# PASSION) FOR HEALTH AND FITNESS INTO A Powerful PURPOSE L, AND A Wildle UCCESSFUL PAREER

"To have this book when you're starting out in the health and fitness industry is such a gift. John has condensed years of his hard-earned experience in a thoughtful, beautiful book. This is the kind of resource that shaves years off your learning curve. Read it!"

— UJ RAMDAS ive Minute Journal,

Co-Creator of The Five Minute Journal, Co-Founder at Intelligent Change

"John has a unique way of breaking down lofty concepts like "passion" and "purpose" and transforming them into real, actionable steps and daily practices. He has fundamentally changed the way I think about (and pursue) goals, skills, and self-development in my own life. Both systematic and heartfelt, this book is a reliable road map to making real change, and loving the journey."

— CAMILLE DEPUTTER
Author of Little Poems for Big Hearts,
Creator of Storytelling with Heart

"For the past 13 years, John Berardi has been one of my greatest mentors in fitness, business, and in life. He's a shining (and rare) example of wisdom, generosity, humor, and action. This is the book I wish I had when I first started in fitness. Even now, I find myself revisiting certain chapters and picking up new insights. True to its name, Change Maker will fundamentally change the way you see the world — and it may just change your life."

— NATE GREEN
Author of Built For Show,
Writer for Men's Health magazine

"With this book, John Berardi picks up where certifications and courses leave off. Change Maker gives the health and fitness professional the secrets to building a successful, sustainable business by helping clients transform their lives."

— GERALYN COOPERSMITH
Author, Speaker and Industry Consultant

"I literally have more faith in humanity because of the way that John Berardi and his team have achieved such success. Change Maker delivers integral lessons from someone who's done it — and done it right!"

— GEOFF GIRVITZ Founder of Bang Fitness, Creator of Dad Strength

"John Berardi's guidance and wisdom have positively impacted my life and Girls Gone Strong in numerous ways. If you want a long, impactful, and lucrative career in the health and fitness industry then I recommend you read this book and consider it your roadmap to success."

— CASEY SASEK
Co-Director of Girls Gone Strong,
Owner of Wildcat Mattress

"Change Maker exceeds all expectations. This is book is the complete roadmap to achieving your greatest ambitions. It might even make you a better human too."

- ADAM CAMPBELL

Best-selling author and former Chief Content Officer of Men's Health, Women's Health, Prevention, and Runner's World "Eleven years ago, I opened my first fitness business: a facility based on principles I learned training people in special operations. During this process, JB's advice and insight played an invaluable role in shaping my new business into what I wanted it to be. Within two years, that first facility expanded to a second, and both of those gyms are now licensed to independent owners where they collectively employ around a dozen people and bring life-changing results and a strong sense of community to hundreds of clients. If you're starting a career in the fitness industry, this book should be on your desk."

— CRAIG WELLER
USN SWCC, founder of Barefoot Fitness,
Co-founder of Ethos Colorado,
Precision Nutrition Coach

"Congratulations on finding this book! You've chosen an industry that has the ability to change the world. And the right guide to help you navigate it."

— JONATHAN GOODMAN

Author of Ignite The Fire,

Founder of The PTDC

### **CHANGE MAKER**



## JOHN BERARDI, PHD

WITH TED SPIKER



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To my wife and children:
For helping me live my purpose,
using my unique abilities,
in harmony with our shared values.

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To change makers everywhere:

For pursuing your passion,

making your life matter,

and helping the world become a better place.

#### CONTENTS

#### **FOREWORD**

by Jonathan Goodman

#### INTRODUCTION

How I Found My Calling and How to Find Yours Too

#### **CHAPTER 1: OPPORTUNITY**

How to Turn Six Common Industry Challenges into Opportunities for Success

#### **CHAPTER 2: CAREER**

How to Use Your Purpose, Unique Abilities, and Values to Plot Your Career Path

#### **CHAPTER 3: CLIENTS**

How to Know What Your Clients Really Want and Deliver It Every Time

#### **CHAPTER 4: COACHING**

How to Master Motivation, Build Relationships, and Become a Client-Centered Change Maker

**CHAPTER 5: BUSINESS** 

How to Build Your Systems, Get Clients, and Make Money

#### **CHAPTER 6: REPUTATION**

How to Earn Respect and Bring Elite Professionalism to Your Work

\_\_\_\_

#### **CHAPTER 7: EDUCATION**

A Complete Curriculum for Becoming the Ultimate Change Maker

#### CONCLUSION

A Person in Such a Hurry Seldom Gets Good Results

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO WORKSHEETS, THOUGHT EXERCISES, AND RESOURCES

\_\_\_\_

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO Q&As

\_\_\_\_

**EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES** 

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** 

INDEX

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** 

#### **FOREWORD**

I was lucky.

During my time as a student at the University of Western Ontario, I emailed legendary nutrition researcher and Western faculty member Dr. Peter Lemon to ask for career advice. Graciously, he invited me to his office and spent hours guiding me, focusing me not on *what* to think, but *how* to think, when it comes to learning more about, and pursuing, a career in health, fitness, and nutrition.

While I was there, Dr. Lemon showed me a study from 2002. His co-author on it was a young (and unknown) doctoral student named John Berardi, who I've since come to know as JB. As Dr. Lemon was his PhD advisor, he talked about JB's work, his work ethic, and the high hopes he had for him.

Although we've been friends for years, and JB has become one of my most influential mentors, I never told him this story before. But he had a hand in guiding my career long before we first spoke. And, trust me, worthwhile guidance in the field of health and fitness is hard to come by.

As JB and I are both avid readers, I know he'll appreciate me using a line from Tolkien to illustrate what happens to many new health and fitness professionals: "Out of the frying pan and into the fire." Unlike many other fields, the health and fitness industry seems to throw people into the profession headfirst. It's a certification or training course and then . . . sink or swim.

