The workout was Eva (5 rounds of an 800-meter run, 30 pull-ups and 30 kettlebell swings). She modified it to 20 jumping pull-ups and 20 dumbbell swings (a 25-lb. dumbbell hurts her arm less). She had to stop twice to help with her daughter and finished in 51 minutes, just after the next class started. She was visibly frustrated, but you had to get the next class going.

FRIDAY

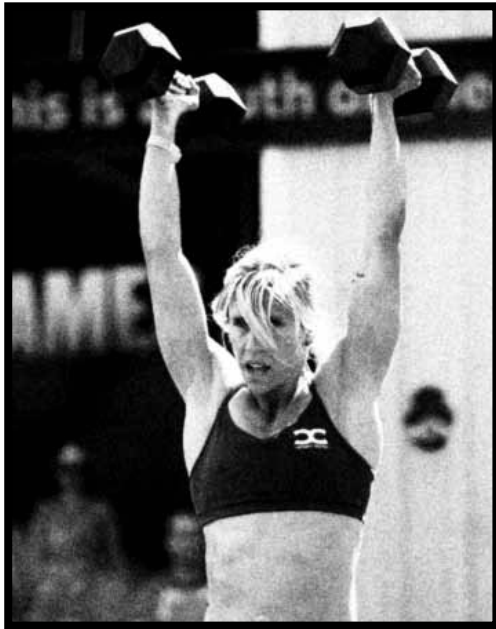
Nothing.

SATURDAY

You see her at the market. She's pleasant but distant. You ask her what you can do for her. She shrugs and says she's just not sure that she's right for CrossFit. You have to go, but you convince her to come in one more time for a free private session tomorrow.

SUNDAY

What can you do for Joan?



CAREY KEPLER
CROSSFIT CENTRAL

Joan needs some motivation!

I would start our session with goal-setting exercises. We would make some very specific goals with dates attached to them. I would have her start her food log immediately, and I would actually focus on it as a top priority. I would ask her to do a 30-day Paleo challenge, and I would also spend some time making sure she understands what I am looking for and helping her create a meal plan that works with her hectic schedule.

I would require Joan to attend a minimum of two classes a week in the gym. I would work with her schedule by allowing her to notify me if something comes up (son getting hit by baseball) so she could attend another class time. That way she doesn't feel like she has failed if something out of her control pops up.

It's more than likely that Joan can improve her tennis elbow with some nutritional changes and some real specifics as to what she can and cannot do in the gym. I'd minimize movements that can play a role in aggravating her elbow (pull-ups, cleans, swings, loads of push-ups), and I would send her out of the facility with ice on her elbow. My goal here is to get her feeling confident that we are addressing all angles of her wellness. Her attitude about herself and her life will perk up once she starts feeling some relief of elbow pain and the benefits of the fitness program.

But right now, Joan is frustrated. I would have her express her disgust. Why does she have to do this? Why does she have to take care of this now? Why is it so very important that she get motivated? Having Joan vent may open up a bunch of "stuff" we did not know about, and we can get to the root of the issue. She will probably get emotional, and if she does not, then I know we may not have dug deep enough. I need her to really make a note of her purpose. I would also see if having her husband as part of her support system would help, and I'd try to get him and the kids involved in her home workouts (described below) as counters if not participants. Getting the kids involved can also help with the diet. This way fitness becomes a family endeavor.

As far as exercise goes, I will set her up with two workouts a week that she needs to get done on her own anytime during the week, as long as they are completed that week. This is on top of making it to class two times. The first set of home workouts would be as follows:

Workout 1

3 rounds for time of:

400-meter run

30 squats

20 mountain climbers

10 sit-ups

60-second plank hold

Workout 2

Max rounds in 15 minutes of:

200-meter run

24 lunge steps

12 sit-ups

6 push-ups

Both workouts can be done with no equipment, at the house and in 15-20 minutes. I will encourage her to put ice on her elbow after every workout. (I know this will be hard for her with her time constraints and kids, but I want to emphasize the importance of getting her body completely healthy.)

