



THE
PERSONAL
TRAINING
COLLECTIVE

The Smarter Way to Grow™

Practicing What We Preach: Supporting the Wellness of Personal Trainers

Brenda Adams, Ph.D. (candidate)



The Wellness Paradox

- Personal trainers are uniquely positioned to understand wellness. They know about exercise, understand health behaviours, encourage healthy habits, help clients set goals, often model healthy behaviours, and spend their careers talking about wellness.
- But they also work irregular hours, build schedules around clients, run businesses, carry emotional responsibility for clients, and experience financial uncertainty.

My Study

- Quantitative piece: Wellness was measured using the Helping Professional Wellness Discrepancy Scale, examining Personal and Professional Development, Leisure Activities, Optimism, Religion/Spirituality, Burnout, and Making a Difference. The study examined demographic, professional, and workload factors in 172 participants.
- Qualitative piece: Semi-structured interviews with 16 certified personal trainers (10 women, 6 men).

What My Research Found

- Most personal trainers wanted their wellness to be a little better.
- Older personal trainers reported higher levels of wellness.
- Men reported higher levels of wellness.
- Those who could financially support themselves with their personal training income reported higher levels of wellness.
- More hours training/supporting clients were associated with higher levels of Making a Difference.
- Current and desired burnout levels were fairly close.

- More client hours were associated with higher burnout scores; those with more experience had lower burnout scores.
- More hours working on the business were associated with higher burnout scores.

What Personal Trainers Told Me

- Wellness is more than exercise - Wellness was described as physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual, not just exercise.
- Taking care of myself takes work - Trainers knew what wellness requires, but finding the time and energy to do it could be exhausting.
- I'm giving and giving - Supporting clients can be emotionally demanding, especially when clients' needs are greater than the trainer's own capacity.
- There's always something else to do - Client sessions are only part of the job. Business tasks, scheduling, administration, family, and other responsibilities add to the load.
- When I'm not well, I'm not myself - Trainers described becoming irritable, self-critical, exhausted, and less able to show up the way they wanted to.
- The things that help are often simple - Routines, realistic expectations, self-awareness, goals, connection with others, and supportive communities helped trainers take care of their wellness.
- I love what I do - Commitment to helping people was a source of meaning — but could also make it difficult to set boundaries and prioritize themselves.

The Personal Trainer Trifecta

Personal trainers move among three roles:

1. Helping Professional — supporting clients to be their best
2. Service Provider — delivering expertise and high-quality services
3. Entrepreneur — building and managing a business

What Could We Change About the Profession?

From Knowing to Doing

1. What is currently supporting my wellness?

One thing I need to protect:

2. What is currently draining my wellness?

One thing I need to change:

3. Where am I saying "yes" when I really need to say "no"?

If we want personal trainers to help other people live healthier lives, we also need to create a profession where personal trainers can thrive.

Stay in Touch

Email: brenda@theptcollective.com

Instagram: resilienttrainercollective

LinkedIn: brendapadams