Sure, there's the opportunity for continuing education along the way. But, in most cases, there's a woeful lack of guidance on which courses to take, which skills to build, and which career paths make the most sense for now and into the future.

Until now.

In *Change Maker*, JB provides authentic, insightful, wise counsel, the kind so many health and fitness pros need regardless of whether they're just starting out or in the middle of their professional careers.

He begins by busting the myth that the path to a powerful purpose

and wildly successful career is simplistic and one-dimensional. Indeed, as he discusses, there are *many* opportunities for you, opportunities that don't *just* involve seeing clients and patients in person or one-on-one.

He also highlights several ways to use your passion to make a real difference, while also bringing together your own unique purpose, talents, and values. The good news is that even if you haven't yet found the right fit, it's never too late to switch your focus and bring all three into alignment.

Beyond discussing all the great opportunities available now—and the ones that will emerge in the coming years—he also shares how to get laser focused on what matters to you, to the people you serve, and to your career. This way you can put your energy into the things that make a real difference while ignoring what's unimportant or, at least, unimportant for now.

If we're going to solve the problems of obesity, lifestyle disease, and overwhelming health-care costs for future generations, we need to think prevention. And movement, nutrition, sleep, and stress management are the best preventatives we have.

However, as I've said before: your ability to write a quality program is less important than your ability to get someone to do the program. In this area, JB's a master. And in this book, he shares an exciting frontier in coaching, one centered in behavioral psychology and rooted in long-term sustainable change, not yo-yo dieting or fitness fads.

With a mix of humility and candor, JB shares some of my favorite lessons: business and professional development strategies that helped him become one of the most successful people in the history of the industry, growing the world's largest nutrition and lifestyle coaching, education, and software company.

In the end, this is a full-circle moment for me. The man whose work was introduced to me during my first real guidance session in this industry has asked me to write the foreword for a book that will guide you (and hundreds of thousands of others) to personal and professional success.

#### **FOREWORD**

So congratulations on finding this book. You've chosen an industry that has the ability to change the world. And you've chosen the right book—and the right guide—to help you navigate it.

Jonathan Goodman Author of *Ignite the Fire* Founder of the PTDC

#### INTRODUCTION

### How I Found My Calling and How to Find Yours Too

In nearly every aspect of life, we need some sort of infrastructure. A house without a foundation would blow over in a breeze. A city without pipes, roads, and power lines would crumble. A body without bones would be a fleshy blob of goo.

So why do we have almost no structure in the health and fitness industry?

Sure, there are lots of choices: a buffet of books, websites, workshops, certifications, and friendly (or not so friendly) advice to randomly gorge on. But while there's an abundance of options, almost no one's connected the dots. There's no curriculum, no path to follow, no guidelines for what to do and how to act, no steel girders to give you the structure to launch yourself into a successful career.

If you work in health and fitness, you're pretty much on your own.

Sure, you may know a lot about exercise or nutrition or the inner workings of the body. But where will you learn how to choose your specialty, attract clients, run a business, manage difficult situations, protect your reputation? Where will you be exposed to the inner workings of success?

Herein lies one of the biggest problems I see in the health and fitness industry: **Too much information, too little context.** It's easy to get overwhelmed or to focus on the wrong things. And that can lead to unclear vision, frustrating (or no) personal development, and—ultimately—lots of good professionals feeling stuck in careers they once dreamed about being a part of.

To illustrate my point, there's currently a 40 percent annual turnover rate among health and fitness professionals—meaning that by this time next year, four in ten will have left a field they were once deeply passionate about.

#### CHANGE MAKER

This book is designed to change that.

In *Change Maker*, I'll share a road map, a curriculum, a way to connect the dots that'll help you achieve success on your own terms. Of course, defining success depends on your perspective, your goals, and your stage in life. But the way I define it is:

#### CHOOSING A PROFESSIONAL PATH

that brings you the most meaning,

#### MAKING ENOUGH MONEY

to be financially secure,

#### HAVING THE FLEXIBILITY

to create your own schedule,

#### **BALANCING YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIVES**

so they support one another, and

#### SEEING PHENOMENAL RESULTS

with your clients and patients.

That last one is why you're in this business, right? It's certainly not because the industry is full of trainers, nutritionists, and functional medicine docs driving Maseratis and doing biceps curls with gold bricks. Instead, you're probably here because 1) you were called (by someone or something) to help change lives and/or 2) the health and fitness industry changed *your* life, just like it did mine.

#### How health and fitness changed no, saved—my life

Maybe it's because I was small and weak, always sneezing and wheezing. Or maybe it's because skinny kids like me got picked on a lot growing up. Whatever the reason, by the time I got to high school, I had a chip on my shoulder and was mad at the world. I skipped a lot of classes; I was always drunk and high; I wasn't that fun to be around; and I had no prospects for continuing my education.

Then, one night, after drinking and driving with friends (go ahead and judge me; I deserve it), we crashed a car. As we spiraled out of control into a wooded area, I had one of those cinematic near-death experiences: Everything slowed down. I saw visions of my childhood. I watched myself being lowered into the ground while my parents loomed overhead, grieving and ashamed.

But, miraculously, we narrowly missed the trees. We didn't hurt ourselves or anyone else. All we did was scrape the car and knock off a side mirror during the crash. When the dust settled, we sat up in a whoawhat-was-that? stupor. "Let's get the car out of this embankment," said the driver. "My parents are gonna kill me."

I had a wholly different reaction. Holy shit! I thought. I have to do something different with my life.

Although we were miles from my house, I decided to walk home. My buddies drove away, getting arrested later that night.