Now that we have the plan set, we get started with her first workout back. We'll do a warm-up and then a simple workout. The plan is for Joan to feel good about a sweat session and a new set of goals. We want her confident that we are headed in the right direction and that she has a plan set in place for success!

For the warm-up, I'd give her two rounds of 10 squats, 10 push-ups and 10 rotation drills, followed by a dynamic warm-up of high knees, butt kicks, punter kicks, lunges with rotation, skips and side lunges.

The Workout:

500-meter row

25 squats

25 walking lunges

25 sit-ups

500-meter row

Joan now has a plan, a team of support, and hope. She will be back in the game in no time!



Courtesy of CrossFit Evolution

MONIQUE AMES
CROSSFIT EVOLUTION

When Joan comes in for her private session, we will sit down and talk for 20 minutes for re-evaluation. I'll remind her of her goals when she started, her accomplishments along the way, how far she has come (remember when you came here and you couldn't even do a push-up?), and how proud I am of her for sticking to her guns and training despite the added responsibilities of family and work.

I will tell her that it's time to make some changes that will kick-start her progression. She needs to make her health and fitness priorities if she wants to have the energy required to excel at her job, run the household and care for the kids. I'll ask her how tired she is, and she will undoubtedly say she's exhausted. I'll remind her of how much energy she had when she was training regularly.

Proposed changes:

1. Because of that toe injury, she'll be rowing every time there's running.
2. Her elbow is acting up due to inflammation. Her diet needs to be cleaned up, and the alcohol has to go, except for her allowed three cheat meals. I'd have her start writing down when she eats, what she eats and how much she eats. We'll start tweaking that diet, but first I need to see what she's doing. Let's track it for a week and see what's going on. Also, I'd ask how much fish oil (EPA/DHA) she is consuming daily. None? Let's start now. Start with 2,000 mg, and we'll ratchet it up if needed from there.
3. She can bring her kids if needed. She can bring their books or homework, and they can sit at the reception area. Surely the boys are old enough to keep an eye on the two-year-old. Or we can put her in the child area so Joan can still work out without interruption. We might even try a different class time.
4. I'd set some new goals, such as climbing the rope faster (better technique) or without using her feet, handstand push-ups, getting stronger and more proficient in the clean, and improving technique with the clean and jerk and snatch. There's so much more that she can learn and do.

I'd move on to showing her our new **Gymnastics Warm-up**, which will surely keep her interested and improve her performance. It'll take her through each movement step by step. This will take 30 minutes. The program serves as both a warm-up and training for new skills. We'll also practice the clean with 3 quick sets of 5 reps at 33, 53 and 73 lb. This is light enough so we can work on technique during the workout. Besides, I want her to get a good workout and feel good about herself afterwards.

The workout will be short and intense because we have spent a lot of time talking and doing skill training.

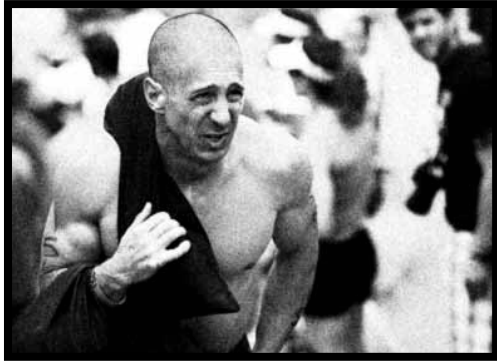
Because people like what they're good at and she needs to feel that she's moving forward, her WOD for today's private session will be as follows:

*3 rounds for time of:
15 GHD sit-ups
10 cleans (73 lb.)
1 rope climb (15')*

This WOD should take about five minutes to complete. I'd wrap up at the end by asking her when she's coming in next, and I'd tell her that I'll meet her when she arrives. I'd congratulate her on taking the steps to move herself forward.

At this point, I am not terribly worried about the tennis elbow. It is very likely related to mobility issues and inflammation. Based on what she's told me, I'm certain her diet is a leading factor. If her elbow was bothering her at our session, then it is definitely inflammation and she would not climb the rope because of the added stress to the joint. In this case, air squats would be subbed to make the workout a bit more fun. I'd probably prescribe 30 reps per round given her work capacity. If the elbow was really bad (this would come out during the skill-development work earlier in the session), deadlifts would be subbed for cleans.

