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## Fitness Tips

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by Cari Draft Elliott, BS, CPT - ACE-Certified Personal Trainer

Can hiring a personal trainer really help me lose weight?

**Question:** *I hear about people hiring personal trainers to lose weight, but I'd like to know if it really works. I'm thinking my money might be better spent on a gym membership or liposuction. Can I really lose weight by hiring a personal trainer?*

**Answer:** Whoa! I might be a little biased, but studies have shown that you won't lose any weight by getting liposuction done! Skip that one. Depending upon your personality and motivation levels, a gym membership can be an excellent idea, if you know what you're doing. Most gyms can hook you up with a fitness trainer for a set-up session; the trainer will ask for your health history and current habits, and design a workout program based on your own personal lifestyle.

If you decide to hire a personal trainer to reach your weight loss goals, there are a few things you can do to get the most for your money.

First, let your doctor know that you are going to increase your physical activity, and ask if there are any limits on your activity. Share these with your personal trainer. Your personal trainer will probably ask you to do just a little more than you are currently doing, building gradually into a more vigorous program. Unless you address the true causes of why you're overweight, your program will not be successful in the long run. If you're overweight because you don't get enough exercise, a personal trainer can help. A personal trainer can also be a cheerleader and someone to hold you accountable when they ask you to eliminate empty-calorie junk food from your daily routine. If emotional eating is an issue, you need to address this problem with an experienced therapist.

By keeping your goals realistic, you can avoid discouragement that comes when unrealistic goals are not met. Remember that fast weight loss is often not fat loss, but water loss, and fast weight loss is likely to be regained in the future. Most experts recommend an initial weight loss of no more than 10 to 15 percent of your current body weight.

Joining a group fitness program that some personal trainers offer can be the answer for some people. Costs are much lower than hiring a one-on-one personal trainer, and being in a group can be motivating in itself. Look for programs that fit your schedule, your lifestyle, and what goals you want to achieve. Need more flexibility? Find a yoga class. Have no muscle tone? Try a power pump class. There are classes in your area that offer combinations, just do your research and find one that's best for you.

In the end, a personal trainer can give you all the tools you need, give you great guidance and motivation, but ultimately you are the one who has to follow-through and do all the work.

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**Cari Draft Elliott is an ACE-Certified Personal Trainer who makes "house calls"! Please check out her website at [www.oneononefitgirl.com](http://www.oneononefitgirl.com) and email your questions to [cari@oneononefitgirl.com](mailto:cari@oneononefitgirl.com).**

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