I agonized over what to do next. I knew I needed to do *something*. But I had no skills. All I knew was the party lifestyle, and I was so small and weak that my upper arm and wrist circumferences were nearly identical. Even so, I was unmistakably drawn to the idea of living better. Part of me wanted to get more sleep, eat better food, and start working out to build some muscle. So I joined a local gym.

I didn't know anyone. I didn't know what to do. I just showed up. You've probably heard the saying: "When the student is ready, the

teacher appears." Well, that's what happened next. One day, while I was flailing around on a leg-press machine, the gym's owner, Craig, approached. He shared some tips, and I guess I took them well, because he invited me to work out with him the next day.

Craig was every young guy's hero. He was big and strong, a 230-pound bodybuilder. He had a business degree and owned a few well-respected gyms. He was well-read. He drove a nice car. He was handsome and girls loved him.

What Craig saw in *me*, I have no idea. However, during the next two years, he became a trusted coach, a good friend, and my greatest mentor. He gave me books to read. He taught me about health and fitness. He talked about the business of owning a gym. He even gave me a job at the front desk and showed me how things worked.

Craig's mentorship didn't just change my life; it *saved* my life. I didn't go back to partying. Instead, I went to a community college. To pay for school, I took personal training and lifestyle coaching courses and started working with a few clients at Craig's gym.

I'd found my calling.

I went on from community college to study medicine, biology, chemistry, psychology, and philosophy as I progressed through advanced degrees at five different universities. While working on my mind, I also built my body, entering bodybuilding and powerlifting competitions. I eventually went on to win a national bodybuilding championship, earn a PhD, and co-found Precision Nutrition, which is now the world's largest nutrition coaching, certification, and software company.

### When I discovered health and fitness, I needed a makeover

When I started working out, I needed to build a new body, mind, and perspective.

Later on, I needed to rebuild my perspective again.

I paid my way through ten years of postsecondary education by

coaching clients. Yet, halfway through the journey, I was feeling unsettled in my work. This was strange because the health and fitness industry saved my life. I believed in the power it had to save other lives too.

At the same time, when I looked around, I saw a big disconnect between the people working in health and fitness and the people we were supposed to be helping.

It seemed as if the entire field was set up to cater exclusively to people like me and my fellow fit friends: the people who already worked out in gyms, shopped at organic markets, and had a commitment to living a healthy lifestyle.

Think about the implications of that.

We were putting all our energy into serving a tiny percent of the population—the small segment of people who, ironically, needed our help *the least*. Not only did this present an ethical dilemma, it also presented a business problem. How was I supposed to stand out when competing with everyone else trying to serve the same market as me?

In addition, we were ignoring the people in pain, the millions who didn't have any experience with health and fitness, the ones who needed our help *the most*. This really hit home for me when I realized that no matter how "expert" I was becoming, I still didn't have the necessary skill or ability to help my loved ones, the people closest to me, avoid fads and make positive changes in their lives.

Once I had this realization, I couldn't unrealize it.

#### Again, I knew something had to change

I needed to learn a different way of seeing my clients—plus a new way of thinking about my work.

That's when I decided two things.

First, I didn't want to *only* help fit and healthy people get *more* fit and healthy. I also wanted to help *everyone* who was ready and willing to make changes in their lives—no matter who they were, what they looked like, or where they were starting from.

Second, I wanted to make sure that my help was the real deal—the kind of help that facilitates lasting, meaningful change in a person's life. No quick fixes, no Band-Aids, no solutions that only work when the conditions are perfect.

#### Sadly, early in my career, I wasn't doing either

I wasn't doing either of those two things—helping those who most needed it, and offering lasting change—on my own. And I wasn't even doing them during the early days of Precision Nutrition, which I started with my friend Phil Caravaggio in a basement in the early 2000s.

Precision Nutrition began as a passion project, a fun way to indulge our love of health and fitness while expressing our geeky science- and technology-loving genes.

In our early years we wrote articles, created educational DVDs, sold e-books, and otherwise ran what people call an "information product" business. During this time we collected lots of testimonials and people told us we were doing great work.

But I wasn't quite sure.

Phil and I started to suspect that articles, books, and DVDs—while offering *some* value—could only do so much. We were beginning to realize that people who want change in their lives don't benefit from big chunks of information dumped into their laps at once.

### Careful, patient, compassionate coaching makes the real difference

Phil and I started to realize that this kind of deep-level coaching was almost entirely missing from the health and fitness industry. So we set out to find better ways to reach more of the people who needed us—especially the people who weren't yet "into" health and fitness.

#### INTRODUCTION

THIS BEGAN WITH REALLY LISTENING TO PEOPLE and, in turn, speaking to their deepest needs when describing our programs.

THEN, ONCE THEY BECAME CLIENTS, COACHING
THEM BY USING NEW METHODS—borrowed from more
established fields like behavioral psychology—known to
facilitate sustainable change.

FINALLY, IT MEANT COMMITTING TO BUILDING A
BETTER BUSINESS, one that'd be around for a long time—
long enough to help create industry-wide change.

Thankfully, we've made great strides.

Today, Precision Nutrition is on its way to directly help millions of people eat, move, and live better while also empowering health and fitness professionals to do the same with their own clients and patients.

As of 2019, we've worked with more than 150,000 coaching clients and mentored more than 75,000 health and fitness professionals from all over the world.

We've coached professional sports teams and Olympic athletes at the highest level of sport.

We've consulted with some of the most respected companies in the world including Apple, Equinox, Nike, and Virgin.

Our methods have been validated in several peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Our team has been recognized by Fast Company as one of the world's most innovative organizations.

Our co-founder, Phil Caravaggio, has been named one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40, recognizing outstanding, visionary young achievers in Canadian business.

And I've been repeatedly named one of the 100 most influential people in health and fitness.

Now, I'm not bringing all this up to brag. This track record of success, I hope, will help you trust me to guide you toward a more fruitful, empowering career yourself. Because that's exactly what I plan to do.

