

Should The Fitness Industry Be Trauma Informed?

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Short Communication

ABSTRACT

Fitness and food both have powerful potential on the positively impacting of mental health. Collectively, they can be used as tools to breed optimum health, self-love and empowerment; along with a healthy sense of self; Or be used as weapons of self-destruction and self-hate - with perfectionism, disordered eating and overexercise as practise. With the global pandemic underway, It's more important now than ever, that industries across the board become trauma informed in their practise. The health and fitness industry is no exception to this. In fact, it's an incredible opportunity to change the narrative and landscape of the fitness industry; and with the diet industry being worth an estimated £2bn in the UK alone - an industry which relies largely on the mass insecurity of its consumers - it's time we looked at the responsibility within the industry in relation to mental health, by taking a shift onto how we can help people to feel better. As a Personal Trainer and Nutrition Advisor with over a decade in the industry; formerly the National PT Ambassador for Fitness First UK; I have personal and professional experience with the considerations of mental and physical wellbeing on a commercial and corporate level. As an adult child of alcoholics, both of whom lost their battles with addiction, fitness and applied nutrition have been key to my survival - it has saved my life. The high turnover of Personal Trainers, and the phasing out of fitness instructors on the gym floor lends itself to a large proportion of stressed out fitness professionals; ones who are desperately trying to make a sale, overshadowing the original reason of getting into the industry to help people. For a change to be made, the fitness giants need to be taking a stand on making sure their representatives are supported well enough to have a working knowledge of how to promote overall wellbeing; as well as better communication skills to ensure that clients are supported, rather than shamed, into achieving their goals. Allowing both the trainers and the clients a healthier overall experience. With a loss of sense of control and certainty due to the pandemic, planned exercise can forge a sense of control and something to focus on; as long as this is from a health-driven perspective it will be useful. While it is widely understood that exercise and eating well can positively impact our health, the attractive benefits on mental wellbeing and human potential are overshadowed by the get-ripped-quick narrative that dominates the market, largely in it's selling power. How many professionals in the fitness industry have an understanding of sleep, the gut and how well-executed exercise can affect mental and physical health? Or how mental health can affect the goals, esteem and current abilities of a client? The opportunity is there to lay down a new path, will the fitness industry grab it with both hands or continue down the well worn path?

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