Again, for everyone we have ever had with an elbow issue, fixing the diet fixed the elbow. It has always been an inflammation thing. In reference to her toe issue, to be honest, I have no idea what to do about that. I would start by subbing running with rowing or the Airdyne, and I would recommend seeing a specialist if it really doesn't improve.



ANDY PETRANEK
CROSSFIT L.A.

My approach with Joan would be to do as I do with a brand new student: get to know her all over again. She is obviously in a vastly different place than she has been in the past. Her life has changed, as have her priorities and goals. It seems to me that she is missing being connected to a coach and/or people in the community who really know her and “get” her now, as opposed to when she first started.

It very well might be that CrossFit isn't right for her now, and I would actually say that to her at the start of the meeting. I would also thank her for being willing to take a closer look at things with me to see if, in fact, CrossFit is still a good fit for her in her life right now.

I would ask her a few questions like:

1. I know this might sound silly because we have known each other so long, but I feel like I need to get to know you again so I can better understand what you're going through. Let's just pretend that we don't know each other and you are coming in to meet me, as a fitness coach, for the very first time. Give me a *Reader's Digest* version of your health, fitness and life up to this point in your life. Even though we know each other, don't leave anything out that you assume I already know.

2. Project yourself one year into the future. Now, we're having a meeting to discuss your new level of health and fitness. What would have to have happened over the course of that year to make you feel happy with your progress?
3. What if we're having that same meeting a year in the future but you're not happy with your progress? What are the things that stood in your way?
4. To get the first set of results that you're happy about, what strengths do you have that will help you get there? What about leverage? Is there anything presenting itself in your life that is making fitness a priority? Do you want a specific result by a specific date, say for an event such as a reunion or anything like that?

These questions should get the ball rolling and might lead to things like frequency of training, specific goals and dates, what other things she might want to be doing in addition to CrossFit (or not), the option of private training, nutrition, etc. If she does, in fact, recommit to CrossFit, one of the most important things to establish in this meeting is the accountability guidelines she's willing to live by (number of workouts in the gym each week, number at home, diet, sleep, etc.). Tightening the reins and setting up clear rules for her to live by, along with consequences for not following these rules, will help get her and keep her back in the game. Having accountability rules is a little like having training wheels: they're there when you lose your balance and ensure you stay upright and moving in the direction you wanted to head in the first place.

I have had the best success with people over the years by always putting things into context for them and allowing them to make choices for themselves about the direction in which they want to head. When I see someone like Joan who has “lost her lust” for CrossFit, in order

for me to come across as genuine, I feel it's important for me to really understand her and where she is by asking a lot of questions.

Invariably, in asking those questions, specific things will arise in and around her habits, schedule, goals, etc. that I will use to simply point out things that could be tweaked to give her a different result. Now, it's my job to recognize those things as they come up in the conversation and to magnify them in a way that allows her to see things she wouldn't or couldn't have seen on her own. These questions help bring these types of things to light and open the door for more questions and more coaching.

I see myself as Joan's trusted advisor, someone who holds her health and fitness in the highest regard but who isn't the ultimate decision-maker. She is. She must make the final decision about the direction she chooses. When she feels empowered to make that choice, after consideration and reasoning, she will truly be the happiest and best off.

It's my job to present CrossFit in such a way that Joan really understands that for her to get what she wants in terms of fitness, CrossFit is going to be the best option. On the other hand, it is always possible that we decide mutually that CrossFit really isn't best option for her right now. In this case, I can be fully supportive of her and offer my guidance in another direction, gently and authentically. If I do that skillfully, I have someone who is a fan for life. I have also left the door open for her to come back if and when her situation changes. In fact, if Joan left CrossFit I would set a follow-up date three or four months down the road to re-connect with her and check in on her life, health and fitness.