### How can you become the ultimate change maker?

While I'm hopeful for the future of the health and fitness industry, I'm frustrated by all the noise out there today. I've watched too many change makers get stuck in the matrix—minds influenced by the bad thinking of pseudo experts, the persuasive power of unscrupulous marketing, and the short attention span of health and fitness media—unable to figure out what's true, useful, or important.

But if you think it's bad on the professional side, consider what it's like for the public. These are the people who desperately need our help. In an industry full of diet books, late-night infomercials, and a million diagnoses from Dr. Google, they don't know where to turn, or who to turn to.

Of course, I want them to turn to you.

But only if you're willing to think differently about who you are, why you're here, how you can make a great living, and how you can make a real difference.

Because, if you can do that, I know you'll be able to:

#### INTRODUCTION

turn your passion into a rewarding, life-changing career that you're proud of;

make enough money to do (and have) the things you want;

learn whether the things you want (and have) are actually the right things for you;

make your own schedule, work on valuable projects, and make a difference; and

surround yourself with people who push you to be better and celebrate your successes.

Even more:

### You have the opportunity to change, even save, lives

Think about all the people out there who are suffering, or in pain, or frustrated.

Maybe they're shooing their daughter away at the park, saying, "I can't play right now; Daddy's knee hurts too much."

Maybe they're giving their mom her first shot of insulin, saying it's just going to be a little pinch.

Maybe they're sitting in the middle seat of an airplane, trying to ask the flight attendant (as quietly as possible) for a seat belt extension and avoiding the judgmental eyes of everyone around them, wishing they could somehow shrink and disappear inside themselves.

Maybe they're sitting on the wax-paper-covered table at the doctor's office, hearing how they're not going to live to see their kids finish high school.

Lucky for them, you're here. Lucky for them, you're ready and willing to help.

#### But let's do it right

Let's turn your passion into something real. Let's put you on track to becoming the ultimate professional, one capable of making change for others and for yourself. Let's put a structure in place where you not only learn to help others live up to their potential, but where you live up to yours.

With this book, I hope to offer that structure.

To begin, *Change Maker* is organized into seven chapters that'll teach you how to turn your love of health and fitness into an invigorating purpose and a sustainable career. Whether you're already working in the field or you're thinking of switching from another one, it's my goal to help you avoid the burnout and lack of direction that, unfortunately, can be all too common in this young industry.

To support what you're learning, I've also compiled end-of-chapter Q&As that are full of real, thoughtful questions I've gotten over the years. In each one I share my unfiltered take on the challenges you'll undoubtedly face as you grow your career. These are available online, and you can download them (for free) at www.changemakeracademy. com/questions.

Finally, as you read through the book, you'll notice a number of exercises, activities, questions, and worksheets. These are absolutely essential to put what you're learning into action. So I recommend downloading them now (again, free) at www.changemakeracademy.com/download-able-forms. There are both printable and fillable versions of each form, and the Quick Reference Guide at the end of the book lists them all.

#### INTRODUCTION

I hope you'll take my advice and grab these resources now. I also hope you'll work through them in order as they'll greatly enhance your learning experience. Even more, they'll help you move from "knowing" to "doing"—the hallmark of every successful professional I've met.

With that said, if you're ready to become the ultimate change maker, let's begin.

# CHAPTER 1 OPPORTUNITY

HOW TO

Turn SIX COMMON

INDUSTRY Challenges

INTO OPPORTUNITIES

FOR Success

Forty years ago, almost no one exercised "for fun."

It wasn't until Dr. Ken Cooper released *The New Aerobics* in 1979 that people started doing cardiovascular exercises like running, cycling, swimming, and skiing as recreational activity. And modern-day health and fitness clubs didn't enter the scene until about thirty years ago. So, if you're working in health and fitness today, or thinking about making a switch, your job is a thoroughly modern innovation.

Compare that to other established professions like law, medicine, clergy, and chemistry, and it becomes clear the health and fitness industry, as we know it today, is *very* young. Like toddler young. Barely walking young. Learning first words young.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. Most children are full of passion and purpose. Their enthusiasm can be measured in decibels. Their energy sparks action. This makes them great experimenters, great learners, great doers. They're the future.

They have their faults, though. Most are impulsive and naive. They make mistakes. They don't think through the consequences of their actions. And they lack the maturity to consider "What do I want most?" instead of "What do I want now?" This makes them first drafts, not final products.

Doesn't this almost perfectly describe the field of health and fitness today?

We're passionate, enthusiastic, even *on fire* for all things food and fitness, health and wholesomeness. Great! We need all that excitement and exuberance. The field is literally creating itself as I write this. Historically, we're on the ground floor of a new movement and a new profession. It's changing fast. And it's our work that'll shape the future.

Before getting carried away, though, those of us working in the field have to recognize that we're *also* inexperienced, impatient, and stubborn. We lack structure and wisdom. We engage in unproductive debates, launch embarrassing products, ignore scientific thinking, and fight for what we think are limited resources.

The good news? This is completely normal.

#### **OPPORTUNITY**

No one would expect a newly walking one-year-old to complete a ninja warrior course. A four-year-old who just learned about lying to write a dissertation on ethics. Or a six-year-old to do complex math problems after just learning to add. We know they're young and inexperienced; we give them time, and permission, to develop. With support, coaching, and encouragement, they often do. The same should apply for new industries and professions.

Consider chemistry, one of the most mature sciences. Around three thousand years ago, humans started recording and manipulating metals. From there it took one thousand years for Aristotle to propose, incorrectly, that all things are made of four different elements. (There are currently 118.)

