Reality of Extreme Weight Loss Programs

Panel Discussion at ACSM Health & Fitness Summit 2012
Weds, March 28 (4:30-6:00pm) & Friday, March 30 (9:30-11:00am)

Panelists:

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What makes reality TV shows about fitness/weight loss inspiring?

How is the act of working out and losing weight portrayed?

Should any trainer with a certification be able to train obese clients?

What the Research Says

• The physical, psychological and sociological effects of reality TV shows about fitness/weight loss.
• Research on the effects of rapid weight loss on The Biggest Loser.
• Thomson Reuters Poll: 57% of respondents say reality TV about weight loss has influenced their eating habits (72% for obese viewers); 48% say these shows influence their exercise behavior (73% for obese viewers).
Losing Weight & Keeping It Off

- On reality TV about weight loss, contestants often lose weight quickly – sometimes 10, 20 or more pounds in a week. A weight loss of 2 or 3 pounds per week is often framed as a disappointment.

- What is a safe amount of weekly weight loss? And what’s our role as fitness experts when it comes to educating clients about the reality of weight loss?

- How is nutrition handled on reality TV shows about extreme weight loss?

- Does it matter if lifestyle changes occur rapidly versus gradually?

How Working Out is Portrayed on Reality TV

- From what we see at home, participants on reality shows about fitness/weight loss train pretty hard. Can the general public (and fitness clients) make a proper distinction between good television and real-life training sessions?

- On reality TV shows, we’ve seen contestants be sick, fall off moving equipment and collapse in exhaustion. It’s dramatic TV, but how do you know how far to push a client, obese or not?

What’s Our Responsibility in the Fitness Industry?

- Are we getting new clients and club members in the fitness industry as a result of reality TV about fitness/weight loss?

- Given the popularity and longevity of *The Biggest Loser* and other reality TV shows about fitness/weight loss, what can we learn from these shows to help us better reach untapped markets and people who are not currently living healthy, fit lifestyles?