



Sports Training for the Older-Adult Athlete

Sometimes the simplest programs offer the grandest rewards.

Client: Arnie

Personal Trainer: Jennifer L. Salter, MSW, owner of Lifeline Personal Training

Location: Toronto

Moved to Move. Like many fitness professionals, Jennifer L. Salter's journey as a personal trainer was ignited by struggle. As an awkward child, skinny and uncoordinated, Salter always seemed to be the last person chosen for team sports. Much later, she learned that those apparently nonexistent athletic abilities were hidden just beneath the surface. "I discovered the wonder of physical activity in my undergraduate years, becoming an avid participant in aerobics and step classes, cycling, rock climbing and weight training," she recalls. "I learned that, despite the messages I had received as a child, I had an amazing capacity for endurance activity and for meeting advanced physical challenges."

It is this experience that motivates Salter to help others unleash their inner athletes via her in-home training business, Lifeline Personal Training.

Understanding Limitations. Almost 14 years ago Salter met someone who had walked a similar path. Arnie, now 69, had a passion for downhill skiing, but believed

his skills were lacking because he had picked up the sport as an adult. "He has spoken of the challenges of learning to achieve high-level ski status without having been on skis as a child," states Salter. "He realized that working with a trainer who could help him improve in these areas would be an advantage to his skiing ability."

Arnie also knew that his demanding work schedule might get in the way of making physical improvements. "He has always [experienced] times when he committed fully to an exercise program and periods when workouts did not occur as frequently as he would have liked."

Getting His Ski Legs. At the outset of the program, Salter realized quickly that improved lower-body strength and program adherence would top Arnie's list of priorities. "My assessment revealed that, while Arnie's cardiovascular fitness level was very high, his lower-body strength was moderate and his upper-body strength was low," she says. During their weekly meetings, Salter focused on "very high intensity strength training" that included several sets of closed-chain lower-body exercises; single-set upper-body work; and exercises to improve posture and scapular stabilization. "As proprioception is a challenge, I do not change the actual exercises in the program," says Salter. Instead, she alters repetitions, holds, exercise order and rest periods.

Knowing that Arnie's work demands were a potential roadblock, Salter emphasized program adherence from the beginning by providing Arnie with a daily workout schedule. "We sat down and went over his weekly schedule in detail, and I created a plan that we both

agreed on."

Marrying Wants and Needs. Salter has come to realize in working with Arnie that sometimes the simplest methods offer the greatest rewards. From time to time she attempted to implement more dynamic design elements, such as plyometrics or dynamic stabilization, to mixed reviews. According to Salter, Arnie found these types of training protocols awkward and unpleasant. "Training Arnie has been a good lesson for me in finding the harmony between creative programming and doing what is best for the client," she says. "I have not felt that using a cornucopia of different exercises would be to Arnie's benefit." Instead, simplicity reigns during the exercise sessions, and has proved successful for both trainer and client.

Going the Distance. Throughout the decade and a half that the two have been training together, Arnie has noticed great improvement in his skiing ability. "He is stronger at age 69 than he was 8 years ago," enthuses Salter. "He says that he is skiing better than he ever has." "I can do tough runs in my late 60s that few people of any age can do," adds Arnie.

Overall, working with Salter has exceeded Arnie's expectations. "I like the consistency of the exercise program that Jen has designed and the fact that she takes every part of the program seriously," he says. "She has designed an exercise program specifically for me and understands what I need to do to improve my skiing and my fitness level in general." ■

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Calling All Trainers

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