Humans later spent another one thousand years trying to turn cheap metals into gold. (Yes, centuries of alchemy.) Finally, oxygen was identified in the 1700s, breaking open our understanding of electrons, protons, atomic mass, and more. Bottom line: chemistry floundered for 2,700 years of infancy and adolescence before humans made modern breakthroughs.

Yet, with maturity, they made them.

And yes, it can feel frustrating to think that many of our questions won't be answered for a long time. Still, it's heartening to know the work we're doing now will lead to future progress. There's a lot to be hopeful about.

#### And that's what this chapter is about: hope.

It's about recognizing we're a young industry, accepting the obstacles that come along with that, and turning those into personal growth and the advancement of the field.

To help us, this chapter covers the six biggest challenges I see in health and fitness today. Instead of shrinking away from them in embarrassment (*Uh, nothing to see here, I'll just go stand over there*), or getting defensive about them (*No way, that's not true!*), let's find the opportunities in them. In those opportunities, we find learning, growth, and maturity.



Obesity stats are frightening. Lifestyle diseases are on the rise. And health care is about to bust. On the other hand, health and fitness professionals like us have real solutions for all three problems. There are profound opportunities to build a career out of making a difference.

There's just one problem: we've created a big gap between the people who *want to* help (what I'll call group 1) and the people who *need* that help (group 2).

Meet group 1: you, me, our colleagues. We're the small army of health and fitness change makers called to help. Of course, I love this group. We're committed and passionate folks excited to spread the word and change people's lives.

Yet our problem is that we sometimes confuse our *passion* for health and fitness with *actual skill* in helping others improve their own health and fitness.

You see this in sports when a hall of fame athlete tries their hand at coaching without actually developing coaching mastery. Or in business when top salespeople flounder as sales managers.

Indeed, you could exercise like crazy and eat more carrots than a Triple Crown winner. You could earn so many certificates and degrees that you have the entire alphabet after your name. You could achieve a massive personal transformation (like losing one hundred pounds, completing a difficult physical challenge, or reversing a host of lifestyle diseases). You could have a positive attitude, relentless work ethic, and a heart of gold.

But if you don't yet have the coaching education or psychological

#### OPPORTUNITY

tools needed to facilitate lasting change in another person, you're just not ready to tackle the hard work of coaching clients.

Sadly, for all its focus on anatomy and physiology, sets and reps, macro- and micronutrients, the health and fitness industry often ignores the *coaching* side of coaching. We look at the *body*, but ignore the *mind*.

That has to change.

For better or worse, this was our legacy. We've all inherited the same rules and ideas. I was no exception. When I started out, I didn't know how to help most people get results, especially those who weren't similar to me. I got frustrated with "difficult clients" or situations that seemed to defy all the rules I depended on. And because I only knew how to help a very small portion of my clients, I worried about the future of my job. I knew I was missing something, but I wasn't sure what.

Maybe you're feeling that way right now. If so, you wouldn't be alone.

In fact, most health and fitness professionals are wondering—at this very moment—why more of their clients and patients aren't getting life-changing results.

They're thinking:

"Maybe I need another certification."

"Maybe I need to go back to school."

"Maybe I should just fire this client so I don't have to deal with this."

"I hope nobody finds out that I don't really know what I'm doing."

And because of that, they're starting to burn out. They're starting to lose their passion. They're starting to give up on their dream.

Meet group 2: our potential clients—the millions of people struggling

#### CHANGE MAKER

with their weight, their health, and their confidence. They're unhappy, not only with parts of their bodies and lives, but with all of us in group 1. And they have the right to be.

They've put their trust in various coaches and poured money into products that haven't worked. The exercise books didn't deliver. The nutrition apps didn't change them. The professionals didn't listen. They're staring down a health crisis.

They're frustrated and feeling hopeless.

Even worse, part of that is our fault. When they asked beginner-type questions, or felt awkward during their first time exercising, we rolled our eyes. (Newbie!) When they struggled with things they didn't quite understand, we called them lazy. (You just don't want it badly enough!) When they transitioned into middle age, we offered them shiny, airbrushed icons. (If you'd have taken care of yourself, you'd look more like this!) And when they looked for help, we told them to change every single thing about themselves and live an entirely different life. (It's not a diet, it's a lifestyle!)

But isn't that just telling people they can't be *themselves*? That to eat better, lose weight, or improve their health, they have to become *us*? In my opinion, that's the laziest form of coaching. No wonder it doesn't stick. These folks don't want to be us. They want to be themselves, only healthier.

And so, we have a gap.

#### **OPPORTUNITY**

The result? Despite all the attention on health and fitness nowadays, people are still getting fatter, sicker, more sedentary, less mobile, and less functional in their day-to-day lives. They're still getting "preventable" diseases.

That means the health and fitness industry is *still* not improving the health, fitness, and/or quality of life for most of the population.<sup>1</sup>

Even more, our health and fitness centers have become places where already-healthy and fit people go to hang out with other healthy and fit people to do healthy- and fit-people things. That's fine, of course. If that's who you want to serve, go for it. Let's just be explicit about what's happening: The health and fitness industry is mostly marketing to, and attracting, a very small group of people. While that's a little sad, it also leads to our biggest opportunity: a "blue ocean" opportunity.

In their book *Blue Ocean Strategy*, W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne argue that successful companies often create "blue oceans" where their products and services are so unique, or cater to a largely unserved group, that there isn't much competition for what they do.

This is contrasted with the "red oceans," where companies fight ruthlessly with competitors because they all offer similar products and services to the same people. The analogy is that an ocean full of vicious competition becomes red with blood.

In other words, instead of trying to attract more people "like us" (which is a red ocean because it's a small group and everyone is trying to serve them), we'd be better off trying to attract people "like them" (which is a blue ocean because it's a huge group and no one is adequately serving them).