If, on the other hand, our discussion results in Joan being reinvigorated and optimistic about her CrossFit training, I would work with her on the specific details regarding her training

frequency (at the gym and at home) and diet, and how, specifically, she wants to hold herself accountable to these commitments. She probably doesn't need special training; getting her reconnected to the local CrossFit community is the most important thing for her ongoing success. Once that happens, she's already proven she knows how to succeed.



THE LAST WORD TONY BUDDING, CROSSFIT HQ

Joan's predicament is a more complex scenario for trainers. With the great majority of new clients, you know that once you get them doing CrossFit for at least a few weeks, they're going to see results unlike anything they've ever experienced. Your job is to get them through that period safely, effectively and enthusiastically.

But Joan has "been there, done that." Life is complicated, but nothing is really that wrong. There's no crisis to solve, she still works out, and she's still pretty healthy—yet she's frustrated. She can't do what she used to be able to do at her CrossFit peak. PRs don't happen anymore, and she has nagging injuries. Just coming to class ain't cutting it anymore. Joan needs a jump-start. She needs extra help getting back into success. She needs support breaking through the daily obstacles that keep her from feeling great.

Carey Kepler is a high-energy trainer (she finished third overall in the 2009 CrossFit Games) who walks her talk. She leads by example, and she's tackled many of the same issues Joan is dealing with. Carey has three children herself and is co-owner of a thriving business. She knows Joan has it in her, and she's right there with her to obliterate obstacles.

Carey knows that nutrition has a huge impact on how Joan feels and performs, so that's going to be a huge part of the push. She also needs to get in a solid four workouts per week. At this point, it doesn't have to be fancy. The consistency will have its impact. Carey creates two easily performed home workouts that can fit within Joan's busy schedule. Then, she requires that Joan come in for at least two workouts a week in the gym. Joan must be held accountable.

Finally, Carey also sought ways to bring Joan's family into it. This is obviously a very important part of Joan's life, and if she feels like her workouts take away from her family time, she's much less likely to stick with them.

Monique Ames has a similar approach. Start with the mental game, the attitude adjustment. Name the obstacles and remember the successes. Commit to dialing in the diet. Monique also specifically addresses the nagging injuries. Inflammation, she says, is caused by a poor diet, and it's most likely the cause of Joan's lingering elbow trouble. Fix the diet (with plenty of fish oil), and the elbow pain will leave. That alone could be sufficient motivation to get back.

Monique will also emphasize mobility and skill development with the CrossFit Evolution Gymnastics Warmup and Oly lifting training. Chronic, nagging injuries are often associated with a lack of flexibility. By incorporating learning new skills with improving mobility, Monique will support the fitness gains caused by renewed consistency with more confidence and general well being because Joan will feel better.

These priorities are matched with the orientation of the Sunday session. Twenty minutes to reset priorities, 30 for warm-up and skill development, and 10 for the workout.

Monique also encouraged Joan to bring the family in, at least the kids. Integrating Joan's top priorities increases her chances for success.

Andy Petranek has one goal for the Sunday session: communication. He is going to talk with her and find out exactly where she is and where she wants to be. At the end of the talk, he's fully confident he can advise her into one of the existing tracks within CrossFit L.A. or away from CrossFit altogether if that's really where she is.

Andy has been a successful personal trainer for over 15 years. He knows he can deliver the goods, and he has seen it all. He knows that if Joan can find it within herself to commit to the CrossFit program, she will be successful. But if she can't, Andy is prepared to let her walk away. Sometimes this is the best approach for several reasons: it builds trust (because Andy isn't just trying to sell her his services), it puts them on the same side, it can be a wake-up call for someone not ready to leave, or it salvages a relationship if in fact CrossFit is not the right program for her.

Joan succeeded at CrossFit in the past, and she can succeed with it again in the future if she's willing to give it what it takes.

All three of these trainers know how to keep clients: give them results and provide an environment in which they know they matter. Train hard with functional movement, eat well and be consistent. It's not easy, and there are so many obstacles that can get in the way. Joan needs to recommit and find new levels of success (results) and satisfaction. All three trainers plant themselves firmly in her camp and will be there for her to the degree she's willing to meet them.

