

Where are you going? by Rob Crenshaw, NSCA-CPT.

Have you ever went out, got in your car, started driving without even knowing where you are going? More than likely, you wouldn't get into your car and start driving without a destination. Of course, if you are like me, you may have one place in mind and end up driving towards another because one reason or the other, especially if they are in a similar direction. Both of these examples, actually, apply to fitness as well.

Most people that I talk with have a general idea of what they want to accomplish from their efforts in the gym. "I want to lose weight." That is great, and by all means, I hope you do. But saying that is like saying, "I am going to drive to California." Great! Get in your car, head west, and you have a 50% chance of hitting somewhere in California. Now if you define your destination as Los Angeles, then you know that at certain crossroads, you will have to turn to get you there. The same applies to weight control. Just losing weight is like driving to California, but losing 15 pounds is like driving to LA. Now, getting even more specific, let's say you want to go to a certain road, or even a specific address in LA. That would be the same as saying, "I want to lose 15 pounds, 10% body fat, and 5 inches around my waist." Taking this one step farther, you can get even more specific. "I want to go to room 415, on the fourth floor of the building at 1122 Fitness Way, Fit Town, USA and get there on Friday afternoon." That would be the same as saying, "I want to lose 15 pounds, 10% body fat, 5 inches around my waist, have nice toned firm legs, a little definition in my arms, and a flat firm midsection by my daughter's wedding."

All the above options are great and will get you going in the right direction. What do most people do when they want to make a cross country journey? They map it out. They do this by themselves with a huge atlas, call AAA for directions, or go on to the many navigation websites available. And again,

the more specific you get the better end result you will have. If you ask for a map to California, the result will probably take you to the capitol city. Then if you narrow it a bit, it will take you to the City Hall of LA. But if you get real specific, then it will take you right to where you want to go. Following the map will get you where you want to go. Granted, there are those few that will just get in and drive and enjoy the adventure, no matter how long it takes them.

The same works for fitness goals. Depending on how specific you want to get, you will need to determine how you will attain them. Most people will go to a gym or buy fitness DVDs and start doing something, cardio or weight training. This is not a bad thing, but it equates to getting in your car without a map and heading in the direction that you think is correct. The next step up from this are those that look at general fitness tips offered in popular magazines. Again, this isn't bad and I use a lot of exercises I see in magazines myself and for my clients. The problem is that they come off as the end all to your fitness goal and not just as a part of the whole picture. And if not used correctly, they may take you way off course. This would be like someone telling you to take Interstate 80 to get to LA. It is in the right direction, but won't exactly get you where you want to go.

I personally have experienced this first hand. For a few years now, I have had a general concept of what I wanted to accomplish by working out. I wanted to be in shape, be able to play soccer, and be able to show my clients what I needed to in order to help them the best I could. But I didn't have a specific goal in mind. Just recently, I have decided to enter into a competition. I am not sure if it will be a body building, fitness model, or muscle model competition as I have to look at all of my options about events and dates. Right now, I am at the travel agent saying I want to go on vacation sometime between this date and that date. Since I have decided to do this, I have had a more specific idea of what I want to accomplish and I

have changed my routines considerably. I do feel more energetic about my workouts as I have a goal in mind and have already seen results.

The people that get the best results and actually end up at their fitness goals are the ones that map out their route. If you don't know how this is done, you can hire a trainer to do it for you. You still have to drive the car, but the trainer can be your GPS Navigational System on board with you the whole way. When you encounter a flat tire or road construction, the trainer will give you the best way to fix the tire or best route to get around the delay. The other thing a trainer can do is give you different tools to use along the way.

In a trip from the Mid-west to California, you will encounter really really flat land, rolling hills, and steep mountains. In your journey along your fitness goals, you will encounter rapid weight loss, no weight loss, and every other fluctuation along the way. The trainer will be there to change up your routine so that you aren't trying to use a high gear to get up a steep incline. A trainer will keep you headed towards your goal and not let you get side tracked. Meet with a trainer today and they will help you define your goals, lay out a map to follow to your goals, and give you tools along the way to overcome any obstacles you may face. The more specific you can be about your goals, the easier it will be know; what route to use, if you are staying on that track, and how to determine your results along the way.

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