We'll explore this idea more in Chapter 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> And not only are we not helping, we might even be doing harm. Consider the opportunity cost, unnecessary injuries, and constant cycle of trading short-term transient changes for long-term healthy behavior. The industry may be wasting people's time, energy, and trust. Eventually, those people give up, worse off and more confused than when they started.

#### CHALLENGE 2

# NOT UNDERSTANDING WHAT PEOPLE Want AND Need



# Assume LESS, Listen MORE, AND EMPHATHIZE WITH THE PEOPLE You HOPE To Serve

Everybody has light-bulb moments.

One of my brightest came courtesy of a disgruntled Precision Nutrition client.

Health and fitness coaches often assume that the people who join their programs want to be healthy and fit—maybe to lose weight, lower cholesterol, or move better. I know I always did. I also assumed that if I could help deliver these physical goals, I'd have another satisfied customer.

#### I assumed wrong.

Some years back, I read a review from a former group-coaching client. Someone asked her if she would recommend our program. Here was the gist of her response:

I don't recommend it. I lost some weight, but I never felt like I connected with my coach. I didn't really need much help from her. But if I would have needed help, I'm not sure how much I'd have gotten. So no. I don't recommend it.

#### **OPPORTUNITY**

Curious where we went wrong, I dug into our database to discover that this client lost over fifty pounds working with us! Yes, *fifty*. In addition, nearly every metric we collected improved—from health, to body composition, to food and nutrition knowledge, to resiliency.

Yet here she was: unhappy and actively *not* recommending our coaching.

I could have chalked up these comments to her being overly picky, to having unreasonable expectations, or to being fundamentally unpleasable. That would have come at a huge cost. Instead, I asked her if she would sit for a paid interview so I could learn more.

What I learned changed our business.

It turns out that losing weight and "getting results," while nice, wasn't enough.

Even though she was in a group, she didn't want to *feel* like part of a group. She wanted the *feeling* of a one-on-one relationship with her coach. She wanted someone to reach out daily, someone to get to know her schedule and her children's names, someone who made her feel special, and taken care of, and cared for. And she didn't get that.

We missed a big opportunity to create a meaningful, lasting relationship with this client, and she left dissatisfied.

Of course, if we *had* asked about her goals, she probably wouldn't have said, "I want to feel connected." That's because learning more about clients isn't as straightforward as asking any old question. You have to learn a specific way of asking questions, which I'll share in Chapter 3.

The answers to these questions were invaluable to us. And nowadays we're asking them more than ever. This allows us to better identify the true values of the people we've promised to help. They feel better served and better connected while we feel happier and more satisfied in our work.

I'm confident this can do the same for you.

#### CHALLENGE 3

# NOT DEFINING YOUR PURPOSE

## DEFINE Yours AND ALIGN IT WITH YOUR Talents

In his book *Start with Why*, Simon Sinek shares the idea that most people live their lives by accident—they live as it happens. The antidote, he proposes, is to live life on purpose, to find our "WHY" (the purpose, cause, or belief that inspires us) and use it as a filter to choose the careers, organizations, communities, and relationships that are most likely to lead to fulfillment.

In my experience, most of us working in health and fitness are here because we've had a transformative experience. Maybe, like me, a health and fitness mentor helped reshape your life, and now you want to pay that forward to others. Maybe it's been a part of your life since you were young, and it's been a way to connect with your family or to express yourself. Maybe you lost someone to a preventable disease, and you've committed to helping others avoid that same fate.

Whatever your reason, you must deeply connect with your purpose and explicitly call out the reason you got into this field in the first place. Because work can be tough. Down in the weeds, it can feel like *Ground-hog Day*. Wake up, go to work, chip away at your never-ending to-do list, navigate workplace politics, deal with clients, go home, squeeze in some time for self-care, go to bed, repeat.

However, when you have a clear sense of why the day matters, when you know how your daily tasks connect to your reason for doing them,

#### **OPPORTUNITY**

when you recognize how your daily tasks are "moving the needle" on something important to you it, things get easier. At worst, this connection helps your day make sense. At best, it keeps you enthusiastic, motivated, and inspired.<sup>2</sup>

It can't stop there, though.

The magic really happens when you align your purpose with your unique abilities.

Popularized by Dan Sullivan, one of the world's most influential entrepreneurship coaches, the unique ability process defines the things that:

- 1 you are, or have the potential to be, world class at;
- 2 you actually enjoy doing;
- 3 will actually make a difference when you do them.

Imagine a scenario where you have a deeply felt and explicitly stated purpose *and* you're working toward that purpose using your strongest talents, having fun, and making a difference. #livingthedream

Yes, lots of people in health and fitness have strong reasons for why they work in this field. Yet more of us need to explicitly define our purpose (and that takes a little extra work). Once that's defined, we need to discover how to use our unique abilities in the service of that purpose.

In Chapter 2, I'll help you discover both.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> One of my good friends does a "Start with Why" exercise with students at the beginning of her workshops. This helps them get centered on why they're there and what they hope to get out of it which, in turn, helps them stay motivated and inspired even as the fatigue of long days of learning sets in.

#### CHALLENGE 4

### Becoming TOO SPECIALIZED

#### **OPPORTUNITY 4**

# GENERALIZE and EMBRACE THE IDEA of THE CASE MANAGER

"I'm looking for a bench-press-only personal trainer, a kale-first nutritionist, and a psoas-only massage therapist," said no one ever. Why not? Because prospective clients—group 2 as described earlier—don't think in terms of specializations.

Quite simply, quite profoundly, clients just want help. They have some sort of pain in their lives—physical, mental, and/or emotional—and they want it to go away.

At the same time, the idea of "staying in your lane" prevents professionals in this field from helping as much as they could. *Personal trainers shouldn't talk about food. Strength coaches shouldn't talk about pain management. Nutritionists shouldn't talk about movement.* This specialty-centric kind of thinking has deepened the divide between the people willing to help and those who need it.

Don't believe me? Then imagine I'm fifty pounds over my ideal weight, my cholesterol and blood sugar are high, I have heartburn, I have pain in my lower back, and I get winded walking across the living room. Imagine it's been like this for a long time, ten years or more, and I'm finally ready to get help. Then, when I reach out, I learn that I'll need:

#### **OPPORTUNITY**

a physician to treat my cholesterol, blood sugar, and heartburn;

a rehab specialist to treat my lower back pain;

a nutritionist to help adjust my diet for weight loss;

a gym membership; and

a personal trainer to help me figure out how to use the gym.

Of course, my insurance only covers a small portion of these fees, none of the specialists work in the same part of town, and none of them know what the other is doing. So, in addition to all the exercising, healthy eating, stress managing, and self-caring I have to make time for, I'll also need to become a project manager overseeing four new part-time employees and one new facility.

Is it any surprise people are struggling?

I know what I'm about to say will be unpopular—especially to those who've developed a deep expertise in a single area, or to those who profit from dividing things into specialties—but it has to be said: in health and fitness, the future belongs to the generalist, not the specialist.

Yes, that was hard to type for a guy who spent twelve years in higher education, each year getting progressively more specialized, and who now runs the industry's top nutrition certification. Yet the writing's on the wall: there's huge opportunity for those professionals who are willing to think of themselves as health and fitness "case managers," "solutions providers," or "concierges."

Of course, there's nothing wrong with being trained as a specialist. There are lots of upsides too. But it can't stop there. The professional of the future will need to support all aspects of health: movement, nutrition, supplementation, sleep, stress management, and more.

#### CHANGE MAKER

Do they have to be experts in each area? No. Should they diagnose or prescribe? No. But they'll need the training and expertise to deliver the equivalent of a Cliff's Notes<sup>3</sup> summary of each topic.

In other words, nutritionists will still focus on nutrition. Trainers on movement. Physicians on diagnosis and treatment. However, each will *also* share resources and insights on other lifestyle-related topics. And they'll tap into their contact lists of—or refer out to—other trusted professionals when they have questions, if someone needs more than they can provide.

This shift is already happening, which is great. But it's happening too slowly—in part because of territorialism and lobbying from professional organizations, but mostly because of old habits and knee-jerk reactions.

For example, in a private Facebook group I'm part of, a personal trainer and lifestyle coach mentioned that his client was recently diagnosed with renal disease, and he was wondering what he could do to support her. He was bombarded with at least fifty comments that sounded like: "You're beyond your scope! You're not a doctor! It's illegal and immoral to help! Run!"

Of course, this trainer shouldn't diagnose or prescribe anything directly for renal disease. But there's a lot of value he could bring to this situation, making himself a crucial part of his client's allied health team.

For example, he could help her *find help*. This is likely a frightening and stressful time for her. The last thing she needs is a trusted coach telling her, "This is out of my scope. Bye." So, while he won't be able to support her medical or dietetic needs, he can help her remain calm, think clearly, and perhaps even help her search for the professionals she requires to move forward. Also, if he feels confident, he could continue to support her exercise, sleep, and stress-management practices, in conjunction with her new health-care team. If he doesn't feel confident, he could help her find someone to take his place. In essence, for a period of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Cole's Notes, for you Canadians.

time, his role may shift from trainer and lifestyle coach to case manager and concierge.<sup>4</sup>

In the end, if we're to legitimately embrace client-centered coaching (more on this in Chapter 4), the logical next step is to develop a more robust knowledge set and coaching practice (more on this in Chapter 7). No, you shouldn't try to be an expert in everything. But you should learn fluency in all the areas that make for deep health.

Clients aren't interested in perfect squats or nailing their macronutrient ratios. They're interested in living a healthier life.



There's a whole buffet of books, workshops, certifications, seminars, websites, and friendly advice available for health and fitness professionals. There's so much information but so little context. And almost no one is tying it all together.

Don't get me wrong: I love education. Like I said, I've done twelve years of higher education (studying medicine, philosophy, psychology, exercise science, and nutritional biochemistry). I've also invested a tremen-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> You can, of course, provide this kind of service for a fee, if required. While this idea may feel uncommon in health and fitness, case management as a paid service is very common in medicine.

#### CHANGE MAKER

dous amount of money in "continuing education" courses both in health sciences and other areas (coaching, change psychology, business, marketing, and so on).

This means I started with a strong foundation determined by the universities I attended. Then I continued my education, delving into the areas I was most interested in, found lacking in my university training, or needed to learn to continue my development as a well-rounded professional.

This strong foundation is what I find missing in a lot of health and fitness professionals today. The majority of their education comes from "continuing education." And that's problematic for two reasons. First, these courses aren't meant to be foundational. They're meant to expand upon an already-strong foundation. No matter how great the courses are, something is always missing. Second, without a strong foundation, professionals aren't really equipped to make good decisions about which course to take next. Sure, following your interests is fun and engaging. However, it's no guarantee you'll learn the things you need to know to be an effective professional.

Consider personal training. With a weekend certificate, anyone can hang up a shingle and start taking clients. After that, the best trainers will commit to a process of lifelong learning. But which courses should they take? When? How can they stack learning on top of learning in a progressive way?

Without a solid foundation or some guidance—what I call context—they're just guessing. Having guessed wrong, many coaches end up chronically busy with courses, heavily invested (financially), without a great education to show for it.

Contrast this with medical training. Physicians have a well-established, multiyear curriculum that includes coursework, clinical rotations, progressively more independent consultation (though still supervised), and context-specific evaluation. That's just to *become* a doctor. After that there are continuing-education requirements to help guide their careers long after medical school is over.

#### **OPPORTUNITY**

Or take skilled trades. A plumber, for example, is required to attend technical school, get 144 hours of classroom time, and apprentice under a master plumber before they can take their first job. Then, when working as a plumber, they need to collect eight hours of continuing education every year.

While drastically different professions, physicians and plumbers have something critical in common: professional infrastructure based on discrete phases of development. "First you do A. Then you do B, because it builds on what you learned in A. Then comes C, which ties it all together." Schoolchildren don't start with advanced calculus. They start with basic arithmetic and build from there.

The same is true of training clients. You don't randomly give them kettlebell swings, box jumps, and hill sprinting and hope that an elite Olympic performance emerges. As a coach, you offer a progression that goes step-by-step, working systematically toward a specific outcome.

That progressive plan is what's been missing in health coaching, exercise coaching, even—to some degree—nutrition coaching.

This book will help remedy that. Not by proposing governmental regulation or the creation of trade schools (although those could make a difference in some contexts). Rather, by helping you create your own custom curriculum, a personal You-niversity that balances what you need to learn (to be a complete professional) with what you want to learn (to pursue what's interesting and fun).

Not only will this approach help you level up your career, it'll also help you stand out from the sea of amateurs. It's fascinating to look around and see coaches who have PhDs, others who have "read some stuff on the internet," and everything in between. It's also sad to see how this confuses prospective clients. They're not quite sure who's qualified and credible. By creating a solid curriculum for yourself, and articulating what you've done (and why), you'll stand apart. We'll explore this idea more in Chapters 6 and 7.

#### CHALLENGE 6

# Professionalism

OPPORTUNITY 6

# INTENTIONALLY CULTIVATE YOUR REPUTATION

When most people in health and fitness—especially fitness—hear me use the word "professionalism," they're afraid I'll recommend trading in T-shirts for collared shirts and dropping conversational language for business speak. I'm actually talking about something deeper here: courtesy, integrity, ethics, communication, giving and receiving feedback, dealing with criticism, and the other "soft skills" that earn us our reputation.

You can wear a suit and tie but if you're constantly late, and rude when you do finally show up, if you say one thing and do another, if your business practices are designed only for your personal gain instead of creating value for your prospects and clients, then your professionalism is lacking.

To be trusted, respected, and seen as professionals, we need to *become* professionals. That means setting a high bar for how we communicate, for how we behave around others, and for how we live (even when others aren't watching). Like it or not, our reputation isn't solely built on the results we get for clients and patients. The rest is determined by how we show up, how we communicate, how we listen, and how we make others feel when they're around us.

#### OPPORTUNITY

We'll dig into professionalism more in Chapter 6.

Again, the health and fitness field is young. And the young often set up false dichotomies. They ask: Would you rather have a coach who delivers results? Or one who makes you feel good about yourself?

Both! I'd rather have a coach who delivers results *and* makes me feel good about myself.<sup>5</sup>

If you want to become the ultimate health and fitness change maker, you'll have to learn to do both. Let others fixate exclusively on muscle physiology, nutrient biochemistry, hormonal pathways, organ systems, macronutrients, and micronutrients.

Yes, learn these subjects too. But don't miss the biggest opportunity of all—becoming the kind of professional that clients are willing to line up around the block to work with.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This realization is an inflection point for many. Early in their careers, they believe that if they do the technical side of coaching well, everything else will fall into place. But, once they see evidence to the contrary, they set out to level up their interpersonal skills . . . or they dig in their heels, assuming people are too stupid to see their obvious brilliance. As one colleague said in response to a question about why less-credentialed coaches often get more business: "Have you ever considered, even for a moment, that you may just be an asshole?"

#### **CHALLENGE 1**

THE GAP BETWEEN US AND Them

OPPORTUNITY 1

Close THE GAP

#### CHALLENGE 2

PEOPLE Want AND Need

#### OPPORTUNITY 2

Ossume LESS, Listen MORE,

AND EMPHATHIZE WITH

THE PEOPLE YOU HOPE TO Serve

#### CHALLENGE 3

DEFINING Your PURPOSE

DEFINE Yours AND ALIGN IT
WITH YOUR Talents

#### CHALLENGE 4

### Becoming === SPECIALIZED

**OPPORTUNITY 4** 

→ GENERALIZE Ond EMBRACE
THE IDEA Of THE CASE MANAGER

#### CHALLENGE 5

GETTING Tangled Ap 'N

Educational OPTIONS

OPPORTUNITY 5

CREATE Your OWN
YOU-NIVERSITY

CHALLENGE 6

NOT PRACTICING

Professionalism

**Prof**essionalism

OPPORTUNITY 6

INTENTIONALLY CULTIVATE

YOUR REPUTATION

THE HEALTH AND FITNESS INDUSTRY IS young.
WITH TIME IT'LL gather THE wisdom IT NEEDS

WE'RE WITNESSING NEW MOVEMENT A NEW profession IT'S CHANGING FAST OUR WORK WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE

close THE GAP BETWEEN THOSE WHO CAN help AND THOSE WHO most NEED THE help THIS IS your BLUE OCEAN OPPORTUNITY

assume LESS AND DON'T BUY INTO cliches LEARN FOR SURE what YOUR clients ARE AFTER THEN DELIVER IT FOR A REWARDING CAREER

explicitly DEFINE YOUR purpose

use YOUR UNIQUE ABILITIES TO serve IT

THE future BELONGS TO THE GENERALIST SQUATS AND MACROS ARE secondary change is WHAT CLIENTS WANT MOST

build a STRONG FOUNDATIONAL CURRICULUM CONTINUING EDUCATION ONLY WORKS WHEN you've FIRST BEEN EDUCATED

COURTESY, INTEGRITY

AND COMMUNICATION matter

to be SEEN AS PROFESSIONALS

WE HAVE TO become PROFESSIONALS

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